

**SACRED SECULAR RELICS: WORLD TRADE CENTER STEEL IN OFF-SITE 9/11  
MEMORIALS IN THE UNITED STATES**

by

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2017

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
THE DIETRICH SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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# **SACRED SECULAR RELICS: WORLD TRADE CENTER STEEL IN OFF-SITE 9/11 MEMORIALS IN THE UNITED STATES**

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University of Pittsburgh, 2017

This dissertation analyzes material practices in the commemoration of violence and trauma through a focus on the memorialization of World Trade Center (WTC) structural steel across the United States to form hundreds of local 9/11 monuments. Less than one percent of the steel artifacts collected from the WTC site was reconfigured as sacred relics and became the focal elements of local memorials, while the rest was sold and recycled as scrap. Based on ten months of fieldwork at such local memorials primarily in the Northeastern United States, the study documents the artifacts' memorialization, and discusses the socio-cultural factors involved in their transformation from rubble to sacred relics.

I discuss the artifacts' transformation in the context of commemoration of trauma and violence, especially in mainstream American culture, and compare with the memorialization of other historical events to point out 9/11's exceptional place in the public imagination. In contrast to the historical practices of commemorating primarily military dead as heroes, the 9/11 commemorations focused mainly on civilian heroes and victims. The ethnographic data from the memorial settings reveal the steel's perceived power and commemorative significance from the viewpoints of those who took part in the establishment of the memorials.

The study demonstrates that the WTC steel's reconfiguration as relics—secular but sacred artifacts instead of rubble—gave them a commemorative value that the agents of memory utilized to make social, political, and cultural statements about 9/11's perceived exceptionality. The steel artifacts are mediums for individual and collective standpoints towards 9/11, and derive

their sentimental quality from their imagined (and sometimes real) ties to the event, especially to the deaths of civilians. The materiality of the steel artifacts and their ability to demonstrate destruction makes physical contact and interactive commemoration practices possible. By incorporating the same type of artifacts over a large geographical territory, local memorials create a memoryscape that marks the actual and imagined connections to 9/11. Through its theoretical orientation, methodology, and subject matter, this dissertation offers a model for the analysis of such contemporary material practices that commemorate the victims of violence and trauma.

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## **PREFACE**

I would like to thank some of the people who enabled me to complete this project. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor and committee chair Dr. Robert M. Hayden. When we first met in Istanbul in 2010, I was at a crossroads in my life and knew very little about this long journey that was about to begin. Thanks to his extraordinary support and guidance over the past seven years, I never felt alone in my decisions and in the face of difficulties. He was always accessible and responsive, even during the busiest times. I am deeply grateful for his kindness and persistent help.

I would like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Laura C. Brown, Dr. Bryan K. Hanks, and Dr. Kirk Savage for their brilliant comments and suggestions. I am grateful for the inspiring conversations we had with Dr. Brown, which always provided me with new perspectives to look at my research. I am also grateful to her for being accessible and open to discuss any subject related to academia. Dr. Hanks has had a great interest in my project since the earliest stages of my work. I appreciate his kind support and am thankful for bringing various materials and approaches in archaeology into my attention. Dr. Savage and his works have always been a great source of inspiration for me, and I consider myself lucky to take his course. I am indebted to him for mind-opening ideas and suggestions, and I am grateful for his

kind help in establishing contacts with the institutions and individuals that were crucial for my research.

I would also like to thank the faculty of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh for their contributions to my intellectual and professional growth. This research started first as a course project at Dr. Kathleen Musante's seminar course on field methods. I am very thankful for her feedback and encouragement to further develop my research.

I am indebted to my informants who spent hours telling me their stories, and generously shared with me the information and documents they have. It was not possible to mention all of you in this work, but I know and remember each of you, and would like you to know that the insights I gained from you are the foundation of this study. This dissertation would not be possible without you.

I thank Jan Ramirez, Chief Curator of the National 9/11 Memorial & Museum, for helping me establishing contacts with the individuals who took part in the collection of the steel artifacts. I would also like to thank the National 9/11 Memorial & Museum staff for their hospitality and the opportunity to volunteer, especially to Liz Mazucci and Lindsay Watts. A special thanks to Peter Miller, retired Senior Manager of the WTC archives at the PANYNJ, for his sincere interest in my project and kind help in reaching out information and key individuals. I feel lucky to have known him. I also thank the National Iron & Steel Heritage Museum for their generosity and hospitality.

I am grateful to my wonderful friends for their endless support and help when I needed them most. The idea of doing a research on the 9/11 memorials first occurred during our conversation with Irem Ebeturk in the first year of our Ph.D.'s. She has been a great source of support since the time we first met. I thank her and little Deniz for driving with me to the

memorials in Georgia for hours despite the hot weather. I thank Venera Khalikova for regularly checking on me when I was writing, and also for being a wonderful friend and source of motivation. I thank Cengiz Haksoz, Hande Sozer, and Rabia Harmansah for their patience. They were always there to help and encourage me even when they were at the other parts of the world. I am thankful to Aanmona Priyadarshini, Nabil Zuberi, Ali Yagiz Yildiz, Yonca Karakilic Yilmaz, Levent Yilmaz, and Maria Venegas for their precious friendship and generosity.

Last but not the least, I would like to thank my family for their lifelong love and support and always believing in me. Being away from you has never been easy. Finally, I would like to thank to my husband Emre Biyikli. We started this journey together seven years ago, and I am thankful to him for his endless support and patience.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

“As someone coming from Turkey, do you think we are nuts?” asked my informant when I was about to leave after our interview about the 9/11 memorial he and his colleagues have at their fire station. “What do you mean?” I asked. “Many things are happening in that part of the world. You may think this is too much, building memorials like this... because they’re almost shrines, they’re treated as shrines,” he said. Having talked about their memorial for an hour, the question he asked reminded me of how I started this project. I explained that I do not think that this is “nuts,” but that the effort put into building memorials across the country for 9/11, and their treatment as shrines, as my informant pointed out, was something that I had seen for the first time in other 9/11 commemorations in the United States. He was also right that violent and traumatic events were happening in Turkey increasingly frequently. Yet, very few of them were memorialized nation-wide. This is why I had had in mind doing research on social memory in Turkey when I began my doctoral studies in 2010. However, at the end of my first year, the variety of the 9/11 commemorations and the representation of the events at the national memorials grabbed my attention. At the time, the tenth anniversary of the attacks were approaching, the Flight 93 National Memorial in Shanksville, PA and the National 9/11 Memorial in New York City were getting ready to open, and therefore how 9/11 should be remembered and commemorated was an on-going discussion.

As I continued following the discussions about the 9/11 commemorations, I learned that the remains of the World Trade Center (WTC) buildings, specifically the pieces of structural steel belonged to Twin Towers, were distributed across the U.S. and as central parts of small-scale local 9/11 memorials, which have town or city level importance. The pictures and videos about those memorials were plentiful, and they often showed the artifacts draped in the American flag, carried on trucks with an escort, and people touching them. The artifacts were animated through such practices, and a metaphorical power was attributed to them. Consequently, the re-use of the WTC artifacts as memorials, and the ceremonial aspect of their memorialization, seemed to present an opportunity to investigate the meaning-making process after a tragedy, and the material aspects of commemoration practices.

There is a vast literature on commemoration and mourning at sites of tragedy and violence (Azaryahu 1996, Doss 2002, 2006, Foote 2003, Jacobs 2004, Margry and Sanchez-Carretero 2011, Young 1993). Building permanent memorials on the sites of the 9/11 attacks—Shanksville, New York City, and the Pentagon—was not an unexpected outcome, considering previous examples such as the Oklahoma City Memorial that was built on the footprint of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. However, the flourish of small memorials, formed of salvaged artifacts across the country, has not been seen for other national tragedies or historical events, or for civilian deaths.

The distribution of the steel artifacts may resemble that of the segments of the Berlin Wall, which were distributed to worldwide locations after its fall. However, there are sharp distinctions between how the artifacts were treated. The segments of the wall were not accompanied by ceremonial processions, which was often the case with the WTC steel artifacts. While it was and is acceptable to sell pieces of the Berlin Wall at auctions, the Port Authority of

New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ)—the owner of the WTC complex, and therefore of the artifacts as well—banned the selling of the steel pieces, and donated them to groups and organizations for memorial purposes only. During my fieldwork, I came across a segment of the wall that was purchased by a restaurant in Suwanee, GA and displayed at the restaurant's entrance, which is an unlikely location and use for the steel artifacts. Most significantly, the segments of the Berlin Wall were the remains of a divided past in Germany, and the initial public sentiment in that country after re-unification was in favor of *not* preserving the remains (Harrison 2011), in contrast to sentiments towards the 9/11 steel artifacts, which became the focus of patriotic ceremonies in the U.S.

The use of the steel artifacts as memorials is a distinct practice even among 9/11 commemorations, because only the steel remains were distributed and memorialized systematically. In addition, the collection for this purpose of the steel remains was the result of a selective process in which only less than one percent of the remains were saved, while the rest of them were sold and sent to scrap yards in the U.S., China, and India for recycling. The selection of a small group of artifacts can be seen as a practical choice, as probably it would not be possible to store all remnants. Yet, the contrast between the two statuses—rubble and relic—is noteworthy, because it indicates two different values attached to the same type of artifacts, which resulted in different treatments. Understanding the motivation to commemorate 9/11 with a steel artifact is crucial to explain how and why the steel pieces went through such transformation from rubble to relic.

Documenting the memorialization of the steel artifacts and the commemorative practices centered on them, this study examines the steel artifacts' transformation from rubble to relic, and thereby investigates the socio-cultural factors involved in the generation of meaning and power

attributed to them. The ethnographic data portrays the memorial settings, and reveals the steel artifacts' power and commemorative significance from the viewpoints of those who took part in memorial building and the acquisition of the artifacts.

## **1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION**

At stake in this research is the question of how the commemoration of violence and trauma develops material practices to commemorate the event, and what these practices suggest regarding the social, cultural, and political aspects of trauma and violence. Symbolic interpretations can help us understand the commemorative practices that focus on objects, yet acknowledging the objects' symbolic significance does not explain why some people feel the need to be active participants in commemorations, and to engage with a monument, or an object. Focusing on the transformation of the steel artifacts from rubble to relics, the study enhances our understanding of what motivates people to react to specific objects. In this regard, the research had two sets of immediate questions:

- 1) As objects of commemoration, where does the efficacy of the WTC steel artifacts come from? Why did only the steel remains become the center of attention?
- 2) What have been the motivations to acquire a steel artifact for commemorations at locations away from the sites of 9/11? What sorts of commemorative actions are undertaken at such distant sites?

Throughout the study, the concept of relic and the sacredness attributed to the steel artifacts emerged as overarching themes to discuss the artifacts' commemorative significance. The attacks of September 11 and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq gave rise in the

U.S. to an impression of national “wholeness” (Butler 2006) along with idealized representations of the 9/11 civilian and military dead (Butler 2006, Simpson 2006, 2011). These latter representations are central to the question of who or what should be the subject of the commemorations. On a broader level, the study contributes to current knowledge on what is being memorialized in contemporary American society and what concerns are involved in the memorialization processes, in particular about ways of coping with national and cultural traumas. Through its focus on the memorialization of the WTC steel artifacts, the study draws attention to the material practices involved in contemporary commemorations. In this regard, the use of the WTC steel to establish 9/11 memorials forms “material strategies” that aim to establish links to the event and trigger remembrance (Buchli and Lucas 2001:79). Bringing ethnographic data and the materiality of the artifacts together, the study is in part one in the archaeology of the present, and thereby contributes to understanding contemporary material practices and humans’ engagement with the material world (Buchli and Lucas 2001, Harrison and Schofield 2010).

A number of scholars have shown that agents of memory often bring their own ambitions and approaches to the memorialization process in order to influence or challenge the dominant narrative (Bodnar 1993, Ibreck 2010, Vinitzky-Seroussi 2009). The agents of memory in the case of local 9/11 memorials focusing on a WTC steel piece, are individuals and groups including rescuers, survivors, and the victims’ relatives, each bringing their own perspective on 9/11 and how it should be commemorated. Consequently, each local memorial has emerged as a site of personal and public remembrance with distinct connections to the memory of 9/11 and nationhood.

## 1.2 KEY CONCEPTS

### 1.2.1 Religious and Secular Relics

There is an unusual museum at a garbage truck garage in East Harlem, New York City. A sanitation worker, Nelson Molina, has collected numerous objects from the trash for over 20 years, and his collection has become a unique resource drawing attention to the variety of artifacts people throw away—from mass-produced Christmas decorations to vintage toys, antiques, family photographs, and school diplomas.<sup>1</sup> One of the things Molina found in trash is a hand-size piece of WTC steel in the shape of the Star of David, inscribed in memory of 9/11. It is one of the most valuable objects for Molina, and one of the least he expected to find in trash, considering the vast significance of the event and its remains in the eyes of many.

A relic is a fragment of the past. Its significance derives from its association with a lost person, or as an object that is a physical reminder of something of historical and cultural significance. Such a relic embodies the essence of the person or event associated with it, and indicates the continuity of a particular state of associations between the relic and its source (Barnett 2014, Krueger 2010, Maines and Glynn 1993, Wharton 2006). In this regard, relics are material items seen as having non-material components that make them objects of wonder and awe. This non-material component in religious relics is a sacred divine power that it is believed that the relic embodies. For instance, in some Christian doctrines body parts of the saints or even “the things that had come into contact with the saint’s body” (Krueger 2010:5) are venerated

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<sup>1</sup> Video interview, Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/video/2014/dec/22/new-york-trash-museumvideo> Accessed: 7/14/2016. Video interview, Aol News, <http://www.aol.com/article/2016/04/01/nyc-sanitation-worker-opens-museum-of-treasures-hes-found-in-th/21337011/> Accessed: 7/14/2016.

because they are considered to be sacred, as holders of saintly power, and are believed to permit access to the saint's capacity to do things, such as heal (Hall 2011, Geary 1986, Rufus 1999, Shortell 1997). Such relics are both mediums "through which a saint or holy figure such as the Virgin Mary could be reached and called on to intercede for the salvation of sinners," and "objects through which miracles could be effected" (Freeman 2011:14). This is why devotees are eager to have the chance to touch or kiss the reliquaries, and pilgrims travel long distances even just to see them (Rufus 1999). In practices of ancestor veneration, remains of the dead continue to have certain powers. The remains are seen in need of care by the living, and failure to provide enough care may bring bad fortune to the living (Sillar 1992, Hastorf 2003).

Historical artifacts, souvenirs, and mementos are also often referred to as relics, yet not all are considered to be sacred or even to have sentimental value. Sacredness here does not mean the same type of property attributed to religious relics, because sanctity can be established in secular realms, as well. As Schramm (2011:7) states, "declaring something sacred means to remove it from the everyday realm, giving it special attention and symbolic value and, at least ideally, deeming it undisputable." Earlier, Kenneth Burke (1945, 1950) defined "God-terms" as the ideas or values that are held undisputable and perceived as ultimate sources of motivation. For instance, terms such as freedom, duty, and money are "god-terms" according to Burke, because they are seen as supreme sources of motivation for certain acts. Moore and Myerhoff also defined sacred as a "wider category than religious," and emphasized unquestionability as the major characteristic of the sacred (1977:3). The sacred can be religious and non-religious, since "unquestionable tenets" exist both in secular political ideologies (e.g. secular, yet sacred state ceremonies and symbols), and religion (Moore and Myerhoff 1977). Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address is exemplary of secular political ideals—the unity of the nation, in this

case—to which were ascribed a sacred status. As Robert Bellah (2005[1967]) has pointed out, the rhetoric of Lincoln’s speech incorporated Christian archetypes such as sacrificial death and rebirth, yet the speech itself was not a religious text, and did not mention any particular religion. Bellah also emphasized this point in quoting Robert Lowell’s comment on the address, which argued that Lincoln gave the battlefield a symbolic significance that went beyond a sect or religion:

The Gettysburg Address is a symbolic and sacramental act. Its verbal quality is resonance combined with a logical, matter of fact, prosaic brevity... In his words, Lincoln symbolically died, just as the Union soldiers really died—and as he himself was soon really to die. *By his words, he gave the field of battle a symbolic significance that it had lacked. For us and our country, he left Jefferson’s ideals of freedom and equality joined to the Christian sacrificial act of death and rebirth. I believe this is the meaning that goes beyond sect or religion and beyond peace and war, and is now part of our lives as a challenge, obstacle and hope.* [Bellah 2005[1967]:48] [emphasis added]

True, religious symbolism does form a significant part of most 9/11 commemorations, such as crosses and stars formed from WTC steel; but my informants often used the word “sacred” in a non-religious sense to emphasize the WTC steel’s distinctiveness and its significance to remember 9/11. Still, it was not uncommon among my informants to approach the steel artifact as a supernatural object, especially when they associated it in their imagination with the deaths of thousands. In such circumstances, the difference between the steel artifacts and religious relics is not large, in terms of some of the practices and sentiments they evoke.

The use of the WTC steel pieces as public memorials altered the practices of commemorating mass violence in mainstream American culture by transforming the artifact into a relic, and making it the object of nationwide commemorations not for military dead, but for civilians. Being transformed on and after 9/11 into wreckage, and then into relics, the steel pieces gained a capacity of secular sacredness, just as former religious sites may be regarded as having

“sacred residue,” defined by Daan Beekers as “the quality of a religious site, or of specific things within that site, that—in the perception or feeling of beholders—persists after the site has lost its religious function” (2016:39). The difference is that the WTC artifacts initially did not have such a seemingly inherent quality. On the contrary, had 9/11 not happened, they would have simply remained as construction materials, without any special significance. In this regard, it is not surprising that recovery workers often referred to the debris as the “pile” without attributing further meaning to it, and the majority of the rubble was sold as scrap. Yet once specific pieces were recognized as artifacts, they also became relics, evoking practices and sentiments comparable to those of religious relics. That is, both secular and religious objects, once they are “hallowed” as Lincoln said of the Gettysburg battlefield, are attributed with having non-material components that give them a special status and a sacred aspect. While for religious relics the non-material component is the presence of a divine power, for the WTC artifacts it is the combination of the notions of death in the name of the nation, thus nationhood and patriotism. In this regard, I argue that the reconfiguration of the WTC steel as relics—secular but sacred artifacts instead of rubble, or construction material—gave them a commemorative value that enabled the agents of memory to make social, political, and cultural statements about 9/11’s perceived exceptionality. While the religious relics are mediums for divine power and derive their sentimental quality from that, the WTC artifacts are the mediums for the individual and collective stands towards 9/11, and derive their sentimental quality from the imagined (and sometimes real) ties to the event, and its consequences—especially to the death of civilians.

### **1.2.2 Commemoration and Memorialization**

By the term *memorialization*, I refer specifically to constructing memorials, and in this case to the use of the WTC artifacts to build them. I use the term *commemoration* as an inclusive term that refers to acts of remembering and honoring a person or an event from the past. It is a form of remembrance invoking certain principles that have social, cultural, and political significance. Commemorations are collective, performed events, and are often ritualized through distinctive practices and symbols. They may take various forms, including ceremonies, festivals, monuments, statues, and anniversaries. As I discuss, the commemoration practices accompanying the memorialization of the steel artifacts have included ceremonies, processions, and tributes that are often left at the memorial sites.

### **1.2.3 Commemoration and Social Memory**

Commemoration plays an important role in societies' conceiving of their past (Gillis 1996, Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 1991), and thereby in the construction and transmission of collective memory as well (Durkheim 1912[1965], Halbwachs 1992[1952]). Since Halbwachs's (1992 [1952]) conceptualization of collective memory as a socially constructed notion, many others have discussed and reaffirmed his assertion that remembering occurs through social frameworks. Memory studies grew significantly in the 1980s (Klein 2000), and the study of memory expanded in fields such as history (Assmann and Czaplika 1995, Nora 1989), anthropology (Bloch 1998, Connerton 1989), sociology (Olick 1999a, 1999b, Olick and Robbins 1998, Schwartz 1982, 1991a, 1991b, 1996, Schwartz et al. 1986), psychology and cognitive science (Conway 1990, 1995, Brockmeier 2002).

Scholars coined terms such as “social memory,” “public memory,” “cultural memory,” and “national memory” as they studied collective memory’s different social dimensions (Kansteiner 2002). While the 9/11 commemorations and memorials serve as frameworks through which individuals remember the events of that day, on a broader level the commemorative response to 9/11 was already part of social memory and the culture of commemoration in the U.S. Therefore, in my analysis I put the memorialization of the steel artifacts into the context of American cultures of commemoration and social memory. I use the term “social memory” to define the cultural practices and memories that are shared by a group, which also includes the events that have formed common points of references among the group members to interpret the present. For instance, previous events such as the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the battlefields and national memorials like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial were common references that my informants made while they were explaining the significance of the WTC artifacts and the 9/11 memorials for them. While the design of the memorials, narratives at the memorial sites, and the commemoration practices are shaped by social memory; the memorialization and commemoration of 9/11 are also social practices that shape social memory

### **1.3 METHODOLOGY**

My interest in the 9/11 commemorations dates to 2011, when I conducted preliminary fieldwork at the Flight 93 Memorial in Shanksville, PA as part of a course in ethnographic field methods. The research was composed of three short periods of observation, semi-structured interviews with volunteers and visitors, and content analysis of the written materials that were present at the site. In summer 2012, I conducted preliminary fieldwork at the 9/11 sites and at other memorial

places in the U.S.A., such as battlefields and memorial museums. The objective of the preliminary work was to identify sites that were potentially comparable to the 9/11 commemorations. For that purpose, I have been to major sites of historical and military importance, including the historical sites of the American Revolution in Concord and Lexington, MA, Gettysburg Battlefield, PA, the National Mall in Washington, D.C., and the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum. I observed public behavior at those sites, and identified the institutions and organizations running the memorial activities. I started collecting preliminary data about the steel artifacts and establishing contacts with my informants in 2013. The dissertation is mainly based on ten months of multi-sited fieldwork between December 2014 and September 2015 at local 9/11 memorials across the Northeastern United States, and the national 9/11 memorials in New York City, Shanksville, and the Pentagon.

As for the sites themselves: there are hundreds of local 9/11 memorials across the U.S., yet there is not a complete list of them anywhere. Therefore, I created a memorials list by combining information from different sources, mainly newspaper articles, the National 9/11 Memorial and Museum's memorial registry, and the website of the Voices of September 11th family organization. In addition to these, I was looking for memorials wherever I went, wondering how the next one would be different from the others I had seen. In the end, I visited more than 70 local memorials during my fieldwork, which helped me to recognize the variety among the memorials, and also notice the similarities and differences between them. In the dissertation, I refer to approximately 30 of these as examples to illustrate my arguments.

Several factors were influential in choosing which memorials to consider for this research. In some cases, for instance, a memorial's distinctive look was the main determinant. Location differences (i.e. church vs. fire station), to whom the memorial is dedicated,

information about past ceremonies, and getting access to key individuals who took part in the process of setting up and maintaining the site, were also influential in deciding which memorials to visit and include in this research. I focused on the Northeastern U.S.—specifically on Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania—due to the high number of memorials in these states, which is a result of their close connection to the 9/11 attacks, and also because of their logistical convenience. Though the majority of the memorials I mention are located in those states, there are also cases from other states, specifically from Indiana, Ohio, and Georgia, that either got substantial attention in the media due to their elaborateness and the scale of commemorations there, or got my attention randomly as I was looking for memorials wherever I went. I made arrangements to visit these memorials and interview their establishers, as special cases outside of the Northeast. I visited those memorials outside the Northeast once, but have been to the other memorials 1-4 times for various purposes such as meeting with the informants, observing the sites on different dates, and taking their pictures.

As Horst (2009:122) has stated, “the field is not a geographical place waiting to be entered but a conceptual space whose boundaries are constantly negotiated and constructed.” In this regard, I agree with Cook, Laidlaw, and Mair (2009:60) that the ethnographer’s field is different from the spaces and places it relates to. “The important thing is the range of theoretically relevant points of comparison that are built into the design of the field,” no matter whether these points are within a single site or multiple (Cook et al. 2009:69). The definition of the field as a conceptual space is informative especially in multi-sited researches like this dissertation.

Marcus (1995) was among the first to discuss the methodological shift from traditional single-sited ethnography to multi-sited ethnography, which reconceptualized the object of study.

In contrast to the local fixation of single-sited research, multi-sited research follows a social and cultural phenomenon across space (Marcus 1995, Falzon 2016), and defines its object of study through different modes or techniques that allow tracing a cultural phenomenon across different settings. In this regard, Marcus argued that multi-sited research could be conceptualized as following a people, a thing (Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986), a metaphor, a plot, story, or allegory, a life or biography, and a conflict. This dissertation is a multi-sited research project developed around a particular type of object—the WTC steel remnants—and analyzing the social and cultural factors involved in their memorialization.

Hannerz (2003) points to the variety of contemporary research activities that were not part of traditional fieldwork in the past. Besides face-to-face interactions and observations, fieldwork today also includes “reading the field’s own newspapers and books, using the telephone, keeping an eye on the fax, exchanging email with informants, checking out various web sites and perhaps watching video recordings of events one could not be present” (Hannerz 2003:35). Similar to Hannerz’s description, my fieldwork included a variety of research methods and activities: semi-structured interviews with informants, observation of public behavior at the memorial sites, documentation and categorization of the memorials, and participant observation through taking part in anniversary ceremonies and volunteering at the National September 11 Memorial and Museum for three months. Local newspapers and memorial websites (e.g. the Facebook pages moderated by fire companies) were rich sources of information, and provided ways to reach informants and to collect preliminary information.

Visual and audio materials such as photographs and video recordings, brought by my informants, stimulated conversation and helped to cover details. Informants often provided me with documents, such as sketches of the memorial design, exchanges with the PANYNJ, and

invitations to past events, and video recordings of past ceremonies. Those materials were useful especially for understanding events such as picking up the steel piece from New York, fundraising, construction, and dedication. I also carried with me the pictures of other WTC steel memorials to use to start or facilitate conversation with the informants.

I photographed and categorized each memorial based on the following criteria: architectural features (e.g. size and form of the steel artifact, memorial design), symbolism, location, commemorative text (narrative), year of dedication, and nearby structures. These factors were important for comparing and contrasting the memorials, and to see if there are certain patterns and tendencies in representation, design, and narrative. Eventually, these comparisons allowed me to see that the memorials emphasize certain themes, such as renewal and sacrifice.

Local memorials are usually located at fire stations and public safety buildings due to the high number of first responder deaths on 9/11. The death of 343 of their fellows created a special connection between firefighters and the 9/11 commemorations. For these reasons, the majority of my informants were firefighters; and since firefighting is still a male-dominated profession with a white majority, my informants were mostly white males with Christian heritage. Besides fire stations and public safety building, the search for the WTC artifacts also took me to police stations, town halls, public park managements, churches, and museums, so that in addition to firefighters, my informants were also individuals such as town officials, Emergency Medical Services personnel (EMS), architects, artists, curators, clergy people, and self-motivated individuals who were voluntarily involved in commemorations. Among my first informants were a firefighters motorcycle club and a rescue team based in Massachusetts, and therefore my

information network in Massachusetts grew in part through chain referrals (the “snowball” technique).

Interviews with the informants focused on the following issues:

- (1) Motivation for getting a piece of WTC steel and building 9/11 memorials; thoughts and memories related to the selection and acquisition of the steel; meaning and significance of the steel artifact.
- (2) Direct and indirect personal connections to 9/11, and whether these played any role in the memorialization process. Those connections were either through first-hand experience (e.g. being a family member, a rescue worker) or as members of imagined local communities (e.g. death of a town resident, or watching the event on TV).
- (3) Thoughts, concerns, and challenges related to the memorial building process. Memorial design, selection of the memorial site, memorial committee, and fund-raising activities are the major steps towards completion of a memorial project, and provide information about the treatment of the steel artifacts.
- (4) Commemoration activities held at the memorial site, and reactions to the steel artifact; these include the ceremonies accompanied the steel pieces, memorial dedication, and ceremonies held for the 9/11 anniversaries, along with thoughts and memories regarding treatment of the steel artifact (e.g. touching the steel).

Interviews with architects, curators, and artists were slightly different from the interviews described above, because they focused on the representation of artifacts, and the issues that the informants considered while working with them. Overall, I conducted interviews with 62

informants. In addition to one in-person interview, some circumstances like document exchange and anniversaries required follow-up with e-mails, and a second meeting.

### **1.3.1 Note on Place and Informant Names**

In contrast to studies in which it is usually difficult to identify the field sites and informants, the sites and many of the informants whose comments I discuss in this dissertation are highly recognizable because of their public presence in the mass media and social media, and also because of their connections to professional institutions such as local fire departments and museums. In these circumstances, I decided to use the memorials and organizations' original names, enable others to visit the memorial sites. Even though the publicity of the memorials and local organizations are likely to reveal the informants' identity, I have still used pseudonyms for the majority of the informants. I revealed the real names only for those who are already identifiable because of their professional affiliations with certain artworks and organizations such as the PANYNJ. In these cases, I used the informants' full names and titles.

### **1.3.2 Reception of an Anthropologist from Turkey: “You are one of us now”**

The attacks of September 11th gave rise to Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiments in the West, particularly in the U.S. (Cainkar 2002, 2009, Kaplan 2006, Kazi 2014). During my fieldwork period the massacres of ISIS were on the news almost everyday, strengthening Islam's association with violence in people's minds. I knew that being an anthropologist from Turkey—a nominally secular state with a Muslim majority—could raise certain challenges in the field, and I was prepared for potential drawback from people. However, my fieldwork experience turned out

to be the opposite of my initial concerns. My interest in the 9/11 memorials as a Turkish person got my informants' attention, and most of the time stimulated conversations.

As a woman of no obvious religious heritage doing her Ph.D. in the United States under the supervision of an American professor, I did not fit into the stereotypical image of the cultural Other, and especially not of the Muslim Other. In this regard, I am aware that my gender, secular outlook, and educational background were influential in establishing rapport. I encouraged my informants to ask me questions if they had any, and I was open to them when they did, even if the questions were about my personal life (e.g. Am I married to an American? Will I go back to Turkey? How did I learn to speak English?), or about Turkey, the U.S., and politics. Mostly, they were interested in knowing how, as a non-American, I became involved in a project about 9/11. My memories of 9/11 and how people in Turkey responded to 9/11 were also among the subjects they wondered about. It is important to note that religion did not become the subject of conversation directly. One of my informants asked whether I am Muslim, and that was after an interview in which we were talking about Turkey and the U.S. in general. He was wondering how people have treated me in the U.S., knowing that I am Turkish. He was glad after hearing that I had not have any problems, yet he still told me to be prepared for negative reactions as I travel across the country.

I was thankful to my informants for their time and contributions, but they were also pleased to see me doing this research on the 9/11 memorials. Just as I was interested in them, they were interested in me as a person from another country doing research on a subject that is important for them. During the fourteenth anniversary commemorations at a local memorial site, my informant introduced me to the reporters from the local channel who were there to record the ceremony. After my informant introduced me to them, they immediately wanted to have an

interview, and the next second I was in front of the memorial talking about my research and myself. On the same day, in his speech to the audience at another town's 9/11 ceremony my informant proudly told the audience about my research subject, and added that he thinks I am at the best place (referring to their memorial) to find the answers I am looking for.

Sometimes my interest in the 9/11 commemorations was interpreted as a sign of 9/11's impact on me. After I touched a piece of the WTC steel one day, my informant asked me what I felt. For me the steel artifacts were pieces of a historical building, and they were special because of the meaning they gained in the eyes of many. In other words, I did not have an emotional attachment to these artifacts in the same way that my informants did; I see them as historical artifacts. Therefore, I explained to my informant how I feel different about this as an historical artifact. Their significance for me is changing as I learn and think more about the experiences of people on 9/11, I told him. "You are one of us now," he said. "You are! Because it has evoked a response in you to take on your part."

### **1.3.3 Note on North American Anthropology and Fieldwork in the United States**

Historically, anthropology had originally been practiced as the study of "other," "non-Western" and "exotic" cultures. As a consequence of colonialism in the New World, indigenous cultures became the earliest subject of American anthropology (Hallowell 1976). It was not until the mid-20th century that some anthropologists turned their attention to the study of American culture. Though anthropologists had written about American culture since the 1920s (Boas 1928, Lynd and Lynd 1929), major growth in anthropology "at home"—the study of American culture by American anthropologists—took place in the 1940s and 1950s (Arensberg 1955, Du Bois 1955,

Mead 1943, Kluckhohn 1949, Warner 1941). In 1955, *American Anthropologist* published a special issue that focused solely on American culture.

Though interest in the anthropology of American culture and the United States grew, anthropology “at home” stayed as a problematic field of study, for several reasons. Ortner (2006:21) stated “anthropological studies of the United States have had a chronic tendency to ‘ethnicize’ the groups under study, to treat them as isolated and exotic tribes,” (see also Ortner 1991). Di Leonardo (1998) argued that the anthropological studies of American culture and society often created exotics at home, and complained about anthropology’s constant look for the “exotic” and its lack of attention to problems of power. She argued (1998:8) that anthropology in the U.S. created domestic exotics who were generally religious, sexual, racial, or occupational minorities; the stigmatized groups. According to her, these domestic exotics were used to demonstrate what is “truly” American. Until the 1990s, Maskovsky (2009) noted, a majority of anthropology programs did not recognize the United States as a legitimate field site, with the exception of Native American studies. Consequently, funding for fieldwork in North America was limited, and American anthropologists were discouraged from doing research in the United States, for fear of not being taken seriously (Maskovsky 2009).

According to some anthropologists, the situation changed after the 1990s, considering the increase in the variety of topics explored in the United States such as poverty, migration, racialization, civil rights and activism, environmentalism, war and militarization. However, doing fieldwork in the United States is still not a common practice among anthropologists, and fieldwork in the U.S. is not encouraged as much as fieldwork outside the U.S. (Goode 2006, Marcus 2005).

While the challenges of doing anthropology “at home” got the attention of scholars, the study of mainstream American culture and fieldwork in the United States by non-American anthropologists does not seem to have gotten an equal amount of attention. The small number of non-American anthropologists doing research in the U.S. is also part of the problem.<sup>2</sup> Even some of my graduate school colleagues were not sure whether they should ask me how my fieldwork went when they returned from their own field sites outside the U.S. Of course, as an anthropologist from Turkey, I was actually already in the field—the U.S.—when my scholarly interest in the WTC artifacts began to take shape. I had been following debates about the 9/11 memorials since my first visit to the Flight 93 National Memorial in 2011, and with increased interest between 2012-2013. In light of these issues, I hope this dissertation contributes to the study of American culture and the United States by more anthropologists from different cultural backgrounds.

## **1.4 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS**

Regardless of whether they celebrate glory or mark a tragedy, commemorations are often discussed as political tools to mobilize groups and strengthen group identity, such as in nation-building (Anderson 2006[1983]). Chapter 2 starts with a summary of main approaches to social memory, and then discusses memory and commemoration in the U.S. with a focus on the major historical events that have become the subject of national commemorations. The purpose is to

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<sup>2</sup> Ruben G. Oliven (1998), Brazilian anthropologist, studied money in the U.S. In his book *Reversed Gaze: An African Ethnography of American Anthropology* (2010), Kenyan anthropologist Mwenda Ntarangwi analyzed the “culture” of American anthropology. Oliven and Ntarangwi’s works are important and exceptional with their explicit motivation to study American culture as non-Americans.

depict the traditional trajectory that preceded the 9/11 commemorations in order to point out continuities and novelties in the culture of commemoration. With their focus on civilian deaths, 9/11 commemorations differed from the traditional trajectory that was largely focused on the military dead. Yet, masculine imagery, and the rhetoric of heroism and sacrifice with religious connotations still formed an important part of both. The statements and representations that took place in the media and public space during the immediate aftermath of the attacks were influential in shaping how 9/11 would be remembered. Therefore, in this chapter I also describe the immediate commemorative responses and the rise of patriotic sentiments in the aftermath of the attacks. Finally, I discuss the commemoration of 9/11 at the national memorials that were built on the event sites. I elaborate on the criticisms that the national memorials in Shanksville and New York City received regarding their designs and contents in order to point out the concerns involved in the commemoration and representation of the events.

Chapter 3 describes the acquisition of the steel artifacts from the PANYNJ and the building process of the local memorials. Understanding these processes and their actors is crucial in order to realize the circumstances in which the memorials were established, because there is not a well-known case of such a systematic distribution of artifacts after a national tragedy or disaster for commemoration purposes. Comparing to the national memorials I introduce in Chapter 2, this chapter highlights the efforts my informants put to get their own steel pieces and build their local memorials. Each memorial is a distinct project, and therefore priorities and concerns changed from one site to another. Yet there were common tendencies, such as creating an inclusive memorial that was not focused on first responders only, or willingness to represent the Twin Towers in memorial designs. No damaged artifacts were kept outside at the national memorials, though permanent traces like the towers' footprints in New York City and the

damaged trees at the crash site in Shanksville are visible. On the contrary, the steel artifacts are mostly outside as public memorials, and this chapter shows that making the artifacts accessible for people to touch was generally one of the major considerations in establishing memorials.

Chapter 4 portrays the steel artifacts as sacred relics in a non-religious sense, and elaborates on the enchanted quality attributed to them. I argue that the steel artifacts are more than historical artifacts in the eyes of those who memorialized them, because my informants often referred to the sentimental reactions that the artifacts evoke on the viewer. The chapter begins with the historical overview of American relics—items of personal interest that had been collected in the U.S. since the eighteenth century because of their association with a historical event or person. The steel artifacts are also association items, yet not all association items have the power to motivate groups to see and touch them, as happened in the memorialization of the 9/11 steel artifacts. I discuss this power with reference to the anthropological literature and to art history, and then illustrate the turning points in the “biography” (Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986) of the WTC steel to show that the powers attributed to the artifacts are the products of particular social and cultural contexts. I describe how the steel artifacts are seen as enchanted objects based on my informants’ accounts, and finish the section with my observations from New York City to show that the perception of the artifacts as objects with metaphorical power is stronger at the distant sites than around the WTC site itself.

Chapter 5 brings together three interrelated subjects: materiality of the artifacts, creation of a memoryscape, and commemorative performances. The material qualities of the steel artifacts enabled certain associations, such as durability, strength, and ability to demonstrate destruction, which also made physical contact and interactive commemoration practices possible. I refer to semiotic approaches (Keane 2003, Manning 2008, Manning and Meneley 2008) to

discuss how the material qualities of the artifacts served to express their attributed meanings, and took part in the artifacts' recognition as relics of destruction and tragedy. Next, I argue that the local memorials are building blocks of a larger memoryscape, which is formed by incorporating the same type of artifact at multiple sites. In the final section on performance, I discuss the enactment of the artifacts' efficacy and significance in commemoration ceremonies. I approach these ceremonies as performance (Goffman 1959) to point out their expressiveness and theatricality. The mnemonic appeal of monuments and memorials are recognized as long as they stay as the focus of commemorative action (Coombes 2003). Otherwise, the durability of monuments and memorials does not guarantee them continuity in case of a change in the public sentiment (Levinson 1998), reminding the faith of Ramesses II's legacy as told by Percy Bysshe Shelley in his poem *Ozymandias*. The WTC artifacts are animated through commemorative performances, and these performances are instrumental in expressing the artifacts sacred status as relics of 9/11. Also, this section shows how the national and religious symbols that I introduce in Chapter 2 have been incorporated in the ceremonies.

Chapter 6 examines narratives at the local memorials. I discuss the emphasis on certain themes such as heroism, rebirth, and sacrifice in commemorative texts, because they aim to put the memorials into a context, and offer a framework about how 9/11 should be remembered. I argue that the local memorials reproduce the overarching narrative of 9/11 that focuses on American victimization and heroism, which was formulated right after the attacks through various channels including media and politicians. In order to elaborate on the issue of representation at the local memorials, I first discuss some notable examples where museum curators had to find a balance between "historical voice" (focuses on interpretation and analysis) and "commemorative voice" (focuses on losses and sufferings) in the representation of an

historical event (Linenthal 1995). Then, I discuss the cultural and political uses of the terms “victim” and “hero,” since the 9/11 dead are often referred to as heroes, even though the majority of them were targets without a choice.

Finally, Chapter 7 summarizes my main arguments from each chapter, and points out the study’s broader significance. Through several levels of analysis I reached to the conclusion that the steel artifacts are the mediums for the individual and collective standpoints towards 9/11, and derive their sentimental quality from the imagined ties to the event. On the one hand, those analyses included the discussion of 9/11’s general impact and consequences in the context of national commemorations, specifically the commemoration of trauma and violence. On the other hand, the study was primarily based on my informants’ viewpoints about the significance of the steel artifacts and the local memorials. Though this study focused on the use of WTC steel for 9/11 commemorations, its theoretical orientation and methodology can be expanded to the study of other commemoration practices that aim to create a material presence for the victims of violence and trauma.

## **2.0 MEMORY AND COMMEMORATION IN THE UNITED STATES**

The Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial on the National Mall in Washington D.C. was unveiled in 2011. The memorial depicts King with his arms crossed, emerging from a huge piece of granite. Contrasting views emerged regarding how King should be remembered, and provoked a discussion on how the memorial design should depict King (Bruyneel 2014). The main question was whether to portray him as a “haloed, consensual figure”, or as a confrontational radical figure (Bruyneel 2014). These concepts were irreconcilable. The quotations selected for the memorial site were also criticized by some as inadequate and misleading (Bruyneel 2014, Dellinger 2013).

The opposing views and criticisms regarding the Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial exemplify some of the challenges in representing and remembering the past. How the past should be commemorated has always been contested, since memory and commemoration have influence on views of how the present should be lived and experienced. Memory studies often dealt with the dynamics of the relation between group identity, and the events remembered by individuals as group members (Bodnar 1993, Saito 2006, Schwartz 1991a, 1991b, Weiss 1997). Scholars have viewed social memory as an effective mechanism for the creation and continuity of group unity and identity (Connerton 1989, Durkheim 1965[1912], Halbwachs 1992), and in this regard many have analyzed the relationship between the politics of memory and nation-building (Ben-Yehuda 1996, Gillis 1996, Khalili 2007, Spillman 1997, 1998). In

particular, the construction of collective memories through state institutions and national ceremonies, and the role of such officialized memory constructs in transmitting the state ideology to society hold a large space in social memory studies (Bodnar 1993, Damsholt 2009, Hamilakis 2007, Mosse 1979, Rowlands 1993, Spillman 1997, 1998, Warburg 2009). Studies of social memory and commemoration remain crucial because establishing visions of “the past” is still a major tool for mobilizing groups, creating group solidarity, and making sense of the present (Armstrong and Crag 2006, Bold et al. 2002, Gongaware 2003, Griffin 2003, Harris 2006, Power 2009).

How should one approach social memory and commemoration in the U.S.A.? As interest in memory studies increased since the 1980s, a focus on memorials also increased tremendously. Memorials to wars, soldiers, U.S. presidents, victims of violence, executed witches, and dead astronauts are some of the memorial types that Doss (2010) pointed out as having emerged after 1990. Like every nation, the U.S. has its own dilemmas, controversies, and challenges in representing and commemorating the past. One approach to doing so is to look at celebrated events of U.S. history. This approach often results in a discussion focused on key historical events and figures, such as military conflicts, political leaders, and social struggles. According to Bodnar, as the American Revolution marked the beginning of a new state, the struggle “not only represented the origins of the nation-state but produced a number of leaders, documents, and dates that served as important subjects for commemoration,” such as George Washington and the Declaration of the Independence (1993:22). The Civil War was another turning point in the U.S. history that had long lasting effects, not only in terms of political gains such as the emancipation of slavery, but also in terms of the cultural practices that changed, such as the emergence of new burial and commemoration practices. It introduced new themes of death, sacrifice, and rebirth,

and Lincoln in his Gettysburg address embedded those themes emphasizing that the dead “gave the last full of devotion” so that the nation can live (Bellah 2005[1967], Wills 1992). The first national cemeteries established following the Civil War due to the high numbers of military dead, though they were for the dead Union soldiers only, not the Confederates (Faust 2008). Embalming the dead became a widespread practice for the first time during the Civil War to facilitate the transportation of the soldiers’ bodies to home before decompose, and also to give comfort to the families by giving them a chance to identify the dead, and see them in a lifelike state (Faust 2008). The war did not only affect soldiers, but ordinary people also witnessed to the war to a large extent (Faust 2008, Sternhell 2012). Memorial Day, originally invented as Decoration Day, became to be observed after the Civil War to remember the military dead, event though when and how they should be commemorated varied in the North and South (Faust 2008).

However, looking at such central events does not tell us the whole story for two reasons. First, their celebration does not guarantee the continuity of their intended meaning (Gobel and Rossell 2013, Levinson 1998). Contrasting views may emerge on whether and how an event should be memorialized, and interpretations of the past may change over time according to political and social circumstances (Doss 2011, Kammen 1991, Levinson 1998, Linenthal 1993, Savage 2011, Schwartz 1982, 1991, 1996, 2000, Schwartz and Schuman 2005, Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 1991, Zelinsky 1988). For instance, in his analysis of the National Mall’s transformation as a memorial landscape, Savage pointed out that though it was “conceived in 1901 a majestic representation of national reunion and harmony, the Mall turned into a highly charged space of collective introspection, political strife, and yearning for change,” (2011:20). Linenthal (1993) discussed the struggle over interpretation and meaning at some of the United

States' most famous battlefields: Lexington Green and Concord's North Bridge, the Alamo, Gettysburg, the Little Bighorn, and Pearl Harbor. In his analysis, Linenthal showed that on the one hand the sites are the nation's "sacred grounds" that had gone through the process of veneration, and on the other hand they are also spaces where Americans compete over their meaning and significance. The commemoration of America's discovery is another contested subject, as Doss (2011) has discussed, being associated today with the "invasion" of America and the oppression of Native Americans, though earlier it was celebrated with great popular support.

Second, as the commemoration of military defeats like the attack on Pearl Harbor also shows, societies not only commemorate victories but also tragedies and disasters. Studies of collective memory in the past often emphasized the way a glorified past is integrated to society's present concerns and values, and followed the logic of Durkheim's conception of commemorative act as the central element of group unity (Halbwachs 1992[1952], Lowenthal 1985, Mayo 1988). The underlying assumption of such studies was that a heroic and glorified past served to keep societies together and facilitated the transmission of values and traditions (Ducharme and Fine 1995, Halbwachs 1992[1952]). It is not without reason that these studies focused on the commemoration of celebrated events. Before the twentieth century, it was not common for public monuments to commemorate tragedies and victims.

If victimization is a state of powerlessness, "when action is of no avail," monuments celebrated its very opposite. They reaffirmed, over and again, the beneficial presence of human (more properly, male) agency in society. They told the stories of men who had acted decisively upon their world, by transforming it for better or saving it from peril. (...) [f]ires, mine collapses, hurricanes, yellow fever epidemics, shipwrecks, or other traumas, no matter how devastating, did not merit commemoration in monumental form. [Savage 2006:103]

Victims and tragedies gained recognition beginning in the twentieth century, especially following World War II. Focusing on losses and atrocities, and commemoration of tragedies and disasters, was a way for coping with the consequences of the war and strengthening group unity, though “the rhetoric of military sacrifice” was and is still heavily adapted in commemorative narratives and representation of such events (Savage 2006:110).

Though the commemoration of tragedies and traumas is relatively recent, they became important as much as the more positively-celebrated events, but are also selective processes, and not without controversies. While some events leave long-lasting effects, others drop from attention and become forgotten. The September 11th attacks are among the most commemorated events in U.S. history, both considering their worldwide impact and the commemorative response they triggered afterwards, and understanding this response requires seeing representations of them in relation to the commemoration of trauma in the U.S.A.

## **2.1      COMMEMORATING TRAUMA**

Atrocities, tragedies, and violence cause fear and insecurity at individual and collective levels, and some of them result in traumatic consequences. According to Jeffrey Alexander, “cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways,” (2004:1). Experiencing trauma plays an influential role in the determinacy of group consciousness, and establishes strong ties between the group’s collective memory and its construction of identity (Alexander et al. 2004, LaCapra 2001, Saito 2006, Stein 1998, Todorov 2003). Also, a moral

dimension is attributed to the commemoration of trauma, so that recalling the events help the members of a group praise their social and cultural values by differentiating themselves from the perpetrators (Bartov 1988, Schivelbusch 2003; see also Chapter 6). This is also the reason for why atrocities caused by human agents are commemorated more widely than natural disasters.

Commemoration of trauma is a growing subfield in memory and commemoration studies due to increasing recognition of traumatic and violent events. One of the factors influential in this wider recognition of such victimizing events is the ongoing struggle over determining what becomes mainstream history. Commemorating their sufferings and painful events, oppressed groups make their voices heard, and by demanding recognition of their version of the past they challenge what has until then been mainstream history. Native American groups and organizations protested the centennial commemoration of the Little Bighorn battle and the general heroic representation of George Armstrong Custer in order to draw attention to the Native Americans' oppression. As Linenthal argued, "In the 1970s Custer became symbolic of white racism and genocidal expansionism. The centennial commemoration at the Little Bighorn became a singular opportunity for Native Americans to intentionally dramatize their dissatisfaction with the current situation" (1993:141).

Commemoration of trauma and violence gains significance also when societies are compelled to "come to terms" with their "difficult past." Such difficult pasts are "moral traumas" that "not only result in loss or failure but also evoke disagreement and inspire censure" (Wagner-Pacifi and Schwartz 1991:384). As Nytagodien and Neal argue:

Attempts to cope with unwanted memories have been central to debates over the relevance of the Nazi Holocaust for German national identity, to concerns for the implications of the apartheid system for a new national identity in South Africa, and to the recurrent debates among Americans over the proper way to give recognition to the atrocities associated with the institution of slavery and the maltreatment of Native Americans. [2004:375]

When the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum planned in 1997 to open an exhibit about the end of World War II and the United States' dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan, some groups and individuals objected to the exhibit, arguing that it called into question the decision to drop the bombs (Linenthal 1995, see also Chapter 6). Another example can be found in the memorialization of the Vietnam War. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington D.C. is formed of black granite walls that the names of the dead soldiers are inscribed upon. Because of its color and lack of any heroic symbols, some considered the memorial degrading and shameful (Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 1991). Since such events often raise moral concerns, it is not uncommon for societies to ignore and not speak about them. For instance, in his analysis of the sites of violence and tragedy in the U.S., Foote (2003) argued while some events and sites of violence are ignored and even erased from the landscape (e.g. sites of mass murder), some events are recognized to the extent that the sites associated with them go through a process of sanctification (e.g. battlefields).

Until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, memorialization was a process spread over time, and it usually took decades for an event to be memorialized (Linenthal 2003). A number of scholars (Linenthal 2003, Sturken 2002b, Simpson 2006) pointed out that memorialization process now begin shortly after events of violence such as terror attacks, mass shootings, assassinations, and also natural disasters. The process usually begins with spontaneous memorials established right after the event at the event site (Doss 2002, 2006, Margry and Sanchez-Carretero 2011, Santino 2006), and followed by proposals for permanent memorials. Proposals for official memorials were considered immediately after the Oklahoma City bombing (Linenthal 2003), and 9/11.

Memorial museums emerged as a “new commemorative form” that is “dedicated to a historic event commemorating mass suffering of some kind,” (Williams 2007:8). Different from more general history museums, memorial museums focus on victims and their suffering, and aim to bear witness. In this regard, they also stand as the official voice of the commemorated event. However, conflicting views may arise about how the events should be represented and how the losses should be commemorated, especially because through commemoration these atrocities are attributed moral and social importance.

## **2.2 REMEMBERING 9/11: IMMEDIATE RESPONSES**

On April 19, 1995 a bomb exploded outside the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. The bombing was planned and set off by Timothy McVeigh, an American citizen and former veteran, and killed 168 people including children. Until 9/11, the Oklahoma City Bombing was the deadliest terrorist attack that took place in the U.S. Edward Linenthal (2003:2) described the social impact of the bombing as follows:

Oklahoma City could claim the dubious distinction of being “first and worst” in the hierarchy of American terrorist attacks. It took place in what was envisioned as America’s “heartland,” shattering the assumption that Middle America was immune to acts of mass terrorism as well the assumption that the nation still had “zones of safety,” such as day care centers. It murdered not only government employees and other adults but also babies and young children, many of them in the America’s Kids Day Care Center, located in the Murrah Building.

The Oklahoma City Bombing and 9/11 are similar to each other in many ways. They were both terrorist attacks that targeted civilians including children. The attack on the federal building in Oklahoma was unexpected. The WTC had been targeted once in 1993; therefore

further attacks were a possibility, yet the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks took place in the most unimagined way. Therefore, both events were shocking, and they caused fear, shock, and tears in the fabric of society. A photograph of a firefighter holding the body of a child in his arms became the icon of the Oklahoma City Bombing, and for 9/11 the iconic image was the picture of three firefighters raising the American flag on rubble. Both events were immediately memorialized on the footprints of the former buildings, and accompanied by memorial museums. Each memorial has a Survivor Tree, as a symbol of resilience and hope. Yet, while the attacks of 9/11 are commemorated and memorialized nationwide, the Oklahoma City Bombing stayed as an event of local importance. The rubble of the Murrah Federal building was not distributed across the country to establish local memorials, though there were proposals suggested re-using the rubble for commemoration purposes. For instance, some suggested collecting soil from the states, and covering the rubble with that soil, while some others proposed to place the rubble in strategic locations in the city (Linenthal 2003). Pieces of granite were used in several memorials in Oklahoma, according to Linenthal, but they never became part of a nation-wide memorialization and commemoration like the pieces of WTC steel did.

Why did the Oklahoma City Bombing not become the object of nationwide commemorations, like 9/11 did? The magnitude and foreign source of the 9/11 attacks, and their consequences, are of course the major reasons for why 9/11 became a national tragedy. The person who bombed the Murrah Building was an American and also former veteran. In this regard, the magnitude of the attacks, the affiliation of the perpetrators, and the number and identity of the dead are all influential in why the events are memorialized and commemorated at different scales. In addition, there are also social and cultural elements involved. One of the major questions of trauma theory is why all disasters and acts of mass violence are not coded and

experienced as a trauma. In contrast to the commonsense understanding of trauma as a natural phenomenon, Alexander et al. (2004: 10) argued that trauma is created by social groups:

For traumas to emerge at the level of the collectivity, social crises must become cultural crises. Events are one thing, representations of these events quite another. Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity. Collective actors "decide" to represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they came from, and where they want to go.

In the same volume, Neil Smelser described cultural trauma as "a complex process of selective remembering and unremembering, social interaction and influence, symbolic contestation, and successful assertions of power," (2004:279). These assertions by Alexander and Smelser are helpful for understanding why not all acts of mass violence become traumas and have long lasting effects, even if they have massive destructive consequences. For instance, the cases that Arthur G. Neal (1998) discussed in *Natural Trauma and Collective Memory: Major Events in the American Century* included the Great Depression, the attack on Pearl Harbor, World War II, the assassinations of President Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., the Vietnam War, and the Watergate Scandal as the national traumas of the 20<sup>th</sup> century United States. The social, political, and cultural impact of those events cannot be underestimated; however, it is not possible to argue that they all had the same impact on society. As Neal stated, while events like the Civil War introduced permanent changes, others, such as the assassination of John F. Kennedy, evoked intense emotional response but did not have much impact on national and public policies.

September 11<sup>th</sup> was a cultural trauma, an event that left indelible marks on society. Millions watched as the events were unfolding, and the images of death and destruction circulated through mass media simultaneously. It evoked fear and anxiety both during and in the

immediate aftermath of the events, which also triggered negative sentiments towards particular groups in American society, especially to Muslims. National laws, regulations, and policies concerning security changed tremendously.

It is not possible to underestimate the event's destructiveness, and the constructionist approach to trauma does not deny the event's violence and brutality, but rather points out the significance of social, cultural, and political context. Smelser explained this point as follows:

The events occurred in the context of American society and American culture at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and the shape of the national reaction was intimately conditioned by that context. The reactions to similar events in other national contexts would have unfolded differently. [2004:270]

In other words, “the political ideological context within which traumatic events occur shapes their impact” (Kaplan 2005:1). This is why it is important to approach the 9/11 commemorations within the context of the culture of commemoration, and also considering the event's impact and consequences, such as the wars carried out in Iraq, and Afghanistan. In addition to the shock and destructiveness of the event, the rhetoric and representations in the media were also influential in how 9/11 should be remembered.

The attacks evoked commemorative responses immediately. Temporary memorials (Doss 2002, 2006, 2008, 2010), also known as “spontaneous shrines” (Grider 2001, Foote and Grider 2012, Santino 2006) and “grassroots memorials” (Margry and Sanchez-Carretero 2011), were established on the streets of New York City (Hirsch 2003, Kaplan 2005, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2003, Jacobs 2004).<sup>3</sup> Pictures of the missing, messages of solidarity and protest, slogans, prayers, religious icons, and miscellaneous symbolic objects such as candles, flowers, and teddy bears

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<sup>3</sup> For the cultural and symbolic analyses of those memorials see the works of Erika Doss, especially Doss 2002, 2006, 2008. For the analysis of temporary memorials as political instruments and social actions, see Margry and Sanchez-Carretero (2011) *Grassroots Memorials: The Politics of Memorializing Traumatic Death*.

were part of those memorials. The commemorations not only focused on the civilians, but also the first responders. The loss of over four hundred emergency workers (firefighters, police, and emergency medical services) on a single day happened for the first time in the U.S. history on 9/11. In the commemorations, the firefighters and the police were recognized as “heroes,” while the “victims” were the civilians.<sup>4</sup> Fire stations all across the city were turned into memorials as memorabilia brought by people accumulated in front of the fire stations (Hendra and McCourt 2001). American flags, flowers, pictures of the dead and missing firefighters, messages of support (e.g. “Thank You,” “God Bless You,” “God Bless America,” “Never Forget”), and prayers surrounded the fire stations, as they did at the other temporary memorials across the city. Even years after the event, the “vernacular cultural expressions” (Bodnar 1993:13) of 9/11, such as graffiti, memorabilia, and 9/11-themed decorations, were observable. Jonathan Hyman’s photographs document the 9/11 imagery and memorial display in public and personal spaces (Linenthal et al. 2013). His photographs covered a period of more than five years after the attacks, and thereby show the continuity of the event’s impact for some individuals. My subject, the local memorials that incorporate WTC steel, were established mostly on the tenth anniversary of the attacks, and as I write some were still in the process of completion although it has been fifteen years since the attacks. The continuity of the memorialization efforts shows the continuity of the event’s affect, as well.

The WTC site became known as “Ground Zero” in the media immediately after the attacks. “Ground Zero” was historically a term used to describe the destructiveness of nuclear bombings (Sturken 2004), and it was one of the many historical references used after 9/11 to

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<sup>4</sup> The concepts of “victim” and “hero” were often used interchangeably for the 9/11 dead, and often the dead came to be known as “victim-heroes.” I discuss the shift between these concepts in Chapter 6, as part of the discussion on commemorative narrative.

understand and represent the event's impact and significance as individuals and the media looked for analogies to describe and make sense of the attacks. David W. Blight explained this confusion as follows:

In the wake of 9/11, we searched desperately for analogies, for moments of recognition from our past. Was it a new Pearl Harbor? A Fort Sumter? Was it John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry in its surprise and violent shock? Where could we find markers in our historical memory to help this make sense? Was this 1861, 1914, 1941, 1968? Was this a new battle of Antietam in its scale of American deaths in one day? (Blight 2011:93).

September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks were mostly compared to the attack on Pearl Harbor (Connor 2012, May 2003, White 2004). September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 was called "a day of infamy" in the media, referring to Franklin D. Roosevelt's speech after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The date coded as a turning point, further supported by declarations such as "America lost innocence," "the world will never be the same again," and "the day changed our lives forever" implying that an indelible change occurred. Analogies were established with the other defining events in the American history, as well (Simpson 2006). Lincoln's Gettysburg Address was used in the memorial ceremonies to establish a similarity between the military dead and the battlefield, and civilian dead and the WTC site. Simko (2015) is among those who have pointed out the frequent use of references to the Gettysburg Address in the 9/11 commemorations by politicians, thus portraying the dead as patriotic sacrifices. In this regard, the sites of attacks were "hallowed ground" and the dead were sacrifices for the nation.

### **2.2.1 Rise of Patriotic Sentiment and War on Terrorism**

The initial shock of the attacks was quickly transformed into a display of patriotism in media and public space. On the one hand, such patriotism became a way of protesting the attacks and

forming solidarity, and was expressed through symbols, commemorative art, and statements about the attacks. The emotional sentiment in the face of the attacks was expressed through patriotic statements and symbols. Displaying the American flag was the most common expression of solidarity; Phillip M. Bratta (2009) noted that “flag purchases skyrocketed among retailers,” up to 18-25 times higher than the regular sales. Displaying the flag became a way of joining with others, and also a way of securing protection—especially for some Muslims—by showing grief and support in the face of the attacks. Other national symbols and icons were adapted to show grief, such as displays of the bald eagle crying, and images of the Statue of Liberty were used to emphasize the notions of freedom and liberty. It was in this context that the photograph of the firefighters raising the flag on the WTC debris became an iconic image of patriotism in the aftermath of the attacks. The photograph was published in a magazine the day after the attacks, and it has been reproduced many times since then in various mediums. Besides its print reproductions, the image has been reproduced in statues and artworks, as well. The image is frequently used on the 9/11 memorabilia. Madame Tussauds New York has the lifelike portraits of the firefighters on display, reenacting the moment of raising flag, and the exhibit named “Hope: Humanity & Heroism.” I saw the photograph on display in the fire stations, as well. Some 9/11 memorials are also conceptually based on this image of the firefighters raising flag. In addition, the image immediately evoked connotations with another iconic photograph, *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima*. Appealing to the similar cultural iconography (and masculinity), the photograph served to communicate the notions of heroism and bravery in the time of crisis after 9/11.

My informants often recalled the immediate aftermath of the attacks as a period of mutual assistance and support, in which everyone was united and trying to help. On the other hand, the

rise of patriotic sentiment combined with calls for war, and of hostility against Muslims in some circles (Cainkar 2009, Peek 2011). Jonathan Hyman's photograph collection includes various examples of commemorative art that show the presence of different attitudes in the commemoration of 9/11 (Linenthal et al. 2013). Some of the works he photographed are expressions of grief, while others had an aggressive tone calling out for revenge and justice. It is not surprising that in his introduction to Hyman's collection, Edward Linenthal (2013:9) stated that some publishers thought Hyman's photographs are "gritty and angry for a book of memorial photographs." For instance, some of the murals he photographed depict slogans such as "THIS MEANS WAR," "Day of Infamy," and "God forgives but we don't." One of the individuals he photographed had a tattoo that depicted bin Laden beheaded.

Even though Hyman's photograph is a collection of noteworthy examples, similar attitudes were found in mainstream discussions of 9/11, as well. Some scholars (Bratta 2003, Edkins 2003a, 2003b, Eisman 2003) have argued that the commemorative reaction following the attacks often mixed with aggression and an anonymous call for war, taking place "alongside a state-sponsored rhetoric of war and revenge" (Edkins 2003b:232). Practices of remembrance, especially those organized by the state, reclaimed the dead as belonging to the state, and helped the government and state to resume authority and defend its actions towards war (Edkins 2003b, 2003b). The victims' deaths were lauded with stories of sacrifice and heroism, the perpetrators were represented as evil, and this categorization of good versus evil formed the foundation of the war rhetoric launched by the Bush administration (Bratta 2009, Edkins 2003b, Sahar 2008, Smelser 2004). Trying to keep the public strong in the face of crises, mainstream media contributed to the promotion of revenge in the weeks followed the attacks (Eisman 2003). It was

not uncommon that mainstream T.V. channels and print media adapted George W. Bush's response to the attacks, as the following excerpt from Eisman (2003:57) shows:

From almost the beginning, both Tom Brokaw at NBC and Dan Rather at CBS were using loaded language in their reports, language that promoted retaliation as the appropriate response to the attacks. Brokaw stated at the beginning of his Nightly News cast at 6.30 pm on September 11 that 'terrorists [have] declare[d] war on the United States'. Dan Rather in his 6.30 newscast stated, 'The nation is stunned but standing, and vowing to come back, fight back'. Both also quoted from George W. Bush's response to the attacks, selecting phrases that further emphasised retaliation. Brokaw chose to quote, 'Freedom has been attacked by a faceless coward. Freedom will be defended', while Rather quoted Bush as saying that we 'will find and punish those responsible for these cowardly events'.

In this regard, April Eisman has argued that mainstream news media acted as a propaganda organ, using loaded language, and promoting war. While the calls for revenge were published and broadcasted, criticisms regarding U.S. policies found little place, and did not get support easily. Eisman (2003) pointed out two cases. When Bill Maher within a week after the attacks commented on the use of the word "coward" for the terrorists, the sponsors cancelled their advertising, and Maher's show was also canceled for a period. His comment was the following: "We have been the cowards, lobbing cruise missiles from 2,000 miles away. That's cowardly. Staying in the airplane when it hits the building? Say what you want about it...not cowardly." Second, she points out the rejection of a political cartoon that criticized the representation of 9/11 as "good vs. evil" by giving references to negative outcomes of the U.S. policies.

My research took place more than a decade after those initial sentiments towards the attacks and the declaration of war on terrorism. Patriotic expressions, such as flag displays, have never vanished, but some of my informants mentioned that the sense of unity that broke out after 9/11 had diminished. This is actually one of the reasons they stated as to why they became

involved in memorial making: they know people forget, and were trying to prevent this by memorializing 9/11. This is why they were especially concerned about children who were not even born on 9/11, and hoping that the memorials would help children learn about the events. Even though the memorials were established after a decade later, however, the 9/11 culture—commemorative narrative, images, and symbols that my informants and the memorials referred to—was formed primarily during the immediate responses to the attacks. The commemorative narrative at the memorial sites (Chapter 6) illustrates this point. In addition, patriotic expressions still dominate the commemoration ceremonies that take place at the memorial sites. On the other hand, the U.S. is still at war. My informants were aware of this, and this is why some of them wanted to mention the branches of military in their memorials, and commemorate the soldiers as well. Actually, one of my informants was in contact with a war memorial foundation to take their 9/11 memorial into the foundation's program, arguing that the 9/11 memorials were also war memorials because of the war on terrorism.

### **2.2.2 Flashbulb Memories and Imagining 9/11's Exceptionality**

Any analysis of 9/11 commemorations must consider the event's exceptional place in the public imagination, since the perceived exceptionality of the event is one of the reasons for wide scale commemorations. The impact of 9/11 on the U.S. and the world has been extensively discussed, and compared with other exceptional events in the U.S. history as mentioned above. However, September 11<sup>th</sup> is exceptional due the method of the attacks: commercial aircraft were turned into weapons. The use of civilian planes as weapons to attack targets in three locations created a nationwide—even worldwide—network of victims, survivors, and witnesses, because the dead were from 90 countries, and the passengers were from all across the U.S. Comparing 9/11 to the

Oklahoma City bombing, the international dimension, the real and symbolic importance of the targeted structures, and the number of the dead were among the factors that made 9/11 exceptional in the perception of my informants. For another comparison, more than two thousand people died in the Johnstown flood in 1889, and it was the single largest loss of civilian lives in the U.S. until 9/11, which is therefore exceptional with the number of civilians, first responders, and public safety officers who died on a single day. My purpose is to show how this notion of exceptionality is felt and experienced by my informants because it links to their motivation to acquire a steel artifact, and the artifacts' sacred status.

September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks have been described as “the most photographed disaster in history” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2003:12, see also Hirsch 2003). Millions watched the events on T.V. as they were happening, and the events were repeated in the media for weeks. Consequently, many people experienced “mediatized trauma” (Kaplan 2005:2). In addition, seeing the attacks, either on site or through media, created distinct personal memories in which people vividly remember the moment and circumstances they learned about the events. Psychologists distinguished this special type of autobiographical memory as “flashbulb memories” (Brown and Kulik 1977, Conway 1995, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2003), the vivid, elaborate memories of the circumstances in which people learned about a triggering public event, and in that aspect differing from memories of actually experiencing the event (Hirst and Phelps 2016). Since the majority of my informants learned about 9/11 attacks through media, they had such flashbulb memories of them, and that moment became a reference for them in explaining the event's significance.

The September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks were not the first public event that many of my informants remembered vividly. For instance, in order to explain its emotional impact, some compared it to

the assassination of John F. Kennedy. However, 9/11 was exceptional because they considered it as the main event of their lifetime. The personal shock and fear they experienced on 9/11 became a shared experience as members of “imagined communities” (Anderson 2006[1983]), which are in this particular case are nationhood and professional groups (e.g. first responders), and that became a motive for memorializing the steel artifacts. My informants brought up these emotional and imagined connections to the event in two ways.

First, my informants had the need to mention what they experienced on 9/11 and afterwards, even though their personal experiences of the events was not the focus of my research. Referring to their experiences, they explained how that day was different from all other events that happened before. They demonstrated the event’s significance for them by telling where they were and what they were doing when they learned about the attacks. More than the content of their memories, I am interested in their use of these memories to explain the importance of 9/11 for them. The following quote from my informant is an example of how he explained the significance of 9/11 for him through the flashbulb memories he had:

I don’t think that I ever, in my slightest imagination thought that it could ever happen here in the United States. Could have happened in any part of the world, but not in the United States. And I think that was a reality-call for us to think... (...) I was around when JFK was assassinated. I was a young boy, and that was a huge event. I remember coming home, and my mom and dad were crying, and I am thinking I came from school, why are they crying? That was, “Oh my Gosh!” Since then there have been huge events of the United States but I don’t think that any of us really thought that that could happen. (...) The wars and the stuff that’s going on now, even though it’s emotional, takes lives, and does the same thing, it doesn’t have the same impact with 9/11. It’s kind of like the first child. You know the first child has a huge impact on your life, and I think 9/11 had the same impact. (...) For me, it happened yesterday. I can tell you where I was, what I was doing that day that it happened. I was on duty at the fire station, and I had come to this building for a staff meeting. And my dispatch called me on my cell-phone and said “you better turn on the TV, one of the towers just got hit by an airplane.” We turned it on [T.V.] and watched it. And I bet you all of our eyes were saying, “Oh my God!” and our first line of thought there’s all firefighters. (...) I never think of that [9/11] as a piece of history, because it’s too upfront. History was

World War I. That's history. 9/11 isn't history, 9/11 is today. 9/11... How many years ago was it? I don't know. Because it wasn't years ago... It was... it's now. It's alive. (...) And it reminds me when JFK was shot. I remember that. I was there, but that's history to me. It didn't have this impact on my life that 9/11 does.

"For Americans," said another informant while we were going to the memorial site, "there are two moments." One is when John F. Kennedy was shot, he said, and the second one is 9/11. "Everybody can tell what they were doing when these events happened," he explained. Then, he started telling what he was doing when he heard the news about the first plane crashed into the towers.

As noted earlier, my informants also compared 9/11 with the attack on Pearl Harbor and the Oklahoma City bombing. The following quotes from several informants show this:

It's kind of like how our ancestors remember the day they were when JFK was shot. We will always remember where we were, when the attacks took place. You can say that I was sitting there and watching TV. You'll never forget that. (...) This attack was, like I said, it was worldwide. Because it wasn't just the United States. Everybody. Because people who were working there in the WTC from all over the world. They would come over to work in it. It wasn't like just attacking the United States. He attacked the world when that happened. (...) Pearl Harbor kind of like affected just us, a little bit, that affected everybody.

This morning I was walking around town, and walked by the Veterans Memorial. We have memorials for things that have happened. But I don't think we have memorials like we have today from 9/11. I just really think that really touched people. But also think the media. Because Pearl Harbor, you didn't see all that stuff happen. You didn't have every second, every second in front of your face. You didn't have that. Pearl Harbor, you might have read about it in a newspaper, a couple of days... or somebody might have told you that. But for 9/11, it was me calling my wife, within the matter of minutes, and she is standing in front of the World Trade Center, everybody was standing in front of the World Trade Center, watching TV. Because the media was able to bring it to you in second instantly. And everybody lived with it, everybody experienced 9/11. Whether you were standing there, or have a family member, or you watched it for weeks. Cause it was weeks of news.

If I had to think about another event that really stuck in my mind, where everybody was, moved by an event, would go back to Kennedy assassination... But that was something that we read about, saw on TV. There wasn't the physicality of a tumbling building.

Second, when I asked them whether they or their town had a direct connection to the events of 9/11, they referred to the shock and fear they felt as what connected them to the events of 9/11. Thus even if they did not lose anyone, or were otherwise directly affected by the event, they felt connected through personal experience, and the events thus became personal for them. Thus, after the attackers' motivation and targets were understood, some informants recalled that they were anxious about whether something could happen where they live.

[They] found out it's a terrorist attack, and I had two small children at the time, and this is how it kind of affected me personally: are my kids safe? That's the first thing I did. Are my kids okay? Family is okay? Once you find out if they are okay, for me I was putting my place and focus on thinking can this happen in our city, could this happen in Cleveland, Ohio? So at that point of time it did become personal. I am sure across the entire nation people were checking on their children, checking on their spouses, and making sure their family is safe. [...] Even though it happened there—we have no connections—not just firefighters but for everyone across the nation it did become personal.

Another informant was watching the news with his child at home when the first tower collapsed. He recalled that when his child asked what happened, he immediately thought of the firefighters, and in shock he replied that a bunch of firefighters died. That moment, he said, made 9/11 “very personal.” Another informant recalled the phone call he got at night from a woman asking about the sound of a plane overhead, despite being hundred miles away from the crash sites. He said that the connection to 9/11 for him was to know that “every single person that was here that was alive went through it.” The phone call he had got made him realize that point, as the following quote shows:

She hung up, and I told to myself: I am the only one working that night, sitting in the kitchen, that an elderly woman in [a town in Massachusetts] is frightened to the point of tears. That's a huge connection to what happened that day, and when we were driving down the street with the steel, when we brought it to the town, and I saw people stand and cover their hearts, I remembered that call. This is important, this is really important.

They were personally affected from it in other ways, as one of my informants said it took a long time for her to get on an airplane. Another informant's father was supposed to be on one of the planes, and my informant said "time stopped" for him when he heard the attacks, because his father might be there. "I remember minute by minute when 9/11 happened," he added.

After the initial shock, many witnessed the crash of the second flight into the towers on television. Besides the situation being so jolting, this was also the moment they realized these were not accidents. They remember how the media broadcasted the scenes of the crashes and the collapse of the buildings over and over again for days. Having been visual witnesses to the moment of the attacks, the images of burning towers and people waiting for help, and the towers' collapse afterwards were fundamentally different experiences from other comparable. The medium of attacks, the four commercial aircraft, created a visual image that some described as spectacular to refer to its dramatic effect, and that image was embedded in viewers' memories.

My informants referred to the attacks on Pearl Harbor also to show its differences from 9/11. Pearl Harbor was a military attack targeting military personnel in a naval base in Hawaii, while 9/11 in New York was an attack that targeted the U.S.'s symbolic structures, killing civilians in one of the most crowded cities in the U.S. Comparing the two events, they wanted to emphasize the randomness of death in 9/11, as one of my informants described as "it could be any of us." Another informant mentioned that he tried to explain the difference to his mother, who recalled Pearl Harbor and was not much affected by the events of 9/11, by saying that Pearl

Harbor was a military attack while 9/11 was not. That point became very personal for some, as the following quote shows:

This is something we can't [forget]. It's like Pearl Harbor, but Pearl Harbor... They were part of the United States at Hawaii. This was a military attack. This [9/11] was the civilian attack. They came here; they killed innocent people. That's the part that bugs me the wrong way [...] When you're at war, you fight in a uniform, this country, that country... But to go into a homeland, and kill innocent kids, women and children, people just going about their ordinary business for the day. And they got to make a decision whether to jump out of the building or burn to death... Still bugs me to this day. I don't know... It's still raw to me, it will always be. It makes me feel good to do this [the memorial].

All these examples are important also to show that the personal (individual) and the social are connected in experiencing cultural trauma (Olick 1999a). In particular, the informants' telling of their story as members of "imagined communities" (Anderson 2006[1983]), in this case the nation but also professional groups, and their emphasis on not only their own but also others' experience by using the "we" pronoun, illustrate the merging of the personal and the social.

## **2.3 NATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM**

Because it [public memory] takes the form of an ideological system with special language, beliefs, symbols, and stories, people can use it as a cognitive device to mediate competing interpretations and privilege some explanations over others. Thus, the symbolic language of patriotism is central to public memory in the United States because it has the capacity to mediate both vernacular loyalties to local and familiar places and official loyalties to national and imagined structures. [Bodnar 1993:14]

In terms of scale and impact, 9/11 is exceptional in public imagination, yet the language and symbolism used at the memorial sites and commemorations are founded on patriotic themes and

symbolism that have long been part of the culture of commemoration in the U.S., especially the commemoration of military events. In this regard, the commemoration practices and symbolism are part of social memory, which John Bodnar referred to as public memory. In the previous sections, I discussed how the key events in the U.S. history provided frameworks for the interpretation of the attacks and the formation of 9/11 narratives. In this section, I particularly focus on the form and symbolism of the commemorative activities that accompanied the memorialization of the steel artifacts, because I argue they are the indicators of the steel artifacts' sacred status, especially when they are used in commemorative performances. The memorial ceremonies performed in the presence of the steel artifacts are ritualized events (Bell 1997) combining national symbols with commemorative action.

National symbols occupy a significant place in the 9/11 commemorations as an expression of patriotism. For instance, the steel was often covered with the flag in the processions, resembling a funeral ceremony. As I will discuss, another common practice I observed at the memorials was to acquire a flag flown over the war zones or state buildings—the U.S. Capitol, in particular. In addition to the symbols of nation and patriotism, 9/11 commemorations also have a religious element. For instance, it was not uncommon to bless the steel artifact before it was dedicated as a memorial. Dedication and anniversary ceremonies included a local priest or chaplain to recite prayers. Religious symbols and objects were often left at the memorial sites as tributes.

Such ceremonial attitudes towards national symbols and their coexistence with religious elements bring to mind the concept of civil religion. Jean-Jacques Rousseau first used the term in *The Social Contract* (1762) to refer to the communal faith that would promote society and strengthen the bonds between citizens: the civic values and obligations. According to Rousseau,

it is crucial for the state to have a civil religion that can claim ties to a divine power. Sociologists of religion, especially Robert N. Bellah (2005[1967]) and Phillip E. Hammond (1976), adopted the term to discuss the devotional and transcendental dimensions of national ceremonies, texts, and symbols in the United States. Referring to John F. Kennedy's reference to God in his inaugural address, Bellah pointed out that "the separation of church and state [in the constitution] has not denied the political realm a religious dimension" (2005:42). That public religious dimension is what Bellah called American civil religion. A decade later, Hammond defined civil religion as "any set of beliefs and rituals, related to the past, present, and/or future of a people ('nation') which are understood in some transcendental fashion" (1976: 171). In the literature, scholars often cite Bellah (2005[1967]) as the main reference, and use his definition to explain civil religion. However, it is important to emphasize that what makes civil religion a "religion" by Hammond's definition is not necessarily a reference to a divine power, but its "transcendental" aspect, which can also be found in secular contexts.

I will not discuss my observations as practices of American civil religion. Still, I find Bellah and Hammond's discussions of American civil religion important and useful in drawing attention to the sentiment the steel artifacts evoke, and the commemorations' religious dimension, specifically the religious practices and language, and the expressive uses of the national symbols, such as the flag. Since these ceremonies that are with religious and national symbolisms are performed in the presence of, and for the steel artifacts, they are also the expressions of how the steel artifacts' sacred status is perceived and experienced.

According to Bellah (2005[1967]), biblical archetypes—Exodus, Chosen People, Promised Land, New Jerusalem, Sacrificial Death and Rebirth—formed the background of the American civil religion. The themes of death, sacrifice, and rebirth were often adapted to signify

national renewal in the face of military conflicts and their high numbers of dead (Monnet 2012). According to Kammen (1991), before 1870 Americans had little interest in the past. Following the Civil War, the past became attached to civil religion, and this transformation aided the reconciliation and preservation of national unity. The Civil War commemoration, especially Lincoln's Gettysburg Address (Wills 1992), produced a strong narrative of sacrificial death and rebirth that became a point of reference for the interpretation and commemoration of future conflicts and tragedies (Bellah 2005[1967], Monnet 2012, Riley 2008, Stow 2007). Lincoln's calling the Gettysburg battlefield "hallowed ground" has led to that phrase being adapted many times in the national narrative to refer to battlefields and the sites of tragedies. The notion of national renewal became instrumental in forming a national unity after 9/11, as well. In the context of 9/11, themes of sacrificial death and rebirth are at the center of the commemorative narrative (see Chapter 6). On the first anniversary of the attacks in New York City, New York Governor George Pataki recited the Gettysburg Address.<sup>5</sup> Mayor Bloomberg argued that the Gettysburg Address was the right choice to commemorate 9/11 because there was a continuity between the two events:

I think it's the most appropriate thing that anybody could say. If you read it, it talks about hallowed ground, it talks of the continuity that's America, and it points out that the 2,800 people who died on 9/11 are heroes who have died so we can continue to practice our religion and have the freedoms that we want. Everything that Abraham Lincoln talked about is still true today. We should remember that and keep our vigil up.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/US/09/11/ar911.memorial.newyork/> Accessed: 8/21/2016

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.nyc.gov/portal/site/nycgov/menuitem.b270a4a1d51bb3017bce0ed101c789a0/index.jsp?pageID=nyc\\_blue\\_room&catID=1194&doc\\_name=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nyc.gov%2Fhtml%2Fom%2Fhtml%2F2002b%2Fsept11.html&cc=unused1978&rc=1194&ndi=1](http://www.nyc.gov/portal/site/nycgov/menuitem.b270a4a1d51bb3017bce0ed101c789a0/index.jsp?pageID=nyc_blue_room&catID=1194&doc_name=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nyc.gov%2Fhtml%2Fom%2Fhtml%2F2002b%2Fsept11.html&cc=unused1978&rc=1194&ndi=1) Accessed: 8/21/2016

In one of the dedication ceremonies at a local memorial described below, the priest adapted Lincoln's address to dedicate the steel artifact, and emphasize its sacredness by using the term "hallowed." The steel artifacts' transformation from rubble into relics is also part of this approach because the steel's use as a memorial is a rebirth with a new status and meaning. One of my informants said that they set up the steel on September 11, 2011 at 10:28 a.m., at the time when the North Tower was collapsed, so that the steel that once fell would rise again. The iconic picture of the firefighters raising the flag demonstrated not only loyalty to the flag, but also this "rising from the rubble" effect (Monnet 2012:5).

The American flag is the national symbol that is present at all memorial sites and ceremonies, symbolizing the nation and patriotism (Marvin and Ingle 1999, Monet 2012, Zelinsky 1988). As I discussed in the previous section, the flag had become an object of solidarity and protest during the immediate aftermath of the attacks. Further, special 9/11 commemorative flags—the Flag of Honor and the Flag of Heroes—were adapted from the national flag. In the memorialization of artifacts, the national flag is one of the objects that has denoted the sacred status of the steel, so that when the steel artifacts were transported from New York, they were wrapped in the flag, thus resembling a funeral ceremony. In this regard, the use of the flag demonstrated the special status of the steel artifact as relics. Hanging the flag from ladder trucks is a very common practice, either at the place the steel arrived, or at stops during the procession [Figure 1]. Sometimes the flag was present in unusual forms, such as the themed trucks that were decorated with flag motifs, and used to carry the steel.

Though the flag has national significance already, certain practices added more significance to them. For instance, the United States Capitol has a flag program since the 1930s, through which people can request a flag flown over the Capitol. It is possible to request a flag

flown on a particular day (e.g. Veterans Day, September 11<sup>th</sup>, Memorial Day) in honor of a person or an event; and certain days get more requests. The flag is issued to the applicant with a certificate of authenticity after it was flown on the requested day. Some of the flags I saw at the memorials were flown at the Capitol, and others were from military bases in Afghanistan and Iraq. One of the flags on display behind a steel beam was flown over the Capitol in honor of the first responders. The King of Prussia memorial, PA has a folded flag in a glass display case, with very specific information about when and where it was flown: “Flag was flown March 2, 2011 at 1600 hrs on Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan at the 131 Transportation Company Motorpool/17<sup>th</sup> CSSB” [Figure 2]. The flag at the Hudson, NH memorial was donated by a person who was in contact with soldiers in Iraq. He requested the flag from them, and donated it to the memorial.

The religious dimension involved in the steel artifacts’ memorialization has taken various forms. During recovery at the WTC site, ironworkers cut off steel pieces in the shape of cross and star, and used them as mementos. Some steel beams that are turned into memorials have traces of those cuts. A few days after the attacks, a construction worker noticed a T-beam standing in the rubble, and notified a local priest, Fr. Brian. The T-beam was interpreted as a cross, blessed by the priest, and it became the focal point of religious services held on the WTC site. Though the services at the site claimed to have non-denominational character because it was public and practically anybody could participate, it was a religious context for many, including those participated in the services as well as American Atheists, who protested the display of this cross. The 9/11 memorial at the Shanksville Volunteer Fire Department is also [Figure 3], a T-beam that was put into the shape of a cross by a firefighters’ organization based in New York City. The organization brought the artifact to Shanksville as a gift to the fire company there. The steel now stands on the fire station’s lawn. I was wondering whether the public display of a cross

in a secular place raised any concerns. Acknowledging the steel artifact's religious significance, the former fire chief that I talked explained that it was never a problem, because the town is dominantly Christian, as one could tell from the number of churches located nearby.

Blessing the steel pieces has also taken place at local memorials, which shows the shifting status of those artifacts. As I discuss in the performance section (Chapter 5), people were invited to take a stone and put it in front of the steel beam at the dedication ceremony of the Hudson, NH memorial, a decision inspired from a Jewish burial custom. Though I defined the sacred as a special status that is not necessarily religious, such practices demonstrate the cases where a religious element added to the steel's relic status.

The steel artifacts' display at churches is expressive as much as the steel that was cut into religious symbols. I have seen various examples of such church exhibits. The Flight 93 Chapel in Shanksville, which is a memorial chapel dedicated in memory of the Flight 93 dead, displays remains from all three crash sites: dirt from Shanksville, a stone from the Pentagon, and a piece of steel from the WTC [Figure 4]. St. Paul's Chapel in New York City has a steel cross that was forged from WTC rubble [Figure 5]. The Church of St. Francis of Assisi (New York City) has a 9/11 memorial that was formed of three steel pieces recovered from the WTC site, and dedicated to the all the victims, including FDNY Chaplain Fr. Mychal Judge [Figure 6]. Here, the artifacts are not presented as an object of veneration, yet their presence in a religious context is different from their display as museum objects. In addition, religious references are often found among the tributes left at the memorial sites. Crosses, rosary beads, stones, prayers, and icons are often found attached to the steel artifacts, or at the memorial sites as tributes [Figure 7].

To sum up, the public dimension that Bellah discussed under American civil religion is part of the steel artifacts memorialization as well. Sometimes it has explicit Judeo-Christian

references, as the examples I discussed above. Sometimes it comes as part of pre-existing symbols and practices, such as the Pledge of Allegiance, verbatims (e.g. “God Bless America”), and prayers, such as the firefighter’s prayer:

When I am called to duty, God, wherever flames may rage, give me strength to save a life, whatever be its age. Help me embrace a little child before it is too late, or save an older person from the horror of that fate. Enable me to be alert, and hear the weakest shout, quickly and efficiently to put the fire out. I want to fill my calling, to give the best in me, to guard my friend and neighbor, and protect his property. And if according to Your will I must answer death's call, bless with your protecting hand, my family one and all. [Author unknown]

All these have include references to a non-denominational God, as Bellah (2005[1967]) argued earlier.

## **2.4     MASCULINITY**

As some scholars have pointed out (Doss 2012, Fischer 2014, May 2003, Sturken 2002a), the commemoration and memorialization of 9/11, especially the concepts of heroism and bravery reified the notions of masculinity and manhood. The links between manhood and nationhood, nationalism and masculinity, masculinity and militarism are well established in the literature (Andersen and Wendt 2015, Enloe 2000, Mosse 1998, Nagel 1998). Nation, state, and military have been masculine institutions that are still dominated by men, and the nation-building and nationhood have often founded on masculine stereotypes, such as “founding fathers” and their “heroic” deeds. As Nagel stated

the culture of nationalism is constructed to emphasize and resonate with masculine cultural themes. Terms like honour, patriotism, cowardice, bravery and

duty are hard to distinguish as either nationalistic or masculinist, since they seem so thoroughly tied both to the nation and to manliness. [1998:52]

In this regard, Andersen and Wendt's (2015) citizen soldier example illustrates Nagel's point. "The ideal of the citizen soldier whose manliness was regarded as being closely connected to his willingness to die a hero's death on the battlefield as a service to the nation" shows "the interconnectedness of masculine norms and nationalist ideologies" (Andersen and Wendt 2015:5).

Following the 9/11 attacks, the notions of heroism and bravery came to be associated with the male first responders. As police and fire services remain male-dominated professions, the majority of the emergency workers who responded to the WTC were men. Consequently, the majority of my informants were also men. However, my point here is not only about the numbers of men and women involved in 9/11 rescues, but also that the commemoration practices and the narrative produced after 9/11 focused on masculine figures and symbols, and often were accompanied by ceremonies and practices resembling military customs, such as military funeral processions, full dress uniforms and memorial coins. This tendency continued in the memorialization of the steel artifacts, as well. The ceremonies accompanying the steel often took place in the presence of uniformed personnel (fire, police, or EMS), resembled military funerals, and included mostly men. My informants who were in the fire service often referred to the "brotherhood" of the firefighters as the reason for their dedication to acquire a steel artifact.

The Boy Scouts in the U.S. are known for their paramilitary organization and training, and they were often involved in the establishment of the local 9/11 memorials and the acquisition of the steel artifacts. Four of the memorials I examined were started by Boy Scouts as their Eagle Scout Service Project. In these projects, scouts are expected to demonstrate leadership skills, and

do a “beneficiary” community work. In this regard, building a memorial for 9/11 was considered fitting the organization’s goals. Veterans’ organizations, such as the American Legion, were often involved in the memorialization of the artifacts, either as sponsors or participants to the memorial ceremonies.<sup>7</sup> It is common to memorialize the branches of the military at the memorial sites, in order to expand the memorial’s scope to include military personnel who served mainly in Afghanistan and Iraq.

## **2.5 NATIONAL MEMORIALS**

### **2.5.1 National September 11 Memorial & Museum**

“This is a burial ground,” said the tour guide when our group stepped on the memorial plaza at the WTC site in NYC. She approached the South Pool, and after dipping her hand in the flowing water under the parapets she touched a name. Lowering her voice, she explained that the volunteer tour guides like her started doing this to show their respect to the dead, though they did not expect everyone to do the same. Still, every one of us in the group repeated the act after her.

As of February 1, 2016, forty percent of the WTC victims are still unidentified, and the individual remains are kept in a repository inside the 9/11 museum.<sup>8</sup> Some family members were strongly against the transfer of the remains from the city medical examiner’s office to the museum, and they protested the decision on the day of the transfer by wearing strips of black

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<sup>7</sup> <http://archive.jsonline.com/news/milwaukee/129504963.html> Accessed: 8/23/2016  
<http://holbrook.wickedlocal.com/article/20150820/NEWS/150828939> Accessed: 8/23/2016

<sup>8</sup> NYC Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) continues its work to identify the remains of victims from the WTC. Forty percent of the victims, and the thirty-five percent of the individual remains are unidentified as of February 1, 2016. (Email conversation with the Director of Public Affairs, NYC OCME. February 12, 2016.)

cloth across their mouths.<sup>9</sup> In their opinion, the decision was disrespectful and offensive because the remains would be kept under the ground level inside the museum, instead of an above ground memorial. Plus, visitors had to pay for museum entrance, and some family members thought the remains of their loved ones would be used to generate income.<sup>10</sup>

The complaints of the family members about the relocation of the remains are among the many incidents that show the difficulty of memorializing a tragedy at the event site, especially in the middle of a metropolis. While many people, like our tour guide, view the memorial plaza as a cemetery, the site has also become a tourist attraction as famous battlefields and cemeteries. The 9/11 Memorial & Museum is part of the tourist brochures, advertised in the hotel lobbies along with fun activities, and it is listed as one of the top six city attractions in the CityPASS NYC. It is a site where mourners and the people having fun have to coexist. Indeed, once I witnessed three visitors emulating fashion shoots by using their reflections on the museum building's glass façade. In addition, it is not possible to ignore the police and security presence at the memorial plaza and the museum. Certain types of behavior (e.g. eating, smoking, running, jumping, sitting on the parapets, etc.) are forbidden at the memorial plaza & museum, and watching the behavior at the site is also part of security work.

Building a memorial and a museum at Ground Zero had been a challenging process since the very beginning. The victims' relatives, local residents, the state and the city governments, the Lower Manhattan Development Project (LMDC), and the owners of the site were all interested

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<sup>9</sup> "Some family members denounce return of 9/11 remains to World Trade Center, others call it 'respectful.'  
<http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/unidentified-remains-9-11-transferred-new-york-world-trade-center-article-1.1787160> Accessed: 8/23/2016

<sup>10</sup> Museumification of sacred sites has been a contested issue, especially concerning the secularization of religious sacred sites. Many sacred sites in Turkey have gone through a process of museumification to assert secular state power over religious institutions, and more recently to assert control over non-Sunni Islam, as discussed in Harmansah, Tanyeri-Erdemir, and Hayden (2015).

in the future of the place, and had different expectations. As already noted, Ground Zero is sacred ground in the eyes of many because it is the place where people died and the bodily remains are not fully recovered. However, not all residents wanted to be reminded of this tragedy everyday (Low 2004). The current memorial design, “Reflecting Absence” by Michael Arad and Peter Walker, was the winner of an international design competition that was held in 2003 [Figure 8]. The key aspects of Arad and Walker’s design are two large voids created by pools sitting within the footprints of the towers, as “open and visible reminders of the absence.”<sup>11</sup> The names of victims (including the six people who died in the 1993 WTC bombing) are inscribed on bronze parapets around the pools. The names are arranged according to “meaningful adjacencies,” which means that the victims’ relationship with each other was considered (*The Week*,<sup>12</sup> Matson 2011). Thus the names of the firefighters are listed under the names of the fire companies they worked with, and the relationships of the firefighters with each other was also considered in the arrangement of their names. All victims are represented equally, regardless of rank, age, and title.<sup>13</sup> In addition to the pools, the memorial plaza includes a grove of trees

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.911memorial.org/design-competition> (Accessed: 8/23/2016)

<sup>12</sup> <http://theweek.com/articles/481973/meaningful-adjacencies-how-names-911-memorial-arranged> (Accessed: 8/23/2016)

<sup>13</sup> Though the dead are represented equally in the memorial, it is important to note that they were not equal in the amount of government funded compensation paid for their families. Families of the first responders, who are glorified as heroes in the commemorations, received compensation much lesser than that given for a broker who worked at the WTC. In the wake of the fifteenth anniversary of the attacks, the head of the 9/11 Victims Compensation Fund, Kenneth Feinberg, was a guest on WGBH radio (September 9, 2016). He explained that the amount of compensation paid to the families was based on the dead person’s earning potential, and consequently everyone received different amounts of money, depending on, for instance, whether the person was a kitchen worker, firefighter, or a broker. The family of a broker was paid much more than a firefighter. The decision was based on the law the Congress passed after 9/11. Another issue Feinberg pointed out was that government money (taxpayer’s money) was not used to compensate families in previous disasters, such as the Oklahoma City bombing and the 1993 bombing of the WTC. He received calls from the families of those victims, asking why they had not received compensation for their loss. This again brings up the question why some tragedies are considered to be more important than others.

selected from various locations including Pennsylvania and Maryland that were impacted on 9/11.<sup>14</sup>

Reminiscent of the criticisms made about the Vietnam War Veterans Memorial designed by Maya Lin for the National Mall (Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 1991), the 9/11 memorial and the museum were also criticized by some because of their form and content (Doss 2010, Sturken 2004). According to some family members, the museum's underground orientation was insulting because going down into the ground symbolically evoked negative feelings. The Vietnam War Veterans Memorial had received similar criticism, with the argument that "the sinking of the monument into the earth was an admission that the United States committed crimes in Vietnam" (Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 1991:394). Some opposed the concept of meaningful adjacencies, demanding that the names of the dead should include information about the age, occupation, and rank of each individual, especially the first responders (Burke 2009, Smith 2010). These critics argued that the first responders who made "a choice" by going inside the buildings deserve special recognition, different from that of the victims who were already inside the buildings (Smith 2010). It was also argued the age of the victims should be mentioned in order to make the public aware that children also died in the attacks (Smith 2010). In this regard, the memorial's minimalist design "was understood as rejection of codes of heroism" (Sturken 2004: 322). Michael Burke (2011), brother of a FDNY captain who died on 9/11, had described the situation as "political correctness gone mad at Ground Zero." Instead of memorializing the attacks, heroism, and sacrifices, Burke argued that the memorial eradicated the evidence and memory of 9/11, even the memory of the towers, because there is no material evidence of the attacks left at the site.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.911memorial.org/selecting-trees> (Accessed: September 16, 2016)

It is true that the memorial plaza does not include any material remains from 9/11, which are kept in the museum. One exception to this rule is the Survivor Tree, a Callery pear tree that survived the destruction. After a period of recovery and rehabilitation, the tree was returned to the memorial plaza as a symbol of resilience, although it was not originally part of the plaza plan.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, the iconic sculpture of the former WTC plaza, Koenig's *The Sphere*, which was also salvaged from the debris, was not returned to the memorial site because reportedly the authorities thought it would affect the memorial plaza's harmony. Instead, it was moved to Battery Park, its current location [Figure 9]. The 9/11 museum has a small replica of the sculpture, but the removal of this iconic artifact from its original setting received criticisms from various circles as an erasure of memory at the event site. Supporters of the sculpture's relocation to the memorial plaza started a movement named "Save the Sphere."

Visitors have to pay an admission fee (\$24 for adults) to enter the museum. Though family members of victims are excluded from paying the fee, not all approve of the idea of paid entrance to the museum, which is also the place where the remains of the victims are kept. Family members complaining about the commercialization of the museum have been reported repeatedly in the media. "It's the only cemetery in the world where you have to pay a fee to get in," a family member who lost a firefighter stated (Benitez 2014). The museum also has a gift shop that faced criticisms for selling souvenirs like T-shirts, magnets, key chains, mugs, stuffed animals, earrings and bracelets. The main reason why the shop has been criticized is because the objects are being sold at a site where thousands died, and many remains were never recovered. The gift shop also sells books and DVDs about 9/11, yet this has not prevented criticisms regarding the commercialization of the site. For example, a few days after the museum's

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.911memorial.org/survivor-tree> (Accessed: 9/16/2016)

opening, a decorative platter that was on sale in the gift shop got attention. The plate was in the shape of the continental U.S. with three small hearts depicted on the locations of the crash sites. After complaints, the museum stopped selling the item, and the museum officials ensured that the museum would enlist more help from the family members in the selection of gift shop items.<sup>16</sup> Even the food to be served in the museum cafeteria could not avoid criticisms, because the restaurant's initial promise to serve "an array of seasonal pastries and sandwiches in a relaxing and comfortable environment" was considered as an inappropriate decision for a setting where the remains of the dead are kept.<sup>17</sup>

The memorial museum offers a narrative crafted along the lines of victimization, heroism, and remembrance with its rich collection of artifacts and documentation. It aims to achieve all these by turning the visitor into a witness at the end of the museum experience. In this regard, the museum focuses on the witness accounts and the artifacts to picture the day of the September 11<sup>th</sup> for the visitors. A quote from Virgil is written on the wall that covers the remains repository: "No day shall erase you from the memory of time." Another quote is from a recovery worker and operating engineer: "We came in as individuals. And we'll walk out together" is written on the wall where the exhibits end. These two quotes are a summary of the general sentiment fostered by the museum. Thus, the museum focuses on its memorialization purpose with the help of carefully crafted narratives and exhibits, rather than offering a critical approach.

As Paul Williams (2007) has noted, memorial museums are commemorative forms that emerged mostly after WWII to memorialize mass suffering, with the objectives of furthering

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.wsj.com/articles/9-11-museum-takes-action-on-criticisms-1401324223> (Accessed: 2/14/2016)

<sup>17</sup> <http://nypost.com/2014/05/22/911-museums-planned-comfort-food-cafe-is-inappropriate/> (Accessed: 2/14/2016), <http://nypost.com/2014/05/21/in-bad-taste-911-memorial-museum-opening-danny-meyer-restaurant/> (Accessed: 9/15/2016), "9/11 Memorial Museum Café <https://unionsquareevents.com/venue-hospitality/new-york/retail-venues-ny/> (Accessed: 9/15/16)

remembrance, interpretation, and teaching about atrocities and violent histories. The museums dedicated to the victims of genocide, wars, terrorist attacks, and natural disasters are examples of memorial museums. Meeting all of these objectives—remembrance, interpretation, and teaching—turns out to be a challenging task for these museums, which have to find the balance between “reverent remembrance” and “critical interpretation” (Williams 2007:8). Otherwise, the museum risks losing either its commemorative function or its critical approach. Some scholars have argued that 9/11 memorial museum’s approach is too narrow and uncritical. In a conference in October 2015, Marianne Hirsch criticized the overarching narratives that memorial museums produce. Instead, Hirsch was in search of commemorative practices that can build a critical approach. The National September 11 Memorial Museum, according to Hirsch, focused so much on the American victimization that it almost invokes a desire to be vulnerable. According to Deutsche (2014),

the memory it constructs conceals a massive forgetting—which, from a Freudian viewpoint, is no unintentional failure of remembrance but rather an active process of omitting, which is to say, repressing. The museum’s repressions are so manifold, the story it tells so circumscribed, that it seems driven by a passion for ignorance.

Deutsche argued that the museum is repressing because it avoids recognizing some critical issues, including the social history of the WTC, including the oppositions to its original construction and its obliteration of local neighborhoods and small businesses, and also the long term U.S. intervention in the Middle East, and the dead and wounded that the War on Terror caused. On the other hand, a short documentary film being displayed in the museum’s historical exhibit section, which I regard as the museum’s most “critical” section due to its mention of the U.S. role in the growth of Al-Qaeda, and information about the terrorists, is found offensive by some Muslims and clergy members. The seven-minute documentary film *The Rise of Al Qaeda*

in this section tells the story of Al-Qaeda's growth and its ideology. The film includes images of bin Laden, the organization's training camps and previous attacks, and it mentions the U.S. support for the organization against Russians in Afghanistan. Photographs of the hijackers and videos showing their passage through the airport security checks are also displayed in the gallery, after the film.

The presentation of information about Al-Qaeda and the photographs of the hijackers contrast with the other 9/11 national memorials, where no images or personal information about the hijackers are given. The only information presented at the other national memorials about the hijackers is that they were Al-Qaeda terrorists, and that they organized a series of attacks on U.S. targets. On the one hand, some family members and the media have protested the 9/11 museum's decision to mention the terrorists, saying that showing the terrorists' faces would "honor" them.<sup>18</sup> However, there have been no complaints about the display of a brick taken from bin Laden's compound, which is a "trophy," not a relic. On the other hand, the documentary film's use of the words "Islamist" and "jihad" in conjunction with Al-Qaeda's actions disturbed some Muslim visitors, including tourists and an interfaith group of New York clergy members.<sup>19</sup> Members of the Interfaith Advisory Group asked for the re-editing of the film to make it clear that Al-Qaeda does not represent all Muslims.<sup>20</sup> Yet the museum officials defended the film's objectivity, and made no changes.

Comments regarding the museum's lack of critical approach, and the controversies about the documentary film and the display of the terrorists' faces are linked to finding balance in

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/03/arts/design/sept-11-memorial-museums-fraught-task-to-tell-the-truth.html> (Accessed 2/16/16)

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/02/nyregion/sept-11-museum.html> (Accessed 2/15/16)

<sup>20</sup> <http://interfaithcenter.org/archives/6889> (Accessed 2/15/16)

representing the commemorative and historical aspects of the events, which is a subject discussed in Chapter 6.

### **2.5.2 Flight 93 National Memorial**

The Flight 93 National Memorial in Shanksville, PA commemorates the passengers and crew of Flight 93, all civilians, as heroes of the nation, since they fought back the hijackers after realizing that they were part of an attack against the U.S. [Figure 10]. The memorial has not received much scholarly attention (but see Doss 2010, Riley 2008), though the meaning and symbolism produced at and around the site formulate the notions of nation and sacrifice, emphasizing on the heroism of the victims. On my first visit to the Flight 93 memorial in 2010, when the site was still under construction, a billboard on the Lincoln Highway caught my attention because of its colorful imagery. I immediately recognized the words “Flight 93” and “heroes” on it, and then I saw the figure of Jesus depicted at the center of the billboard, with a plane flying over his head [Figure 11]. The American flag was depicted in the background. I pulled over to read the whole thing, and saw that it was an anti-abortion message that drew an analogy between terrorism and abortion, specifically between the civilians of the Flight 93 and aborted human fetuses. The message used the narrative of the Flight 93 story, and included the following statements: “Flight 93”, “Born Hero’s [sic] Gave Their Lives to Save Lives,” “Life is a Precious Gift,” “Save God’s Unborn Hero’s” [sic] and “America Must End the Terror of Abortion.” The billboard is not part of the Flight 93 memorial and does not have links to the memorial’s management, but is located approximately 2.5-3 miles from the memorial’s entrance.

Leavy (2007) has discussed the American pro-life movement’s use of 9/11 narratives of patriotism and terror for their own political ends, and that they appropriated these stories and

images in their campaigns and commercials soon after the event took place. The anti-drug movement has also adopted the concept of terror and the narrative of 9/11, reinforcing the state's good-versus-evil interpretation of the events (Leavy 2007). The anti-abortion billboard near the Flight 93 memorial, which was still present as of September 2015, is an example of this trend.

The impact site is the focal point of the Flight 93 memorial. The site is considered to be the burial place of the Flight 93 crew and passengers and is therefore sacred ground. Visitors view the impact site, but without access to it, from the memorial plaza. Only family members are allowed to enter the sacred ground. The names of the crew and passengers are inscribed on a white marble wall located at the end of the memorial walkway and aligned with the flight path. Entrance to the impact site is located on the left of the memorial wall, and protected by a wooden fence. Visitors view the impact site as they walk on the memorial pathway, and once they reach the memorial wall they can look at the site through the wooden fence.

In 2002, Congress passed the Flight 93 National Memorial Act that officially recognized the site as a national memorial. The act designated the Flight 93 Memorial as a unit of the National Park System, and clarified specifically that “the terrorists on United Airlines Flight 93 on September 11, 2001, shall not be considered passengers or crew of that flight.”<sup>21</sup> The memorial design was the winner of an international competition organized by the Flight 93 Advisory Commission, family members, Flight 93 National Memorial Task Force, and the NPS (Jury Report 2005). The memorial is solemn in design, and monumental in scale. Forty memorial groves surround the area between the wall of names and the visitor center, creating a circle. It is a 3.5 mile drive from the main entrance on the Lincoln Highway (US Route 30) to the memorial plaza. The memorial is enclosed in an open field encompassing 2,200 acres, and one cannot

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<sup>21</sup> Public Law 107-226 Sept. 24, 2002

easily tell where the memorial site ends. Touring between the memorial structures (i.e. from the main entrance to the visitor center; from the visitor center to the Memorial Plaza; and from the Memorial Plaza to the Wall of Names) made me comprehend the size of the field, thus its monumentality as well. Construction was still in progress at the site as of September 2015. The visitor center was completed and opened to visitors in September 2015, five years after the opening of the memorial plaza. Future plans include the construction of a 93-foot tower.

The memorial does not have a museum, but the outdoor exhibits and the visitor center complex fulfill the function of a museum to some extent. The outdoor exhibits are located at the arrival court, before one enters the memorial plaza. They explain chronologically the events of 9/11 and focus on the story of Flight 93, especially the passengers' and crew's decision to fight back against the hijackers. Passengers voted and decided to resist after they heard about the attacks in New York and Pentagon in cell phone calls. As the struggle between the passengers and the hijackers began, the hijackers crashed the plane, which thus did not reach its target, believed to have been the U.S. Capitol. In addition to the story of Flight 93, the exhibits also give information about the investigations at the site after the crash. One of the exhibits displays photographs of the crew and passengers. Information about the terrorists, however, is very limited, especially compared to the 9/11 museum in NYC. The only information given about the hijackers at the Flight 93 Memorial is that they were the al-Qaeda terrorists who hijacked four commercial U.S. airliners to implement the plan they had been working on since the late 1990s.

The visitor center complex includes a small gift shop and a series of exhibits. The exhibitions inside the center follow a trajectory similar to that of the outdoor exhibits, beginning with the statement that it was "just a normal day" and continuing with the timeline of the events by highlighting the key moments, such as "America is under attack," and "this is the work of the

terrorists.” Then the exhibit continues with the hijackers’ takeover of Flight 93, and the passengers’ decision to fight back. Unlike the outside exhibits, the inside exhibits do not end with the investigation at the site. The public response to commemorate the event and the emergence of makeshift memorials near the crash site are also part of the exhibits. Material evidence includes artifacts and plane parts recovered from the crash site. These are behind glass, and displayed below the information written on the exhibition panels. Again, photographs of the passengers and crew are displayed, and it is noted that the Congressional Gold Medal recognized their “heroic and noble” actions.<sup>22</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the memorial groves surrounding the area between the wall of names and the visitor center create a circle. The architects’ original plan was to replicate the gesture of embrace, and they proposed to plant red maple trees to create this shape. Even the name of the design was “Crescent of Embrace.” With the influence of some bloggers, some people argued that crescent is a reference to Islam, and would dishonor the site. They even argued that the memorial design was oriented toward Mecca, and called it the “Crescent of Betrayal.”<sup>23</sup> As a result of these criticisms, the architects modified the design, and renamed it the “Bowl of Embrace.”

### **2.5.3 National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial**

The National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial commemorates the crew and passengers of Flight 77 and the Pentagon personnel who died that day, and is built on the impact site at the west side of the

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<sup>22</sup> “Since the American Revolution, Congress has commissioned gold medals as its highest expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions.” <http://history.house.gov/Institution/Gold-Medal/Gold-Medal-Recipients/>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.crescentofbetrayal.com/>

building [Figure 12]. The memorial, designed by Julie Beckman and Keith Kaseman, features 184 wing-shaped benches with a pool of water that glows at night. The names of victims are inscribed on the benches, with each bench representing one victim. The benches are arranged according to the age of the victims starting from the youngest, who was three years old. Visitors can see the age difference between the victims as they walk straight from the memorial entrance. The sloping wall located at the western edge gets higher towards the end of the memorial, because it indicates the age range of the victims starting from the youngest one. The orientation of the benches indicates the path of Flight 77, while their edges indicate whether the victim was from the Pentagon or from Flight 77. If the edge of a bench points towards the Pentagon, it belongs to a person who worked there. The benches that point in the opposite direction belong to the victims of Flight 77.

The Pentagon Memorial was dedicated on the seventh anniversary of the attacks, thus three years earlier than the National 9/11 and Flight 93 memorials. Despite being first, the memorial's visitor center remained a work-in-progress at the time of my research. The center is planned as a pentagon-shaped building located in the area of a loop ramp at the Columbia Pike and Washington Boulevard interchange. Thereby, it will be in the vicinity of the Pentagon National Memorial and the 9/11 Pentagon burial site in the Arlington National Cemetery.

Despite the site's military importance, the Pentagon memorial has received relatively little attention in the literature and media, possibly because the attack on the headquarters of national defense was seen as weakness. For some, "The Pentagon is the forgotten 9/11."<sup>24</sup> In this regard, the less amount of attention given to the Pentagon than the other national 9/11 memorials contrasts with the historical trajectory in the commemoration of military dead in the U.S.A.

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<sup>24</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/just-like-korea-is-the-forgotten-war-the-pentagon-is-the-forgotten-911/2016/09/05/049e3e52-713c-11e6-9705-23e51a2f424d\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/just-like-korea-is-the-forgotten-war-the-pentagon-is-the-forgotten-911/2016/09/05/049e3e52-713c-11e6-9705-23e51a2f424d_story.html) (Accessed: 9/5/2016)

Compared with the high number of visitors at the memorials in NYC and Shanksville, there were only a few visitors when I was at the site in 2012 and 2015. The WTC is the icon of 9/11, and Flight 93 draws attention with its heroic story, but details regarding the events that took place at the Pentagon are not much provided. Compared to the National 9/11 and Flight 93 memorials, the Pentagon memorial seems designed to *not* become a tourist attraction. The memorial is quite a solemn place, and while the minimalist design and relatively smaller number of visitors are influential in creating this solemnity, it is important to note that the site is under close security watch because of its proximity to the Pentagon. For instance, dropping someone off in front of the memorial entrance is strictly forbidden.

An interfaith chapel known as the Pentagon Memorial Chapel was added to the Pentagon in 2002, as part of the reconstruction work. The chapel is less than 100 feet away from where the plane hit the building, and therefore it is near the memorial site, although the public is not able to see it. The chapel is designated for people from different faiths, and thus holds a prayer service for Muslims.<sup>25</sup> Considering the protests against the Flight 93 memorial's originally proposed crescent shape and the building of an Islamic community center (often referred to as the "Ground Zero mosque") near the WTC, it is important to note that the memorial chapel at the Pentagon has not received any particular criticism for holding Islamic services.

In contrast to the national 9/11 memorials, the local 9/11 memorials have town or city level importance. They are established in locations away from the event sites, and built through the members of local community. In the next chapter, I describe the process of acquiring a steel artifact and memorial-building, and thereby introduce the actors who took part in this memorialization process.

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2010/US/08/18/pentagon.chapel.islam/> (Accessed: 2/15/2016)

### **3.0 BUILDING STEEL MEMORIALS**

The memorialization of the steel artifacts developed through local initiatives that gained functional roles in the 9/11 commemorations. These memorials that incorporate the same type of artifact across distant geographical locations form an emergent “memoryscape” in which local memorialization practices interact with the personal and national memory of 9/11. I refer to the actors of the memorialization process as “agents of memory” (Vinitzky-Seroussi 2002, 2009) to emphasize their creative role in the formation of the memoryscape. The local memorials are not only mnemonic devices to remind 9/11, but they are also cultural productions suggested particular ways for how 9/11 should be commemorated and remembered.

My purpose in this section is to demonstrate the steps of the WTC steel artifacts’ memorialization process, and introduce the work undertaken by the agents of memory. This process is important for understanding the circumstances in which the memorials flourished, especially because such wide-scale, and simultaneous memorialization has not taken place for any artifact before.

#### **3.1 AGENTS OF MEMORY**

In 2009, the PANYNJ announced they were open to requests from municipal agencies and non-profit organizations to acquire a piece of WTC steel. As the following excerpt shows, in their

announcement the PANJNY stated they would make the WTC steel pieces available for public displays:

The Port Authority is soliciting proposals from public and municipal agencies and not-for-profit organizations interested in acquiring a piece of 9/11 World Trade Center steel for public display. (...) The letter [requesting a piece of steel] should describe your organization or agency, specify the type of artifact you are requesting, how the artifact will be used, an architectural description of the place where it would be displayed (e.g. metal case with glass panel), and other pertinent information and photos, designs or sketches of the proposed display. Our distribution is limited to public and municipal agencies and not-for-profit organizations.<sup>26</sup>

The September 11<sup>th</sup> Families' Association cooperated with the PANYNJ to spread the announcement among potentially interested groups, such as fire, police, and EMS departments, and municipal agencies. Then and current President of the association, Lee Ielpi, is a firefighter who lost his son, also a FDNY firefighter, on 9/11, and through his connections to fire services the announcement spread easily among the fire companies.<sup>27</sup> The letter written by Lee Ielpi on behalf of the September 11<sup>th</sup> Families Association and the PANYNJ was addressed particularly to emergency personnel, and presented the availability of the steel artifacts as a rare opportunity:

The steel must be used in a memorial open to the general public such as in parks, training grounds for uniformed personnel or places of public assembly. ***The steel is not intended for and may not be used in personal collections, sold or used for fundraising.*** All requests for steel need to be in writing on official letterhead from an officer of a federal, state, or local agency, or a not profit organization. Requests from outside the United States are also welcome.

This is a rare opportunity to create a lasting memorial honoring the lives lost and educating future generations about the events of September 11, 2001. Everyday, your work as emergency personnel demonstrates the power of good. A public memorial to the victims and heroes of 9/11 is a powerful way to insure their memory lives on in your community.

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<sup>26</sup> One of my informants gave me a copy of this announcement. It was titled "PA Seeks New Homes for WTC 9/11 Steel."

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Peter Miller, retired PANYNJ manager.

The letter ended with a note to saying all requests must be sent to the PANYNJ. Copies of that letter and the PANYNJ announcement were circulated on the Internet and published in newspapers as well. My informants learned of the availability of the steel artifacts either through newspapers, especially *The New York Times*, or through fire magazines and the e-mail groups that they were members of. I acquired a copy of Lee Ielpi's letter through my informants, who framed it and hung on the wall of their department's main entrance, side-by-side with the pictures of the steel artifact, and the tag that was attached to the steel when they received it [Figure 13]. Having the letter and the steel tag framed and hung on the wall demonstrates the value they attribute to the artifact, and to their own status as the new owners of it.

The memorialization process began with sending applications to the PANYNJ, and according to my informants, it took almost a year to get the approval. A few applicants were fortunate enough to receive a steel piece in the size and shape they wanted, but most had to take whatever piece the PANYNJ assigned to them. At the very beginning of the process, some had a chance to make a visit to Hangar 17 at JFK airport (where the artifacts were stored) and choose their own piece. Peter Miller, retired senior manager of WTC archives at the PANYNJ who took part in the distribution of the steel artifacts, explained that their initial plan was to give this chance to all applicants, but the demand increased tremendously that they were not able to invite people to come and pick their own pieces anymore. Among my informants, only three groups had the opportunity to go to Hangar 17, and select the piece they wanted.

After the PANYNJ approved requests, applicants received the paperwork related to the court order and insurance. Regarding the first, the steel pieces were considered as forensic evidence until they had gone through forensic investigations and were released by the court order. Otherwise, the PANYNJ was not allowed to distribute the artifacts. In addition, the

PANYNJ was not responsible for any harm that the steel artifacts might cause. It was the applicant's responsibility to secure necessary insurance coverage, and arrange the transportation of the artifacts. Restrictions also applied to the treatment of the steel. The applicants were not allowed to manipulate it, such as by melting or cutting off pieces as souvenirs, and they had to agree with all these restrictions. My informants were surprised with the amount of paperwork and restrictions regarding the use and display of the steel artifacts.

The applicants formed memorial committees either during the application process, or after they acquired the steel artifact. The memorial committees were usually combined of residents, town officials, and public safety personnel. As is common in committees, there would usually be one or two key individuals who led the initiative, and my informants were those individuals who managed the process. I wondered whether those individuals had taken part in similar projects before, because I thought there might be a tendency to lead the process among those who were experienced in building memorials. However, none of my informants had taken part in a memorial project like this before. One of the groups was experienced in managing their own memorial site dedicated to deceased group members not related to 9/11, yet that was still a different experience than the memorialization of the WTC artifact. Therefore, my informants usually stated they had no idea about building a memorial until they started this project.

Building the memorials usually took about a year, although a few groups were still working to complete their project when I completed field research in September 2015. The period between the acquisition of the steel artifact and memorial dedication included construction of the memorial site and fundraising activities to cover the costs. The majority of the memorials I visited were dedicated on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the tenth anniversary of the attacks. Dedicating the memorial on that day was a conscious decision for my informants, and

they made all the arrangements accordingly to be able to finish the project by the tenth anniversary.

The memorialization of the steel artifacts in all cases had gone through similar stages: application, selecting the piece, fundraising and construction, and dedication. Still, each memorial process was shaped by local factors, with their own priorities, concerns, and challenges.

### **3.2 APPLICATION**

There had always been interest in acquiring artifacts from the PANYNJ, Peter Miller said. Peter was the senior manager of the WTC archives at the PANYNJ, and he directed the steel giveaway program from 2009 to 2010. He is also a 9/11 survivor. He was on the 65<sup>th</sup> floor of the North Tower when the plane hit. We met in NYC to discuss the process of the steel artifacts' distribution. Peter told they considered keeping Hangar 17 as it is with the artifacts, but due to maintenance difficulties and the level of interest in the artifacts, they decided to give the steel away for memorial purposes. Though they knew the program would get attention, the demand for acquiring a steel piece exceeded their expectations. The initial interest in the pieces grew tremendously after the PANYNJ made public announcement. Proving this point, my informants told they came up with the idea of building a permanent memorial to 9/11 after they heard that the steel was available from the PANYNJ. Before that, they did not have plans for building a permanent 9/11 memorial, though they commemorated the event on the anniversaries. "It all fell into place at the same time," one of my informants said, "we had the opportunity to get steel, then we took it from there."

Steve took the initiative to request a steel artifact to set a memorial in their fire station in Salem, MA. He read in *New York Times* that the PANYNJ would give away WTC steel to fire departments. He thought that was a great opportunity and that they needed to do something. He talked about this possibility with his chief and co-workers, and after securing their support he started the application process. Though he and a friend of his from the department worked together to form the project, Steve was the one who prepared the application for the PANYNJ. He was a bit surprised at seeing the rules and restrictions about how the steel pieces must be treated. It was “so much like a private collection,” he recalled, “there were very strict rules on how it should be displayed, and where that can be displayed.” He felt the need to give the demographics of the town and argue why it is a good location for the steel to be publicly displayed, which he described as “I almost had to write them an essay.” Salem is a touristic city drawing visitors with its history; particularly through its connections to the witch trials took place in the late seventeenth century. Steve explained in his application the number of people visiting the city and where the fire station was located, and argued this would give a lot of people the opportunity to come and contact with a piece of the WTC steel. This was very important for him because people were coming to the city usually for the city’s witch-themed attractions, and he thought the memorial would be a special point in the city, adding more to its historical significance.

Rob, from Indianapolis, read about the WTC steel’s availability for memorial purposes on a fire magazine. He felt the need to do something and bring those artifacts to his city, because as a rescue worker who worked on the WTC site he wanted 9/11 to be remembered, but he did not know where to start. After he got the idea of building a memorial with the WTC artifacts, he went to the Crown Hill Cemetery to get advice. I asked him why he went to the cemetery in the

first place, and he said it “made perfect sense” because they “build memorials and monuments for living.” Meanwhile, he earned the support of the firefighters he knew, and continued to have meetings with the cemetery management. Everything gradually grew through new connections and participants. The management of the cemetery introduced Rob to an architect and contractor. “It was a group of people who didn’t know each other,” Rob said. The cemetery helped in designing the memorial and financing throughout the project. Without knowing what sort of an artifact they would receive from the PANYNJ, Rob made plans for two steel beams that would resemble the towers. He prepared a packet that included a description of the intended memorial design, and presented it to the mayor first. He secured the support of the mayor, police and fire chiefs, congressman and governor, and included all these into the packet that he submitted to the Port Authority. He got the approval from the PANYNJ ten months later in 2010.

Except the Acton 9/11 Memorial in Massachusetts, the memorials that my informants initiated were all the first permanent memorials dedicated to 9/11 in their towns. Acton had a memorial dedicated in memory of the two residents who died in the attacks, but with the steel’s availability they altered the memorial and moved it to the front yard of the town’s public safety complex. Bill (firefighter), and Carl (police officer) worked together to start the application process. Bill received an email stating that artifacts from the PANYNJ would be available to fire departments, and mentioned this to Carl and his lieutenant. The 9/11 memorial in memory of the two town residents who perished in the attacks was small and built, impromptu, composed of a granite bench and a memorial walkway with a dedication stone, and was not visible enough. If they could get a piece of steel, Bill thought they could take out the old memorial and incorporate it into a new structure, which is what they did. They formed a committee with people from their departments, town, and residents that had backgrounds in engineering. Then they

contacted the family members in Acton who had lost their spouses on 9/11, to ask if they approved of the initiative. They applied to the PANYNJ with the town's support, and it took over a year until they heard that they would receive a piece.

Besides the information circulated on the Internet and newspapers, word-of-mouth was also effective in the spread of information. My informants received calls from people asking their advice about contacting the PANYNJ, going through the application process, and building a memorial.

### **3.3 SELECTING THE STEEL PIECES**

Only three groups among my informants had the chance to visit the hangar to choose the piece they would like. Others described the kind of piece they wanted, and the PANYNJ tried to meet their requests, if possible. However, most of my informants did not even have the opportunity to do that, but were willing to get anything that the PANYNJ would assign to them. Yet even in those cases the PANYNJ had to discuss the appropriateness of the pieces with the applicants, because the size and weight of the steel mattered for transportation arrangements and the space limitations of the designated memorial site.

Peter, the retired PANYNJ manager I introduced earlier, recalled that they received various requests, and approved all except a few cases that were not considered appropriate for memorial purposes. For instance, they rejected an application that asked for a small piece of steel to make a dagger. He recalled that they usually received three types of requests. First, people asked for two straight beams to resemble the twin towers. Second, they were asked for damaged steel pieces to evoke trauma. Third, religious organizations asked for crosses. A Jewish group

requested a small piece of steel to incorporate in a *grogger*,<sup>28</sup> which was approved. Even before I asked to Peter, he added that no Islamic organizations had requested a piece, even though they were prepared for such a request. He knew it might raise controversy, but they would still give the steel in such a case. One group returned the steel they had received because their lawyer objected to PANYNJ's release form, which stated the PANYNJ was not responsible for any damage the artifacts might cause. The group returned the steel to avoid any potential risks, such as contamination.

"I know what I wanted, and what I wanted was two upright beams. They had steel bended and all kinds, but my focus was that I wanted them to kind of emulate the two towers," Rob said about the Indianapolis 9/11 Memorial. Ten months later his request was approved, and the PANYNJ gave two 22-foot steel beams for *Project 9/11 Indianapolis* [Figure 14]. For the Acton 9/11 memorial in MA, Bill and Carl also requested two 5-foot pieces to symbolize the towers, but they were assigned one piece 10-feet tall. They had to cut the piece in half to symbolize the towers and incorporated them into their memorial [Figure 15].

Another memorial that emulated the twin towers is the Hudson 9/11 Memorial in New Hampshire. Keith, firefighter and the president of the memorial committee, submitted the memorial plan drawn by an architect, and provided letters of support from the town in the application. Originally, he requested two beams that would represent the towers, and contacted PANYNJ several times to get a steel piece big enough for their memorial. They were not able to get two beams in the end, instead receiving one 23-foot I-beam. Keith saw the beam in the pictures sent from the PANYNJ, but he did not see how it actually looked until the day they went to the hangar to pick it up. In order to represent the second tower in the memorial, they asked a

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<sup>28</sup> A *gragger* or *grogger* is a tool used in *Purim*, to make noise when Haman's name is mentioned. Symbolically, it denounces Haman, a figure in the Hebrew Bible who wanted to persecute the Jews.

local company to build a metal structure that would look like a tower, and added it to the memorial [Figure 16].

Since the demand for the steel artifacts exceeded the PANYNJ's expectation, they had to negotiate the size and shape of the artifacts with the applicants. Steve, who put the application for Salem's memorial, recalled the change in their negotiations with the PANYNJ. Originally they were supposed to get 6-8 foot piece, but due to the increasing demand the PANYNJ could not fulfill their request, and they ended up getting a smaller, 3-foot piece [Figure 17]. This change in the size of the steel altered their plans because originally Steve and his friends planned to have a procession from New York City to bring the steel to their city. They changed their plans when the piece got smaller, and had it shipped from New York instead.

Massachusetts's FEMA Urban Search & Rescue team was among those participated to the rescue work at the WTC within the first week of the attacks. Jack and Brad are members of the team, and had the chance to go to Hangar 17 to choose the steel piece for their memorial. The piece they selected was from the North Tower and part of the "impact steel," which is the special name given to the steel pieces that were directly affected by the planes when they hit the towers, and these pieces are known by their bent forms and melted sections that happened as a result of direct contact with the planes. They chose this piece from the North Tower, for two reasons. First, the impact steel from the South Tower was originally located fifty floors lower than the North Tower impact steel, and therefore they were much heavier and bigger. (The steel pieces get lighter and thinner as the floors go up.) It would be difficult to handle such heavy pieces. The second reason is the symbolic meaning of the North Tower, because they used the North Tower as their point of reference during the rescue search at the WTC site.

The PANYNJ and the applicants reviewed the size and weight of the steel with each other to make sure the applicant would have the resources to handle it, but except for the few above cases, applicants usually did not have the option to make a choice about what they would get. “You get what they give you,” was the common response among my informants. Rich, resident and the chairman of the Dracut Historical Society, took the initiative to acquire a steel artifact for the 9/11 Memorial in Dracut, MA. He was hoping to get a piece that was twisted because he thought that would demonstrate the destruction, but he could not state such a preference. “We knew exactly what we were getting,” because they discussed how much weight and size they could handle, “but we didn’t know what it looked like,” he explained.

### **3.4 PROJECT DESIGN AND LOCATION**

Designing the memorials was usually a collective work discussed among the members of the memorial committee, though sometimes an individual came up with the design plan and implemented it. For the Dracut’s memorial, Rich contacted the town manager after he read on a newspaper that the WTC steel would be available from the PANYNJ. The town manager gave the whole project to Rich, and together they applied to the PANYNJ. Rich was the primary lead in acquiring the steel, and setting it up as a memorial at the front lawn of the fire station. His background in engineering helped him planning and building the memorial site.

In most cases, the memorial committee or the individual who led the process came up with the idea of a potential memorial design, and then asked help from engineers and architects they knew. Designing the memorial depended on the size and form of the steel piece. Since getting the approval from the PANYNJ and seeing the pieces took almost a year, some

informants did pre-work based on their expectations, and others waited to see the steel before making any design plan. Those who were able to get bigger steel pieces tended to have elaborate designs and processions, while the smaller pieces took the form of simple displays of them, and lacked processions because they were usually shipped from New York City. For the Acton 9/11 Memorial, Bill and Carl had drawn sketches of what they wanted to do. They wanted to display two steel beams symbolizing the towers on a pentagon shaped base, but their plan was not finalized until they saw the actual steel piece and discussed with the other members of the committee. Despite having multiple meetings and different design suggestions within the committee, they kept going back to the original design that Bill and Carl had sketched on a napkin when they first thought about building a memorial. They worked with an engineer to build the memorial, and since the town already had a 9/11 memorial built impromptu years ago after the attacks, they incorporated the elements—bench and memorial bricks—from the old memorial into the new one.

Interestingly, more than once I heard sketches drawn on napkins. Through this detail of the sketches drawn on napkins, my informants actually pointed to the consensus they reached in the memorial design, and thereby pointed to the aptness of their design to memorialize 9/11. When Carl mentioned that they returned to the original design drawn on a napkin, his point was to show the design's properness and functionality. The Hudson 9/11 Memorial was also designed quickly. Keith, the president of the committee, told despite having more than twenty people in the committee, it only took fifteen minutes to come up with the memorial design. One of the members drew a sketch showing two beams representing the towers on a pentagon shaped area, and Keith recalled it only took fifteen minutes and everyone agreed despite the large group size. They kept the napkin from that meeting and gave it to the town's historical society. The

memorial design has not changed since then, except adding a few more details such as the inclusion of flight paths into the design. In other words, the stories about the quick memorial designs, as the sketches drawn on napkins, are told not to portray the process as having been simple, but rather to show the determination and sincerity put into the project. This is why the Hudson memorial committee kept the napkin and gave it to the historical society. “What still gets me today: there was never any issues. We had some bumps because of construction, but there were never any disagreements on the plan. The fifteen minutes... It was amazing! We were really shocked when we said out we had done the first meeting,” Keith told. Another memorial that was sketched on a napkin was in King of Prussia, PA. John, the firefighter I met when I was at the memorial site, brought up the point that the architect drew the sketch on a napkin in less than ten minutes. Like the Hudson committee that gave the napkin to the town’s historical society, John also told that they framed it, and gave it to one their fire stations.

The ultimate design of the Dracut 9/11 Memorial was determined by the size of the steel the PANYNJ gave, Rich told. Rich designed how the steel piece would be displayed in front of the fire station as a memorial, keeping it simple to keep the construction costs low. In contrast to Rich who designed the memorial on his own, some of my informants worked with professionals in designing their memorials. For instance, in case of the 9/11 Memorial in Natick, MA, the brother of the then fire chief, who was a professor of landscape architecture, gave the memorial design to his students as a semester project. The memorial in Acushnet, MA was also designed with the help of a professor and his students [Figure 18]. Dan, the fire chief who initiated the Acushnet’s 9/11 memorial, started a Facebook page the day they brought the steel to the town, because he thought publicizing the steel on social media might be helpful to raise funds for the memorial’s construction. Within two days he got a message from a firefighter from a nearby

town, explaining that he and his brothers were artists with degrees in sculpture, and they could help building the memorial. Their professor from the university also became involved in the project, and three of them—Jason, his brother James, and their professor Matt—voluntarily worked to design the memorial. They and the committee generated various proposals together about how the steel artifact must be displayed. At the beginning Dan recalled that the emphasis was on the firefighters lost. Since the fire department received the steel, and he thought they needed to focus on the 343 firefighters who died on 9/11, but later they decided that the memorial should commemorate everyone affected by it.

The selection of the memorial sites depended on the city or town's permission, and to the site's appropriateness for a public memorial. The main criteria were visibility and accessibility. For the Indianapolis memorial, the city identified six potential sites, which included Firefighters Museum, and a fire station. Yet, Rob explained the sites were not adequate for the display, and he did not want the memorial to be interpreted as a firefighters' memorial. Though the current site is also nearby a fire station, it is a highly visible and accessible spot next to the Indiana Central Canal, and across Indiana Historical Society. For the Acton's memorial (MA), Bill and Carl had to get the approval of the town because they wanted to redesign the town's original 9/11 memorial, and move it to the front lawn of the town's public safety complex. Some memorials are located in public parks. For instance, the Hudson memorial is located near the main entrance in Benson Park, which was used to be a private zoo and amusement park. The town owns the park now, and it is still going through a transformation. The memorial committee did not consider the park first, but later they thought the memorial would be the cornerstone of the park and liked the idea. With the permission of the selectmen they secured the site and started construction.

The city of Suwannee, GA has its 9/11 memorial in the Town Center Park. Paul, city manager, and Linda, assistant city manager, together took part in the process of building the site. They considered several locations to place the steel piece. First, they thought about putting it at a police substation, but then a war veteran who worked for the city at the time brought to their attention that the area was not “solemn enough” for the memorial because it was highly trafficked. Then, the committee decided to run a solicitation process to decide the best location. They made the information about and pictures of the steel piece public, and requested proposals from artists. Though they wanted the memorial to be near the town center area, they did not have a specific location in mind because they wanted the artists to come with their own ideas and propose the site that would fit their project. In addition to the memorial’s current location, they also considered the city hall, and a spot between the fire and police station. Yet, because of practical considerations related to urban design, implementation, and maintenance the park seemed as the best option. “The place needed a certain amount solemnness,” Paul said, and some sites did not have that due to factors like the presence of a playground nearby. Some sites were potential places for future development, and they did not want the memorial to be moved in the future. Yet the main question, Linda told me, was “Does it feel right?” The memorial’s placement in the Town Center Park felt right to them because it was a “serene” place, a secluded part of the park with granite walls, walkways, and stairs. They did not want to put it by the city hall because they did not want the city and the area be defined by a tragedy. They also did not want it to be “intruding.” “We didn’t want people, every time they walk there [in the park], thinking what a horrible tragedy that was,” Linda added. They nicknamed the current location the “serene place” because it is a secluded site, which is visible, but not dominating.

The location of Dracut's 9/11 memorial (MA) is exceptional due to its special circumstance. The memorial is located on the front lawn of a fire station, and it is also facing the family farm of John Ogonowski—Dracut resident, and the pilot of Flight 11 that crashed into the North Tower. There is a memorial stone dedicated to his name at the farm's entrance, and the 9/11 memorial is looking towards that direction. Rich explained putting the steel by a fire station was their main intention since the beginning. However, the reason for the selection of that particular station was its closeness to Ogonowski's farm.

### **3.5 FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNITY**

"Our way of giving back to the community," John repeated several times when he was explaining the significance of the King of Prussia 9/11 Memorial. The important thing about the memorial for him was to see that community was benefiting from it, especially the children because many of them were not born when 9/11 happened. My informants often praised the notion of community and the community support they had received. Donations and voluntary work were the indicators of this support for them. Therefore, the stories of how they collected funds and the voluntary work involved were the subjects they emphasized most in our conversations.

The memorials were funded by donations, except in a few cases, like Suwanee (GA), where the memorial was built as part of the city's public art initiative. While large-scale projects like the 9/11 memorial in Indianapolis cost more than \$350,000, the memorial costs usually varied between \$10,000 - \$80,000. These numbers indicate the value of memorial construction. The actual costs were much lower because much of the work was donated. For instance,

volunteers did all the work for the Acushnet 9/11 Memorial and construction companies did not charge, and therefore the memorial practically had no financial cost for the memorial committee to meet.

Fundraising included activities such as selling memorial bricks, pens, t-shirts, commemorative coins, organizing public events like comedy nights, and taking the steel to parades to publicize it. For the Acushnet memorial, the committee had plans to raise funds, but in the end they did not have to pay for anything because everyone donated their service. Also, this process revealed connections to 9/11. When Dan went to a local distributor to purchase paving stones for the memorial, the distributor did not want money and told the story of his wife who was on a plane at the time of the attacks. That was personal to him, Dan told, and that's why he wanted to contribute to the memorial. Whatever they needed, from the excavation of the site to its lighting, was donated, and Dan recalled the story of each donation and the connection he shared with each donor. The donors did not know others were also donating their services, so it was not part of an organized fundraising program. One day they needed an auger, and Dan came across a group of workers putting in traffic lights, who had an auger. Dan told them about the hole they needed to dig, and the same day on the way back to their company they stopped by the memorial site and volunteered to dig the hole. The construction of the memorial took place in summer, and Dan recalled residents frequently brought refreshments to those working at the site.

Keith described the construction process of the Hudson memorials as follows: "Once we announced it to the public, we had people coming in and showing up, and say 'What can I do to help?', 'I can't help on the committee but I can help provide funds.' Businesses did the same thing. The support was unbelievable." He was proud that they did it "together as a community." Sarah, a member of the committee and the photographer of the memorial, recalled people

stopped by to help when they were working on the construction: “The interesting thing is, when we were doing this people that were in the park just for a walk would come over and shovel, and move a brick or two. They just came over and just jumped right in.” The committee set up tents in the town to collect donations, promoted the project through local T.V. channels, and took the steel beam to parades such as that for the Fourth of July. In those parades, members of the fire department accompanied the steel on a flatbed truck, while volunteers walked behind the steel beam collecting donations for the memorial. Sarah described those parades as emotional events in relation to the people’s reaction to the steel artifact:

One of the biggest parades around invited us to come with the beam. So we did. Again 100-degree weather... We walked for five miles, over bridges, and people would stand up. (...) We get to some spots and people were just quiet, hands over their heart, or they were saluting. Other spots we would get to they were cheering, waved their flags. And, imagine walking down the street with this [the steel]. You are already emotional, and they start singing the Star-Spangled Banner... Hundreds of people, because there were ten thousands people at the parade, and it was just so moving.

For the Indianapolis’s memorial, Rob told he “literally worked every day” for almost two years because there was always something to do, such as scheduling meetings and organizing fundraising events, which also included taking the steel beam to public events such as the state fair. Financial support grew gradually as news about the steel beam became widespread. They raised money through individual and corporate donations, and in fourteen months they were able to raise over \$400,000. He is a member of a motorcycle club, and has connections to veterans’ organizations. Members of these organizations supported the memorial not only financially, but also symbolically by accompanying the steel’s procession and the commemoration ceremonies. They sold thousands of memorial items like t-shirts and coins, and many volunteered to help to sell them.

Kim is an Acton resident who lost her husband on 9/11, and was one of the family members Bill and Carl contacted when they decided to renew the town's 9/11 memorial by incorporating the WTC steel and moving it to the front lawn of the public safety complex. They informed her about their plans and sought her consent. Kim supported them, and the memorial committee included her and Sean, who had lost his wife on 9/11, in every decision about the memorial. Kim contributed to this process whenever possible, though she thought the memorial committee was never demanding towards them. "We felt like recipients of it [the memorial] as opposed to participants," Kim thought. She was present at the fundraising events, and volunteered to participate in the games that took place. However, watching the memorial committee going to town events, collecting money, selling t-shirts to support the memorial was priceless to her. She was there when they brought the steel and unloaded it. Seeing the procession arranged for that day, and thinking about all the efforts went into the project, Kim pointed out the community's role in all of this.

I have done these things, I know how much work goes into this kinds of events, and this kind of fundraising. And it's just incredible to me that they took this on in their spare time. They had young babies, young children. Gratitude doesn't even touch on how I feel.

(...)

I think, when you're here, New York and everything that happened with those buildings and the planes is very removed... Almost like it's an out of sight, out of mind kind of thing. When you drive by such a prominent place and you see the steel, it's like people ask what are those rusty things standing there. And, especially when people walk by going into the building... I guess it reflects just how intense the damage was, because it is all twisted, and all of that... So you sort of see the damage, but you see that's a community... that the community came together, they are trying to heal that damage.

Besides the already known connections to 9/11, new and unknown ones were revealed during the memorialization process. One informant from the town of Natick, MA said the fundraising process had been an "eye-opener", since he realized many people in the town

actually had relatives in the towers and on the planes when they started buying memorial bricks in memory of those people. Memorials revealed connections at other places as well. When the steel piece was unveiled after its arrival in Suwanee, GA, Linda and Paul realized the connections that the city had to 9/11. “Everybody has some connection, we all know someone who was connected to somehow,” Linda said. Yet, this was not a conscious motivation for them when they applied to get a steel piece. Rather, they wanted to build the memorial considering the general impact of 9/11; they were not thinking of a particular connection to the city when they started the project. Paul described his experience as the following:

I didn’t realize that one of our dispatchers’ sisters was a first responder. One of our planning commissioners at the time happened to be in New York in the hotel, and he went and did triage physically there during the time. After [the memorial] the stories of personal connections mushroomed out in ways that I wasn’t fully aware of until then.

The Hudson 9/11 Memorial also brought volunteers, family members, and survivors together. A family member who lost her cousin in one of the towers wrote multiple letters to Keith and the committee to thank them for their efforts and providing family members with a “to go to place” near their homes. On the day of the memorial dedication, Sarah, the photographer of the memorial project, and Keith saw someone with a NYPD uniform in the audience. The visitor was a retired NYPD officer now living in New Hampshire. On 9/11, she was at the WTC site and searched for people. Sarah and Keith met her after the ceremony. Sarah recalled the visitor had brought with her a stuffed animal and some papers that she found at the site on 9/11, and showed them to the people that came to talk to her. Meeting her and listening to her stories was quite an emotional experience for Sarah, and the visitor became a very special person for her. Keith and Sarah stayed in touch with her in the following years, and invited her to one of the memorial ceremonies as a guest speaker.

### 3.6 CONCERNS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPOSITIONS

Considering the controversies regarding the memorial designs at the national 9/11 memorials, I discussed with my informants whether they had any concerns, challenges, or opposition during the memorialization process. One of the major issues that they paid particular attention to was to make people know no public funds were used in the memorial construction. This is why it was important for them to highlight that funding for the memorials came from corporate and individual donations. Another concern was the misrepresentation of the memorials as firefighter or law enforcement officer memorials only. There are such local memorials, dedicated only to firefighters or police officers, but the majority of my informants stated that they avoided such representations, and dedicated the memorial either to the day or to everyone who died on the attacks, as the following statement shows:<sup>29</sup>

What we wanted to do was to make sure we covered everyone. We wanted New York represented, we wanted the Pentagon represented, and we wanted Pennsylvania represented. Everybody agreed we need to make sure we include all. (...) One of the big concerns at the start: because the fire department started the process that it was going to be dedicated to the three hundred and forty-three firefighters. And, I actually made it perfectly clear that this is not the firefighters', this is for everybody. We lost a resident in town, we wanted to make sure we honor that resident.

One of my informants told that his initial idea to get a steel piece did not generate much support among his colleagues. "A lot of people didn't see the same way I did," he said, and added that they perhaps did not like the thought of 9/11 or the thought of a 9/11 memorial. From his point of view, getting a steel artifact and building a memorial was a gesture of remembering the dead. However, he thought others had thought they were sort of "prolonging" it. He tried to

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<sup>29</sup> I discuss this subject again in the narrative chapter.

explain them that “it is just a memorial,” almost downgrading it, and as the project developed he got their support. Similar to this case, another informant mentioned that there was first some apprehension from the members of the department including himself that they could not imagine one would want a piece from the WTC buildings. “That doesn’t really seem cool to go and take something that so many lives were lost that day,” he explained. Though the idea of having a steel piece sounded offensive at first to some, he added that their opinions changed later as they thought more about the plan. Disagreements were settled after they had come to view the piece as “something that you can put your hand on and really reflect on what happened that day.”

When the artists John Van Alstine and Noah Savett in Saratoga Springs, NY assembled large pieces of WTC steel to create the memorial sculpture named *Tempered by Memory*, their project had received both negative and positive reaction [Figure 19]. The site originally designated for the sculpture was in front of the city center, but as the sculpture got bigger the site became too small for the display. The city considered a spot near the visitor center as an alternative location, but that raised public concerns since some board members argued that people might get injured because of the size and form of the sculpture. John recalled that one person even argued that people would get injured and killed. In addition, John and Noah recalled that some people did not want to see the beams, saying they did not want to be reminded of the tragedy everyday. Some others thought the project was pouring salt on the national wound. On the other hand, other people saw the project as an uplifting memorial, especially the ironworkers who took part in the construction phase of the sculpture. Despite the controversies, the project was completed by the tenth anniversary, and was placed at the center of High Rock Park in Saratoga Springs.

In Suwanee, GA some people thought the artists would manipulate the steel and turn it into a sculpture, and they objected to such treatment since they found it disrespectful. However, this had never been the intention of the committee, and the concerns faded after people realized the actual plans for the memorial. The major concern for the committee was the accuracy of the information that would be displayed at the site. They spent hours in deciding which source of information to rely on to represent the timeline of the events and the number of the dead accurately. I discuss the concerns raised in Suwanee in Chapter 6 as part of the narrative analysis. In Indianapolis, two people petitioned to stop the construction, arguing that there are too many buildings in the city and the memorial would take away green space. The memorial committee and the petitioners discussed the situation with the city commission, and the commission found in favor of the committee. In addition, the memorial committee transplanted some trees, and planted new ones for those that could not be transplanted.

Consequently, though the local memorials I introduced in this section were all based on the incorporation of the same type of artifact, each memorial was a distinct project and had their own priorities and concerns. My informants approached to these memorials not only as tributes to 9/11, but also as community work. This is why they often emphasized the importance of the voluntary support and donations they received for their project. The sites where the memorials were built did not have a prior significance related to 9/11, but the memorials—especially the presence of the steel artifacts—converted them into the sites of commemoration, which I discuss in detail in the following chapters (4&5).

#### **4.0 RELICS OF 9/11: ARTIFACTS TURNED INTO SOCIAL ACTORS**

On my way to Coatesville, PA in summer 2015, I took a break at the South Midway service plaza in Bedford. While I was going towards the plaza's main entrance, I noticed two pieces of concrete wall standing on my right. They were placed behind the Blue Star Memorial Highway marker, which is a tribute to the United States armed forces. As someone who had been tracking the WTC steel artifacts for two years, these two pieces of concrete got my attention immediately. Seeing them behind a memorial highway marker made me think that they might be memorials too. As I read the information board, I learned that the pieces of concrete were part of an exhibit about model road construction, specifically the construction of the original Pennsylvania Turnpike road, and the concrete sections were taken from the original road [Figure 20]. The following explanation was on the information board:

Construction of the original Pennsylvania Turnpike utilized the most modern processes and construction methods available and accepted in the late 1930's. (...) The exhibit slabs were salvaged from an original section of abandoned turnpike adjacent to the current Breezewood Interchange.

The salvaged pieces of the original turnpike road and the WTC steel are commemorating two very different subjects. While the concrete pieces are tributes to the 1930's road construction techniques that were progressive for their time, the pieces of the WTC steel commemorate one of the most traumatic events in the United States history. Yet, they both relate to the tradition of collecting artifacts that have historical importance. As in the case of the turnpike road exhibit,

sometimes those artifacts are kept as historical documentation. However, some artifacts go beyond documenting history, and are attributed a special meaning and power due to their direct connection to an event or person. Artifacts of this second type are often referred to as relics to signify their authenticity and importance, and some seem even to be considered sacred, either in religious terms or with secular references that seem nearly religious, and evoke sentimental reactions.

If we are to define the sacred as undisputable and removed from the everyday realm (Schramm 2011:5), things may become sacred both in religious and secular contexts. For instance, discussions on the concept of civil religion have demonstrated that secular ideals and national values such as the national flag and sacrifice for the nation are often attributed sacredness, and venerated in ways reminding religious practices (Bellah 2005[1967], Coleman 1970, Halmond 1976, Warburg 2009). As I discussed in Chapter 2, the concept of civil religion does not necessarily suggest links to a divine power. Though Bellah (2005[1967]) and Warburg (2009) noted the presence of religious references in public ceremonies, others (Coleman 1970, Halmond 1976) pointed out the ways secular practices resemble religious devotions. Coleman (1970) showed the applicability of this definition to secular states, including the Soviet Union, and argued that secular nationalism is also a civil religion. For Soviet Russia, he argued, “The Russian civil religion included saints (Lenin entombed), sacred feasts (May Day), and crucial belief in Russia’s special role in unfolding world history as the spearhead of the socialist revolution” (1970:73). In this regard, “sacred” is not always a religious term, but rather indicates a transcendental quality attributed to people and things, including secular references.

The pieces of the WTC steel are thus not only historical artifacts, but also sacred relics, because they have been attributed a special meaning which differentiates them from everyday

items and other 9/11 artifacts, and became the central focus of the nation-wide commemorations. Like religious relics, they are also objects of efficacy, in the eyes of those who memorialized them. By efficacy of the steel, I refer to the attribution of power to it, the sentimental reactions it evokes, and the enactment of this power and sentiment in ceremonies. As I stated in the Introduction, religious symbolism formed a significant part of the 9/11 commemorations and the steel artifacts' memorialization, but my informants often used the word "sacred" in non-religious sense as well to emphasize the artifacts' efficacy and distinctiveness, and their significance for remembering 9/11. Still, it was not uncommon among my informants to approach the steel as a supernatural object, especially when they associated it in their imagination with the deaths of thousands. Thus even if the steel artifacts are not fundamentally religious objects, the difference between them and religious relics is small in terms of the practices and sentimental reactions they evoke. This chapter therefore discusses how the steel artifacts were turned into effective objects as relics, and demonstrate how this quality of *relicness* was experienced and manifested in the memorialization of the artifacts.

#### **4.1 POWER OF OBJECTS**

Collecting ordinary artifacts that are associated with outstanding events, places, or people is a practice that dates back at least to the Medieval age. Though such artifacts are generally referred to as "association items" (Barnett 2013), they are also known as relics, souvenirs, and curios (Bird 2013, Maines and Glynn 1993). Maines and Glynn (1993) have used the term "numinous objects" to describe things that are collected not for their aesthetic or informative quality, but "for their association, real or imagined, with some person, place, or event endowed with special

sociocultural magic” (1993:10). The magical aspect that Maines and Glynn have mentioned is found especially in objects that are known as relics, and is linked to a problem that has long been of interest in anthropology: the power of objects (Gell 1988, MacGaffey 1990, Mauss 1990[1954], Strother 2000, Pietz 1985). Marcel Mauss’s *The Gift* is still among the most influential works in anthropology that focused on the role of objects in the creation and continuity of social relations. Mauss observed that the objects that were exchanged during gift giving created an obligation to reciprocate. He was interested in finding out the source of this obligation, asking, “What rule of legality and self-interest, in societies of a backward or archaic type, compels the gift that has been received to be obligatorily reciprocated? *What power resides in the object given that causes its recipient to pay it back?*” (1990:3 [emphasis added]). According to Mauss, the source of that power was the giver of the gift. Giving a gift was to give some part of oneself, and accepting the gift was to accept “some part of his [the giver’s] spiritual essence, of his soul” and that part had to be given back (1990:12). This obligation of giving back was the motive of gift exchange, and social relations continued through exchange.

For Mauss, the study of gift exchange in pre-industrial societies was important to understand “a stage in social evolution” (1990:47). The base of his argument was the assumption that industrial (Western) societies had things and persons as distinct categories, in contrast to pre-industrial non-Western societies, an understanding that had always been influential in making sense of non-Western cultural practices. Works of later anthropologists (Appadurai 1986, Gell 1988, Hoskins 1998, 2006, Munn 1986, Strathern 1988) also proved that the qualities attributed to things and persons often merge and diminish this difference. In considering 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century European and African encounters, the term “fetish” was used by Europeans to describe certain African cultural practices in which material objects were believed to embody

special powers (Pietz 1985). Those objects were believed to have the power to control human behavior and events, and thus the fetish seemed to be incompatible with the understanding of things and persons as distinct categories (Pietz 1985, MacGaffey 1990). Due to the fetish's seemingly incompatible conceptualization, the term fetish often connoted a confrontation with "the other," in which Europeans discounted the power attributed to inanimate objects in pre-industrial non-Western societies.

Fetishism can be seen as reification—"the universal human tendency to apprehend abstraction as things" (Silva 2013:80)—and was not found in non-Western societies only. Considering the power attributed to the relics of saints and to icons in some Christian doctrines, European culture also did not, and does not, distinguish things and persons in all cases. Regarding the veneration of saints' body parts in Europe, Geary (1986) and MacGaffey (1990) argue that relics of saints are both objects and persons. They are valuable not only because they are association items (associated with saints,) but also because they have power to do things, such as heal, as holders of saintly power (Geary 1986, Rufus 1999). This is why devotees are eager to have a chance to touch or kiss the reliquaries, and pilgrims travel long distances even just to see them (Rufus 1999). In Orthodox Christianity, the sacredness and power of the icons are based on the belief in the Incarnation. In the Incarnation, God united with the human nature through which Jesus became "God and man," and thereby "became capable of being depicted" (Kenna 1985:348, see also Ouspensky 1992). "Through the Incarnation, matter itself was 'deified,'" (Kenna 1985: 348). Therefore, the icons depicting figures of religious significance are not representations, but it is believed that they are material forms that maintain a connection with the divine power. The icon must resemble its prototype, Kenna states (1985:349), because it transmits the power of the depicted figures by following certain features in their depiction.

The tendency to attribute power to inanimate objects is not limited to religious belief and practices. In his writing on the fetishization of commodities in capitalist societies, Karl Marx pointed to commodities as objects of intrinsic power. In this regard, studies in economy continue to focus on the fetishization of the objects of consumption (Belk and Wallendorf 1990, Fernandez and Lastovicka 2011). In considering the power of images, art historian David Freedberg (1989) has discussed the treatment of art objects as living beings. Freedberg's starting point was images, specifically artworks that evoke "outwardly markable responses" on viewers, such as kissing an image, crying before or breaking one, and going on journeys to see one (1989:1). Freedberg described the term "response" as "the symptoms of the relationship between image and beholder" (xxii). Consecration and kissing of religious images, iconoclasm, aniconism, fearing an image or desiring it, are a few of the phenomena that Freedberg focused on to show the influence of the images on viewers. He is critical of the Western thinking about art that is focused on formal and aesthetic appreciation and ignorant of the response that images evoke on their viewers. According to Freedberg, the Western approach has explained such responses in terms of "magic," and described them as "irrational" and "superstitious," and thereby prevented any discussion about response. Yet even though the power of images is seen as being indicated by the response to them, Freedberg did not propose that images have a power of their own. He argued that "the power of image arises from the *interaction* between images and people" (1992), and that context conditions response (1989). He also argued that response is not to aesthetic qualities of a representation, but to the present reality that the image formed by becoming what it had represented (1989:245). Still, context is the keyword in his formulation, and response may change if the context changes, just as the response to a forged artwork might be different than to its original.

In his anthropological theory of art, Alfred Gell suggested viewing art as “a system of action” that is “intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic representations about it” (1988:6). In other words, Gell rejected treating art objects as a matter of meaning and communication, and seeing them based on aesthetic appreciation only. Instead, he argued that art is about “doing,” and developed a theory in which he argued that objects exert agency, depending on the socio-cultural context they belong. Kissing a holy icon, according to Gell, “elicit[s] the agency of the image in relieving illness or poverty” (1988: 32). An anthropologist might be interested in the aesthetic qualities of the Asmat shields (Papua New Guinea), but for a warrior on the battlefield the shield is not an object of aesthetic apprehension but a “fear-inducing” shield, Gell explained (1988:6). He viewed the Trobriand prow-boards of the Massim region in Papua New Guinea and their efficacy as a potent psychological weapon aiming to demoralize the opponent (1992:44). The efficacy of the board is not attributed to the visual effects it produces, but to the fact that these effects “are interpreted as evidence of the magical power emanating from the board” (1992:46).

The power attributed to objects enables them to be social actors with specific roles and functions, and they seemingly take on the attributes of persons. The socio-cultural context conditions the response to their efficacy, as Freedberg and Gell argued from different theoretical viewpoints. In the present case, the WTC relics derive their efficacy mostly from the perceived exceptionality of 9/11, and the material connections to the dead and the events. In this regard, they are also enhanced through the notions of nationhood and patriotism.

The following section introduces some of the major association items in American history in order to put the WTC artifacts into a historical context, and illustrate the varying

degrees of power and significance that has attributed to objects of historical and personal importance in the U.S.A.

#### **4.1.1 Historical Overview: Association Items and American Relics**

In Europe and North America, association items formed the earliest collections that would later become the bases of museum collections. According to Barnett, the United States “developed its own canonical sites and collecting traditions, most centering on political and military persons and events and bolstering a patriotic narrative of glorious national origins,” (2013:21) Before the development of manufactured mementos like postcards, souvenirs were often association items, such as samples of soil from battlefields. In 2014, the Smithsonian Institution opened the exhibit “Souvenir Nation: Relics, Keepsakes and Curios” at the National Museum of American History, featuring ordinary yet unusual objects that were kept by their original owners as the reminders of special events, people, and places. Locks of hair belonging to presidents of the United States, a piece from Franklin D. Roosevelt’s birthday cake, fragments of Plymouth Rock, George Washington’s coffin, and the Berlin Wall are a few of the items that were displayed at the exhibit. As the title of the exhibit suggests, many of the objects were originally collected as souvenirs, regardless of their later categorization as relics, mementos, keepsakes, or curios.

Some association items have gained national significance, and thereby became instruments of nation building. According to Bruggeman (2008), Thomas Jefferson was aware of the power of objects and their potential role in nation building. As evidence of this awareness, Bruggeman refers to Jefferson’s letter to his granddaughter. Referring to the American Philosophical Society’s acquisition of two chairs made of the elm tree under which William Penn first signed an Indian treaty, Jefferson wrote the following:

If these things acquire a superstitious value, because of their connection with particular persons, surely a connection with the greater Charter of our Independence may give a value to what has been associated with that; and such was the idea of the enquirers after the room in which it was written. Now I happen still to possess the writing box on which it was written . . . it claims no merit of particular beauty. It is plain, neat, convenient . . . Its imaginary value will increase with years [and, in time, may be] carried in the procession of our nation's birthday, as the relics of the Saints are in those of the Church. [Bruggeman 2008:48]

Jefferson was right. Along with objects of natural history, objects associated with historical persons and events formed the earliest museum collections in the United States, and some of these objects achieved national value. Plymouth Rock, which marks the supposed landing place of the Mayflower Pilgrims in 1620, is still one the most valued relics of American history. As Barnett stated, it was enshrined in the 1770s “as the site of the nation’s originary moment” (2013:21). Pieces and fragments that were taken off the rock became part of museum and private collections. In 1774, the inhabitants of Plymouth attempted to relocate the rock from the shore to the town square, but it was accidentally split into two pieces during its placement on the carriage. While the upper portion was taken to the town square, the base of the rock was left at its original place. Yet, the Pilgrim Society of Plymouth later reunited the rocks and placed them into a monumental enclosure. In 1920, the Rock was carried to its current location, inside a protective cage (Bird 2013: 48).

Pieces of wood taken from the Charter Oak were among the most venerated objects of American history in Connecticut. Though there is no current evidence, it is believed that the colonists hid the charter of Connecticut inside an oak tree when King James II demanded the return of the charter in 1687. According to the legend, the document disappeared mysteriously when it was about to be given to Sir Edward Andros, James II’s appointed governor of New York. It is said that Captain Joseph Wadsworth hid the Charter in the trunk of the oak, and

thereby the independence of the colony was never officially rescinded, and was considered valid when James II left the throne in 1689 (Samuels 1999). The tree died almost two hundred years after the supposed event, and the response to the death of the tree proved its significance for the public imagination. The tree fell in 1856 due to wind, and according to Samuels (1999), its death was announced in newspapers all across the country. People were eager to acquire a fragment of the tree. Miscellaneous furniture was made of the wood of the Oak, such as the Hartford and Connecticut chairs of state, earrings, bracelets, goblets, Bibles, lamps, and musical instruments. In addition to these, the tree was draped with the flag and given a hero's funeral (Samuels 1999).

As Barnett (2013) and Bird (2013) show, besides natural objects such as Plymouth Rock and the Charter Oak, most nineteenth century relics were items that belonged to statesmen and the founding fathers. Among the most popular souvenir-relics collected in the United States are the items associated with George Washington. In 1837, Washington's remains were carried from the family burial vault to Mount Vernon. After the relocation, Washington's family distributed small pieces of wood from the old mahogany coffin (Bird 2013:60). Mount Vernon itself is one of the nation's most visited sites, as a national shrine. Visitors to Mount Vernon often wanted to take a piece with themselves as a souvenir, and they cut off souvenirs from Washington's home (Bird 2013, Lee 2001). In order to prevent such actions, selling objects made of wood from the house was developed as an alternative. Items made of natural features, such as of wood from the trees at Mount Vernon, were also added to the souvenir inventory (Bird 2013). Almost anything related to Washington has had the potential to be converted into a relic. Pieces of marble taken from the Washington monument, bricks from Washington's boyhood home at Wakefield, and pieces of the triumphal arch under which Washington supposedly passed in Trenton were also collected.

The Liberty Bell is both a national icon and one of the most famous relics of the United States. The bell, which was originally made to announce assembly gatherings and warnings, became an icon of the struggle for freedom during the American Revolution (Callahan 1999, Nash 2010). The bell was cast in London and sent to Pennsylvania's State House in Philadelphia in 1751, upon the request of the authorities for a bell that would be big enough to be heard by the large population (Nash 2010). The words from the Bible "Proclaim Liberty thro' all the Land to all the Inhabitants Thereof" were inscribed around its waist, and these words became one of the distinguishing aspects of the bell. Another, and more visible, aspect that distinguishes the bell from others is the giant crack in it. The bell cracked once after the first time it was rung in Philadelphia, and it was recast twice after that. However, it is not known exactly when the current crack occurred.

The bell was mainly used to announce assembly gatherings and notable events such as King George III's ascension to the English throne (1761), the end of the French and Indian War (1763), Benjamin Franklin's departure to England to represent colonial grievances (1764), to protest the Townshend Duties (1768) and the Coercive Acts (1774), and most memorably, the reading of the Declaration of Independence (1776) (Nash 2010). According to Callahan (1999), in the years following the Civil War, the bell served as a symbol of unity for a nation in need of healing. It took several train journeys to the different parts of the United States, travelling across the country between 1885-1915 to be displayed at expositions and fairs, and attracted huge crowds wherever it went.<sup>30</sup> According to Nash (2010:77-8), the demand from the public to see the bell was a solid expression of "the bell's intrinsic—almost magical—power." It received great attention from the public so that every stop the Bell would make was announced (Callahan

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.independencehall-americanmemory.com/the-liberty-bell/> (Accessed: 9/6/ 2016)

1999). Callahan has cited Victor Rosewater's *The Liberty Bell: Its History and Significance* (1926:153) in which Rosewater described the public reactions:

The popular ovation accorded the Bell at every point of its journey surpassed all expectation. From the outset, the sight aroused in those who were viewing it a feeling of mingled ecstasy and awe, a regard for it as something truly sacred, a desire to touch it, yes, to kiss it, to press against it some coin, or ring, or trinket, or flower, to be kept as a memento. [Callahan 1999:68]

Historical accounts say that people reached out to touch the bell and staged ceremonies (Nash 2010:78). According to Nash (2010:85), the *Public Ledger* reported the bell's departure from Philadelphia as follows: "Fathers with their little sons, mothers with babes in their arms, the gaily dressed promenaders, shop girls, clerks, and business men alike were eager to file past the sacred relic."

During the mid- and late-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Liberty Bell became a symbol for social movements, such as the anti-slavery movement. Later, it was used in advertising and tourism as well (Callahan 1999). Today, the Liberty Bell Center in Philadelphia is a national pilgrimage site and tourist attraction with thousands of visitors every day. My last visit to the center was on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 and I had to wait in line for forty minutes to enter. Visitors pass by the information boards quickly to see the Liberty Bell at the end. Though visitors are not allowed to touch the bell, it is surrounded by the crowd of people that want to have their pictures taken with it. Besides the veneration of the original Liberty Bell, which is the one currently on display in Philadelphia, full-scale replicas of the bell were presented to each state in the United States in 1950.

Except for iconic artifacts such as the Liberty Bell, it is important to recall that many of the artifacts that are now part of relic collections were actually collected by individuals as mementos for themselves. Thus most artifacts, such as the pieces of Washington's old coffin,

were in personal collections before they were placed into museums. Yet, as Barnett (2013) argues, though collecting relics had been a common practice, only a few people could actually own them; they circulated primarily among the elites of society—sightseers, antiquaries, and collectors. However, the situation changed after the Civil War. The objects that were collected during and after that conflict belonged to an event that affected common people, and the collectors were not the elites only, but everyone including soldiers, their families, and people living near the battlefields. Therefore, compared to iconic artifacts such as the Liberty Bell, the relics of the Civil War were both items of personal and of collective significance.

Though relics, numinous or association items more broadly, were valuable and meaningful in the eyes of their collectors, they were not necessarily so for historians and museum professionals, who were often suspicious of the items' contribution to the understanding of the past (Barnett 2013, Bird 2013, Mainess and Glynn 1993). For some, the relics were just objects of personal belief and interest, with no historical value. Despite this common view among historians and museum professionals, however, museum collections have never been free of relics, and exhibits such as the Smithsonian's have proved that they too can be part of the interpretation of social history. The artifacts that are on display at various memorial museums resemble this tradition to a certain extent. As Barnett (2013:9) has pointed out, "many of the objects on display in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC— the burned books and defaced religious artifacts, the shoes and other possessions of the dead— are strongly reminiscent of the objects that appeared in the nineteenth-century relic museums," although this time the artifacts on display belonged to an event that did not even take place in the U.S. Barnett's argument can be expanded to the memorial museums commemorating the U.S.-based events, such as the Oklahoma City bombing and the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, along with

other museums such as those housing battlefield remains. In terms of the methods of collecting, those artifacts were not necessarily collected by museum professionals; they have often been donated by those who witnessed the events, since the individuals around the site are usually the ones collecting artifacts as mementos.

The 9/11 artifacts, including the WTC steel remains, are certainly association items taking their significance from their connection to the events of 9/11. However, as not all association items get the same amount of attention, the practices accompanying the 9/11 artifacts also vary. For instance, the memorialization of the steel pieces differs from other artifacts that became museum objects. While the steel pieces are reframed as touchable memorials, the museum objects are untouchable and protected. The steel pieces' nationwide distinguished recognition as commemorative objects provides the memorials with an object of shared experience and reference. Most significantly, the WTC artifacts are treated as relics, in many ways resembling the religious relics with transcendental aspects, especially in locations away from the event sites. In other words, the steel artifacts are more actively engaged in places that are away from the event sites. I will demonstrate this point by giving examples from the fire stations in Manhattan, and the local memorials that are geographically located away from the crash sites. First, however, I discuss the biography of the WTC steel to point out its transformation, and illustrate how the *relicness* of these items differs from the alternative paths they might have gone through.

## 4.2 BIOGRAPHY OF STEEL

Objects, like persons, have life cycles, and the value ascribed to them changes as they move along the different phases of their lives (Appadurai 1986). Igor Kopytoff (1986) has argued that things become commodities not only because they are produced materially as such, but because they are “culturally marked as being a certain kind of thing” (1986: 64). Kopytoff thus shows that the nature of commodities changes as the cultural paradigms change: “The same thing may be treated as a commodity at one time and not at another”, or it may “be seen as a commodity by one person and as something else by another” (Kopytoff 1986:64). Kopytoff therefore suggested that things have biographies like humans, and that a biographical approach can reveal the periods in the thing’s “life,” demonstrating how its use changed over time, as well as the cultural markers associated with it. “At the heart of the notion of biography,” as Gosden and Marshall have stated, “are questions about the links between people and things; about the ways meanings and values are accumulated and transformed” (1999:172). The biography approach provides an analytical framework for examining the WTC artifacts’ transformation into commemorative objects, because it illustrates the turning points in the social life of these artifacts, and thereby shows that the meaning and value ascribed to the WTC artifacts as relics are the products of particular social and cultural contexts. The steel pieces and other building materials had gone through the same life cycles until the attacks took place. Following the attacks and the collapse of the buildings, the artifacts acquired different biographies as rubble and relics of 9/11.

#### **4.2.1 Steel as Construction Material**

Due to technological innovations in transportation, manufacturing, and communications, industrialism in the United States gained tremendous pace during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Hillstrom and Hillstrom 2005). Though both iron and steel production were the major forces of the U.S. economy until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, iron was the leading material, and iron production was much higher than the steel production. For instance, iron production by the Civil War was approximately 75 times higher than the steel production, and that was because producing steel was a costly process and limited to expensive specialized products (Hillstrom and Hillstrom 2005:11). However, steel replaced iron quickly in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when mass production began with the introduction of the Bessemer steel making process.

Steel is a strong and malleable metal, and therefore a more efficient construction material than iron. With mass production, steel replaced iron and became the main construction material for railroads, bridges, and factories. The development of such infrastructures—especially railroads and bridges—increased transportation and trade, and the steel industry kept growing to fulfill the increasing demand. The earliest examples of modern U.S. corporations emerged in this period (Hillstrom and Hillstrom 2005). As its mass production fueled the growth of American industrialism and capitalism, steel remained one of the main symbols of that industrial era. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, steel was being used in the construction of the earliest skyscrapers in the U.S., which later became the nation's architectural symbols (Douglas 2006).

The Twin Towers of the WTC complex were built between 1968 and 1973, though the construction of the other buildings in the complex continued until the 1980s. Soon after the

PANYNJ announced plans for the complex in the 1960s, the project became the focus of political, economic, and environmentalist discussions. As Gillespie (2001) has noted, the beginning of the WTC project corresponded to a period that foresaw a globally engaged U.S., with ambitious projects such as moon landing, but when the WTC project was in progress, especially in the early 1970s, the country was dealing with a series of national crises. The Vietnam War was continuing despite increasing criticisms, and the government itself was even being questioned due the Watergate scandal. In such an unstable period, the necessity of the WTC project was frequently questioned. Many criticized the project arguing that it did not serve the actual needs of the community (Gillespie 2001:130), and some were against sponsorship by a government agency (the PANYNJ) for a real estate project.

Gillespie (2001) documents that complaints and criticisms continued as the construction went on, and they were not only about the project's political and social aspects. Aesthetic quality was also the focal point of criticisms. Art historians and architects denounced the project mainly because of its massive scale (Gillespie 2001). Yet, the towers soon became iconic structures of the Manhattan skyline, symbolizing New York City despite the criticisms of the professionals. The towers were frequently depicted in popular culture, such as movies, magazines, postcards, and souvenirs. They were not only the symbols of New York City, but also icons of American economy and capitalism, and thus potential targets that became real ones. September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 was not the first time the towers became symbolic targets for a terror attack. In 1993, a car bomb exploded below the North Tower killing six people, and the perpetrators were affiliated with al-Qaeda.

The Twin Towers were the tallest buildings in Manhattan, and like many other skyscrapers, steel was the main construction material for the WTC complex. The project needed

almost 185,000 tons of steel, and it was challenging to find a steel company that would have adequate resources for such an amount of production. Inevitably, the WTC complex did not remain only a New York project, because the steel was brought from various companies across the U.S., including from steel plants in Virginia, Pennsylvania, California, Washington, Missouri, Texas, and New York (Gillespie 2001:83, Glanz and Lipton 2004:5). That was a strategic decision the PANYNJ came up at the time to avoid the high manufacturing costs offered to them by the leading steel companies, which were U.S. Steel and Bethlehem Steel (Gillespie 2001, Glanz and Lipton 2004). Although the steel production was contracted to U.S.-based firms, 25% of the steel came from Japan, and when the news became public the decision was criticized, for not using American resources. The PANYNJ had to make an explanation that they had no control over where the steel producers would get their supply (Gillespie 2001:130).

The cultural history of steel in the U.S. explains why this material is often tied to American industrialism. It has a social and cultural significance as an icon of American industrialism, signifying the country's economic development. In the construction of the WTC complex, however, steel was nothing more than a construction material. It was a commodity without any particular significance. Not the steel, but the buildings themselves, due to their massive scales and designation as the World Trade Center, became symbolic in the years followed their establishment. Only after 9/11, following the collapse of the towers, the steel again became a culturally significant artifact, but this time specifically as WTC steel. At various points throughout this dissertation, I point to the connection between the dead and the WTC steel. Yet, it is important to note that the 9/11 memorials are not only memorials for the dead, but also for the buildings that were destroyed. The design of the local memorials illustrate this point very well, because it is a very common choice to erect the steel pieces side by side to resemble

the Twin Towers. It is also common to memorialize New York City and the WTC site in memorial designs, as I discuss in Chapter 5.

In the 1960s, Lukens Steel in Coatesville, PA had produced the steel beams that formed the bases of the Twin Towers, which were also known as “tridents.” The return of the steel tridents from New York City to Coatesville, PA—to the place where they were produced—illustrates the connection between the cultural history of steel and the WTC steel in particular. The National Iron and Steel Heritage Museum in Coatesville, which has ties to the Lukens family, obtained 10 tridents from the PANYNJ, and brought them to Coatesville. The tridents returned home, as the museum calls it. One of the tridents was set up as a memorial dedicated to the steel workers who lost their lives during steel production, and is located at the museum courtyard [Figure 21]. However, at the time of my research, the museum was also planning to use other tridents for educational purposes. Their plan is to re-erect the tridents and re-create the northeast corner of the North tower. By putting those pieces on display, their aim is not only to remind 9/11, but also to integrate them into the story of the American steel industry, and in particular the story of Lukens Steel Company. James D. Ziegler, the Executive Director of the Graystone Society and The National Iron & Steel Heritage Museum, explained that their purpose is to display those artifacts not as a memorial, but instead “as a monument to steel that was made here [Coatesville], went to New York, and became part of two very important buildings, which were so important that they were targets of destruction.” In this regard, the museum’s treatment of the tridents shows the transitions in the WTC steel’s biography, and the exhibit they are planning to do is based on that biography. According to James, the return of the tridents to Coatesville and their use as part of an exhibit of steel-making will show “the life cycle of steel,” which was produced in Coatesville, became construction materials in New York, and then had

been returned to their production place. The next phase for the tridents could be recycling, as happened for the majority of the WTC debris, but “we intercepted that process to make a monument out of it,” James added.

#### **4.2.2 Steel as Rubble**

After the attacks “Ground Zero” became the name for the WTC site, expressing the scale of the destruction, particularly in the media. However, people had also come up with other terms to refer to the site. Witness accounts (Langewiesche 2003) noted that recovery workers called it “the pile,” and my informants usually called it the WTC site, with a few exceptions such as “the pile,” or “the pit.” On the other hand, when people, including scholars and journalists, specifically talked about the material remains of the buildings, they often used the terms rubble and ruins interchangeably.

While ruins evoke continuity and decay over time, rubble indicates deliberate destruction. As Helmut Puff puts it “Rubble is material without significance; it is matter destined to be removed. By contrast, the term ‘ruins’ evokes traditions, visual codes, and a wealth of significations” (2010:254). Therefore, ruins were often appropriated as political means to claim ties to an imagined past, and thereby legitimate the right to rule (Hamilakis 2007, Hell and Schonle 2010). Eighteenth century European art and literature were fascinated with ruins as aestheticized remains of the distant past, and objects of melancholy (Hell and Schonle 2010, Dillon 2014). Looking at twentieth century post-war destruction and the remains of the industrial age, ruins came to signify decay and destruction (Dillon 2014), though fascination with their aesthetics, as in the case of Detroit’s industrial ruins (Dora 2015, Marchand and Meffre 2010, Vergara 1999), still exists. Unlike the eighteenth century ruins that became the subject of

artworks, twentieth century ruins emerged and have disappeared quickly. They are hardly the remains of a distant past, since they are mostly produced as a result of deliberate destruction, not as a result of natural decomposition (Steinmetz 2010, Yablon 2009). “Ruin time” in the words of Hetzler (1988), is hardly observable. According to Hetzler (1988) natural decay gave ruins their intrinsic quality. “The ‘ruining’ may be started by human or natural causes but the maturation process must be done by nature in ruin time. Otherwise there is only devastation and there is no unity forming the ruins,” Hetzler argued (1988:51). In this regard, the ruins of the twenty-first century are more fitting to Puff’s definition of rubble. As Huyssen argued, twenty-first century ruins are either detritus or restored age:

Authentic ruins, at least as they existed in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, seem to have no place in late capitalism’s culture of commodity and memory. Commodities in general do not age well. They become obsolete and are thrown out or recycled. Buildings are torn down or restored. The chance for things to age and to become ruins has diminished, ironically in the same measure that the average age of the populace continues to rise. The ruin of the twenty-first century is either detritus or restored age. In the latter case, real age has been eliminated by a reverse face lifting, whereby the new is made to look old. Repro and retro fashions make it increasingly hard to recognize the genuinely old. [2010:19]

The September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks produced rubble in the most unimagined way. The WTC steel pieces that have become part of the local memorials were once part of the WTC rubble. As the photographs taken during the immediate aftermath of the attacks and the recovery period show, the steel remains were the most visible items at first glance, and they were matter destined to be moved, in the same way that Puff described rubble as “matter destined to be removed” (2010:54). Moreover, the WTC site was considered a crime scene and the rubble was forensic evidence, which is a situation that not many people are aware of. Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani issued an executive order within days after the attacks that prohibited amateur photographs of the

“ruins” of the WTC because the site was a crime scene, not a tourist attraction.<sup>31</sup> My informant, Sarah, actually told me that she was surprised when a first responder she knew told her that they were not just looking for survivors, they were in a six-block crime scene:

It’s the first time that anybody ever said that to me. It was a crime scene. And, I don’t think people understood that. Cause I didn’t look at it like that. I looked at it as a terrorist attack, but that was it. Technically it was a crime scene.

People who were involved in acquiring a steel piece from the PANYNJ were aware of this aspect because they had to wait for the judge’s decision to release the artifacts, and they were told the reason for this was because the artifacts were considered as forensic evidence. I also became aware of this aspect after I started talking to my informants about the steel acquisition process.

Only the standing remains of the towers were aestheticized (e.g. in photographs) in ways resembled the representation of the eighteenth century ruins, but they were still matters that needed to be removed, and eventually the traces of destruction were cleared from the site completely. “[T]he rhetoric of reconstruction as a means of demonstrating resilience, resistance, and hope,” which is often the case in post-conflict reconstructions, was effective in the cleaning of the 9/11 sites from the traces of destruction, as Vidler also argued (2010:30). Consequently, 99% of the steel remains after the recovery were sold and sent to scrap yards in the U.S., China, and India for recycling purposes. Steel in this process was again a commodity, this time in the eyes of the buyers and sellers. An article published in *Chicago Tribune* after the purchase is one of the examples drawing attention to the business aspect of this transition. The article stated the following:

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/27/nyregion/a-nation-challenged-not-a-tourist-site.html> (Accessed: 9/9/2016)

As New Yorkers emotionally debate what kind of memorial should honor those killed in the Sept. 11 World Trade Center attack, 50,000 tons of mangled metal from the twin towers have been sold and shipped to China as scrap. China's largest steel company denied reports that it plans to make souvenirs out of metal from the collapsed buildings. But officials at Shanghai Baosteel here said the company did buy scrap from the wreckage of the terrorist attack. For those involved in the deal, the purchase was an ordinary business transaction. "Scrap from the World Trade Center is cheap, and the quality is good," said Cao Xianggen, an engineer at Baosteel. "America can't use it all, but China has a huge demand for it." For some victims' families, however, the selling of the steel that entombed their loved ones could prove an example of cold-hearted global trade.<sup>32</sup>

Some rumors took place in that period, claiming that the buyers of the steel would use them to make souvenirs, and sell them for profit, but the buyers never accepted these claims.

#### **4.2.3 Steel as Relic**

When the steel pieces turned into commemorative objects, either preserved in a museum or converted into a public memorial, they entered into a new phase. In terms of the biographical approach, the salvaged piece of steel began a new life, different from that of those discarded as scrap. The salvaged steel not only became historical artifacts, but also gained a non-religious sacred status—though often combined with religious symbolism. As I discussed in the Introduction, not all historical artifacts are attributed such sacred quality. Even when they are considered sacred, they are not necessarily treated as enchanted objects, and evoked sentimental reaction. However, the steel artifacts, especially the ones formed the local memorials, were often treated as enchanted objects, and they became the focus of commemorative actions such as the funeral-like processions, and dedication ceremonies. This section, which approaches the steel

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<sup>32</sup> [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2002-01-27/news/0201270268\\_1\\_metal-management-world-trade-center-shanghai-baosteel](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2002-01-27/news/0201270268_1_metal-management-world-trade-center-shanghai-baosteel) (Accessed: 7/14/2016)

pieces as relics, elaborates on the enchanted quality attributed to them, and the sentimental reactions they evoke. I finish the section with my observations from NYC to show that the attachment to the artifacts is stronger at locations away from the event sites.

#### **4.2.3.1 “Please Touch and Never Forget”**

In March 2016, the following message was posted on the website of the 9/11 memorial in Hudson, NH:

The steel means much to many this was sent in tonight from a visitor walking in Bensons Park  
Never Forget  
“D\_\_, I would like to share what I saw tonight at Benson’s 911 Memorial at 5:20 PM. C\_\_ and I were beginning to pass the Memorial. I saw a photographer walking toward the towers. He was carrying a large camera attached to a fully extended tripod. He put the camera down, took off his hat and approached the steel beam. He then literally hugged the beam with his arms; his two hands were visible from where we were. He leaned his head forward against the steel where; (I strongly assume) was a personal prayer for close to a minute. Then he took a step back; put his hat back on and slowly walked away. That is what I had the pleasure of seeing.”

My informants often referred to the urge and need to touch the steel artifacts as a sign of the steel pieces’ exceptionality, and their sentimental impact on the viewers. Keith, the chair of the Hudson memorial committee, referred to the steel in his dedication speech as follows:

The steel that rises above us all, although an *inanimate* object, has provoked an amazing and emotional response. I have had the honor of watching hundreds of people visit the steel. I have seen thousands of tears, hugs, and many hands touching the steel as words of prayer are whispered. [Emphasis added]

The inanimate steel artifacts are animated through the qualities attributed to them, and the commemorative practices focusing on them. “We treated it as almost like a sacred religious

artifact,” said one of my informants, referring to the day they brought the steel artifact from New York City.

Pete is the chief of a fire department in Connecticut, and the person who took the initiative to build a memorial for 9/11 at their station. The company received a piece from the North Tower, and set their memorial on the station’s front lawn. I did not know that I would meet Pete until I arrived to the fire station, but as soon as we met he started telling me the story of their memorial. As he told me about how they acquired the steel piece, he often referred to the sentimental attachment he felt towards it.

Pete and his friends dedicated the steel artifact as their 9/11 memorial on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011, on the tenth anniversary of the attacks. The steel piece stands at an angle, and they raised it to its place at 10:28 a.m., the time when the North Tower collapsed in 2001. By putting the steel artifact to its place at 10:28 a.m., they wanted the steel to be up in the air 10 years, 10 hours, and 28 minutes after it fell. One of the first things Pete said to me about the steel artifact was that “the steel has power.” It was not just a piece of steel for him. He elaborated on his thoughts as follows: “Can’t explain it. There’s energy in that steel. I am not into a paranormal theory that you see in these days... but I think if you are sensitive to [that] kind of thing... you feel it.” Following this, he recalled that on the day of the dedication he came to the fire station at 7:00 a.m. to set the steel, and felt an urge to touch it.

I had just walked out there. There was nobody in the building but me. And the sun was coming into the window. And I put my hands on the steel... It was 8:46. That was the time that the [North] tower was struck.

He happened to look at his watch the moment he put his hands on the steel, and realized that it was the time the North tower was hit. (He recalled the timeline of the events minute to minute, and this is why when he saw the time was 8:46, he easily realized that it was the time the

tower was hit.) That moment became a point of reference for Pete to explain the power of the steel. He heard similar experiences from other people who had been near the steel, and though everyone had a different story, he said there were others who could feel “a presence” when they touched it. He did not attribute a particular meaning to the “presence” and the “energy” he mentioned, but he referred to Gettysburg battlefield as the closest example to his experience.

Ryan is a member of an international firefighters’ motorcycle club. The club received a piece of steel in 2011, and dedicated it at their headquarters in 2012. According to Ryan, the steel piece has been transformed to a landmark because of its connection to the events of 9/11 and the people who were at the towers:

The people... everything that piece of steel went through, everything that it was done to... You can imagine the amount of people that were in there. You can imagine the amount of people that were in contact with that steel, whether it was for support people, whatever... There were people there. There were people in contact with that. There was emotion that went through that. It is not a piece of steel anymore; it is a landmark. It’s a reminder of exactly what happened.

Once, he witnessed a club member from Belgium who started crying when he touched the steel piece, and Ryan was surprised to see a non-American react that way:

First time he had ever stepped foot on American soil. He walked over [to] it, put his hand on it, and started crying. I am standing next to him; and I am like ‘I don’t know how to deal with this.’ I am like... you are doing what we do... but you weren’t there, but you’re still doing it. And it’s amazing, because of the connection.

Touching the steel and making it accessible for others to touch have influenced the memorial designs, as well. Rich, from Dracut, MA, read in a newspaper that the PANYNJ was giving pieces of the WTC steel to cities and organizations that were willing to build a memorial. He decided to apply to get a piece for the town and started the building process with the support of the town manager. With the help of his background in engineering, Rich monitored all details

of the memorial construction by himself. The piece of steel they received is approximately 7 feet long, and mounted on a pedestal that positions the steel at an angle, which is 9 degrees and 11 minutes. This is one of the many symbolic attributes that Rich visualized in his memorial design.<sup>33</sup> In order to be able to put the steel at an angle, they had to attach it to a steel holder, and for that purpose they drilled four holes in the lower section of the steel beam to tap screws. Since the drill created holes on the surface of the steel beam, it created four small pieces of steel that one can hold. Instead of throwing them away, Rich took the pieces, and mounted them onto presentation plaques. He gave the plaques to the town hall, the library, and the town's historical society for public displays, in his own words "in an attempt to never forget and to preserve the remnants of the artifact." He mixed all other remnants that came off the steel beam during the construction with concrete and buried them at the base of the memorial. "So everything from the 9/11 is in one place," Rich said. It was important for Rich to make the memorial accessible for everyone, because he wanted people to be able to touch the steel. For that reason, he avoided steps, and planned a diameter wide enough for a wheelchair. In addition, he put a label on the steel piece that says, "Please Touch and Never Forget" [Figure 22]. He explained the reasoning behind the label as follows:

It [the memorial] was designed for people to walk up to it... touch it, get the feeling. (...) I was afraid that people would just go and think it was a holy representation and be afraid to touch it.

Acushnet 9/11 Memorial, MA is a rare type of 9/11 memorial since it includes artifacts from all three crash sites: WTC steel from New York, a piece of stone from the damaged section of the Pentagon, and a stone that was recovered from the crash site in Shanksville. The memorial

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<sup>33</sup> See Chapter 5 for the discussion of the memorial designs and their symbolism.

was established by the initiative of the fire chief, and it is located on the front lawn of the fire department. They formed a committee to manage activities such as fund raising and memorial design, and set certain goals while discussing how to incorporate all the pieces in the memorial site. The most important goal was, the fire chief said, to put the “relics” at a level that people can put their hands on them [Figure 23]. “That was the overriding objective,” he emphasized with excitement.

All of them [the artifacts] could have been put behind glass, they could have been raised high, they could have been kept inside, but just based on the reaction that we saw from so many people, we all just quickly agreed that whatever we did needed to be done such a way that folks could put their hands on it... that they could make this physical connection.

The public reaction he mentioned refers to a number of moments he witnessed when watching other people approach the steel. A crowd welcomed the committee at the fire station the day they brought the steel from New York City to the town, and Dan recalled that the first reaction from many was to touch the steel. Seeing that reaction reminded him of the first time he saw the steel piece at the hangar; he remembered that he and two of his friends went over and put their hands on it as the first thing. “There’s a visceral connection that’s made in coming back here and seeing the people from this town doing the same thing. I think we made a mental note of that.” This is why they wanted to make all three artifacts accessible for anyone who wants to touch them.

The day they went to New York to pick up the piece, Dan recalled that how they felt before and after they got the steel was quite different. The change he noticed in his and his friends’ attitudes illustrate the steel’s sacred quality, in the non-religious sense that it was different and separated from everyday realms. It also illustrates the sentimental reaction the artifact evoked:

I don't think we were prepared for how solid we felt. Driving down was a lot of joking, a lot of fun. It was early in the morning. A lot of coffee. But once we were in the possession of the steel, it took on it a different tone. It was much more solemn, it's a very good word to use. It was very respectful. We knew what we had in the back of that truck. We stopped for lunch and we didn't know whether we should leave it. Going into the restaurant, it made us pause to think we are in the possession of something very important here, what do we do?

One of the sculptors who designed the memorial is a volunteer firefighter, and he recalled that the first time he saw the steel artifact he did not know what to do—whether to touch it or not. “We touched it, and it was alive,” he said. Touching it was a solid emotional experience, almost electrifying he said, and it was like feeling all the souls and emotions went through it, he added. For him, being alive was the best way to describe his experience.

Rob, a firefighter and member of the FEMA team from Indianapolis, participated in the rescue work at Ground Zero during the first eight days after the attacks. He is from Indiana, yet his team was sent to New York City after 9/11. He got the idea of building a memorial for 9/11 after he saw an article in a firefighters magazine saying that WTC steel was available for memorial purposes to public safety organizations and cities. He knew what he wanted since the beginning; he asked for two upright beams because he wanted to emulate the Twin Towers. He took a flight to New York City in person to pick up the steel beams. A truck also drove to New York to pick up the beams from Hangar 17 at JFK airport. After the steel beams were loaded onto the truck, Rob accompanied the driver and they drove all the way back home from New York together. “I stayed in the truck all the way back from New York. Cause I felt obligated to... These are my babies and I want to be with them,” he said, and it was not only him felt that way. During the trip, he several times witnessed the impulse that the steel beams evoked. The following is what Rob witnessed at the parking lot of the hotel they stayed in:

First we stopped in Pennsylvania after we got out of New York City, and we stopped in [a hotel]. (...) As soon as we got the beams in New York, I put a flag on. I consider these... maybe in bizarre way, but I truly believe that there are still traces of DNA on these beams. And they deserve the respect and honor of having the American flag. (...) Checking the straps, and making sure that everything... A [woman] standing there, and looking at the beams, and she has tears... So I got off the trailer and walked into her, "Are you okay?" She whispered, and we are the only ones in hug parking lot, "those beams are the WTC beams?" she said, "May I touch those?" and I said "absolutely," so she reached up. And when we brought back, everybody wanted to touch it.

Seeing the woman's interest and excitement, Rob decided to give her some pieces of concrete that had been fallen off the beams:

I said, "give me your hand." And I said, "There." She looked at it, "What's that?" I said, "That's concrete from the World Trade Center, you may have those." She started crying...and she said, "I'll never forget this."

Like Rich, who mounted the steel leftovers to memorial plaques in Dracut, Rob also did not discard the small piece of steel they had to cut off during the construction of the memorial. He brought the piece with him when we met, and handed it to me wondering how I would react. As I explained earlier, I see the steel pieces as historical artifacts, and this understanding has evolved over time as I got more involved in this research about 9/11 and talked to the people who were directly affected from it. However, I did not have an emotional attachment to them in the same way my informants did. In other words, knowing the historical significance of the WTC buildings, and the magnitude of the attacks, touching the steel artifacts for me is similar experience to touching a rare historical artifact, but lacks the same emotional attachment my informants had to them.

Ben, a member of the same motorcycle club as Ryan, established a connection between the touch of the steel and the stages of life that it has gone through. When he was getting prepared for the dedication ceremony of their memorial, he thought about what others might be

experiencing when they come across the steel piece, and based on his own experience and feelings toward the steel artifact he expressed his thoughts as the following:

The steel was born out of a piece of ore and had no feeling, didn't mean anything to anybody. And then it was formulated into an I-beam, a piece of something that did something... and for years people traded on top of it, so that piece of steel grew life in it, knew what human life was about (...), and then it came crushing down, and so now I think that when people walk up and they touch it they can feel the life in that. They can feel that it's almost human. It's almost a part of your life. (...) That particular piece, if it could only tell you what happened, it would be a life changing moment to hear that piece of steel say: "here I stood for years and people just took me for granted, and walked on me, and I held them up, I am the strong piece holding them up. And now I am a bent piece... I am still alive but I am bent, heart-broken, my life is broken, my heart has gone." And that's how, I think, some of us and a lot of us in the United States feel about [it]. (...) So that became part of how I felt about how that steel came to us. It came to us, with that non-life, and now it's gonna rest with us forever, and our total connection is our firefighters, three-hundred and forty-three firefighters' lives we can feel in that steel. I can put my hand there, and feel the pulse of three-hundred and forty-three firefighters. And that's what part of that whole memorial now.

As Ben imagined the stages the steel piece had to go through, he associated the piece with the lives of the firefighters died.

Sarah, the photographer of the 9/11 memorial in Hudson, NH, is the only person I knew that avoided touching the steel artifact on purpose. "I never touched it," she said when we were talking about the building process of the memorial. I was surprised since almost everyone I met before her pointed out that touching the steel was the most common reaction they observed. However, Sarah did never want to touch it because of the unknown connections the artifact might have to the people died that day:

I get emotional. And I don't [touch it.] I heard a lot of people touch it, and tell me that they feel weird; not weird, but experience strange vibes coming from the beam. I watch other people touch it, and I can't do it... because I think there's so much sadness in it... It came from an elevator shaft, and you hear of the stories about people walking down the stairs in the stairway... I don't know where that came from, you know? And I don't know if anybody died on that beam. And, it just makes me sad.

“The steel piece is absolutely sacred because thousands died in towers, and perhaps they were on that steel before it was cleaned,” said another informant, who was an emergency service personnel and took part in the recovery work after the attacks. After giving this reference to the possible connection between the steel artifact and human remains, he added, “it should be enshrined and guarded.”

My purpose in giving these examples is to show that the steel artifact is more than a historical artifact. It has this sentimental quality attributed to them, and this is why I differentiate those artifacts as sacred relics from the other artifacts that lack such sentimental affect. The loss of human life in the towers is influential in the attribution of this quality, as the statements from the informants show, but it is also revealed in the treatment of the steel pieces almost as living beings. For instance, the procession of the steel artifacts often resembled funeral ceremonies. The following section focuses on this relationship between the artifacts, and the lost people and buildings.

#### **4.2.3.2 Disappeared bodies and buildings**

In his essay about the post-war reconstruction of Warsaw, Jerzy Elzanowski (2012:114) described the use of post-war rubble as construction material, and invited the reader “to consider the *possibility* that Warsaw’s post-war rubble-concrete buildings may contain human remains.” He argued that the post-war rubble in Warsaw had a memorial aspect, and approached the city’s urban-topography as a war memorial.

Elzanowski’s claims regarding the presence of human remains in Warsaw’s topography are applicable to the WTC’s destruction. In the aftermath of the attacks, only 292 “whole” bodies were recovered, and DNA identification studies have been continuing since then (Colwell-

Chanthaphonh 2011).<sup>34</sup> Almost half of the victims' remains are still unidentified, and therefore not returned to the families. The impact of the destruction was so powerful that majority of the bodies were just "disappeared" (Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2011). Knowing this fact brings in mind the relation between the human remains and the debris.

Yaeger (2003) and Sturken (2004) argued the dust emerged after the attacks had an ambiguous status, because as Sturken explained, "once it became clear that very few people had survived (...), the dust was defined not simply as the refuse of the towers' destruction, but also as the material remains of the bodies of the dead" (2004: 312). Due to this ambiguity, Sturken argued dust was a polluting substance in Mary Douglas's terms, and had to be removed "precisely because of its liminal status—as both refuse and body." She continued as follows: "And it was removed, thoroughly and efficiently, along with the larger chunks of building debris, to the Fresh Kills landfill. There, body parts were still sought, but the debris had already been transformed through its relocation into the category of rubbish" (Sturken 2004:314).

Though Yaeger and Sturken rightly pointed out the mixed status of the dust, its removal was crucial because it was toxic material in the first place. (Remember that the recovery workers were given instructions to wear masks, and many of them are still suffering from respiratory diseases.) Plus, the same ambiguity—whether it was rubble or body part—was valid for the steel artifacts as well, yet this ambiguity did not code the steel as polluting material. On the contrary, it enforced their commemorative value as relics. The possibility that the steel artifacts might have come to contact with the dead is an underlying cause for the steel artifacts to be treated as a living being. This connection was sometimes expressed directly, as in the case of my informants who directly referred to the connection between the dead and the steel, and sometimes it was

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<sup>34</sup> According to Colwell-Chanthaphonh, the New York City Medical Examiner's Office defined 'whole' as the 75% or more of the body.

expressed symbolically in the commemorative ceremonies, where the steel's procession resembled funeral ceremonies.

Rob wanted to put the American flag on the steel beams because he believed there were still traces of DNA on them. He put the flag on them after they loaded them to the truck, and they set off. When they were about to enter the tunnel into NYC, they realized that trucks are not allowed to enter. After a moment of confusion, the police stopped six lanes of traffic to let them turn around, and escorted them until they left the city because they saw the steel beams on the trailer. However, putting the flag on the steel beams did not always get a positive response, at least until it became clear what the steel beams actually were. Rob told the following story.

During one of their breaks on their way back to Indianapolis, Rob and the driver once again wanted to make sure that everything was safe. While they were checking the straps, a van pulled in and a man from his window screamed at them saying, "How dare you put a flag on that load of steel?" Rob climbed off the truck, walked over, and said, "Sir, those are beams from the World Trade Center. Those are considered burial sites, and they will be accorded proper honor and respect by having an American flag on them." Upon this the man apologized immediately, and Rob broke the ice by appreciating his "patriotism" in that he had warned Rob about something that he thought was wrong. Then, the man and his family came out to look at the beams, and touch them.

According to the U.S. flag code, the flag should not touch anything beneath it, such as the ground, the floor, water, or merchandise; never be carried flat or horizontally, never be used as the covering for a statue or monument; yet it can be used to cover a casket (CRS report).<sup>35</sup> However, covering the steel artifacts with the flag is socially acceptable, and that acceptance

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.senate.gov/reference/resources/pdf/RL30243.pdf>

shows that the steel artifacts are considered to be different than a statue or monument. Covering the steel pieces with the U.S. flag is a practice that shows the close connection between the artifacts and the dead, and the flag has become the key symbol in the artifact's animation almost as a living being. In this regard, the removal of the last steel beam from the WTC site, which is called the Last Column, is noteworthy, as this was the only piece of steel that was moved from the WTC ceremonially, following the funerary customs in the fire service.

The Last Column has become a significant symbol of the recovery and rescue efforts at the WTC site. It was not structurally different than the other steel columns that supported the towers. Yet, it was turned into a memorial during the days that followed the recovery of the bodies of six firefighters near it. Recovery workers at the site spray-painted abbreviated words and signs (i.e. "X," "SAVE," "FDNY") on the debris to indicate what was found or what needs to be done on a particular spot. During the search for bodies, "SQ41," which stands for Squad 41, was painted on the column to indicate the spot where other bodies could be found (Torres 2011:59). Following the finding of the bodies near it, the column turned into a memorial. Workers and family members started putting markers and signatures on it, which also included numerous materials such as letters, flowers, patches, pictures of the missing, and flags. The number of the materials attached to it kept growing each day, and it stood as a memorial until the end of the recovery work.

The cleanup and recovery efforts at the WTC officially ended on May 30, 2002 with a public ceremony that centered on the removal of the Last Column from the WTC to Hangar 17 in the JFK Airport. The ceremony began with the ring of a fire bell, which is a traditional element in the funeral of a firefighter, at the time the North Tower collapsed. The number of the rings

(five bell strikes, repeated in four series) signals the death of a firefighter.<sup>36</sup> First, an empty flag representing the bodies that were never found was carried on a stretcher, and put inside an ambulance. Then, the passage of the Last Column on a flatbed truck started. The column was covered with a black shroud, and an American flag was put on it. Firefighters, police, and politicians who stood at the site saluted the piece as the truck passed by them slowly, and an honor guard accompanied it. No speeches were given, and the ceremony took place in silence, except for the drums, and the bagpipes played Taps. The Last Column is currently on display at the National 9/11 Memorial Museum.

The significance of the Last Column ceremony was that it officially acknowledged the connection between the victims and the material remains through a funeral-like treatment. The column itself in part owes its significance to the bodies found nearby it. In this regard, the Last Column is the major example to compare with other steel artifacts. It became common practice to drape the flag over the steel pieces after they were picked up from Hangar 17, as Rob also did. Peter, the PANYNJ manager, mentioned that some even put the steel on the flag, although it is usually considered inappropriate to place something on the American flag. Rob's story with the man who screamed at him highlights the status of the WTC remains as relics, because learning that the steel beams were from the WTC eliminated the man's outrage against putting the flag on what he initially perceived as junk.

Ben, retired firefighter and a member of the motorcycle club I mentioned earlier, was among the committee that went to New York City to pick up their piece of steel. He witnessed everything starting from the time they picked up the steel from the hangar to their arrival at the

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<sup>36</sup> The strike of bells in a firefighter's funeral has origins in the old communication methods that were used between headquarters and fire stations, before the advent of radios and fire alarms. Different number and series of bell strikes were assigned for different types of announcement. In the case of the death of a firefighter, the signal was to transmit five bell strikes, repeated in four series. Source: <http://www.iafireassn.org/memorial/tributes-to-firefighters/>

club's memorial site in Boylston, MA. After they loaded the steel onto the trailer, they started a procession in which more than a hundred motorcycles from their group participated. In addition to the club members, police officers from different parts of Massachusetts also joined the procession with their motorcycles, as the convoy moved from New York to Boylston. On the road, they were welcomed and saluted by residents and firefighters who knew that they would be coming that day. People were waiting along the road, waving flags, and there were aerial fire ladders were up with the flags hanged on them. Once they arrived to Boylston, it was time to take the steel piece off the trailer and introduce it to the group gathered at the memorial site. "That piece of steel never left our control; stayed in our control whole time," Ben said. "We were treating it as it was a sacred piece." They draped it with an American flag, and carried it to the memorial site holding it like a casket, which was a deliberate act [Figure 24]. "The typical American funeral, the casket, is carried by pallbearers, typically six" Ben explained, and that is why a group of six, including himself, hold the piece of steel, and carried it to the memorial site. After a short ceremony that included a few speeches and a prayer, they put the piece of steel to storage until they decided the memorial details.

#### **4.2.3.3 Origins**

One of the questions I asked my informants was whether it mattered to know what part of the towers the steel piece came from. They were willing to know the location if that was possible, but otherwise it did not matter from what sections the steel came from. The physical qualities of the steel piece—size, weight, and shape—were more important to shape their preferences. The PANYNJ attached identification tags to each piece of steel, and catalogued them accordingly. When the pieces were given away, the information tags were still on them. The tags were important to prove that the artifact was really acquired from the PANYNJ, and they also made

possible to track the information available for the artifacts. At the dedication ceremony of the memorial in Dracut, MA, Rich brought the tag with him, and showed it to the audience, explaining that each piece had an identification number, and considered forensic evidence. In the fire station in Clifton Heights, PA the tag of the steel was framed, and hanged on the wall at the station's entrance along with the pictures of the memorial, and the letter sent on behalf of the PANYNJ. At the dedication ceremony of the Hudson 9/11 Memorial, NH, the town selectman presented Keith the tag and a thank you note framed together [Figure 25].

For a short period of time, one of my informants doubted whether the steel piece they got was actually from the towers. As they were setting the memorial, he realized "USA Bethlehem" was written in raised letters on the steel, and immediately thought of Bethlehem Steel in Pennsylvania. At the same time he was also preparing his speech for the dedication ceremony, and thought that if he could find more information about the artifact, he could tell its story at the dedication. He contacted the local library in Bethlehem to get some background information about Bethlehem Steel, and specifically their connection to the WTC steel. After doing some research, the librarian contacted him, and said that Bethlehem Steel was not awarded at the contract, and a Japanese company made the production. Hearing that was shocking for my informant, because that meant the steel he had gotten could not be from the WTC towers. "My heart was broken," he recalled. Upon this, he started thinking:

Did this come from Marriott [Hotel]? Did it come from the other buildings in the concourse? [If so] would it matter? (...) I went home that night, I was thinking about this thing: We think it's steel from the WTC, we were told that it's part of the attack on 9/11, but there's a chance that it might be from the hotel across the street, that wasn't hit by the plane, it was destroyed by the collapse. Does it really matter? Then I started thinking the deliveryman who came, and put his hand on it, and had that connection, and that response. If I told him that it was the steel from Marriott Hotel, would he have the same connection? I don't know, I don't know... So, two days later, the librarian called back. And he had done deeper research, and found out that the quality of the steel that was needed for the lower

levels, and the company that got the project in overseas, couldn't produce. So they subcontracted it to Bethlehem Steel. So, he said, I would imagine that yours is one of the heavier pieces because the heavier pieces of steel were low, and as the building raised the steel got smaller and smaller.

Though the second call from the librarian gave him relief, he also decided that it did not actually matter where it came from.

Now thankfully, the exact location, exact tower, or where it was... I don't think that's important. (...) It's a damaged piece of steel that was in a building prior to 9 o'clock in the morning on September 11<sup>th</sup>, and now it's [here] because it was part of that horrific event.

#### **4.2.3.4 Voices from New York: “We lived it”**

Walking in lower Manhattan, the traces 9/11 were everywhere—especially around the national memorial, and fire stations. The WTC site has been under construction since the towers collapsed. The site has gone through a major transformation with the construction of the National September 11<sup>th</sup> Memorial & Museum and the new WTC complex. The memorial plaza was opened to the public on the tenth anniversary of the attacks in 2011, and the museum section opened in May 2014. One World Trade Center—a.k.a. The Freedom Tower—was also completed in 2013, and became the new icon of New York City. It looks down on the city with its magnificent height of 1776 feet (symbolizing the year of the Deceleration of Independence), and people around are walking heads up and trying to capture the full-image of the tower with their cameras. Due to the ongoing construction, some streets were still closed in 2015. The construction site was fenced-off and surrounded with banners depicting the future WTC site. Direction signs for the memorial plaza and the museum were on those banners, so accessing the memorial plaza was easy despite the confusion the construction caused.

Liberty Street is one of the gateways to the National 9/11 Memorial & Museum. Engine 10 Ladder10 fire station—a.k.a. The Ten House—is located at the Liberty Street and Greenwich

Street intersection across from the memorial plaza. The Ten House is a significant reminder of 9/11, since they were the first to respond, and lost six firefighters that day. The station was significantly damaged because of the collapse of the towers, but it was reopened in 2003 after renovations. A bas-relief memorial plaque on the wall next to the fire station depicts portraits of the firefighters who died. Their station doors, and fire trucks were decorated with American flag and number 10 paintings, making the station and their vehicles highly noticeable. Each time a fire truck leaved or entered the station, people stopped to take pictures of it, and the firefighters [Figure 26]. The sidewall of the station that is across the WTC site is covered with a 56-foot-long bas-relief memorial dedicated to the 343 firefighters who died on 9/11.<sup>37</sup> This FDNY Memorial Wall is getting constant attention from the public. The 9/11 Tribute Center, a non-profit organization that is run by the September 11<sup>th</sup> Families Association, is located at the other side of the station on Liberty Street. The center houses an exhibit on 9/11, and organizes guided tours to the 9/11 memorial plaza. The tour guides are selected from the individuals who witnessed 9/11, so people who visit the memorial plaza with the guides from the Tribute Center get a chance to listen to the events of 9/11 from someone who saw them.

Where the FDNY Memorial Wall ends, Cedar Street begins, and O'Hara's Pub & Restaurant is located on the corner. O'Hara's Pub was a gathering place for the Ten House firefighters, and many others. The place was significantly damaged on 9/11, yet eight months later it reopened, and emerged as a memorial on its own. The walls are fully covered with fire and police patches that were presented as gifts to the pub from all across the world. Posters and pictures of 9/11 are on the walls. One of my informants (not even from New York) told me to go to this place, and ask for "the book," so I did. The bartender brought a massive scrapbook that

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<sup>37</sup> <http://www.fdneytenhouse.com/fdneywall/about.htm>

included pictures, letters, and newspaper clips about 9/11. This was how I first became familiar with this place. In my other visits I realized that many of the customers knew about the book, and were interested in looking at it.

Another significant 9/11 landmark near the WTC site is St. Paul's Chapel, an Episcopal church located on Broadway, and the oldest church building in Manhattan that is actively in use. Today it is a popular tourist destination not only because it is a historical building, but also because of its relation to 9/11. The church survived without damage despite its closeness to the Twin Towers, and it was a resting place for the first responders and rescue workers. The chapel still carries traces from those days, and houses a series of exhibits depicting the days of the rescue work. Notes, prayers, firefighter and police uniforms, patches, and fliers for the missing are displayed inside the church along with the artworks and mementos commemorating the victims of 9/11.

The landmarks noted above are the major structures that are well known in the area through their connections to 9/11. Yet, the memory and trace of 9/11 are not limited to them. It is very likely to run into a memorial plaque, a piece of WTC steel, graffiti, or a memorial garden while walking elsewhere in the city. The most remarkable examples of those reminders are found at fire stations, which have become memorials of their own. Many of them have painted images of 9/11 with the emblems of their own company on their station doors.

It is a tradition in the fire service to commemorate firefighters who died on duty, and often they are commemorated through memorial plaques at the station. However, commemorating the dead in the stations took multiple forms after the loss of 343 firefighters in one day. In the all fire stations that I have been to, the dead firefighters were commemorated by memorial displays that were composed of a variety of objects such as uniforms, plaques, and

pictures, and also by artifacts recovered from the site. These items generally include belongings of the perished fire fighters, fire equipment, and rubble from the site. It is easy to identify to which company fire equipment belonged because they usually carry the company number and color. Thereby, tools such as halligans,<sup>38</sup> and fire helmets were returned to their home fire stations when they were found in the rubble. Engine 26 is one of the companies that were able to recover artifacts from the site, and put them in a glass display case as a memorial dedicated to the five firefighters they lost [Figure 27].<sup>39</sup> At the center of the display was a painting that depicts the Engine 26 fire truck on its way towards the Twin Towers while they were still burning. Portraits of the dead firefighters were painted above the smoke coming out of the towers. The duty board was also kept as it was on 9/11, and it stood on the right side of the painting. The base of the memorial display was covered with the American flag, and the objects were placed on it. One of those objects was a notebook showing the daily shifts and division of work. The open page had the date September 11<sup>th</sup> on it, and showed the names of the firefighters who were on duty that day. Pieces of stone from the WTC site, a cross made of the WTC steel, and a crushed helmet were also part of the exhibit. A halligan and an axe that belong to Engine 26 were also recovered from the debris, and they were also part of the memorial display.

Almost all fire stations in NYC have designated memorial spots similar to Engine 26's, and own a piece of steel and other artifacts salvaged from the WTC site. Yet, the acquisition of these artifacts was not the result of an organized effort, and they were not considered to be essential to memorialize 9/11. In other words, owning pieces from the site was not the primary goal of the firefighters to keep the memory of 9/11 alive; the events of 9/11 were still fresh for

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<sup>38</sup> Halligan is a forcible entry tool used by firefighters.

<sup>39</sup> Three of the firefighters were the members of Engine 26, two of them were assigned to Engine 26 for the day.

many of them, and they were already surrounded with the images of their dead friends and of 9/11.<sup>40</sup>

My interview with firefighters from Rescue 1 first made me realize the currency of 9/11 to firefighters. Rescue 1 is one of the fire companies that took high casualties on 9/11. They were among the first groups that responded, and lost 11 firefighters that day. Some of my informants that were not from New York mentioned me that a firefighter from Rescue 1 helped them obtain a piece of WTC steel. I went to Rescue 1 to find that person, and interview him about his role in giving away the steel pieces, but he was not at the station, and I had to leave a message for him. Though the person I was looking for was not there, they invited me to join their lunch at the station. We talked about 9/11 and its memorialization over lunch, until they got a call.

They were six, but three of them—Daniel, Chris, and Jerry—joined the conversation most.<sup>41</sup> They were all first responders, except Chris. Daniel warned me that the things I will hear in NYC would be different from what I heard in other places. At first I did not quite understand why, but later Daniel started talking about the people who came to NYC on 9/11 from other places to help recovery and rescue work. That subject became a particular focus of our conversation. According to Daniel, some people missed the meaning and significance of the debris while they were trying to be part of the event. For instance, Daniel regretfully remembered that some people were taking pictures of themselves on the debris—the place that he considered to be a grave. According to him, that was a sign of disconnection, and he thought many of the people who came from other places were “disconnected” from what really

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<sup>40</sup> Interviews with the firefighters in New York evolved around what they and their team members did after the planes hit to the towers. Finding people to interview was challenging because the fire companies changed since 9/11; people left.

<sup>41</sup> All names for Rescue-1 are pseudonyms.

happened. “They were disconnected but grasping for connection,” Chris added after Daniel. “It makes them feel better, makes us feel worse,” Daniel said regarding others’ efforts to prove their presence on the site. Another firefighter, Jerry, also joined the conversation at this point, and said they do not need a piece of steel, because they remember 9/11 all the time. “I look at the watch, and it is 9:11 p.m.... I immediately recall 9/11,” Daniel added. He explained that he wanted to remember his friends, not the event. That is why he prefers to see the pictures of his friends, instead of a piece of steel. “We went to funerals everyday. I don’t want to be reminded of this day. You don’t forget it, but you don’t want to be reminded of it,” Jerry added after Daniel. For the same reason, they were not willing to talk about 9/11 anymore, because they wanted to move on although never forget. Daniel had not been to the 9/11 memorial yet. Others also thought they do not have a connection to there; they think their station is a memorial already. The names of the firefighters who died on 9/11 were painted on the table that we were sitting around. They still keep the helmet, and the boots of one of their friends who died. Chris said the boots stand where their friend left them, and they had become part of the station. The pictures of their friends were on display in a glass case, which was dedicated by the mother of one of the firefighters who died, and it was located in front of the station.

The emphasis on the fact that the first-responders from NYC witnessed, and experienced the events of 9/11 at first hand came up several times during my interviews with firefighters in the area. Two first-responders from Engine 205-Hook & Ladder 118, Scott and Leo, made me realize that point once again. Both took part in the rescue work in the rubble, though they were assigned to a different fire company then. Engine 205-Hook & Ladder 118 lost eight firefighters, and their portraits were displayed at the memorial section inside the station [Figure 28]. Their halligan was recovered from the debris, and was attached to the center of the memorial panel

they had. A fire helmet was placed below the portraits of the firefighters to symbolize the dead. An artifact resembling a piece the WTC steel was painted in red, and the names of the firefighters were written on it. There was a series of plaques placed at the lowest section of the memorial, depicting a speech given by a firefighter during a memorial service after the attacks.

I asked Scott and Leo whether they considered adding a steel piece, or a remnant from the site. After thinking for a second Scott said they did not really talk about it because they “lived it,” and they “don’t need anything else to remember.” On the other hand, they still keep the duty board as it was on 9/11. They also kept copies of the cover page of *Daily News*, which published a photograph of the Ladder 118 truck on the Brooklyn Bridge heading towards the towers. Leo brought the cover page from downstairs while Scott and I were talking about the memorial. To them, that was what really mattered, because it was the last picture of the dead firefighters that was taken before the collapse. Scott took me downstairs to show the full coverage on *Daily News*, which was framed. On another day, I was surprised to find out that Engine 24-Ladder 5 had no artifacts on display, though they had a memorial with the portraits of the eleven firefighters they lost on 9/11. Later I learned from one of the firefighters at the station that the only artifact they had is a steel cross that was given to them by the ironworkers. They were keeping the cross in the office, but he brought it to show me.

I was telling about my research and the use of the WTC steel remains as public memorials to a firefighter from Squad 1 in Brooklyn, and in an attempt to explain why they did not have a steel memorial he suddenly said, “we lived it.” Their 9/11 memorial panel included eight memorial plaques dedicated to the eight firefighters they lost. The halligan that belonged to the company was recovered from the debris, and was attached to the wall below the panel. They kept a few pieces from their destroyed vehicles, which were also in display inside the station.

Engine 54-Ladder 4 lost all firefighters on duty (15 in total) that day. Their names were painted on the station door along with the company emblem, and the date “September 11, 2001.” The memorial panel inside the station displayed the portraits of the lost firefighters, and it got my attention immediately when I entered the station. Visitors were not allowed to take pictures of the panel due to concerns raised by the family members. Several artifacts were displayed at the station separately from the memorial panel. The axe they recovered was hung on the wall, inside a glass case, and the “Ladder 4” label removed from the old destroyed truck was hung on the ceiling. The ironworkers carved the company name and a cross on a piece of the WTC steel, and that was on one of the walls. Since the panel stood as the main memorial, the recovered artifacts were placed away from the memorial.

Engine 226 in Brooklyn had a memorial display put behind glass, and it included four firefighter uniforms, each representing a member of the company who died on 9/11 [Figure 29]. Pictures and personal objects that were brought by the family members as tributes accompanied the uniforms. In addition to this display of uniforms and family tributes, Engine 226 owned pieces of WTC steel as well: three pieces of the steel were displayed at the lower section of the memorial. They were provided by the Port Authority steel workers, and put behind glass along with the uniforms. Looking at the whole memorial, it was the firefighters’ uniforms and the tributes that were drawing the main attention of the viewer. I was so focused on the uniforms at the upper part of the memorial that I did not see the steel pieces until they pointed them out. In this regard, the emphasis put on the steel artifacts in those stations was in contrast with the significance attributed to the steel artifacts at locations away from the NYC. In my observations at NYC, the steel artifacts were one of the many commemorative objects available, but in other

places outside of New York, the steel artifact was usually the only, and the most important memorial item.

The first responders who witnessed the event and its aftermath salvaged artifacts from the WTC site spontaneously, and used them as tangible reminders of 9/11, as the examples from the NYC demonstrated. They were mostly small in size, and usually put behind glass, like museum displays. Some were hung on walls, or places that were not easy to reach and touch. However, in the other places outside of New York where I conducted research, pieces of the WTC steel were the key elements of memorial sites, and the memorials were designed to give physical access to the steel piece. In addition, my informants who witnessed or took part in the building process of a steel memorial away from New York have put greater emphasis on the steel as a sacred object that is associated with the lost lives and buildings.

## **5.0 MATERIALITY, SPACE, AND PERFORMANCE**

In this chapter I discuss materiality of the steel artifacts, their role in creating a memoryscape, and the commemorative performances that accompanied them on particular days and occasions. First, I discuss materiality of the artifacts to show that the steel's material qualities, especially their damaged form, were influential in their recognition as the relics of 9/11. Second, I discuss how the memorials incorporated the artifacts into their designs, and argue that the memorials created a memoryscape by incorporating the same type of artifacts across multiple sites. Finally, in the last section I discuss the steel artifacts' animation through commemorative performances. My objective is to show that these performances, and the national and religious symbols accompanied them were instrumental in expressing the artifacts' sacred status.

### **5.1 MATERIALITY OF STEEL**

As the exceptionality of 9/11 is reflected in the scale and diversity of the 9/11 commemorations, the materiality of the steel artifacts is effective in shaping commemorative practices and perceiving the artifacts' special status.

Scholars have developed a number of approaches to the definition and study of materiality, focusing on topics ranging from archaeological findings to everyday objects, and discussing their "social lives" (Appadurai 1986), biographies (Hoskins 1998, Kopytoff 1986),

“thingness” (Brown 2001), sensuous material qualities (Keane 2003, Manning 2008, Manning and Meneley 2008, Tilley 2004), form and meaning (Miller 2002), and efficacy and agency (Gell 1989, Ingold 2008, Latour 2000, 2002). My definition of the materiality of steel draws from several of these approaches.

In 2007, Ingold complained about the lack of a clear definition and understanding of the concept in scholarly works. Referring to a session on materiality from the 2002 American Anthropological Association meeting, Ingold argued that none of the presenters were “able to say” what materiality means, and they did not “even mention materials or their properties” (2007:2). Therefore, Ingold asks whether the concept of materiality is actually necessary:

What academic perversion leads us to speak not of *materials and their properties* but of *the materiality of objects*? It seemed to me that the concept of materiality, whatever it might mean, has become a real obstacle to sensible enquiry into materials, their transformations and affordances. [2007:2]

In his response to Ingold, Tilley argued that the concept of materiality is required because it goes beyond “the brute materiality of stones,” and considers “why certain kinds of stone and their properties become important to people” (2007:17). The concept of materiality urges us to consider not just material properties but also the material’s social significance in relation to people, landscapes, things, and artifacts (Tilley 2007). My conceptualization of materiality is similar to Tilley’s approach, paying attention not to the “brute” materiality but to its significance in relation to people. As materiality of the steel artifacts, I consider the bundle of qualities (Keane 2003) that they have, discussed below. I also refer to the concept of “affordances” (Gibson 1979)—the set of possible actions that objects can enable in relation to the physical and cognitive capacities of people (Griswold et al. 2013:347-8, McDonnell 2010). As discussed below, I argue that the materiality of the steel artifacts enabled certain affordances, such as

durability and strength, and thereby contributed to the establishment of their commemorative value.

### ***Bundle of Qualities: “Qualisigns”***

A number of scholars (Keane 2003, Manning 2008, Manning and Meneley 2008) have discussed materiality through a semiotic approach. Keane (2003, 2005) argued that people’s assumptions about signs and their function in the world determine what they consider to be object and subject, and consequently also their notions about what counts or does not count as a possible agent. For example, Keane explains that while one may say that only humans can be agents, others may suggest that spirits are also agents. In this regard, Keane focuses on “the tangible and sensual aspects of the way in which signs actively engage with the material world” (Leitch 2010:67). According to Keane (2003:412), an object embodies the “bundling” of distinct material qualities, which are *qualisigns*—sensuous qualities of an object that are potentially significant (Keane 2003, 2005, Manning 2008, Munn 1986). For instance, Leitch (2010:69) suggests whiteness, translucency, hardness, permeability, mutability, weight, and veining as bundling qualities of Carrara marble, and notes that each quality can be “bundled” with others, as Keane suggests (i.e. veining is “bundled” with whiteness, operating as a sign for Carrara marble). Manning (2007) discussed the oldness of Georgian Orthodox churches as a material qualisign that defines them. He has examined changing discourses regarding the ancient Georgian Orthodox churches under different historical periods—Russian Empire, Soviet Union, and the Republic of Georgia. During the Russian empire, churches were built in the Russian Orthodox architectural style, and no churches were built during the Soviet era. The Georgian churches during already in existence during these periods were all ancient, and this ancientness, according to Manning, became a central feature of Georgian churches. He supported his argument by tracing how these churches

became representative of different discourses—civilizational progress and Georgian romanticism during the Russian Empire—through their ancientness. Therefore, according to Manning, the new churches built in the Republic of Georgia did not seem to be “real” churches, since they were “lacking all the attributes of the sublime that Georgians have learned to associate with ‘the countless old, original and grandiose churches and monasteries’ in Georgia” (2008:345).

Keane (2003:414) has pointed out the importance of context in qualisigns’ shifting meaning and values: “qualisigns bundled together in any object will shift in their relative value, utility, and relevance across contexts.” In other words, qualisigns gain different uses and meanings depending on the context and audience (Leitch 2010, McDonnell 2010). In the present case, certain qualisigns are bundled within the steel artifacts, such as their heavy weight, robustness, color, and damaged texture. During recovery operations at the WTC, these qualisigns signified the steel as rubble—materials that needed to be taken under control by clearing them from the site. The images of the recovery and rescue work at the WTC site show the scale of destruction, and confrontation with huge amounts of material that had been rendered matter out of place. The recovery work, clearing the site, and then forensic investigations required ordering of the materials, and analysis of their material qualities. However, those materials came to be experienced differently in the context of 9/11 commemorations and memorialization. Robustness and damaged forms of the steel artifacts gained particular significance in this new context, because it is in part through these qualities that the steel is recognized as relics, and signify the events and destructiveness of 9/11. Their damaged forms became beautified as memorials, even converted into artworks. In Keane’s terms (2003), the qualisigns—robustness and damaged form—of the steel artifacts shifted in value, gaining a commemorative significance not as deformed unwanted materials, but as relics of tragedy and destruction.

## *Agency*

With the “agentive turn” (Hoskins 2006:74) that became effective in the 1990s (Chua and Salmond 2012) scholars introduced a variety of approaches to theorize the agency of objects, and diminish the separation between humans and non-humans. Actor network theory (ANT) (Latour 2000, 2005) suggests that agency is not inherent in humans or non-humans, but emerges through interaction. Humans and non-humans are part of a network in which power is distributed among them. In this regard, humans and non-humans both have agency and can become social actors equally. In addition, some scholars theorized agency as an action that can be extended and distributed. Alfred Gell (1998), for instance, treated artworks as secondary agents, as extensions of the artist’s agency (Chua and Salmond 2012).

On the other hand, some theorists have argued against the concept of agency and its distribution over humans and non-humans. According to Ingold (2005, 2007, 2008), ANT fails to consider embodied experience “in which humanity and nature are inseparable.” In this regard, the concept of agency is irrelevant, because persons and things are united through embodied processes. In his response to Ingold’s rejection of the idea that things have agency, Tilley (2007:19) redefines agency, perhaps paradoxically, as “affordances and constraints for thought and action.” Tilley’s approach is enlightening for further discussion of the materiality of the WTC artifacts in the 9/11 commemorations, because commemorative practices are shaped in part through the steel’s affordances.

## *Affordances*

The concept of “affordances” (Gibson 1979) stands for the set of possible actions that objects can enable in relation to the physical and cognitive capacities of people (Griswold et al. 2013:347-8, McDonnell 2010). The bundle of qualities “enable particular ‘affordances’ for

particular audiences in particular settings” (McDonnell 2010:1806). McDonnell (2010) examined how the material qualities of AIDS campaign objects constrained the fabrication of meaning, affording different amounts perceptibility and legibility, and thereby were influential in shaping the AIDS knowledge in Accra, Ghana.

Thus defined, affordances provide a means to discuss the interaction between the steel artifact and the viewer, without appealing to the long-debated concept of agency. The steel artifacts’ qualisigns—robustness and damaged form—came with certain affordances, such as durability, strength, and visibility as public memorials, allowing physical contact and ability to demonstrate destruction. Therefore, the materiality of the steel artifacts enabled interactive commemorative practices, such as touching the steel, setting them up as accessible public memorials, and carrying them through processions. Thereby, the commemorative practices are shaped in part through the steel artifacts’ affordances.

### **5.1.1 Handling the Steel**

The recovery work and forensic investigations required ordering of the artifacts, and analysis of their material qualities. Witness accounts and the imagery documenting the recovery of the WTC debris depict the site as having been overwhelmed with dust and rubble. Looking for survivors and bodies in the debris required close interaction with the rubble, to the extent that the seemingly undifferentiated pile became meaningful over time. The rubble has become part of the memories of 9/11 at all levels, especially for those that were present at the site during and after the attacks.

The removal of the debris and cleaning of the site took more than eight months, and the PANYNJ and NYC’s Department of Design and Construction (DDC) worked together in this

process. The collection of artifacts from the WTC site by the PANYNJ also took place in this period, starting only days after the attacks. The collected artifacts were stored in Hangar 17 at JFK airport until their distribution to museums and memorials was finalized. The PANYNJ was not the only institution interested in collecting artifacts. Organizations and museums such as the New York Historical Society, New York State Museum, and the Smithsonian National Museum of American History were also involved in the collection of artifacts—not just the steel, but anything that would document life at the WTC, and the day 9/11.<sup>42</sup> Besides these institutional efforts, random individuals had begun collecting artifacts from the site already. However, some of those people returned the things they had taken to the PANYNJ in order to avoid any legal issues and also potential contamination from the dust, which seen as largely toxic.<sup>43</sup> The artifacts in Hangar 17 were less than one percent of the whole debris: what was preserved from approximately 1.8 billion tons of debris were less than 2,000 artifacts, including smaller objects like personal things. The collected artifacts included a variety of objects, from construction materials to the objects of everyday life. While some artifacts were selected directly from the field, some others were selected at the Fresh Kills Landfill at the Staten Island (Adler 2011).

The initial collection of the artifacts and their transfer to Hangar 17 was not a straightforward process. First of all, Hangar 17 was not immediately ready to be used as storage; it was in poor condition, and needed some renovations to make it a suitable place for the storage and preservation of the artifacts (PANYNJ Report 2007). Temperature and humidity control was crucial, especially for the preservation of special artifacts like the Last Column and the meshed pieces of concrete known as “composites” (PANYNJ Report 2007). Until the use of the hangar was finalized and renovations began, the WTC artifacts were kept in various locations in New

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with Lisa Seymour, History Department Database Manager, New York State Museum. March, 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Peter Miller. December, 2014.

York and New Jersey, such as the Fresh Kills Landfill on Staten Island, scrap yards, and Port Authority facilities (PANYNJ Report 2007). By mid-2002, hundreds of objects collected by the PANYNJ, from steel beams and demolished police cars to personal items, were transferred to Hangar 17. The size and weight of the steel artifacts were often a challenge for their preservation and transportation, eliminating other potential storage locations which were not able to support such large, heavy materials, and did not have suitable conditions for preservation. On the other hand, Hangar 17 was able to support the steel since it had been used for aircraft in the past. Some large pieces were cut into smaller ones to facilitate their transportation to the hangar (PANYNJ Report 2007). The size and weight of the pieces became a concern also for the builders of local memorials, considering transportation costs and the space limitations of the memorial sites. Those groups that did not have the resources or available space for a large piece of steel had to ask for smaller pieces.

The PANYNJ committee wanted to document the towers also from an engineering aspect, and this was one of the reasons for collecting the structural steel remains (PANYNJ Report 2007). It is important to remember that the WTC site was considered a crime scene, and the things collected from the site were forensic evidence until the investigations were completed and the court ordered permission for their release. Analysis of the structural artifacts was also required to understand the towers' collapse, in order to identify any architectural weakness and to prevent future errors. Consequently, forensic investigations and analysis of the structural materials by the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) began in 2002 and continued until 2008. NIST then returned the pieces to the PANYNJ and kept only small pieces as evidence for testing.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with Peter Miller.

The PANYNJ tagged and catalogued each object for its inventory. Each item was examined, measured, and photographed with a detailed description of its current condition and original location (PANYNJ report 2007), which is illustrative of the care given to each piece. For example, the following description was written for one of the steel beams:

This was possibly a transfer girder. There is a steel stiffener plate welded perpendicular to the web. Particles of concrete and debris are loose on the steel. The ends have been cut for removal. The actual cross dimensions of the steel member are: 31" wide x 3" thick flanges, 54" deep x 2" thick web. There are no visible identification markings on the steel. [Port Authority's report 2007, II-301]

Artifacts continued arriving at the hangar even after the end of the official collecting process. According to the PANYNJ's report (2007), when additional artifacts were brought to the hangar, they admitted them to the collection as part of the historical preservation process protected by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Interestingly, Peter, retired PANYNJ manager, mentioned that at some point public concerns were raised about toxins and contamination of the artifacts. Upon this, people who collected things from the site through unofficial means brought the steel they had gotten to the hangar. In some other cases, people brought the steel to the hangar after realizing that they did not have space to keep it properly. The PANYNJ accommodated these contributors and added the pieces to the collection.

This initial handling of the artifacts tells one part of the story, which is a process of creating a historical collection along with forensic analyses. However, the materiality of the steel artifacts came to signify different things for their receivers during their memorialization as local public memorials, as the following sections will demonstrate.

### 5.1.2 Material Memories

Three of my informants took part in the recovery work for a week. In addition to the interviews I conducted with them, they brought with them the pictures and notes they took while they were at the site. Each interview took 2-3 hours. Their experiences at the WTC site became the main motivation afterwards for them to ask for a steel piece to build a 9/11 memorial.

Jack and Brad are members of the same team under FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) Urban Search and Rescue Task Force. Their team is not based in New York, but they were deployed to New York City on the evening of the attacks. They both participated in the rescue work on the WTC site for eight days. Rob is also a FEMA member from Indianapolis, whose team was also deployed to New York City within twenty-four hours after the attacks, and he also had worked at the site for eight days. They had taken hundreds of photographs while they were there, and we looked at and talked about those photographs when we met. The photographs are important not only because they show the working conditions at the debris site, but also because they show the things from the perspective of the workers.

The eight days they spent at the WTC site are marked by material references. Jack and Brad's team set up their command post on Vesey Street. When they arrived to the WTC site and first looked at it, Jack remembered that he saw that the collapsed buildings formed a pit from where they fell in, six stories below ground. They went down in that pit. This moment became a reference for their memorial design, and this is why the base of their memorial is built a few feet below ground. Koenig's *Sphere*, the sculpture that once stood at the WTC plaza fountain, survived the collapse with significant damage and was noticeable at the WTC site during the recovery. Jack and Brad's team used the sphere—"the globe," they call it—as a marker for their search pattern. Looking at the site from their base, the globe was in the middle, between the

remains of the two towers [Figure 30]. “The North Tower when it fell, didn’t fall completely, there was still some steel standing up, and that was on the other side of the globe,” Jack explained. The positioning of the sphere and the towers became their reference for directions during the search. For Brad, the sphere also became a way of dating the photographs he took at the WTC site.<sup>45</sup> He remembers it rained heavily on September 14<sup>th</sup>, and the rain settled most of the dust in the area. Then Brad noticed that the globe lost its dust covering and started to shine: “If the golden fountain [the sphere] ball is dull and dusty, it was before Friday the 14<sup>th</sup>. If the gold fountain ball appears dented and shiny it is after the rain stopped on Friday the 14<sup>th</sup>. ”

They started their search pattern counterclockwise, the North Tower being 12 o’clock and their base is 6 o’clock. Since multiple teams worked in shifts at the site, 24 hours a day, marking the rubble was crucial to provide communication between the rescuers. The “X” sign with the name of the team next to it meant the search on that spot was completed, so the new person could start working on the next spot. Therefore, many artifacts recovered from the site have traces of various markings, meaning things like danger, victims, or hazards. One of the spots that Jack and Brad’s team searched was the subway beneath the WTC. They marked the subway cars as they continued their search. Nine years later when they went to Hangar 17 to pick up the steel for their memorial, they saw the subway car they searched and noticed it because their search mark was still on it. Seeing that piece with their mark on it nine years later was both surprising and moving, and Jack remembered one of their friends got emotional and had to leave the hangar.

According to Jack and Brad, dust and steel were two things expressive of those days. From the first day, Brad remembered the standing remains of the South Tower visible from

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<sup>45</sup> In addition to the interview, Brad gave me the notes he took about the eight days they spent at the WTC. Therefore, the information provided in this section is the combination of the interviews and his notes.

Church Street, which become an iconic image afterwards for many. What was left behind was mostly steel, Jack explained:

Very ironic to the most of the people working down there searching; the only thing you find is steel, and there was dust everywhere, but there was no furniture... We found one intact person on the day we got there. She was completely intact, clothed, looked like she was sleeping. Covered in gray dust. And after that we didn't find one other intact person. Everything else from that point on was parts. So, the only thing that was really a recollection of the event as far as material goes was the steel. (...) I mean you saw railroad cars and stuff like that, subways, but it really didn't depict what was going on surface side. And even the pictures you see of the buildings that were standing had pieces of steel in them. So that came to be a real big thing.

When Rob and I first met in Indianapolis, he had brought with him a thick folder full of information about the 9/11 memorial he initiated, and a few pictures of himself at the site. When I asked him his motivation for building a 9/11 memorial, he turned to his folder before saying anything and showed a picture of himself standing in front of the pile of rubble, and then he said, "That's the motivation." His experiences at the WTC site prompted the idea of getting a steel piece to build a memorial. Two days after our first interview we met again in front of the memorial, and this time he had with him all the photographs he took at the WTC.

Like the photographs we looked at with Jack and Brad, Rob's pictures also showed the complexity of the debris and its massive size and unstable topography. According to Rob, what people saw on TV was not sufficient to understand what being at the site felt like, because it was not possible to replicate the sound and smell there. When firefighters enter into a building, they carry PASS (Personal Alert Safety System) devices on their air packs. It is an alarming device, and it starts the alarm when a firefighter becomes motionless for 30 seconds. The alarm gets louder until help comes. When Rob and his team arrived at the site on the next morning (September 12<sup>th</sup>), they could still hear the sound of the PASS devices coming from the debris,

which belonged to the firefighters who died at the collapse. In the picture he had showed, he pointed to the steel beam standing next to him. The beam was marked as “DOA,” meaning dead on arrival. Rob explained there was a woman buried down there at that spot and they could not get to her yet. The search dogs became depressed because they could not find anyone. Dust and debris were everywhere, and there were certain procedures to drink water. He remembered they had to open it under cover, drink it, and if they took water away, they had to discard it to avoid contamination. Though they wore masks, ten members of his team were diagnosed with cancer since they had gotten back from the site. Rob has also had to deal with serious health issues since then.

A giant steel section from the WTC façade hit the Deutsche Bank building and demolished its façade, and it was hanging down from where it got stuck. Rob pointed to the picture of that piece hanging from the building. From my point of view, it did not seem different from any other steel piece at the WTC site. However, soon I learned that it gained a special recognition at the site by the recovery workers: since it could kill somebody if it fell, people at the site named it “the widow maker.”

### **5.1.3 Hangar 17 Experience**

In the beginning, people who requested steel artifacts from the PANYNJ were invited to come to the hangar and choose a piece they liked, Peter Miller explained. However, in the first year the PANYNJ received thousands of requests, and it became difficult to manage so many. It was not possible to give everyone a chance to come and choose anymore. Instead, the PANYNJ asked people to describe in their applications what they wanted, and tried to assign appropriate pieces for each applicant. At some point they had to cut larger pieces into smaller ones to supply the

high number of requests, and also because many applicants could not handle large pieces. Even though the majority of the applicants did not have a chance to choose the steel piece they would get, some of them were still able to see inside the hangar when they went there to pick up their steel.

The hangar experience is illustrative of both the materiality of the artifacts and their efficacy. One of the first things Peter told me about the hangar was that it was “like a cemetery,” rather than a museum. After the investigations ended around 2008, select groups of people, such as the recovery workers, were invited to visit the hangar and see the artifacts. Peter recalled a PANYNJ officer who could not speak for a moment when he entered.

Twelve of my informants have been inside of the hangar. While only a few of them had the opportunity to choose the piece they would like, most of them at least saw inside the hangar when they were there to pick up the piece the PANYNJ assigned to them. They took pictures inside the hangar, and we looked at those pictures together as they talked about their experience.<sup>46</sup>

For Jack, Brad, and Rob, seeing inside the hangar was a recollection of their WTC memories, because they saw again artifacts that they had seen during the recovery work, this time in a setting that is the opposite of the WTC site. The artifacts that were once scattered across the debris at the site were now removed from their original context, sorted and categorized as historical objects waiting to be picked up or transferred to their eventual locations, most likely as memorial or museum items.

John, the firefighter from the King of Prussia, PA fire station approached me when I was taking pictures of the memorial in front of the station. Their memorial attracts many visitors, so

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<sup>46</sup> My informants were not allowed to share the pictures taken inside the hangar; therefore they did not give me any copies. We looked at the pictures together only for the interview purposes.

he came to talk to me when he saw me at their memorial site. He was a member of the memorial committee, and he went to Hangar 17 with a group of other firefighters to pick up their steel piece. When I asked him about that experience, he just said “I wouldn’t wish that on my worst enemy.” People think firefighters are “tough,” but everyone cried, he added. I have heard similar reactions from my other informants. “Silence. I don’t think anybody spoke a word while we were walking around and looking at the stuff,” another informant told.

Sean lost his wife in 9/11, and he joined the memorial construction in his town when the committee approached him to share their plans and get his consent. He went to the hangar to pick up the steel beam with the committee. Being in the hangar, standing next to a steel piece that had been part of the building that his wife’s plane hit was “pretty intense, pretty powerful,” Sean said. He described the hangar as a forensic recreation of the buildings. He was very impressed to see how all those artifacts collected from the WTC site were put back together forensically in a secluded area. “That was an intense powerful moment knowing that you were present in a very nonintrusive area... I mean very private. It’s not public place. Personalized, private.” Especially, the treatment of the steel pieces in the hangar drew Sean’s attention:

As you walk in it, the aura... the sacredness of it... That was very intensive part. (...) The way the workers treated it [the steel]... to the naked eye it’s a crumpled up piece of metal, but these people treated it like this wasn’t just a pile. These were all laid out individually, so each piece of metal was treated like it was fragile. Each piece of the steel, you know is strong... You know its thickness, the strength of it, but the way people handle it was like it was very delicate, and sensitive material.

Jared is a volunteer firefighter who lost his brother on 9/11 at the WTC. His other brother, a firefighter in Fairfax County, VA responded to the fire at the Pentagon on the same day. His company applied for a steel artifact when they heard about their distribution, as part of a Boy Scouts project. Jared has been to the hangar when they were there to pick up the steel piece

for their memorial. One of his friends, also a firefighter, wanted to go with him because his father worked at the steel mill that produced the steel for the WTC. It was not easy for Jared to describe how it was being inside the hangar. In a way it was creepy he said, but at the same time it felt similar to being at Arlington National Cemetery or Gettysburg. “It’s the same kind of feeling for me to walk through there, it’s like you are on hallowed ground. There was just something special,” he explained.

Seeing the impact of destruction on the artifacts was also part of the hangar experience. It was different from seeing the artifacts in a museum, because the access to the hangar was limited and the artifacts were not yet conceptualized as museum objects. In other words, in contrast to the objects in museum display, the artifacts inside the hangar were still close and accessible. The following quote shows the details that drew Jack’s attention inside the hangar:

They actually had tents set up, and they kept the humidity and temperature constant all the time, and some of the things were pretty bizarre there, where the parts of the buildings were compressed down, and you could actually see the twin floors and they had little hands they lined up with each other, so there’s any movement in that piece, they can see it. And you could actually see ash, and actually read the print through the ash what was burnt. It was pretty amazing. (...) [One of the beams] was probably as big as this table, square, and looked like just a paper clip, it was bent right around. The force that must have been involved to do something like that is incredible.

Another informant who saw the artifacts both at the museum and the hangar explained how it was different for him to see them in the hangar first:

It was very eerie, because in the hangar, nobody else was there, I could touch it. We went in the vehicle tent, where the ambulances were, the cruisers were, and the old fire trucks that got burnt, the ladder truck missing the whole front of it, it’s in the museum, I have a picture of me standing next to it, touching it. Very eerie. Before anybody could see that I got to see that. So, very, very special for me to see that and be able to touch it, and be there.

Consequently, the accounts of the informants regarding Hangar 17 demonstrate how the robustness and damaged forms of the artifacts worked as their potentially significant sensuous qualities—qualisigns—to signify their immediate connection to the events and destruction.

#### **5.1.4 Form and Texture**

Material qualities of the artifacts had to be considered during their transportation, memorial design, and also regarding their preservation and protection. For instance, processions to escort the steel artifacts were less likely to happen if the piece was small, so ceremonial processions took place mostly for large pieces of artifacts. One informant said that they cancelled their plans for a procession after learning that their piece would be smaller than three feet. In such cases, the pieces were usually delivered by shipping them from New York. The size did not affect the steel's significance, as all of my informants stated getting a piece was the important thing, but it affected the form of commemorative acts and memorials.

Since steel gets rusted over time, some of my informants preferred to clear coat their artifact to prevent further rust, and keep it in its original state. When they coated the steel pieces, it was critical to keep the traces of destruction, and other markings such as writings and spray paint. Yet, the majority of the memorials were uncoated, because they did not want to intervene, and instead let it change and transform in time. Remarkably, the stains of rust that occurred on the memorial's ground sometimes triggered symbolic interpretations, instead of seeing them as signs of deterioration. Standing next to the steel artifact and telling me the memorial's symbolic features, one informant pointed to the stains on the ground, and with an emotional tone that I could tell from his voice he said he sees them as “tears from heaven.” I came across a similar

interpretation at a different memorial site, which this time they interpreted the stains on the ground as “tears from the World Trade Center.”

Since the memorials had to be open to public access, they were almost all located outdoors, except a few cases where the artifact was put inside a building’s entrance. Due to such open access, vandalism has been a threat for some of the memorials. News about theft and demolition took place in the media, which described the memorials as “desecrated” because of the damage.<sup>47</sup> Only one of the memorials I visited had a record of vandalism, in which someone scratched the memorial base to write something. Therefore, the issue of vandalism did not come up as a major subject in my fieldwork, and when an informant referred to the issue, the subject was not vandalism, but the lack of it. Mentioning that the memorial was not vandalized was a way of saying the memorial was respected and accepted in the community. For the Hudson 9/11 Memorial, MA, Sarah brought up that there had been no vandalism, even though the site had been vandalized many times in the past:

I have a lot of respect for this memorial. I think that people who come and see it do too, because it has been up here for a couple of years now, and there’s been no vandalism. None. That says something. (...) Before they started re-doing the park, this place was vandalized so bad, there was so much spray paint, kids had broken in, and broken things. (...) Nothing has been done to this memorial.

Another indicator of the value and significance attached to these artifacts is the care and effort given to keep together any particles cut off the steel. The PANYNJ did not allow selling or discarding any remains that might fall or cut off from the steel artifacts during the memorial construction. One of the solutions, which also turned into an act of commemoration, was burying the remains under the memorial. For instance, the concrete pieces that were cut off the steel

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<sup>47</sup> <http://www.nbcmiami.com/on-air/as-seen-on/306562581.html> (Accessed: 8/23/2016)  
<http://sanangelolive.com/news/san-angelo/2016-06-25/bishop-michael-pfeifer-disturbed-desecration-911-monument>  
(Accessed: 8/23/2016)

beam of the Hudson memorial were mixed into the cement, and buried under the memorial's base. There were also pieces of wood attached to the beam, and they were removed for the construction purposes. Later the committee put those wood pieces inside the beam, and sealed it.

Artists and art historians worked with the steel artifacts to create sculptures, or an exhibit that approached the artifacts' materiality from different viewpoints. Their experiences and perspectives illustrate the ways the form and texture of the artifacts affected their works. The artists John Van Alstine and Noah Savett assembled pieces of steel to create their sculpture, "Tempered by Memory," in Saratoga Springs, NY [Figure 19]. Though they are both metal sculptors and experienced in working with steel, the pieces of the WTC steel were unusual materials for them. "They were empowered and imbued by this event, and the fact that they were literally shaped by the impact of the planes, and the tumbling of the building just gave them power like no other," John explained. The physicality of the tumbling building attracted Noah as a sculptor as well. He pointed out that the other events that he recalled, such as the assassination of JFK, did not have such physicality. The first time he saw the pictures of the debris, he thought of what a memorial would be the remnants of the building, but he did not have the opportunity then, though later he made other works conceptually based on 9/11.

Arranging the pieces, they wanted to give the memorial "uplifting quality." Except for the beam that they bent to use as the base of the memorial, they did not make any changes on the artifacts. Noah explained there was an attempt to make a composition, but maintaining the visual integrity of the way the steel material has been shaped by the event was very important. The idea of a relic as a tangible part of the past was one of the things they considered in designing their sculpture, because they noticed everyone wanted to touch the steel pieces. This is also the reason

why they wanted to put it in a place that would be easy for people to touch. John explained how they combined the steel pieces' relic and artistic quality:

We didn't want it to be just a relic. We wanted to be respectful and look back what happened, but we also wanted to somehow convey optimism, and a looking forward. I call it kind of Janus concept, where you look into both ways at the same time. So, part of that was to create something with the substantial scale, and also something that has some aesthetic grace to it, and kind of uplifting.

According to Noah, although their work is an abstract sculpture, it is meaningful to people because of the material it was made of:

It is a known fact where the steel came from. Immediately that gives a meaning in itself. The way we manipulated to make a piece, I think, does bring something more than just being a relic. (...) Any of those pieces just could be a relic, and people would touch and say 9/11, but I think making into a piece of art has in fact brought something more than just a relic to the table.

In 2010, Margaret Stocker, art historian and a trustee of the India House Foundation, curated an exhibit featuring the artifacts found at the WTC site excavations before and during the buildings' construction.<sup>48</sup> One group of the artifacts was the remains of Dutch trader Adrian Block's ship that burned on the Hudson River in 1614, including charred timbers, a keel found in 1916, and an anchor found in 1967 during WTC site construction. They were "maritime relics."<sup>49</sup> Another major artifact was the flag of Netherlands, which was one of the United Nations flags on display in the lobby of the Twin Towers, and recovered from the site after attacks. Margaret heard the PANYNJ's holding of the steel artifacts while she was working on the exhibit project,

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<sup>48</sup> India House Foundation is a non-profit organization established in 1999 to document and preserve maritime history, and help revitalize Lower Manhattan. It grew out of a social club called India House, which was established by the businessmen in shipping industry in 1914.

<sup>49</sup> <http://legacy.waterfrontalliance.org/partners/india-house-foundation> (Accessed: 9/20/2016)

and decided to borrow a piece of WTC steel to add to the exhibit. Thereby, the exhibit would bring together the artifacts that were both connected to the WTC site and disasters.

Margaret had a chance to visit Hangar 17, and she chose a piece that was approximately five feet long with the inscription “SAVE” on it. I wondered what she looked for in the piece she wanted. Weight and presentation were the major issues she considered. The piece had to be small for easy transportation, and at the same time she was concerned about how to present it, because some people might have objections to putting the steel on a pedestal and treating it like art. In this regard, she wanted to choose a piece that revealed what had happened, but did not look like junk. In the end, she chose a piece that was an upright part of an I-beam. She was also attracted to the word “SAVE” that was written on it. The piece was twisted slightly, and that quality seemed almost like a “dance” to her, reminding the gesture and movement of the Greek sculptures, specifically the *contrapposto* they achieved, and at the same time reflected the violence of the attacks.

A few months after the exhibit, on the tenth anniversary of the attacks, Stocker put the artifact on display in the narthex of the Brick Presbyterian Church in NYC, and “reinterpreted” it as a “sacred object.” Stocker stated that they put the steel into a sacred space in the same way that the Stations of the Cross would be treated in Catholic churches and cathedrals in Europe. They took pictures of the steel with the cross at the background, and “conflated the cross in the church with the steel.”

Between the two exhibits, Stocker made arrangements to put the artifact on a permanent display at India House’s entrance outside, and for a couple of months the artifact stayed on the top of the stairs at the entrance. However, later some of the trustees had second thoughts about continuing talking about 9/11, especially considering that one of the trustees had lost his wife on

9/11 at the WTC, and eventually the board decided not to have a permanent display. Throughout these displays at India House and the Brick Church, the steel became the object of different contexts—secular and religious, private and public, through which the material qualities of the artifact interpreted in relation to secular and religious connotations, and also as an object of distress.

## **5.2 SPACE, PLACE, AND MEMORYSCAPE**

Monuments and memorials are sites of memory and commemoration, and are also instruments of place making. Archaeological records of monuments and ancestor veneration have provided strong evidence regarding the role of commemorative structures as border markers and manifestations of power and land ownership (Dillehay 1990, Harmansah 2011, Mantha 2009). Anthropologists have documented that “perceptions of and values attached to landscape encode values and fix memories to places that become sites of historical identity,” through which “landscape becomes a form of codification of history itself, seen from the viewpoints of personal expression and experience” (Stewart and Strathern 2003:1). In the formation of nation-states and national-identities, monuments and memorials contributed to the creation of “imagined communities” (Anderson 2006[1983]) by locating certain histories in the landscape (Osborne 2001), and creating landscapes of national memories (Savage 2011).

As places of commemoration, memorials and monuments engage with their surroundings in different ways depending on their historical, cultural, and political relevance, and architectural aspects. As Savage (2001) has discussed, beginning in the late nineteenth century the “statue monuments,” which were freestanding statues that vertically raised on architectural support,

gradually replaced by “larger spatial frameworks” through horizontally spread elements (2011:198). Though the spatial monuments did not differ from the statue monuments in terms of their subjects, which were heroic portraits of male figures, they introduced the idea of a monument as a space of engagement (Savage 2011). As Savage notes, not all subsequent monuments followed this model, but the idea of a monument as a space of engagement became the central feature of the national memorials by the twenty-first century, especially for memorials commemorating victims and sufferings with a purpose to heal. With its non-figurative design and horizontal expansion, Maya Lin’s design of the Vietnam Veterans War Memorial, dedicated in 1982, is exemplary of spatial experience and engagement, avoiding a didactic tone promoting war and heroism, and instead focusing on the losses and the dead (Savage 2011, Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 1994). However, as I discussed in Chapter 2, it is important to recall that the memorial’s black color and lack of heroic details received negative criticisms, which resulted in the addition of a flagpole and a realistic statue of three soldiers near the memorial’s entrance, and later the Vietnam Women’s Memorial close to them. One more additional change was also made; the sponsors inscribed a dedication note at the center of the memorial, depicting the death and loss as heroic sacrifices (Savage 2011:277-8).<sup>50</sup> Yet, the memorial wall remain as a site of spatial experience and engagement, offering visitors a place to reflect, and they engage with the memorial leaving personal notes, mementos, and rubbing of a name on the wall (Hass 1998, Savage 2011).

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<sup>50</sup> The inscription, writing in two parts, stated the following: “In honor of the man and women of the armed forces of the United States who served in the Vietnam War. The names of those who gave heir lives and of those who remain missing are inscribed in the order they were taken from us”, “Our nation honors the courage, sacrifice and devotion to duty and country of its Vietnam veterans. This memorial was built with private contributions from the American people.” See Savage (2011: 277-8) for the analysis of the inscriptions’ message.

The national 9/11 memorials are also designed as spaces of engagement, avoiding figurative representations and providing space for visitors to move around and experience the site. The architects of the National 9/11 Memorial designed the memorial plaza to be a “mediating space” that is integrated with the city. They proposed “a space that resonates with the feelings of loss and absence.”<sup>51</sup> The architects of the Flight 93 Memorial stated, “The Memorial should offer intimate experience, yet be heroic in scale. Its strong framework should be open to natural change and allow freedom of personal interpretation.”<sup>52</sup> For the Pentagon 9/11 National Memorial as well, the architects envisioned “a place that prompts contemplation but does not prescribe what to think or how to feel.”<sup>53</sup> These proposals do not guarantee that visitors experience the memorials exactly the way their designers envisioned. Yet, the memorials still work as spaces of engagement for those want to grasp a connection, and their spatial layouts facilitate that connection by providing a space to act and walk, and thereby a way to internalize the sites’ physical aspects, which were affected by the attacks directly. Visitors leave personal notes and mementos near the names of the dead and designated spots at all three sites throughout the year.

Having been constructed on the event sites as places of commemoration, the national memorials expanded on places that had already gained a mnemonic quality. On the other hand, the local memorials are located away from the event sites, and the sites they were built on did not have a mnemonic significance related to 9/11. In addition, the local memorials with steel artifacts can hardly be considered as spatial memorials due to their small areas and artifact-oriented

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<sup>51</sup> “Reflecting Absence,” by Michael Arad and Peter Walker. [http://www.wtcsitememorial.org/fin7\\_mod.html](http://www.wtcsitememorial.org/fin7_mod.html) (Accessed: 9/28/2016)

<sup>52</sup> Flight 93 National Memorial General Management Plan Summary (2007). <https://www.nps.gov/flni/learn/management/upload/fl93%20gmp%20summary%20WEB.pdf> (Accessed: 9/28/2016)

<sup>53</sup> KBAS, Pentagon Memorial. <http://kbass.co/home-3/uncategorized/pentagon-memorial> (Accessed: 9/28/2016)

designs, which mostly display the artifacts alone and treat them as statues. Even though some of the memorials have spatial elements, such as a horizontal layout on a larger area and benches around, they are not as spatial as the national memorials because of their less abstract designs and relatively small areas. Yet, the local memorials are still able to function as spaces of engagement due to the steel artifacts' presence, and create distinct commemorative spaces despite their geographical distance from the event sites. On a broader level, they are part of a memroyscape objectified through the incorporation of the same type of material at multiple sites, sharing similarities in design, symbolism, and narrative. The definitions of the concepts "place," "space," and "memroyscape" are crucial to elaborate on these arguments.

Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan's discussion of the relationship between "space" and "place" has been a common source in spatial studies (Isomaa et al. 2013, Maddrell and Sidaway 2010). According to Tuan (1977), space is a location without meaning and significance (abstract geographical extension). Space turns into place when meaning ascribed to it. He argued, "enclosed and humanized space is place" (1977:54), and space and place depend on each other:

The ideas 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place. [Tuan 1977:6]

While places are "functional nodes in space" where activities converge, space is "a throughway" (Tuan 1979:388, 411). According to Tuan, "Monuments, artworks, buildings, and cities are places because they can organize space into centres of meaning" (1979:415). In this regard, the local memorials are commemorative places, which gained meaning and mnemonic significance upon their establishment.

As opposed to geometrical space, there is also space perceived through bodily movement and practice on the physical place. In this regard, Michel de Certeau conceptualized space as “*a practiced place*” (1984:117). According to de Certeau, “the street geographically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e., a place constituted by a system of signs,” (1984:117).

Drawing on Tuan and de Certeau, I argue that memorials and monuments are places of memory and commemoration, and a commemorative space occurs as one interacts with them. Though this interaction requires a physical act in de Certeau’s theory, it does not necessarily have to be an expressive act visible to everyone; similar to de Certeau’s example of the act of reading, one interacts with the memorial not necessarily by walking and exploring every aspect of it, but also by observing it, reading its inscriptions, and thinking about the reason of its existence. In this regard, commemorative space is also an imagined space shaped through personal and socio-cultural elements.

In the case of the local memorials with steel artifacts, which are geographically distant from the event sites, the artifacts became a medium of connection between the local memorials, and also between the local memorials and the WTC site. Distance is the key for the local memorials, since they are based on the idea that the WTC steel had come all the way from New York City, and the artifacts and spatial references create imagined ties between these places. Therefore, the commemorative space that each memorial created is also part of a memoryscape created through the connections between them and to the WTC, which is further enforced by the use of the same type of artifact, and by similar designs and symbolism. The suffix “-scape” gained a special recognition with Arjun Appadurai’s use of the term to theorize “irregular” and

“fluid” global cultural flows (Appadurai 1996), specifically the global flow of people (*ethnoscapes*), technology (*technoscapes*), capital (*financescapes*), information (*mediascapes*), and ideologies (*ideoscapes*) (Appadurai 1996:33). I use memoryscape to refer to the space created by the web of local memorials that incorporate the same type of the artifacts, and similar spatial references and symbolism. In this regard, each memorial site and the commemorative space they create is part of a larger memoryscape. The scale of this memoryscape marks both actual connections, such as victims’ network, and perceived impact of the attacks at other places.

### **5.2.1 Making a Commemorative Space**

Though each local memorial is a separate site, they share similar ideals. Most of my informants were not familiar with the other local 9/11 memorials so that each local memorial was a distinct project. Yet, they still shared certain characteristics in design and symbolism, and that points to a shared understanding of how 9/11 should be commemorated and memorialized.

Massachusetts’s FEMA Urban Search & Rescue team’s memorial in Beverly, MA was not yet completed when I met with Jack and Brad for the first time in 2015. The base of the memorial was finished, the steel beam was on its place, and the plan to complete the rest of the memorial was ready. The memorial is formed of two steel beams that are connected to each other because once they formed the grid-like façade of the North tower [Figure 31]. Jack and Brad, who were members of the team, joined the rescue work at the WTC site right after the attacks. Their experiences and memories of the WTC site became a point of reference and inspiration for the design of their memorial, which is located on their training site.

Explaining the memorial design, Jack said “it’s all reminiscent of what took place on 9/11.” Brad requested from the PANYNJ a segment of the steel beams that formed the façades of

the towers, because their operation base at the WTC site was right across the standing remains of the towers. The view of the towers' standing remains and the Koenig sphere were constants during their rescue work at the WTC site, and they wanted somehow to include those elements into their memorial design. Also, the memorial base is a few feet below ground to remind them of the moment they went down into the pit. The bricks they used at the memorial are "ash gray" to symbolize the dust that covered the WTC site. They ordered a stone sphere to install in front of the steel beams to symbolize the Koenig sphere [Figure 32]. The memorial is exceptional considering its reenactment of the team's experiences at the WTC [Figure 33]. It has created a commemorative space by reenacting the WTC site from the viewpoints of the team members.

I did not expect to find artifacts other than WTC steel remains at the local memorials when I started my fieldwork, but I have seen that a variety of other items were occasionally incorporated into the memorials, some from the 9/11 sites, some from other places, such as American flags flown in Afghanistan and Iraq. The memorial at Acushnet, MA is one of the few to have artifacts from all three 9/11 sites. Getting materials from all of these sites was not the plan at the beginning, I was told by Dan, the fire chief who initiated the Acushnet memorial and acquired the artifacts. However, after bringing the WTC steel artifact to the town, he began a search to find out what had become of the damaged sections of the Pentagon. He contacted a Massachusetts Senator's office to see if anyone had information about the Pentagon. With the help of the Senator's office, Dan contacted the person in the Pentagon who was in the charge of the damaged building parts. They agreed to send Dan a piece of the Pentagon by mail, but the piece they sent was very small (about ten inches long), and that was not adequate for the memorial they planned. When Dan contacted the Pentagon a second time, they invited him to visit to see the pieces they had and pick up the one he would like.

When he was at the Pentagon, Dan recalled that it was not easy for him to decide which piece to take with him. The pieces were numerous and of various sizes, and since he was alone he had to pick up a piece that he could carry. “I simply didn’t know if I was choosing the right one,” he recalled. Eventually he selected the piece that is currently on display at the memorial because of its characteristic look:

I ended up selecting the piece we have because there is some damage to it. There is some sooting from the fire, and there is an architectural groove in it as well, that we believe was designed to help shed rain... So you could see it’s just not a block of cement, it actually was something, and I liked that.

After securing the artifacts from the WTC and the Pentagon, Dan felt he had to try for Shanksville, as well. I knew from a conversation with a park ranger at the Flight 93 Memorial that only a few artifacts were recovered from the crash site there. Unlike the WTC and the Pentagon, in Shanksville there were not many materials to collect because the plane crashed into an empty field and no buildings were destroyed. The debris were damaged and burnt, except a few aircraft parts and personal items. When Dan found a contact from the National Park Service, he was again told that only a few remains were recovered and they could not give them out. However, they still had some stones that were moved during the recovery excavation, and they told Dan that he could get one. Dan drove to Shanksville upon hearing this, and when he arrived the park authorities had already selected a stone for him. That stone is currently on display at the memorial site [Figure 34].

The memorial site is not significant on its own, but by bringing the artifacts from all three sites together, Dan thought the memorial has become “a very special place.” He elaborated on this: “I don’t think the place is sacred; it is front lawn of the fire station. But when you bring these items together, they bring with them the importance they represent. And I don’t think I

have seen people react that way.” The reaction he mentioned not only refers to the people’s will to touch the artifacts, but also to the way they act at the memorial. For instance, when we were talking about the anniversary ceremony they have every September 11<sup>th</sup>, he recalled that some parents try to prevent their children from running or jumping at the memorial site. For him, that is an indication of the site’s significance and specialness. “This isn’t the place that you run around and jump up and down. It is a solemn place... but it was just a lawn! Nothing happened here.” He knew the memorials are located at common places, such as lawns and parks, and thought the memorials have changed those places.

We view this as the jewel of our community. This is the jewel. And at night when it’s lit up, it is just beautiful. On a summer day when everything is growing, and the grass is nice and green, it is beautiful to look at. Then you remember what it is, and it just takes on that much more influence.

(...)

I have been to Dealey plaza where President Kennedy was killed. There’s a marker on the road; this is the spot. You go to Ground Zero, you see the memorial, fountains that’s where the buildings stood. That’s not the case here, there is no connection between Acushnet and 9/11, other than every single person that was here that was alive went through it. And that’s the connection.

The memorial design has added more to the artifacts. The artists who designed the memorial put “a couple of secrets” into it, Dan said. From the very top of the steel to the base is 9 feet 11 inches. The steel was put in an angle, and it is pointing at the WTC site. They took GPS coordinates and arranged the steel’s direction accordingly. If one stands behind the where it is pointing, she would look be looking towards the WTC. The base of the steel is a pentagon, and the coordinates of the WTC, Shanksville, and the Pentagon are inscribed around it. Through such spatial references, the memorial site gains significance and creates imagined ties to the sites of attacks.

The Acushnet memorial was the first time I saw the WTC steel oriented towards New York City. However, soon I came to realize that others did this as well. The interesting thing is that the idea occurred to these people separately. As I briefly introduced in the previous chapter, the 9/11 memorial at Dracut, MA is located on the front lawn of the fire station, right across from the family farm of John Ogonowski, the pilot of Flight 11. The memorial is oriented towards to the WTC, and Rich, resident and the chairman of the Dracut Historical Society who acquired the artifact, explained that it also corresponds to the John Ogonowski monument located in front of the Ogonowski's farm:

The direction of the artifact facing the south-west... and that direction creates a straight line from the 9/11 memorial not only to the John Ogonowski monument, which is across the street, but if you draw a straight line from where you're standing at the memorial, over his monument [it] continues to the WTC in New York.

The memorial in West Stafford, CT is also oriented towards to the WTC site. Setting the memorial towards the WTC was Pete's idea, who was the fire chief. He came up with this idea without knowing other memorials had done similar things. He told they avoided modifying the steel to protect its original state, and erected it on the same angle as the torch cut. When they asked how to place the steel, Pete said "towards Manhattan," without aforethought.

Such information is not always easily available to the public; they are "hidden meanings" or "secrets" of the memorials in my informants' words. Some of them are known by word-of-mouth in close circles and shared by the audience on the anniversary ceremonies, while others are explained on memorial websites and brochures. It is also possible that visitors learn them if they get a chance to talk to the caretakers of the memorials on the site. I believe this is usually the case, because my informants were engaged with the memorial most of the time and they share the details of the memorials with the visitors when they see them at the memorial site. I

witnessed one of those moments in Indianapolis, when Rob and I were sitting on the bench at the memorial site looking at the pictures he brought. Two people approached the steel beams. After a few minutes, Rob asked them if they wanted to know how the beams ended up in Indianapolis. He started the conversation, and told them the memorial's "hidden meanings."

The Indianapolis 9/11 Memorial is almost a symbolic recreation of the WTC plaza, and it also has stone markers depicting the events in Shanksville and the Pentagon. There are seven trees around the memorial site that symbolize the seven buildings of the WTC complex. The benches are exact replicas of the benches that were at the WTC plaza. The steel beams are reminiscent of the towers, as they stand side-by-side. A life-size sculpture of an eagle, sculpted by a firefighter, is on top of one of the beams, and it looks toward New York City [Figure 14]. "It looks back to New York City, and the reason we did that was we wanted to show that even though these [the steel beams] are gone from New York, they are always looking back," Rob explained.

In Pennsylvania, the King of Prussia Volunteer Fire Company (KPVFC) 9/11 memorial is another example of how the spatial links are reenacted, thereby creating a commemorative space with imagined ties to New York City. The memorial has two pieces of steel beams that are reminiscent of the towers, and it has "the WTC patio" area separate from the memorial. The patio is composed of red and gray bricks depicting the WTC site plan with its seven buildings, main plaza, and surrounding streets [Figure 35]. The names of these streets—West, Vesey, Church, and Liberty streets—were inscribed on the patio, and that helped me to identify each WTC building. This is not a random depiction since the patio is oriented according to the actual position of the WTC buildings, forming a large-scale map based on the actual size of the area.

The base of the WTC steel beams is a pentagon, which is also scaled from the actual area and height of the Pentagon.

The North/South compass orientation of all these represented buildings are as they actually were and if you align the center of the monument with the flagpole, that alignment is the North/South direction. (...) The stainless steel towers of the monument, as well as the World Trade Center patio in pavers [paving stones], are exactly 1/52<sup>nd</sup> scale and an additional reduction in scale was required for the pentagon. The footprint and the height of the pentagon base are 104<sup>th</sup> scale. [The KPVFC 9/11 Memorial brochure]

John, the firefighter who met me at the memorial site, was impressed by all these details. He did not need to look at the brochure, because he had all details in his mind. We walked around the memorial together, and he showed me where I should stand to get the spatial references right.

Every time I thought a memorial to be unique in some aspect, I would soon see similarity at a different site. I thought the WTC site plan depicted on the KPVFC memorial was a specific, unique case until I came across the 9/11 memorial in Cranberry Township, PA. Cranberry Township and King of Prussia are at the opposite ends of Pennsylvania, approximately 300 miles apart, but the similarities are remarkable. The Cranberry memorial is located in front of the volunteer fire company's station. The steel beam is horizontally placed on top of two columns that replicate the steel façade of the towers and their striped outlook, and they stand on a scaled-down depiction of the WTC site [Figure 36]. Like the memorial in King of Prussia, the names of the streets and the buildings are visible on the ground. A memorial stone standing next to the steel artifact depicts the timeline of the events. On the back of the stone are laser-etched illustrations of the firefighters working on the debris, the iconic image of the three firefighters raising the American flag, the Manhattan skyline with the WTC towers, the Pentagon, and an airplane symbolizing Flight 93 [Figure 37]. Similar to the King of Prussia and Cranberry

Township memorials in Pennsylvania, the 9/11 memorial in Suwanee, GA also used the WTC site plan in memorial's design. The memorial has a sculptural work at the center, and it reflects the layout of the WTC site on ground when it is illuminated at night. Cutouts that are in the cone shaped sculpture project an aerial map, and show an aerial view of the WTC site at night [Figure 38].

The public safety training campus of Chester County, PA created a commemorative space through memorial displays of artifacts from all three sites. The training campus includes classrooms and a tactical village for the training and education of the public safety personnel—fire, emergency services, and police. A piece of the WTC steel and remnants of the Pentagon's damaged section are located at different points at the campus, each standing as an individual memorial. Ethan, the person who took part in acquiring the artifacts, showed me a stone they took from Shanksville, although it was not on display yet, because they were still discussing the details with the architect. Their plan was to put the stone in a shadow box with the timeline of the flight pattern and crash.

I have learned from my informants that acquiring a piece from the Pentagon was not the result of a systematic program like the PANYNJ's distribution of the steel remnants. Though the Pentagon did not have such plans, they were willing to help when people contacted them. The authorities were flexible in letting people select whatever piece they like, and even more than one if they needed it. Ethan and his friends went to the Pentagon to select pieces as a group of public safety personnel. At the time they did not know yet how they would memorialize the pieces they would take, but the person in charge of the remains told them that depending on the type of the memorial they were planning they could take more than one piece. They took six pieces of stone, putting five of them into the corners of a pentagon-shaped flagpole base, and one

of them holding the memorial plaque. The flagpole is at the lower section of the campus near the training village. A 15-foot long WTC steel beam is located inside the lobby of the academy building, which differs from the tendency to put the artifacts for outdoor displays. On the left of the steel beam there is a painting of three firefighters raising the American flag. The American flag behind the steel beam was flown over the United States Capitol for a day in honor of the first responders [Figure 39]. Ethan was surprised to see that a group of Argentinian firefighters who came to visit the campus were impressed with the artifacts, and he expressed his surprise as follows: “To see them so mesmerized by the steel, and then the Pentagon artifact... That was my first experience with somebody from outside the country that knew what that day was to us. They all wanted to have their pictures taken out here.”

Building a memorial is a community work that incorporates local resources, such as donated labor from local professionals, and voluntary support of the residents, as explained in Chapter 3. Here, I would like to emphasize the contribution of two sets of practices to the creation of a commemorative space that has ties to personal memories. The first are the practices that allowed my informants to leave a personal trace at the memorial site, and the other is the purchase of memorial bricks that are inscribed with the name of a person or a message, and used as pavement.

When I met Dan, memorial bricks were still on sale for the Acushnet memorial. The money earned from the bricks was used to cover the memorial’s maintenance and upkeep. For the first time during our conversation with Dan it came to my attention that people were purchasing memorial bricks not necessarily to commemorate the 9/11 victims. On the contrary, most often the donors did not have any connection to 9/11, and the bricks they donated were in the names of their family members and friends. Except for the names of the former firefighters

worked at the department, all donated bricks were for the loved ones of the donors that passed away. They wanted to put the names of their loves ones on the memorial ground because of the importance of the location, and because “it is a special place,” as Dan said. For instance, a friend of Dan, who passed away and has no headstone because his remains were cremated and dispersed, has a brick donated in his name. Dan said his family comes to see both their stone and the memorial.

The Clifton Heights Fire Company, PA covered almost the full cost of the memorial by selling memorial bricks. Jesse, one of the firefighters who was with me at the memorial site, pointed to the memorial bricks, and said that individuals and local business owners purchased them in memory of someone they know. Since they were not necessarily about 9/11, the site had become a place of memory for the donors, as well. Jesse’s family had donated one in their own name. On the other hand, Kenneth Caldwell was one of the victims who died in the WTC, and his remains were not found. Kenneth’s mother, who was living in a town nearby, donated a brick in memory of her son, and participated to the commemoration ceremonies at the site. Jesse showed me the brick donated in the name of Kenneth, and the bricks that the fire company donated in memory of the Port Authority officers, NYPD, and FDNY.

Being the person who initiated the memorial building, or being a member of the memorial committee is a source of pride. The memorial projects are eventually for the community informants said, but for those who led the process it is a personal memorial as well. This point sometimes came up in the interviews when my informants clearly stated that they were “honored” by being part of the project. For instance, they were proud of the idea that their grandchildren will visit the memorial in the future and learn that it is their grandparent who made it. Since the names of the memorial committee were often written on plaques at the memorial

sites, the information about who contributed building the memorial is available to the visitors. Memorial bricks also give clues about who was involved in the project, as I discussed. However, besides the public information available about those personal connections to the memorial, sometimes there are “hidden” traces of personal attachments, as the following three examples demonstrate.

A pentagon shaped wall surrounds the steel piece at the FEMA 9/11 memorial I described above. Before the wall’s construction, present and former members of the group who were together on 9/11 assembled to sign the building blocks that would be used in the wall’s construction. This is different from the engraved memorial bricks that are used at other memorial sites, because the blocks were assembled into the wall and not visible anymore. The messages written on the blocks were various. “Most of the people signed their own name and wrote sayings like ‘never forget,’” Jack told. Some of them put another person’s name, or that of a loved one they knew in New York who lost their life. Jack put the name a good friend of his who was a chief in NYC. Among the pictures of the memorial that we looked at together, I saw there was a pile of building blocks that were signed and ready to be used in the construction. Along with the messages like “We shall never forget WTC 9-11-01,” the messages were generally “in memory” of someone they knew, and included names only. I asked why they did this despite knowing that the blocks will not be visible at the memorial. Jack explained the purpose of signing the blocks was to remind themselves of being a team.

The symbolism of signing of the wall, and not being able to see it is, when we go out the door as Mass-Task Force 1, it’s not [Jack], it’s not [Brad] It is the team. And, the bricks in the wall are a symbol of that because every brick is a team member, but the team is not a brick, the team is the assembly of the bricks, so team is the wall. And the individuals don’t need to mentioned, because it’s not about the individual, it’s about the team.

The wall surrounding the Parma Heights memorial in Ohio contains tributes buried inside it. The construction of the wall was a group activity in which firefighters of the company and the bricklayers worked together to build the wall. Brian, one of the firefighters took part in building the memorial, explained that they wanted the memorial to be a little part of them, so they either wrote their names on the bricks, or buried objects as tributes. Brian was among those who preferred to write down his name. Others buried medallions such as St. Florian medals (the patron saint of firefighters), FDNY badges, and rosary beads [Figure 40]. They also buried a full set of nametags that firefighters use on their assignment board, so that “all our names are buried in there,” Brian said. (Assignment boards are used to display duties and schedules, such as the names of the officers working that day and their tasks.) Somebody has to tear down the wall to find out those pieces, as Brian told. Though it is not a secret, there is no explanation about the buried objects at the site, only the firefighters and bricklayers know about it.

The WTC steel cross located on the lawn of the volunteer fire station in Shanksville—one of the first companies that responded to the Flight 93 crash—is a gift from the FDNY Fire Family Transport Foundation [Figure 3]. The foundation originally wanted to put the piece at the Flight 93 National Memorial, but that did not happen because the National Park Service did not allow a permanent memorial from other sources at that point. The foundation still wanted a piece in Shanksville, and they contacted the fire department’s chief to place the memorial at their station. More than one thousand motorcycles escorted the beam to the station from New York City, because it turned into a fund raising event for the foundation by a firefighters association based in New York. Organizers of the event and members of the Shanksville fire department signed the bottom of the memorial before putting it into its place permanently. The retired chief

whom I met at the site explained that the signatures are known only by those who were present during the ceremony:

Everybody involved from our station that was involved, and the New York City firemen that were involved signed the bottom of it. (...) Anybody that was associated with the whole process signed the bottom, and people who are seen in that picture [a picture in the photo album that we were looking at] are the only ones who know that our names are there.

Rich, who led the building of the 9/11 memorial in Dracut, MA was in charge of the memorial details, though he got support from the town management. All the details included in the memorial, such as its orientation towards to New York City and the Ogonowski's monument, symbolic elements in height and other dimensions, and the design of the memorial site are his ideas. In addition, he had his last name and the dedication year etched onto the metal base that holds the steel beam. This is a personal memoir for himself, especially for the members of his family that will come afterwards. Like Rich, another informant from another state also said he was proud of being part of this memorial project, and being the person who started things:

Somebody sent me a photograph a couple of days after the dedication, where there was a uniformed soldier showing his daughters the steel. That's why we got it... That was the whole thing behind it... There is a certain amount of personal pride. My daughter someday can bring my grandchildren here, and say your grandfather got that. To be able to bring that to town—we are 13,000 people; to be able to bring something that significant here was absolutely phenomenal.

### **5.3      COMMEMORATIVE PERFORMANCE**

In this section, I discuss the performative aspect of the practices accompanied the memorialization of the steel artifacts. Bringing the steel from New York, its dedication, and the

anniversary ceremonies were performances that focused on the artifacts. The concept of performance needs clarification because of its manifold uses in the literature. On the one hand, the concept is linked to arts-based performances, such as theatrical plays. On the other hand, theorists extended the usage of the term to the study of everyday practices. Goffman (1959) analyzed social interactions from the viewpoint of a theatrical performance, and argued that individuals as social actors “perform” specific roles according to social context in order to articulate particular messages. Scholars of tourism studies analyzed tourists’ behavior as performances, approaching them as staged acts (Noy 2008). According to Schechner, “Performances—of art, rituals, or ordinary life—are ‘restored behaviors,’ ‘twice-behaved behaviors,’ performed actions that people train for and rehearse” (2013[2002]:28). I use the term “performance” to emphasize the expressive—performative—aspects of the practices took place in the commemorations. Besides the spontaneous acts, such as touching the steel, or leaving tributes at the memorial sites, the ceremonies of bringing the steel (the welcoming ceremony), dedication, and anniversary are also expressive acts that required the participation of groups and individuals, and were rich in terms of the symbols they used. Not all memorials had the all ceremonies, yet the ones I discuss in this section are illustrative of the contexts where the steel artifacts stood as memorials.

In Chapter 2, I discussed that the 9/11 commemorations focused on certain themes such as sacrificial death by using national and religious symbols together. I also discussed that patriotic and masculine imagery, and practices resembling military customs were often involved in the commemorations. This section will provide additional supporting evidence to this argument by describing the welcoming, dedication, and anniversary ceremonies. National symbols were essential components of these ceremonies, which were often supported by

expressions of patriotic sentiments. As I discuss below, bringing the steel from New York was accompanied by ceremonial events that animated the steel. It was not uncommon for “opening prayers” and “invocations” to take place in all three types of ceremonies. That brings our attention to the status of the steel artifacts as relics, and the role of religious references in the commemorations.

There is a tradition to put more emphasis on the commemoration of milestone years, such as decennials, or centennials. In the case of the local 9/11 memorials, there was a conscious effort to dedicate the steel piece on the tenth anniversary of the attacks in 2011, since the memorial projects usually began between 2009 and 2010. Even if the memorial was built before or after the tenth anniversary, there was still an effort to schedule the dedication on the day of September 11<sup>th</sup>. According to Connerton (1989), the emphasis given to certain dates and intervals is more about quality than quantity. “The intervals which are framed by certain critical dates, and which annually occupy the same relative position in the calendar, are believed to be qualitatively similar” (Connerton 1989:66). In this regard, annual commemorations can be seen as attempts to diminish the temporal distance between the past and the present, reenacting the event’s chronology. In her discussion of the dead-body politics in post-socialist states, Katherine Verdery argued the exhumation and reburial of the political, military, and religious leaders’ bodies were attempts to reorder the “meaningful universe” (1999:26), which required the redefinition of every aspect of social, political, and cultural life. Bringing the pre-communist period to the present, they reconfigured time. Carrying the six-hundred-year old bones of Serbian Prince Lazar throughout the monasteries in 1987—two years before the sixth hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo— “not only established the territorial claims of a new Serbian state,” but also “compressed time, as if his death in 1389 had occurred just a few days

ago,” Verdery argued (1999:98). The annual ceremonies for 9/11 at the memorial sites often marked the exact time of the attacks by ringing bells and having a moment of silence. Therefore, dedicating the steel on the anniversary, having annual ceremonies thereafter, and marking the moments of attacks in the ceremonies were attempts to create a temporal connection to the event.

### **5.3.1 Bringing the Steel**

Bringing the steel from New York to their new locations was accompanied by patriotic performances that often resembled military ceremonies and funeral processions. They were emotionally intense moments for their participants. John, the firefighter I met in King of Prussia, was impressed when the state police closed the PA Turnpike for the procession to come through, even though it was rush hour, around 5 p.m. John was among the group that went to New York that day, and he said it was not them requested to close the turnpike. People were at the roadsides when the steel and its accompanying vehicles arrived to the town. He was very proud seeing such interest in the procession and the steel’s arrival. He added that every year hundreds participate to the anniversary ceremony, which is higher than their expectations, and he said he get chills seeing people’s interest and participation to these ceremonies. He got emotional and excited even when he was telling me these.

“It was really by fate that I became the photographer for the 9/11 committee,” said Sarah. She is a photographer living in Hudson, NH, and from fundraising events to the construction of the memorial site she documented each stage of the Hudson 9/11 memorial. She published a photography book a year after the memorial was completed, in which she included photographs from her own collection of the 9/11 memorial. Sarah is originally from Oklahoma City, and the

bombing there had a remarkable place in her memories and was part of her motivation to take action for the 9/11 memorial in Hudson:

I had read in our town paper that our firefighters had gone to JFK in New York to pick up the steel beam. And I got really emotional about it because I have my friends and family back in home in Oklahoma, and it took a long time for me to go and visit the memorial. (...) So when I found out that the beam is coming, it really moved me. I couldn't do anything in my native [city], where I was born and grew [up]... So I wanted to see it.

The day the steel beam would arrive in Hudson, she took a day off from work to see the procession, and take pictures of it. The procession was three hours late due to traffic, but Sarah waited for them at the fire station. She was sitting in her truck when the procession showed up, and she started taking pictures immediately. She recalled the firefighters came out their truck and touched the beam, some of them were crying and others somber. She knew that the procession would continue to a couple of other places including the police station, and when she noticed that the firefighters were going back to their truck she started following them and ended up in their procession, though that was unplanned. She was behind the steel beam, and she remembered telling herself "This is crazy! I am just a nobody that wanted to see the beam, and now I am in the procession of the steel beam with a police escort." She continued taking pictures all day long, and the next day she posted them online. Her pictures were shared among other people, and the 9/11 memorial committee became aware of her work and asked her to document the whole process of the memorial's completion. Consequently, she joined the memorial committee and took part in every stage from fundraising activities to the dedication of the memorial.

When the steel beam was loaded onto a flatbed truck at JFK airport, the Hudson firefighters covered it with the American flag. Keith, the fire captain and the president of the memorial committee, said they planned to visit every fire station and the police station in town

and have a ceremony at the end. “All the people were on the side of the road, because they knew we were coming, and every fire station had a large group of people there to meet us.” The ceremony had speeches from Keith and the selectman (both had gone to New York to pick up the beam), a prayer from a local priest, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and the national anthem. One of the pictures taken by Sarah showed a female police officer playing Taps at the ceremony, and other officers standing at attention and saluting while she played. About one hundred people joined the ceremony that evening, Keith and Sarah recalled. People continued coming to the station even after the ceremony ended, and Keith said they had to move the steel from the station to a spot where people could see it without worrying about the fire trucks coming in and leaving the station.

Self-motivated individuals like Sarah were present at other processions, as well. In April 2010, a convoy of 28 trucks brought 10 tridents from New York to the National Iron and Steel Heritage Museum in Coatesville, the place where they were produced.<sup>54</sup> The museum named the event “Coming Home to Coatesville.” Eugene L. DiOrio, the museum historical advisor, made several trips to New York City to assess the pieces they would get, and arrange their transportation. He was again in New York City with the president of the foundation when the tridents were being loaded to the trucks. “I will always remember that day watching them load these things,” he mentioned. The trucks could not all come into the hangar due to limited space, so they had to do the loading one by one. The tridents were draped with the American flags and “Coming Home” banners [Figure 41]. The interesting thing is that putting the flags on the tridents were not the museum’s idea, but the truck drivers’. They brought the flags with them

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<sup>54</sup> The museum is the project of the Graystone Society Inc., which has ties to the Lukens family. The number of the trucks is bigger than the number of the tridents because they had to cut the tridents into smaller pieces to make them fit to the trucks.

voluntarily to decorate the tridents and their trucks. “We were enormously impressed again by the patriotic aspect of this,” Eugene recalled. The convoy was greeted by people at multiple points along the way in Pennsylvania [Figure 42], firefighters saluted the procession and draped flags from their trucks, which is a sign of respect that they do for special occasions.

A military helicopter (UH-1 Iroquois helicopter, a.k.a. “Huey”), and approximately 10,000 motorcycles escorted the steel beams for Project 9/11 Indianapolis despite the rain [Figure 43]. The bikers were from various motorcycle and veterans organizations. The truck that was carrying the beams was decorated with the American flag patterns and the Statue of Liberty, and “We will never forget” was written on it. The steel beams were draped with the American flag on a flatbed truck, and the procession kept growing until they arrived at Indianapolis. Rob recalled the day as follows:

We reached Richmond, and I saw thousands of bikes... The entire city was shut down. And, when we left Richmond, we got to Greenfield, just outside Indianapolis... And the state trooper called me ‘do you realize what you have done?’ Oh no, what now... I was stressed out... This was step one... He said there are still bikes leaving Richmond, 47 miles away... So they basically closed the interstate, almost for 50 miles. That shows how people came together, just to be part of this once in a lifetime opportunity.

Rob had contacted veteran and motorcycle organizations to tell them about the memorial and to collect donations, and in this way the news about the steel beams coming to Indianapolis became widespread. The procession was planned; yet no one expected that much participation, Rob said. He knows people from sixteen states came to Indiana to join the procession, yet he does not know how they found out about it. He thinks the motorcyclists and veterans are among the most passionate people to help for a good cause, especially when it is a patriotic theme such as 9/11. There are videos on Youtube recorded by people at different spots along the procession route, proving that there were people on the roads and overpasses waiting to see the procession.

The procession in Acushnet, MA began when the steel was about to enter the town. Instead of having a trailer, Dan said they put the steel on the back of a special vehicle that was designed to carry the casket in a funeral. The owner of the truck was also a firefighter, who wanted to drive the steel in the procession that day. Dan also went with the driver of the vehicle. They were inside the vehicle that had the steel on it, and the fire engines, ambulances, and police cruisers were ahead of them with their lights on, but no sirens. “It was very solemn,” Dan recalled. Dan described the moment they entered the town as follows:

And as we pulled on to the main road in our town, that was February, no snow. People were sitting on their front steps. And some had brought beach chairs on the sidewalk; they were waiting for us to go by. And when we passed... So here comes all the police cars, here comes the fire engines, and people saw this odd looking vehicle. And when they saw the steel, it was visible, there was a mix of emotion that was displayed. Folks who were sitting stood, older men took their hats off. Some saluted. And you could see some folks crying, as the steel came down the main street.

In some circumstances, the welcoming of the steel pieces was accompanied by religious (Christian) practices that included a local priest or a chaplain, and blessing of the steel piece. When the steel arrived to Dracut, MA and was taken off the truck, the fire chaplain blessed it by saying, “I ask God’s blessings on this piece of metal and what it represents, and the connection that we’ll always have with 9/11.” In the welcoming ceremony organized by the firefighters’ motorcycle club the day they brought the steel from New York, the department chaplain was also present at the ceremony. First, six members of the club unloaded the steel from the truck, and brought it to the memorial site by holding it from both sides as if they were carrying a casket. Later, the chaplain pointed out the sacredness of the steel by adapting Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address:

In religious circles we use words like “consecrate” when you set something apart for a special purpose. Look at this piece of steel. It certainly lost all its extrinsic

value. It's no longer worth anything structurally like it was designed to do. We can't consecrate it here today. It was consecrated by the very men and women who ran to the sound of alarms, who ran to the sound of sirens, who ran to the smoke.

Addressing to the first responders' death on 9/11, he repeated that the steel had already become consecrated "because of the sacrifices." Blessing the steel artifacts in accordance with Christian practices sometimes took place in dedication ceremonies, as well.

### **5.3.2 Dedication**

The memorial's unveiling is the focus of dedication ceremonies, and this is what separates them from the welcoming ceremonies and anniversaries. Compared to the welcoming ceremonies that focused on the first encounter with the artifact and its introduction to the public, dedication ceremonies focused on acknowledging the efforts put into building the memorial, and presentation of the finished work. While the welcoming ceremonies tended to have free flows of events and speakers, dedication ceremonies often included local and state politicians as guest speakers, speeches from department chiefs, and were accompanied by honor guards playing bagpipes, the national anthem, and traditional songs such as *God Bless America*. The presence of a clergy member to lead a prayer, sometimes also referred to as a "peace prayer" or "invocation," often marked the opening of the ceremony. The task of unveiling the memorial was usually reserved for the family members, and the public safety personnel.

Dedication ceremonies were important to create the first impression. Some of my informants told they tried to hide the memorial until the day of the dedication. Most of the time it was not possible to cover the signs of construction, yet they still tried not to give much clue about how the memorial would look. A fence surrounded one of the memorials during

construction period, and the public did not see it until the dedication ceremony. One informant told, “There were pieces missing purposely” throughout the construction process, and even those who knew about the memorial did not know how it was going to look like exactly. They gave the final shape to the memorial the night before the dedication to have increased impact on the audience at the dedication.

Reminding Bellah’s (2005[1967]) discussion of civil religion in the United States, the dedication ceremonies always included religious references, most significantly references to God. The ceremonies began with opening prayers led by chaplains, or clergy members affiliated with a local church. The focus of the prayers was not only the people affected by 9/11, but also the memorial itself. Therefore, not only the people, but also the steel artifact and the memorial site were mentioned in the prayers. The Acton 9/11 Memorial, MA is one of those memorials dedicated on the tenth anniversary, and the memorial unveiling began and closed with prayers. While the opening prayer was led by a Christian cleric, the closing prayer was led by a Jewish cleric. Both clerics referred to the memorial directly as part of the invocation. In the opening prayer, Father mentioned the memorial as follows: “As we dedicate this memorial we ask that you bless it and all those who would stand before it as we do today.” Before the closing prayer, Rabbi commented on the memorial’s link to a custom within Jewish tradition:

When we hear the loss of a dear one, we tear something. We make a tear in our clothing, or in a piece of cloth that’s attached to our clothing. This is a very ancient ritual that goes back to Bible—people tear their clothes as a sign of grief. To me it always represents the fact that something precious has been torn from us. I see here this torn steel, and I think about the things that have been torn from us, and the ones have been torn from us, but I also see something has great strength.

Religious practices that are focusing on the memorial and the steel illustrate the steel’s efficacy as an object that was given an active role in the commemoration. These practices

sometimes included blessing the artifact. For instance, the clerics blessed the steel with holy water in one of the dedication ceremonies. In the dedication ceremony of the Hudson 9/11 Memorial, the Jewish mourning ritual—placing a stone on the grave—was performed as the committee invited the guests and audience to pick up a stone from the basket, and place it in front of the steel. People lined up to pick up a stone, and leave it in front of the beam. Thereby, the steel beam was given an active role in the ceremony.

The dedication ceremonies were also the opportunities to share with the audience the story of the steel artifacts, through which the notions of volunteerism, community, and nationhood were emphasized. Those who were involved in the memorial building told the audience how they heard about the artifact's availability, fund-raising efforts, and the memorial design. In terms of the symbolism and narrative, dedication ceremonies also carried the characteristics of the national and masculine symbolism that I described earlier. For instance, regardless of the location of the memorial site, public safety personnel—fire, police, and EMS—always participated the ceremonies in full dress uniforms, and honor guards were always present playing national songs in bagpipes. The American flag hanging from a ladder fire truck is one of the major practices that often took place in the ceremonies.

### **5.3.3 Anniversary**

September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015 was the fourteenth anniversary of the attacks, and I participated in 9/11 anniversary ceremonies at three local memorials. This was a return to the sites that I have been before, and I met with my informants again after months. A challenge to studying the anniversaries is that all ceremonies are held on the same day and at around same time making it hard to attend more than one ceremony. On September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015 I selected the anniversary

events that would take place at different times, at locations approximately 1 hour away from each other. Each ceremony was in different format. The first event, in Dracut, was scheduled to begin at 8:46 a.m. The second, in West Bridgewater, was an all day event that would begin around 8 a.m. And the third event was scheduled to begin at 6:30 p.m. at the memorial site located on the lawn of the fire station at Acushnet.

The first of these ceremonies took place at the Dracut fire station, where the 9/11 memorial is located. The ceremony was punctual and took place despite rain. Guests were inside the station to avoid the rain, but the firefighters and police officers that would lead the ceremony were outside the station. They were in full dress uniforms, except for four firefighters who were in their service uniforms. A group of approximately 20 individuals, mostly men, were ready outside for the ceremony to begin, lined up and oriented towards the 9/11 memorial. The color guard was standing on the left side of the group, holding the national flag, state flag, and the department's flag.

The ceremony began with a call by the fire chief at 8:46 a.m., the time when Flight 11 crashed into the North Tower. The group and the color guard stood at attention upon the chief's order. "Ring the bell," the chief said next—the signal to ring the fire alarm. The firefighter who was responsible for ringing the bell rang it five times, and then four more times after a pause. The numbers of fire bell rings have specific meanings. Ringing the bell five times in groups of four traditionally means a firefighter has died on duty. It is a tradition to ring the bell in firefighter funerals, and this was practiced in the 9/11 commemorations in memory of the firefighters who died that day. When the bell stopped, another firefighter walked towards the flagpole and lowered the flag to half-mast. Nobody talked when all these events were happening, and nobody was moving except the firefighters who were performing the ceremonial duties.

After lowering the flag, two firefighters carried a wreath to the 9/11 memorial, and placed it in front of the steel beam beneath the memorial's label saying "Please Touch and Never Forget." The chief ordered a trumpeter who was standing behind the memorial to ring Taps, and he started playing it after he turned towards the direction the memorial points to, towards the WTC in New York. After playing Taps, the chaplain of the fire department stepped forward and prayed for John Ogonowski and the other dead and survivors of 9/11. In the end he recited the firefighter's prayer. We observed a moment of silence after the prayer until we heard the fire bell rang five times in sets of four, and then the fire chief announced the ceremony was completed. There were flowers, American flags, and a wreath put beneath the stone at Ogonowski's monument, which is right across the 9/11 memorial. His parents were also at the ceremony, but they left early, Rich said.

I arrived at West Bridgewater at around 3 p.m. Even if I did not know the location of the memorial, it would not be possible to miss it because the first thing one would see while driving on the road into town was a flag hanging down from the fire ladder [Figure 44]. As I got closer, flags and posters became more visible, and were beyond my expectations in terms of the level of decoration, and the numbers of the visual materials. "3,000 Lives Lost W. Bridgewater Remembers" was written on a red banner. A panel next to it depicted the emblems of the FDNY, NYPD, and Port Authority police. It was dedicated to the "Fallen Heroes," and a black piece of cloth was placed on top of it. The panel next to it had the iconic picture of the three firefighters raising the American flag on the WTC debris, which was taken by the photographer Thomas E. Franklin on September 11, 2001. The banner and panels had duplicates that were facing in the opposite direction, so that the visitors and drivers from both directions were able to see the images.

The exhibit covered the whole area in front of the police and fire departments. I was not expecting Roger, West Bridgewater resident who sets the memorial display voluntarily every year, to be there, since it was 3 p.m. already, but I noticed him as I drove into the parking lot. He was sitting on a chair and chatting with another person. I parked the car and started walking towards the fire station's garage door. At the same time, the woman he talked to started walking towards the parking lot. We had a quick look at each other, and she said, "he's working hard." "He's working hard and doing an excellent job," she added.

Roger told that they had had to cancel the ceremony in the morning because of rain. Since my last time here, they had made improvements on the memorial. They finished the granite part, and the inscriptions looked bright and new. He was hoping that the memorial would be finished by next year.

National symbols and military imagery were the key elements of the exhibit. The main components were posters depicting iconic images related to September 11<sup>th</sup>, which were supported by national symbols and patriotic quotes [Figure 45]. White and red stripes decorated the posters' frames. The imagery displayed on the posters was repetitive in the message and symbolism, since they many times emphasized the victimization of the U.S. by the terrorists and were decorated with flags.

A police car and an antique fire truck, both decorated with U.S. flags, were on display. "Honor and Remember" tags were attached to the police and fire department flags that were standing in front of the vehicles. Behind the vehicles was the ladder fire truck, and its ladder was holding the U.S. flag. One of the posters depicted a bald eagle crying over the images of the burning towers and of a military aircraft carrier. "United We Stand" was written under them.

The lawn area that was at the end of the exhibit was surrounded by approximately fifty American flags. This grass area was also a tribute to the Flight 93 passengers, and was marked with the words of Todd Beamer, who was a passenger on the flight, and it is believed that he was among the passengers who tried to stop the hijackers. “Are you guys ready? Let’s roll” were the final words heard from him, and this gave him special recognition in the Flight 93 commemorations, as a hero. The following was written on a small roadside marker that was standing in front of the grass area:

9-11-01

IN THE WORDS OF

TODD BEAMER

LET’S ROLL

LET’S NEVER FORGET

There were two tents set up near the steel artifact, under which panels and posters were located. The panels depicted the sites and sequence of the attacks. In contrast to the other panels that presented national symbols and the iconic images 9/11, such as the firefighters photography and fire & police emblems described earlier, those panels pointed out where and how the attacks took place. For that purpose, one of the panels depicted the timeline of the attacks, flight paths, and crash sites. The panel was between the memorial flags that were created to memorialize the first responders (Flag of Heroes) and three thousand people who died on the day (Flag of Honor). The Pentagon panel next to the Flag of Heroes had a picture of President Bush taken in front of the damaged section of the Pentagon. The Shanksville panel next to the Flag of Heroes had a

picture of the crash site while the smoke was still visible. “Honor and Remember” tags were attached to both panels. A woman and a child were walking around. Looking at the board with the flight details, she explained to the child where the planes had taken off. Roger explained the Flag of Honor to them, saying that the flag had the names of everyone “killed by the terrorists.” When I was there, a few more children came to see the exhibit and Roger gave them U.S. flags. The photo book published in the immediate aftermath of the attacks, *9-11 A Tribute*, was also part of the exhibit for visitors to come and look at.

People started to come to the memorial site in Acushnet at around 5.30 pm, and there were more than sixty people gathered in front of the memorial at the fire station when the ceremony started at 6 pm. Dan, the fire chief, was the speaker and led the flow of the ceremony. The memorial, specifically the steel beam and the artifacts from Shanksville and Pentagon, was the focal point of the ceremony, since Dan referred to them and the building process of the memorial frequently throughout his speech. He emphasized the community effort that went into building the memorial in the summer of 2011. The designers of the memorial—a volunteer firefighter and his brother—had degrees in sculpture, and they offered to help building the memorial the night of the day the steel arrived in Acushnet. Their professor from the university also joined to the project, and all three worked voluntarily to design and build the memorial. Local business owners donated their labor and machinery to help the construction. Residents stopped by with refreshments to help those working at the construction of the memorial.

Dan pointed out the artifacts many times during the ceremony, and shared with the audience the memorial’s symbolic elements to prove “the level of care and detail that went into this project.” I noticed some people were nodding as they were listening to Dan’s talk about the memorial details.

Like all of you I found myself doing pretty much the same thing: thinking about what happened 14 years ago. But driving up Russell Street and looking at the memorial, especially this morning, I started to think a little bit more on what we did four years ago. Started to think about travelling to New York City with [Paul... & Eric...], and bringing back to Acushnet in the back of Eric's truck the 2700 pound steel [here he's pointing to the steel behind him] beam that you see behind me. And the procession that we had that day in February. When so many people in Acushnet laying South Main Street, and waiting for us here when we got to the station. Absolute raw emotion that was on display that afternoon. Started to think about the intense sense of community that we enjoyed during the summer of 2011.

(...)

The memorial behind me continues to serve as the focal point for the town of Acushnet because of the presence of the items from all three sites. Remember, we have the stone in front of me from the crash site in Pennsylvania. The piece of the Pentagon behind me was damaged on that day. You can still see a portion of the damage from the jet fuel that hit that piece of granite. And of course the steel beam that came from one of the two trade towers.

(...)

From the top of the steel to the bottom of the base, you would measure 9 feet 11 inches. If you were to draw a straight line from where the steel points, it would bring you directly to the WTC site. Those are some of the details that the artist brought to this project. And I wish that was written on somewhere, cause we need to make sure that the future generations know the level of care and detail that went into this project.

The ceremony had several key moments. It started with the Pledge of Allegiance that was led by a group of boy scouts, in which everyone participated by turning towards the American flag flying at the station flagpole. A local priest came to the podium afterwards and recited a prayer for the dead and survivors of 9/11. Following the prayer, a male firefighter and a female paramedic to place the wreath. They carried the wreath and put it in front of the steel beam in a direction that could be seen from the main road. A local music band formed of teenage girls dressed in white, red, and blue also performed at the ceremony. Dan invited them to sing the national anthem after the firefighters placed the wreath. They performed multiple times throughout the ceremony, and along with their original songs they also sang *God Bless America*.

When the ceremony ended, people did not leave the memorial site quickly [Figure 46]. They were talking, walking around the memorial, and taking pictures of the artifacts and the memorial site. There were roses left underneath the memorial's glass panel, and many people took pictures of them. Dan had mentioned those roses at some point in the ceremony. Apparently, someone left them during the day because when he came to the station early in the morning the roses were not there. He said every year since the memorial was built, they often see roses left at it. Parents were showing their children the artifacts and allowing them to touch them. A woman explained to a girl that the steel beam "came from one of the buildings," and told her to touch it. The girl touched the beam, though she hesitated at first. The woman added that there were two towers, and repeated that it came from one of the buildings. Next, she took the girl to the Pentagon stone and the rock from Shanksville, explaining to her where each artifact came from. "The rock is from Shanksville... the plane crashed there," she told the girl.

The designers of the memorial—Jason, James, and their professor Matt—were among the audience, and I met them after the ceremony to learn how they were involved in the project. While Jason and I were waiting for others to join us, a woman approached and wanted him to call his brother and professor to take a picture. I could see that she started crying as she talked to them, and people, including me, avoided approaching them since it was a private emotional moment. Yet, I could see she thanked and hugged them. During our conversation Jason said it is interesting that the memorial reveals different connections, like those of the woman who had just come and talked to them. They told me that she was a town resident who lost her daughter on 9/11, which was at the same time her birthday. She told them her story, and wanted to thank them for the memorial.

## **6.0 NARRATIVE AND REPRESENTATION AT LOCAL MEMORIALS**

Violent events involve victims and perpetrators, and analysis and representation of such events often turn into explicit or implicit questioning of righteousness and morality of the groups involved. This is one of the reasons why the representation of mass violence is a sensitive subject matter, and a critical question is how to represent the actors in the memorial setting. Even when those who committed violence are well identified, condemning their actions may wrongly result in blaming and essentializing the ideologies and groups that they are seemingly affiliated with, such as race, ethnicity, nation, and religion. Furthermore, the representation of perpetrators in a memorial setting may seem offensive and contaminating to some (Grider 2007). As I discussed in Chapter 2, planners of the 9/11 commemorations had to consider these points at the national memorials, though in the end they could not avoid criticism. It was clearly stated in the Flight 93 National Memorial Act that the hijackers would not be considered passengers or crew of the flight.<sup>55</sup> Regarding the National 9/11 Memorial and Museum, some demanded the separation of first responders' names from those of other civilians, and wanted an emphasis on the heroism of the former group. Some family members protested the museum's decision to mention the terrorists, arguing that this would honor them. On the other hand, the museum's use of the words "Islamist" and "jihad" in describing Al-Qaeda's motivation disturbed some Muslims.

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<sup>55</sup> Public Law 107-226 Sept. 24, 2002. Another example that shows the exclusion of one group from the memorial setting is the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg. The cemetery was established for the Union dead only; the Confederate dead were not allowed.

Besides these challenges of representation, memorial museums are the major institutions that stand as the official voice of the commemorated event. In this regard, two points that I discussed in Chapter 2 are also relevant to the current chapter. As Paul Williams pointed out, meeting the objectives of remembrance, interpretation, and teaching is a challenging task for memorial museums because “critical interpretation” and teaching of events often contrasts with uncritical “reverent remembrance” (2007:8). This point is related to David Linenthal’s (1995) distinction between “commemorative voice” and “historical voice,” which I discuss in this chapter. The second point is related to museums as producers of “monumental memories” (Hirsch 2015). As Marianne Hirsch (2015) pointed out, memorial museums are often monumental in scale, and produce overarching memories with nationalistic and ethnocentric narratives. For instance, it is impossible to ignore the scale of the National 9/11 Memorial and Museum, as the site not only encloses the towers’ footprints, but also goes underground. The objects in the museum vary from small personal items to giant steel beams, yet due to its massive size the place still does not look overwhelmed with objects. Proving this point, one informant told me that he could not believe that the ladder truck in the museum looked so small, because he knew from standing on the street that a fire truck is huge. Consequently, as Sturken argued, at the site “one is reminded constantly... that the scale of the event was massive” (2015:477). Not only the architectural features but also the meanings produced at the museum are also monumental, with their strong emphasis on American victimization and heroism through the objects and quotes that are on display. As I argued before, the museum aims to create a witness in the end, and therefore it is also monumental in terms of the influence it aims to achieve on how the events will be remembered and interpreted at the national level. The Flight 93 National Memorial is also

monumental through the huge area it encompasses (2,200 acres), and its focus on the civilian passengers of the flight as national heroes.

Though the focus of this chapter is the local memorials, I start with the issues related to representation at the national memorials because the major themes they emphasize and the official narrative they produce are adopted by local memorials as well. Through their small scales and unofficial origins, the local memorials could also be the places where alternative, critical narratives were produced. However, these memorials have also chosen the commemorative narrative to a large extent, and focused on the events and losses of 9/11 with references to victimhood and heroism. I elaborate on this point in this chapter by giving examples from the memorials' commemorative texts, but first I will discuss how the use of the "historical voice" was not welcomed in some memorial settings, and also elaborate on the political aspects of the terms victim and hero.

## **6.1 HISTORICAL VERSUS COMMEMORATIVE VOICE**

According to Linenthal (1995), there are two approaches in the representation and memorialization of an event, the "commemorative voice" and "historical voice."

The commemorative voice is personal and intimate. It speaks with the authority of the witness: "I was there, I know what happened, because I saw it and felt it." The historical voice is more impersonal and studious. It seeks to discern motives, understand actions, and discuss consequences that may have been difficult to analyze completely during the event itself. To witnesses, it can sound condescending, even when no condescension is intended.

Controversies often rise when balance is not achieved between these approaches. Examples are numerous. In 1997, the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum planned to open an

exhibit that would discuss the United States' dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan, and the end of World War II. Veterans organizations, politicians, and political commentators objected to the exhibit, arguing that it called into question the decision to drop the bombs, and omitted the circumstances that made the decision seem crucial (Linenthal 1995, White 1997). In addition, these opponents did not approve of even mentioning the Japanese experience (White 1997). Instead, they expected the exhibit to commemorate only the sacrifices of the American forces and the ending of the war. Eventually, the museum cancelled the original plans for the exhibit, and only displayed the *Enola Gay* and the testimonies of its crew without any analysis (Linenthal 1995, White 1997). Thus, the museum dropped the historical voice that suggests analysis and interpretation, and focused on commemorating the end of war. Proving Linenthal's (1995) point, Secretary of the Smithsonian Michael Heyman stated in the press release that they "made a basic error in attempting to couple an historical treatment of the use of atomic weapons with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration of the end of war" (White 1997:10). The USS Arizona Memorial was also criticized for similar reasons (Linenthal 1995, White 1997). According to White (1997), any references at the memorial to the atomic bombs and discussion of the factors that led Japan to attack on Pearl Harbor elicited complaints.

On the other hand, in his discussion of the building process of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., Linenthal (2001) showed that even the commemorative voice has boundaries, especially when the representation of perpetrators and the display of human remains in the museum were at stake. He explains that some thought the inclusion of the perpetrators was necessary to tell the full story, specifically to show that it was not one person or some superhuman force that killed Jews—real individuals, more than one, actively took part in killing them. Yet this idea "threatened to contaminate what for many was

commemorative space” (Linenthal 2001:199). There was also fear of causing an unintentional fascination with the Nazis, and concern about representing the Nazis as the sole perpetrators, since there was also the question of bystanders’ responsibility. Thus, deciding who were the most important actors to include was part of the representation question. Eventually, the perpetrators were represented through photographs showing not only Nazi officials, but also various aspects of German society including “Nazi rallies, youth organizations, and business, church, political, and judicial subservience to Hitler” (Linenthal 2001:204). In addition to this, white plaster models were created to reenact the extermination process, which also helped to show that real persons were “at work” killing people (Linenthal 2001:205).

The commemorative voice is dominant at the national and local 9/11 memorials, with minimum or no reference to perpetrators. Instead, the focus is on the civilian losses, and glorifies their victimhood and heroism. However, the concepts of victim and hero are not fixed categories, since heroism is sometimes attributed to victims as well. As the following section shows, cultural and political factors always influence to what extent the victimhood and heroism of the dead will be recognized and commemorated.

## **6.2 THE CONCEPTS OF VICTIMHOOD AND HEROISM**

The deaths of civilians are often neglected, compared to the vigorous commemoration of the military dead. Instead of being treated as mere victims of war, military dead are commemorated as national heroes. This is why monuments until the mid-twentieth century were mostly dedicated to military dead and heroic figures, while civilians and the notion of victimhood were not the subjects of public commemoration and monuments (Savage 2006:103, Simpson 2006:23-

4). For instance, while the heroism and bravery of the American Civil War soldiers were often celebrated, thousands of civilian victims who died because of the war-related causes were not recorded systematically (Faust 2008). One exception to this is Jennie Wade of Gettysburg. It is believed that Wade died in her house because of a stray bullet, while she was baking bread for Union soldiers. Her house is a popular destination for historical tours today, and for some she is “a symbol of thousands of anonymous civilians killed during the war” (Baker 2011).<sup>56</sup>

The recognition of victims and civilians in public commemorations started to take place in the twentieth century, and has gradually increased since then. It is very likely today to see memorials dedicated to the civilians who were the victims of war, genocide, terrorism, and natural disasters. Memorials to long-ago executed witches and recently dead astronauts have also become part of this movement (Doss 2010, Foote 2003). Within the last few decades, it has become a custom to set up temporary memorials to commemorate the dead after an act of mass violence, such as mass shootings (Foote and Grider 2012, Grider 2007). Even though temporary memorials are not always followed by permanent ones, they still indicate the increased importance given to civilian deaths. What rarely happens, however, is the commemoration of civilians as heroes. In the Oklahoma City National Museum, Rebecca Anderson, a licensed practical nurse who rushed to the scene to help in the rescue efforts and died because of a head injury, was presented as “Hero, Victim.” Anderson draws attention because of her civilian identity and her dual status as both victim and hero.

The commemoration of civilian victims and heroes is the central theme in the 9/11 commemorations, and the national memorials are dedicated largely to them. Yet, victimhood and heroism are ascribed to the dead differently. The civilian passengers of Flight 93 are

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<sup>56</sup> “The Civilian Experience in the Civil War,” by Jean Baker:  
<https://www.nps.gov/resources/story.htm%3Fid%3D249> (Accessed: 10/5/2016)

commemorated as heroes, because they chose to fight the hijackers. In New York City, however, heroism is mostly associated with the first responders who died while trying to rescue people from the towers. The civilians who died at the WTC and the Pentagon were victims of the event, because they did not have a chance to stop what was about to happen. As pointed out in the previous chapters, in contrast to the historical trajectory to commemorate military dead, the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial has received less attention than the other national memorial sites despite the fact that many victims were military personnel. The memorial received less attention than the other national 9/11 memorials possibly because the attacks—particularly the attack on the Pentagon—were seen as failure in defense.

Investigations after the attacks has revealed that technical problems and breaks in communication also played roles in the deaths of firefighters at the WTC (Simpson 2006, Dwyer and Flynn 2005), but the possibility that firefighters inside were not well-informed about the dangers of the situation has not lessened the heroism ascribed to them. Indeed, Simpson asks “whether the word *hero* now means one who need not have died at all rather than (or as well as) one who chose to die for a higher cause than self-preservation” (2006:48). This question of “choice” and consciousness in risking one’s own life also relates to the death of the Flight 93 passengers. These passengers fought the terrorists not only to stop them, but also because that was their only chance to survive,<sup>57</sup> so that the difficult and brave decision they made was not necessarily a choice to die. Despite the question of choice in their death, the Flight 93 passengers have been recognized and celebrated as national heroes.

Commemorating the dead as victims and heroes is closely linked to these terms’ cultural and political connotations. While heroism suggests a state of selflessness and willingness to

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<sup>57</sup> Savage, Kirk. (2011) Panel discussion at Harvard Graduate School of Design, moderated by Krzysztof Wodiczko: “September 11: Memory, Vision, Practice.” September 13, 2011

engage in self-sacrifice, victimhood suggests a state of passivity. Therefore, the hero figure is often described as an active agent, while the victims are only the receivers of their fate. Because heroism is often associated with sacrifice, it is also often considered sacred. “Sacrifice” has Latin origins in *sacer* (“sacred”) and *facere* (“to make”), and the meaning “to make sacred” indicates the transformative power of sacrifice (Swenson 2014:33). In this regard, the act of sacrifice transforms things and makes them sacred. For example, in his review of the ritual sacrifice, Carbo Garcia argued that, “the central role of sacrifice is based in its sacralization capability to transform the common food into a divine one” (2014:286). Another view, however, holds that “The principle of sacrifice is destruction” (Bataille 1989:43). In this approach, sacrifice removes an object’s ties from the world of things through destruction and restores them in the sacred world (Biles 2007:27). However, in the case of the steel artifacts it is important to clarify that destruction alone is not the reason why the artifacts are attributed sacredness. It is rather the destruction of human lives that attributed sacredness to the artifacts. For instance, heroic sacrifice is often considered to be a willing act, and therefore those who sacrifice—“destroy”—their lives for a cause are often venerated. In this regard, the sacredness of the WTC artifacts is partially due to the idea that the dead, especially first responders, were sacred because they were self-sacrifices for the nation. However, I discuss in the following sections there are circumstances in the case of 9/11 in which the victimhood and innocence of the dead are venerated as much as heroism.

Because of its perceived passivity, victimhood is usually not a preferred state politically, and this is one of the reasons why heroism used to be commemorated more often than victimhood. However, there are circumstances where victimhood may also become politically advantageous, as in the case of establishing moral superiority to the enemy. Therefore, whether

or to what extent the dead will be remembered as hero or victim depends not only on the question of choice in their death, but also on cultural and political circumstances.

It is often the victim status of a group that defines a common grievance, and empowers members to unite and act collectively. According to Todorov (2003), remembering the past and making it known to others becomes a duty for members of groups that have experienced a traumatic event. As he argues, groups carrying victim status from the past can complain, protest, and make demands to gain greater rights in the present. Many Japanese, throughout most of the postwar period, portrayed their nation as the victim of nuclear annihilation, and that formed an essential part of their national identity (Bartov 1998, Orr 2001, Saito 2006). Similarly, societies that experienced mass killings may refer to this event as an essential part of their group identity, increasingly invoking the term “genocide.” Furthermore, the Holocaust frame with its references to the supreme victimhood of genocide is utilized as a symbolic resource to support the causes of other suppressed groups (e.g. minorities, homosexuals) by providing a frame for their grievances (Bartov 1998, Stein 1998).

One of the sources of power in claiming the status of victim is its potential to challenge the perpetrator’s morality (Bartov 1988, Schivelbusch 2003). Victims of assassinations or massacres, for instance, are sometimes viewed as “martyrs,” and the perpetrators are seen as irredeemable and essentially evil (Azaryahu 1996, Doss 2006). In armed conflicts, the defeated party can claim a morally privileged status for its loss and depict the enemy as an illegitimate winner. Serbs, for example, commemorate their defeat in the Battle of Kosovo (1389) as a moral victory, because according to the Kosovo myth the Serbian ruler Prince Lazar chose to be defeated in order on earth in order to secure the heavenly kingdom for the Serbian nation (Bakic-Hayden 2006). In addition, Schivelbusch points out that “the defeated party can always declare

the decisive factor to have been a violation of the rules, thereby nullifying the victory and depicting the winner as a cheater” (2003:16). For instance, American southerners’ celebration of the Civil War defeat as the “Lost Cause” makes the defeat a heroic and a sacral event (Schivelbusch 2003). According to this view, the Confederate army lost the Civil War because of the industrial capacity and high numbers of the Union armies, not because of mistakes, or lack of bravery, or adherence to a false cause (Mills and Simpson 2003). Consequently, victimhood can be perceived and presented as a glorious status, an ultimate sacrifice, and also as legitimization of the dead, so that it was not all in vain (Mosse 1979, Weiss 1997).

Glorification of victimhood is observed in commemorations, as well. Holocaust memorials, battlefields, and memorials of violent death are some of the cases where the dead are not only commemorated as the victims of violence, but also honored because of their sufferings (Azaryahu 1996, Doss 2002, 2006, Jacobs 2004, Wood 2009). In some contexts, however, victimhood may be disparaged due to its “passive” image. Wubben’s discussion of some early views regarding American Prisoners of War (POWs) in Korea shows how the prisoners who “gave up” during captivity or did not have the ability to escape were seen as “morally weak and uncommitted to traditional American ideals” (1970:5). On the other hand, though the Holocaust commemorations get their power from victimization of the Jewish community, in some contexts the image of victim as a “passive” recipient was disfavored. The official Israeli day of remembrance is called “The Memorial Day for the Holocaust and Heroism” because the official commemorative narrative determined two groups to commemorate: victims and heroes. While the term *Shoah* (Holocaust) signified “traditional diaspora patterns of passiveness,” another term *gevura* (heroism) was used to commemorate the acts of Jews who resisted the Germans (Meyers and Zandberg 2002:391).

In the days followed the 9/11 attacks, a heroic narrative was developed through official sources, such as President George W. Bush's address, and in much of the media (Leavy 2007). President Bush's address to the nation on September 11, 2001 officially announced that "freedom came under attack" and the nation responded to "evil" with strength:

A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shatter steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve. America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining. Today, our nation saw evil—the very worst of human nature—and we responded with the best of America.

That narrative, which depicted the nation as an innocent victim that was able to rise heroically in the face of evil, helped the U.S. to justify its military actions, and became the underlying theme of the official 9/11 commemorations. Therefore, victimhood and heroism of the civilians and first responders are not only related to how they died, but also to the potential influence these terms will have on how 9/11 will be remembered.

## **6.3 NARRATIVE AT THE LOCAL MEMORIALS**

### **6.3.1 Naming the Dead**

Local memorials repeat the official discourse by focusing on the commemoration of heroes and victims. Yet, they show variety in terms of which group or individuals they are dedicated to. While some memorials do not specify a particular group, others are dedicated to a specific group or individuals, such as first responders and town residents. To whom the local memorials are

dedicated mainly depends on the type of groups and organizations that acquired the steel artifact, and the direct or indirect connections these people have to the events of 9/11.

Not mentioning the names or number of hijackers is a concern not only for the national memorials, but for the local ones as well. Only a few local sites that I have seen include information about the source of the attacks. The presence of the hijackers is instead hidden inside the general description of the events. For instance, the attacks are generally referred to as “the events of September 11,” “the awful day,” “the tragedy,” and most commonly as “the terrorist attacks.” Rarely, memorials do give specific information about the source of the attacks and how they took place, as the Foxboro 9/11 Memorial, MA does. The following note was written on a plaque at the site, explaining specifically who started the attacks: “Nineteen members of al-Qaeda, an international terrorist organization, had hijacked four commercial airplanes and intended to crash them into buildings in the United States.” Like this memorial, the memorial in King of Prussia, PA is also specific about the source of the attacks: “On September 11, 2001 there was a series of four coordinated terrorist attacks launched by the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda upon the United States in New York City and the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.”

The majority of the memorials, however, focus on the times and places of the impacts and the casualties, as in the following examples: “In honor of the nearly 3,000 people who perished in the attacks of September 11, 2001,” and “On September 11, 2001, America suffered an assault on its home soil that resulted in almost 3,000 dead and countless others physically and emotionally wounded.” The lack of direct reference to the source or reason of the attacks reminds us of the discussions about the representation of perpetrators in a memorial setting (Linenthal 2001, White 1997). Linenthal states that there was concern that the lack of information about the Nazis in the memorial museum could make the Holocaust appear as the

acts of an “invisible evil” (2001: 201). In a different way, excluding direct information about the perpetrators, the local memorials focus on the events and losses, and they seem to give agency to the planes (i.e. “Flight 11 crashed into the North Tower”), not to the hijackers.

The city of Suwannee, GA has its 9/11 memorial at the Town Center Park. The experiences of Paul, city manager, and Linda, assistant city manager, draw attention to the challenges of representing a national tragedy publicly at the local level. One of the inscriptions at the memorial plaza says, “Nearly 3,000 people died in the 9/11 attacks.” The statement looks plain and simple, yet it is actually the result of a discussion that lasted for hours. First of all, they were concerned about the reliability of data and the concept of “victim.” However, this was not an easy issue to resolve, especially the numbers, which vary from one source to another. This is why information about the numbers of dead and times of the event vary from site to site. Some sources include the 19 hijackers and state that the total number of the 9/11 dead as 2,996. Yet, hijackers are often excluded at the memorials, and the number is then given as 2,977. For example, the Acushnet 9/11 Memorial, MA is very specific about the number of dead. The dedication note states the memorial “stands as a reminder to future generations of the 2,977 lives lost that autumn morning,” and then gives the exact number of the dead for each group (passengers and flight crew members, workers at the Pentagon and the WTC), and organization (FDNY, NYPD, Port Authority police officers, EMS technicians).

Though Paul and Linda checked various reliable sources online, they were confused with the details, even slight differences in timelines (i.e. minute differences in when the planes took off). “I cannot tell you how many times we proof-read the text,” said Paul. They thought reliably sourcing the text was very important so as not to have disagreements in the future. Consequently, they decided to pick a reputable source of data, which turned out to be *The 9/11 Commission*

*Report*, and put a timeline at the memorial site based on the information given in that report. However, they said they were reluctant to give a precise number of dead at the memorial. If they had given a specific number, Paul and Linda thought people would question whether the terrorists are included, why or why not, or whether they included people who died in the following years from the effects of exposure to the site. In other words, it was hard for them to decide when to stop counting the 9/11 dead. This shows part of the difficulty of building a memorial ten years later, while the event was both not too recent and not too distant. Eventually, they abandoned using a precise number, saying instead that “nearly 3,000 people died” that day.

Despite the general tendency at local memorials to remember all those who perished, some memorials are dedicated to or put more emphasis on a particular group, like the first responders. Heroism and sacrifice are the main themes of such memorials. The 9/11 memorial located in the courtyard of the Hartsville Fire Company, PA is dedicated to the NYC emergency responders specifically, including two former members of the company who joined the military in response to 9/11 and died in action in Iraq. The names of the first responders from the FDNY, NYPD, and the PANYNJ are listed on the memorial wall. “Our goal is always to remember the sacrifices made by the emergency personnel on September 11, 2001,” was written in the memorial brochure. The Liberty Corner, NJ 9/11 Memorial memorializes the dead firefighters with a piece of steel placed on a stand in the shape of a staircase, which represents the WTC staircase and the firefighters’ rescue efforts there. Instead of the timeline of the attacks, the staircase displays the radio transmissions between the firefighters as they were climbing up inside the towers.

Although there are memorials dedicated to a particular group like the first responders, some intentionally avoided doing that. For instance, one of my informants stated that even

though he has been a firefighter for 35 years, he did not want to do single them out because almost 3,000 people died that day, and people are still dying as a result of exposure, or as soldiers dying in action. Also, he believed that some organizations failed to complete their memorial projects because they had insisted on focusing on one group only, and did not get enough community support.

The use of commercial passenger planes as weapons resulted in the deaths of people from a wide geographical area, including people who were not from the United States. The towns around the departure and arrival locations of the planes lost residents who were on those planes. Despite the common opinion that 9/11 impacted three sites, towns and cities away from the crash sites also lost residents. Such connections were often expressed at local memorials by listing the names of the residents who died. For instance, Philip M. Rosenzweig (passenger) and Madeline Amy Sweeney (flight attendant) were residents of Acton, MA, who were on the plane that crashed into the North Tower. Their spouses were invited to participate in the building process of the Acton 9/11 Memorial, and the memorial is dedicated in memory of Philip and Madeline, and all others who died in the attacks. A piece of steel beam surrounded by granite stones is the focal point of the monument, while the signatures of Philip and Madeline and the emblems of the FDNY and NYPD are engraved on the granite stones. The Mercer County, NJ Memorial memorializes the 28 county residents who died in the attacks, although it took a public outcry to add their names to the site.<sup>58</sup> People protested to the memorial committee because the names of the victims were not part of the original design, while the names of the elected officials and county freeholders were displayed in two dedication plaques. A county spokeswoman reportedly said that what names to include and what not to was not an easy decision: “What if someone was

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<sup>58</sup> [http://www.nj.com/mercer/index.ssf/2011/11/at\\_mercer\\_countys\\_911\\_memorial.html](http://www.nj.com/mercer/index.ssf/2011/11/at_mercer_countys_911_memorial.html) ,  
[http://www.nj.com/mercer/index.ssf/2011/11/victims\\_names\\_will\\_be\\_added\\_to.html](http://www.nj.com/mercer/index.ssf/2011/11/victims_names_will_be_added_to.html)

born in Trenton but moved as far as California for their entire adult lives? At what point do you say who do we exclude?” (Duffy 2011). She also added that displaying the names of the local victims was rejected in favor of commemorating all victims (Duffy 2011).

Rarely, 9/11 memorials draw attention to subgroups other than the first responders. Twenty steel tridents are now part of the National Iron & Steel Heritage Museum’s collection in Coatesville, PA. All except one of the tridents were not accessible to public at the time of writing, but the museum had plans to create an appropriate display of these artifacts. The one that is open to public view is displayed as a memorial in the museum courtyard. While mainly a reminder of 9/11, the memorial also draws attention to the steelworkers who made the tridents, and the memorial is also dedicated to those who lost their lives on the job. At the Clifton Park rest area on I-87 North, a small memorial with a piece of the WTC steel is dedicated to three employees of the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council and New York State Department of Transportation. The memorial park in Yardley, PA is distinguished by its emphasis on the 42 children from Pennsylvania who lost a parent, as well as 58 victims from Pennsylvania, and 18 Bucks County victims.

### **6.3.2 Innocence and Sacrifice**

The commemorative narrative at local memorials often put emphasis on themes such as heroism and sacrifice. According to one narrative, the civilians who died in the attacks were innocent victims, and the first responders are the heroes who sacrificed their lives. In this regard, bravery of the first responders was often juxtaposed with the innocence of the civilians, as the following excerpts show:

While thousands were rushing out of the World Trade Center, hundreds of brave firefighters, police and other public safety personnel were bravely and unselfishly rushing in. We remember the 442 first responders—including 343 New York City Firefighters, 38 Port Authority Police Officers, and 27 New York City Police Officers—who made the ultimate sacrifice in order to help thousands of civilians working at the WTC safely escape the attacks.

In the memory of the 2,983 people who lost their lives in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001; including the 343 firefighters of the Fire Department of New York who gave their lives to save others.

September 11, 2011. The many who died. The many who fought to save others. Memories never die.

(...) dedicates this memorial to all those who lost their lives in that horrific chronicle of evil. And with a loving remembrance of all the brave men and women, heroes all who made the supreme sacrifice that day in the line of duty with the hope that others might be saved.

May this steel beam from the World Trade Center Towers stand as a lasting memory of the innocent lives we lost on September 11, 2001, and as an enduring tribute to the Police Officers, Firefighters and Emergency Responders who gave their lives to save others, and as a constant reminder of the brave members of the United States Armed Forces who defend our freedom and sometimes make the ultimate sacrifice.

Each excerpt above is taken from a different memorial, yet the narrative is constructed around similar expressions, especially the concept of “sacrifice.” They indicate that the first responders “rushed in” the buildings, “gave their lives to save others,” and thereby made the “ultimate sacrifice.”

Though heroism and victimhood rarely merge in the context of civilian deaths, the passengers of Flight 93 have become civilian heroes. As I discussed earlier, these people are treated differently than the civilians killed in Pentagon and New York, because they “chose” to fight back the hijackers, and their actions are therefore glorified as bravery. The following

excerpt taken from a memorial in Connecticut reveals the distinction between the Flight 93 passengers and other victims: “This monument serves as a permanent memorial to the victims of the terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon, and the brave action of the passengers on Flight 93 in Shanksville, PA on September 11, 2001.”

Though the grouping of the civilians as victims and the first responders as heroes has become the common response, there were also cases in which these terms were used interchangeably. Since the recognition of victimhood and heroism in part depend on the influence that the terms will evoke, a group or individual may be considered a hero in one setting, and a victim in another. The following excerpts show the interchangeable usage of these terms for the same group of individuals. The first excerpt is from the 9/11 memorial in a town from Massachusetts. In this example, heroism is not only reserved for the first responders, but also used for the civilians who died:

Dedicated on September 11, 2013, this monument is a permanent memorial to all 92 Massachusetts heroes, including two of our own, taken from us in the terrorist attacks on our nation that fateful day. May it serve as a symbol of hope, freedom and liberty.

In the following example taken from a memorial in New Jersey, however, all individuals are grouped as victims:

The name of each innocent victim who died at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and in the field in Pennsylvania is inscribed on the memorial walls.

The last example refers to all the dead as victims, but at the same time it emphasizes their bravery:

This floor beam was taken from one of the World Trade Center Towers to preserve the memory of the brave and innocent victims of the attack on September 11, 2001.

### 6.3.3 Strength and Renewal

As discussed in Chapter 2, memorial vigils all across the country, as well as voluntary help and aid for the rescue workers, spread quickly as gestures of national unity and community support after the attacks. My informants often mentioned that they felt united in those days. Some raised funds, or collected equipment that rescue workers could use, and sent them to New York.

The themes of solidarity and renewal were frequently displayed at the memorial sites. For instance, a granite monument placed in front of the WTC steel beams in New Providence, NJ has the following note written on it:

To the people of New Providence, from the people of Flower Mound, Texas, we offer this memorial as our solemn pledge to remember you. Because of September 11, 2001, we unite in brotherhood to share your grief, offer strength in continuity and embrace hope for America's future.

Flower Mound is the sister city of New Providence. Like this monument, the words “brotherhood,” “strength,” “continuity,” and “hope” were often used to give the message of support and solidarity. Another memorial with a direct reference to unity is in Indianapolis. A black granite wall stands behind WTC steel beams, and the poem *One* by Cheryl Sawyer is inscribed on the wall. The following is an excerpt from the poem:

As the soot and dirt and ash rained down,  
We became one color.  
As we carried each other down the stairs of the burning building  
We became one class.  
.....  
As we retell with pride of the sacrifice of heroes  
We become one people.  
We are  
One color  
One class  
One generation  
One gender

One faith  
One language  
One body  
One family  
One soul  
One people  
We are The Power of One.  
We are United.  
We are America.

One of the members of the memorial committee came across this poem, and the committee liked it because it talks about “being one” and is “reinforcing the unity.”

Of special note concerning the themes of “strength” and “renewal” is that the steel pieces were referred to especially in this context. The steel pieces are fitting for the strength narrative because of their aesthetic and material qualities. This analogy is explicit in the commemorative narrative of some memorials, such as the following examples taken from different memorial sites:

We are honored to display this poignant remembrance of loss and sadness. Like steel, the beam represents our strength, courage and struggle to keep freedom alive.

Once a part of an American icon this piece of the World Trade Center Steel is bent and twisted. A result of a national tragedy this artifact rises once again in honor of the 343 firefighters, 60 police and port authority officers and the 2,349 civilians who lost their lives on September 11, 2001. Let us never forget that tragic day or the strength of our country.

This single steel girder represents and honors the strength and courage of over 3,000 people that were killed on this day.

In one part of his address to the nation, President Bush used the word “steel” literally and also as a metaphor to address the U.S. response to the attacks. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, he said “terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they

cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shatter steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve.” Consequently, this part of President Bush’s address was quoted in some memorials to accompany the display of the WTC steel.

The concepts of rebirth and renewal are part of the strength discourse. The recovery and construction at the WTC site is referred to as the “rebirth” at Ground Zero in the media and various other platforms, such as the National 9/11 Memorial and Museum. Project Rebirth, a non-profit organization created in response to the events of September 11, produced a short film titled *Rebirth at Ground Zero*. The film documents the construction process at the WTC site through time-lapse footage and interviews with people whose lives were affected by the attacks.<sup>59</sup> In some local memorials, as well, the commemorative narrative promotes the idea that the nation became even stronger in response to the attacks. For instance, in the invitation of the dedication ceremony for the 9/11 memorial in Hudson, NH, which is formed of a 23-foot steel beam and a glass tower of equal height, the glass tower was described as “a symbolic gesture demonstrating that even under great adversity the United States of America will always rise together, as one, to protect her freedom.” The myth of Phoenix rising from the ashes is also used as a metaphor to stress the renewal theme. The artist of the memorial in DeKalb, GA made a steel sculpture of a Phoenix wing, and it is located at the center of the memorial with a small WTC piece attached to it [Figure 47]. The memorial in Foxboro, MA glorifies “American ideals” while disdaining the enemy, and makes reference to Phoenix as a metaphor for rebirth and renewal:

By showing they could murder Americans, al-Qaeda hoped to strike fear into the hearts of all those who defend democracy, human rights and the basic freedoms we hold dear. But al-Qaeda failed. Far from creating terror, the attacks on that day

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<sup>59</sup> <http://www.911memorial.org/project-rebirth-0>

strengthened our patriotism. From the ashes on that day rose a Phoenix, a renewed dedication to the ideals that have made this country great. Citizens of the world were reminded that buildings may fall, but freedom is forever.

Besides the common themes that are used in the commemorative narrative of the memorials, it is important to note the similarity between those narratives and the narratives of U.S. war memorials. Especially, the narratives such as the one taken from the Foxboro memorial above are reminiscent of war memorials in contrasting the U.S. and the enemy, in which the enemy is depicted as weak and evil. Such narratives are quite different from the memorials that are focused more on remembering the dead and healing, rather than on glory. In this regard, the following examples are in contrast with the previous excerpt, because they focus on hope and healing:

The concrete blocks at the base of the steel represent the foundation of our lives: family, relationships and community. The recurring circular forms signify the continuance of life. The water surrounding the memorial symbolizes healing and rebirth. The island on which the steel beams stand and the connecting bridge suggest the blending of ethnic, cultural and spiritual differences. Finally, the flowers between the concrete blocks represent life and hope, reminding us that with the passing of time comes healing, peace and resolve.

The steel is set on a pentagon shaped base that is surrounded by a circle symbolic of the continuity of life. The grassy terrain on either side of the flagpoles and two red maple trees are in remembrance of those on Flight 93 who valiantly prevented further horror on a field in Shanksville, PA.

This Tower of Remembrance—emerging from the rubble of violence—will remind us that in God there is hope; that as we remember, we heal.

#### 6.3.4 Temporality

Narrative construction is a selective process. The beginning and ending of a narrative frames the event, and thereby aims to shape the experience. As Zerubavel argued, “The experience described between the points of beginning and ending in the narrative is assumed to represent the relevant part of that past, defining information left out as nonimportant” (1995:221). In the 9/11 commemorations, the past is divided into two periods: before and after 9/11. At both the national and local, relevant history begins in the morning of September 11, 2001, so that the memorials with a timeline are illustrative of how temporality is communicated at the sites, and what are considered as the key moments in narrating the event.

The narratives at the memorials were usually constructed along the times of the attacks and collapse of the Twin Towers. Some memorials list the events of the day with a detailed description, while some others only gives the times of impact. The memorial in Acushnet, MA refers to the time period between the departure of Flight 11 and the collapse of the North Tower as “the 149 minutes that forever changed our lives.” The chain of events are inscribed on a glass panel, located in front of the steel piece, allowing you to see the steel piece at the background as you read the text. The memorial in Cranberry, PA follows a similar format. It starts the day with the departure of Flight 11 and ends with the collapse of the North Tower. Unlike the memorials in Acushnet and Cranberry, some other memorials do not narrate the course of events of that day, but instead depict the times of the attacks.

It was also common among the memorials to visualize the timeline through architectural features. The memorial in Suwanee, GA is designed as a sundial, with a stainless steel sculpture depicting an aerial view of Lower Manhattan located at its center. The timeline, from the departure of the first flight to the collapse of the North tower, is inscribed on the ground in

accordance with the sundial, and thereby it brings the time element to the memorial. The timeline in the Hudson 9/11 Memorial is displayed through stone markers. The base of the memorial is formed of a pentagon-shaped stone wall, and the green space within the pentagon symbolizes the crash site in Shanksville. The walking path to the memorial reenacts the flight path of the plane that hit the Pentagon. Therefore, the path makes a sharp angle and meets the pentagon wall at the end. Stone markers, which only show the time of the events without providing further details, are placed along the path. The timeline begins with the first hit to the North Tower. “8:46:26 FLIGHT 11 IMPACTS THE NORTH TOWER OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER SEPT 11, 2001” inscribed on stone. The same format follows for others: the impact on the South tower, west side of the Pentagon, the collapse of the South tower, plane crash near Shanksville PA, and the collapse of the North tower. Consequently, like the sundial design in the Suwanee memorial, the Hudson memorial also brings the time element to the design through the markers placed along the walk path. The timeline ends with the collapse of the North Tower, and the next stone is dedicated “IN HONOR OF OUR MILITARY MEN AND WOMEN WHO DUTIFULLY SERVE TO PROTECT OUR FREEDOM.” Though not explicitly mentioned at the memorial site, this is actually a reference to the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. My informant has told me that it was not part of the original memorial, but was dedicated two years later on Memorial Day, “to honor the soldiers who went to protect us afterwards.”

The memorial in Foxboro, MA also has stone markers, which depict the timeline separately for each site. Like the Hudson 9/11 Memorial, the stone markers are placed along the memorial pathway. Right after the stone markers is the area where the steel piece is located. The piece is incorporated into the design that includes two granite pillars representing the Twin Towers. There are three benches located in front of the pillars. Again, the times of attacks are

inscribed on the benches, which are located in front of the pillars. Though the Indianapolis Memorial also used stone markers to depict the timeline, it focused only on the moments of the attacks, and did not mention the plane departures and the collapse of the buildings.

When did 9/11 end? This question relates to the framing of the 9/11 narrative. Timelines usually end with the collapse of the North Tower, and in most cases, the number of the dead is limited to those who died during or immediately following the events. Linda and Paul's concerns about how to represent the dead at Suwanee's memorial demonstrated it could be hard to decide when to stop counting the dead. Knowing the long-term effects of the attacks, such as health problems, one informant mentioned that the memorial they dedicated aimed also to give support to the kids and families of those who still suffer from those effects. For the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary on September 11, 2015, the PANYNJ sent a letter to the recipients of the WTC steel. The letter called the organizer of memorial services to raise awareness about the continuing health impact to responders and survivors: "While the facts of that day have been well documented, many throughout the country are unaware of the health impacts still faced by thousands of responders and survivors who live not only in the region that we serve but also around the country" (PANYNJ 2015). The letter also included information about the progress achieved in the treatment of 9/11 related illness and injuries. According to the letter, more than 71,000 responders and survivors are receiving medical monitoring and treatment. More than 33,000 of them have at least one injury or illness, more than 22,000 have two or more, and more than 3,700 responders and survivors have cancer related to 9/11. My informant made several copies of this letter, and he was distributing them to the visitors at the memorial site that day.

Consequently, the commemorative narratives at the local memorials are parallel to the themes emphasized in the national memorial sites and the official 9/11 narrative enforced by

various channels including politicians. The lack of direct reference to the perpetrators, limited information about the before and afterwards of 9/11, and the emphasis on renewal and heroism in the face of victimhood and sacrifice were the major themes I emphasized in this chapter to show how the local sites depicted 9/11.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

The starting point of this study was the contrast between the majority of the WTC rubble that was discarded as scrap and the less than one percent that was treated as sacred relics and became the central components of 9/11 memorials across the country. I documented the memorialization of the steel artifacts, and discussed the socio-cultural factors involved in their reconfiguration as relics of 9/11, in order to understand why groups and individuals voluntarily became part of these processes, and why they started a movement of widespread, off-site memorial construction that has not taken place for the commemoration of other traumatic events and national tragedies in the American past. Unlike studies that have focused on institutional forms of commemoration and on-site memorialization, this study focused on the commemoration of a national event at local levels. In this regard, the study aimed to go beyond symbolic interpretations and understand the memorialization process and the artifacts' *relicness*, by investigating the motivations of those who took part in the acquisition of the artifacts and memorial building. I tracked the memorialization of one particular type of artifact across multiple sites to investigate the process's socio-cultural dimensions. Using a biographical approach to portray the WTC steel's life cycles—construction material, rubble, scrap, and relics—the study showed how sacredness came to be attributed to the artifacts in specific contexts.

Based on my fieldwork at local memorial sites primarily in the Northeastern United States, I argued that the artifacts' reconfiguration as relics—secular but sacred artifacts instead of

rubble—gave them a strong commemorative value through which individuals and groups aimed to communicate their views about 9/11 and how it should be remembered. On the one hand, building memorials and displaying artifacts were ways of paying respect to the dead, especially to those who “sacrificed” their lives to save others and the nation. On the other hand, through their broken and damaged forms, the artifacts served as reminders, and even as warnings, about threats perceived against the nation and against American identity—in this particular context, especially external threats. For instance, some of my informants pointed out that the memorial would help to teach children about 9/11. In addition, the steel artifacts were also used to emphasize the notions of national renewal and strength in response to the attacks. This is why the steel artifacts were usually put in an upright position to create an uplifting quality. In this regard, the commemorative power attributed to the artifacts enabled the agents of memory to make social, political, and cultural statements about 9/11’s perceived exceptionality. In arguing this, I emphasized that the artifacts’ sacredness was often indicated through expressive, sentimental reactions. The artifacts had a sentimental quality in the eyes of those who memorialized them, often revealed in peoples’ encounters with the steel, such as the urge to touch it. It was the attribution of this quality that meant that the steel pieces were not only historical artifacts that could demonstrate the scale of destruction, and also led me to see an analogy between religious relics and the WTC artifacts as secular relics.

This analogy required a careful conceptualization of the term “sacred.” Drawing from discussions of civil religion, I defined sacred as that which is undisputable and removed from everyday realms (Schramm 2011). In addition, I drew on Abraham Lincoln’s use of the term “hallowed” at the Gettysburg battlefield, and Kenneth Burke’s “God terms” to further illustrate that sacredness can exist in secular contexts, and that the supreme value of the object or idea to

which it is attributed thereby stands indisputable. Though religious symbolism—mainly Christian—forms an important part of 9/11 commemorations, the sacredness attributed to the steel artifacts was of this second type: non-religious yet special enough to make the artifacts’ significance undisputable. The ceremonies often involved an invocation prayer, and the tributes left at the memorials included prayers and religious symbols, yet my informants did not explain the artifacts’ significance through religious sources. In this sense, another reason for drawing this analogy was that both religious relics and the steel artifacts are perceived to have immaterial components that derive power from a larger ideal. While this immaterial component for the religious relics was a divine power, I argue that the steel artifacts derived their power and efficacy from their imagined—and sometimes real—ties to the event, especially to the dead whose remains were not recovered.

I have reached these conclusions through several levels of analysis. First, I have discussed 9/11 exceptionality, based on the event itself and on informants’ relations of their experiences. The events of 9/11 are coded as exceptional in the public imagination on account of several factors: their unexpectedness, the method of attack, the strategically and symbolically important targets, and the number of civilians and first responders who died in a single day. The use of commercial aircraft as weapons to attack structures of national significance was unimaginable until then and shocking. Further, millions watched the planes hit the towers on television and on the web, and experienced the events directly as “mediatized trauma” (Kaplan 2005). On the other hand, the narratives produced by politicians and other channels including media, and the patriotic expressions that flourished all across the country, also contributed to marking this event as different from all earlier events. This sense of exceptionality often came up in my interviews with informants, who frequently referred to their flashbulb memories (Brown

and Kulik 1977) to explain the significance of the event for them, and thereby the artifacts' significance as well. They compared 9/11 to historical events such as the attack on Pearl Harbor and the assassination of John F. Kennedy, but pointed out that 9/11 occurred in their own lifetimes and thus had a personal impact on them, different from all other events that they thought were memorable and important. The death of nearly three thousand civilians was another factor that distinguished 9/11 from other events, such as military conflicts.

The flashbulb memories, shock, fear, and anxiety made 9/11 personal to my informants, even if they did not themselves have a direct connection to the places and events. They referred to this emotional connection to explain their motivations for taking action to acquire a steel piece from the PANYNJ and build a memorial. Those who were firefighters had a special connection to the dead, especially to the 343 firefighters who died, because of their professional affinity, which they called "brotherhood," and was also part of their motivation to request a steel artifact and build a memorial.

At another level, I focused on the commemoration practices and symbolism involved in the artifacts' memorialization processes. In explaining the significance and meaning of the steel, the form of commemoration ceremonies indicated, and my informants' accounts pointed out, the possible connection between the artifacts and the dead. Some of my informants clearly stated that they think the steel might have come into contact with the dead, and that there might be human remains on them still. This connection was most evident in circumstances in which the steel piece was treated as if it were a casket. The artifacts were wrapped with the American flag when they were carried in a procession, usually on flatbed trucks. Almost all my informants pointed out the urge to touch the steel, and shared their observations of other people touching the steel. This is why making the artifacts accessible for touching was a major goal in designing

memorials. A further connection of the steel to the dead was provided by some who saw the artifacts inside Hangar 17, which they said looked like a cemetery.

The materiality of steel was critical for explaining why only such artifacts were memorialized nationwide. Of course, the influence of the PANYNJ's systematic distribution cannot be ignored, but I have argued that the materiality of steel also served well to communicate the scale and impact of destruction. I have elaborated on this point by approaching the steel's material qualities—robustness and damaged form—as *qualisigns* (Keane 2003) that shifted in value, and gained commemorative significance as relics of tragedy and destruction, not as deformed unwanted materials. These *qualisigns* came with certain affordances, such as durability, strength, and visibility, which fit well to the “strength and renewal” discourse of 9/11. The steel's material properties also shaped commemoration practices, because the artifacts lend themselves to physical contact and have the capacity to demonstrate destruction. Additionally, I have argued that the cultural history of steel in the U.S. must also be considered to understand the artifacts' memorialization. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, steel has had social and cultural significance as an icon of American industrialism, as did the two iconic buildings—the Twin Towers. In this regard, I have argued that the 9/11 memorials were not only for the dead, but also for the buildings themselves. The frequent representation of the Twin Towers in memorial designs, and spatial references at the memorial sites to New York City, were the observations I drew upon to support this view.

Despite their geographical distance from the sites of the 9/11 events, local memorials created distinct commemorative spaces, and functioned as spaces of engagement through the steel artifacts' presence. The steel artifacts were seen as mediums of connection between the network of local memorials, and also between the local memorials and the WTC site. Thus the

distribution of the same type of artifacts over a large geographical territory created imagined ties between those places. The web of local memorials, which incorporated the same type of artifact and similar references, thereby created a memoryscape that marked both actual connections, such as victims' networks, and the perceived impact of the attacks on other places in the country. The scale of this memoryscape, which covers the whole country, is also a marker of 9/11's exceptionality.

The systematic distribution of the steel artifacts by the PANYNJ started approximately eight years after the attacks, and the artifacts were usually dedicated as memorials on the tenth anniversary. Despite the time gap, the narratives, images, and symbolism that the sites and my informants referred to were parallel to the 9/11 discourses formed by politicians and the media in the immediate aftermath of the attacks. The wider narrative emphasized the heroism of the first responders and civilians, sacrificial death, the innocence of the victims, and the unity and strength of the nation. The local memorials continued to communicate these themes through their narratives and representations. The performances that took place during the steel's transportation and dedication, and at anniversary ceremonies, were often dominated by patriotic and national symbols. The ceremonies resembled military funerals, and took place in the presence of honor guards and uniformed personnel: fire, police, and EMS.

I have discussed the memorialization of the steel artifacts in the context of commemoration of trauma and violence in mainstream American culture, and compared them with commemorations of other historical events that had traumatic consequences. My point in this comparative approach was to highlight the massive scale of the 9/11 commemorations that focused on civilian heroes and victims, in contrast to the general U.S. historical trajectory of commemorating military dead as heroes. This comparative approach also helped to illustrate

9/11's distinct place in the public imagination. For instance, though the Oklahoma City bombing and 9/11 were both terrorist attacks targeted civilians, the rubble of the Murrah Federal building was not distributed across the country to establish local memorials, and the Oklahoma City bombing stayed as an event primarily of local importance. In this regard, Jeffrey Alexander's (2004) definition of cultural trauma as social construct is important for understanding that the monumental scale of the 9/11 commemorations and the events' distinct recognition are not only due to its brutality, but also conditioned by the social, cultural, and political context.

These issues may be useful for future research. At the most immediate level, and as discussed in Chapter 4, the WTC artifacts had a turning point in their "biography" (Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986) after 9/11 and the collapse of the buildings. In the early phase of their lives, the WTC steel were construction materials, thereby commodities, but after 9/11 they had gone through two different phases. In contrast to the artifacts that were salvaged and recycled, the artifacts incorporated into the off-site memorials became relics. However, people's interactions with these artifacts and memorials will continue to change over time, and the artifacts may lose their secular sacredness or gain additional meanings. The biography approach will be useful to analyze potential changes in the ways that the artifacts are presented and also in how they will be perceived and treated. Such an approach would provide insights on the changing role and interpretation of the memorials in societies.

"There is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument," Robert Musil (1987) has stated, in pointing out that monuments are often neglected despite their material presence and purpose to be long-lasting reminders. In this study, I focused on those who actively took part in the memorialization process of the steel artifacts. The steel artifacts had personal and social importance for my informants, but further research is needed to collect and analyze variety of

reactions and attitudes from those who were not involved in the memorialization process and had not considered getting a steel artifact, and among people who have no memories of their own of 9/11. Future research might also expand to a wider geographical area to survey different regional attitudes, farther from the 9/11 sites. I recall a visitor at the Flight 93 National Memorial in 2011 who told me that he would prefer funds to be spent on a different cause rather than building an expensive memorial to remember a sad event. My informants in this study were supporters of the off-site memorials and received almost no criticism for supporting them. They often referred to the presence of a strong consensus regarding the establishment of these memorials. Such consensus is rarely achieved in commemorations, because different groups often have varying and contrasting views about how the past should be interpreted and remembered. In this respect, the degree of consensus achieved in the memorials I discussed is striking and unusual, yet also understandable because of the similarities between the informants' cultural, professional, and socio-economic backgrounds. Future research can focus on the views of those who have different backgrounds from those of my informants and explore the lack of steel artifacts at potential sites to see whether there have been any cases of unwillingness to acquire a steel artifact or memorialize 9/11.

Elements missing from the memorial sites, such as Islamic symbolism, and the lack of reference to U.S. foreign policies, indicate there is a consensus about what should be included and excluded in the 9/11 commemorations. The memorials avoided "historical voice," which would offer analysis and interpretation of what happened, for the sake of being inclusive and not confrontational, yet the missing elements suggest that commemoration has limits. Future research can focus on the politics of exclusion and inclusion to explore the limits of commemoration at these memorials. Further, the fact that the majority of my informants were

male may in part account for why commemoration ceremonies resembled military customs, and those informants who are in the fire service often referred to the “brotherhood” of the firefighters. In this regard, gendered representations of memory also remain as an important subject to explore.

Finally, this study analyzes a case of meaning-making process after a tragedy. I have aimed to contribute to documentation of what is memorialized in contemporary American society, and to enhance the understanding of what motivates people to become active participants in commemorations. While daily practices are increasingly being digitalized, material attachments remain significant for commemoration purposes. Thus, even though I have focused on the WTC artifacts and the 9/11 commemorations, the study sheds light on the analysis of other material practices developed to commemorate trauma and violence. For instance, the From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration Museum that is scheduled to open in 2017 in Montgomery, Alabama will be the first national memorial dedicated to the victims of slavery and lynching—to the victims of “racial terrorism,” according to the museum’s official description (EJI 2016).<sup>60</sup> The museum will incorporate high-tech exhibits along with artifacts, films, recordings, and comprehensive data on lynching (EJI 2016). In addition to these, the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), the owner of the museum project, launched a memorial campaign, and invited volunteers to collect jars of soil from the places where lynchings took place in the past. The jars, each dedicated in the name of a victim, will be displayed in the museum, creating a material presence for the dead there. This is the reverse process of the steel artifacts’ memorialization, bringing memorial materials together in a new setting, instead of expanding from one location to

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<sup>60</sup> “EJI Announces Plans to Build Museum and National Lynching Memorial.” August 16, 2016. <http://eji.org/news/eji-announces-plans-to-build-museum-and-national-lynching-memorial> (Accessed: 11/3/2016)

outwards. Through its theoretical orientation, methodology, and subject matter, I hope that this dissertation offers a model for the analysis of such contemporary material practices that commemorate the victims of violence and trauma.

## 8.0 AFTERWORD

As an anthropologist from Turkey doing research in the U.S. about the 9/11 memorials from 2014-16, initially I had some concerns about how I would be received, as mentioned in the Introduction. Considering 9/11's role in the rise of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiments, I was prepared for distrust or resistance from my potential informants. However, my concerns faded soon after I started my fieldwork, because people were comfortable in talking to me and pleased to see me, a non-American, doing this research. They were willing to introduce me to other people and to tell them about my research topic. Of course, I am aware that the situation might have been different if I had extended my fieldwork to a wider geographical area, or if I fit into stereotypical images of the Muslim Other—e.g., by wearing hijab, or if my name were easily recognizable to Americans as Muslim. Yet, I thought that that even if I had received an offensive comment because of who I am, I could still be confident, believing that the social and political norms in this country, at least ideally, do not approve such behavior.

As I finish this dissertation, however, the U.S. has entered into a new political and social phase with Donald Trump's presidency. Neither his arrogance nor his offensive comments on groups including women, immigrants, and Muslims prevented him from becoming President. On the contrary, his extremist and provocative statements on many issues ranging from environmental concerns to national security, and promises of anti-immigration policies seem to have helped him to gain support. His degrading comments on many subjects were normalized

and praised by his supporters as gestures of sincerity and truthfulness. Some of the country's most prevalent racist organizations showed their support for Trump as his campaign promises seemed to fit their "white-supremacist" ideologies, and they celebrated Trump's election as a victory. During all of this, Trump did little to distance his stance from those of such groups, or to renounce their support.

Trump did not invent racism and xenophobia in the U.S, but he took advantage of existing tensions and thus released hate. This new period that has started with Trump's candidacy raises several questions for me as an anthropologist and "alien" in the U.S. As I have noted, even though I had some concerns about my fieldwork experience at the beginning, I was confident in approaching to my informants, and in fact experienced almost no hostility. To the contrary, as I noted in one chapter subheading, one person told me that "You are one of us now." Now, though, I ask myself what I would feel if I were planning to do this research in the current political and social context. The society seems to have gone through a tremendous political and emotional divide since the day I finished my fieldwork. Hearing Trump calling Mexican immigrants "rapists," talking about removing birthright citizenship, and about banning Muslims from entering the U.S. sounded unreal to me for some time, but as the election season progressed I did not know what to think and feel in front of a Trump poster. In fact, I felt withdrawn when I entered into a memorial site on the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11 at the same time as a car that had a Trump sticker on it, because for the first time I thought that if they knew I come from a Muslim-majority country, people in the ceremony would prefer for me to leave. I never met with the driver of that car, but that brief moment was enough to make me feel alienated.

Considering the sudden political and social change that came with Trump, I am also wondering whether my informants would or even could talk about community, and about being

united, in the same way they did almost two years ago. In marking the actual and imagined connections to 9/11, the off-site memorials often emphasized the themes of nationhood, unity, and sacrifice. The narratives at the memorial sites favored a commemorative voice focusing on the dead, and avoided any critical approach to the event, mostly for the sake of being inclusive and not to offend anyone. The memorials were the products of voluntary support and group agreement, and erected for the community.

Of course, the unity and wholeness depicted by the memorials, and by informants, were based on certain assumptions, such as my informant's claim that the majority of the people living in his town were Christians. While it was common for the memorials to incorporate Christian and Jewish elements, Muslim symbols were obviously never part of them. The towns I have been to in the Northeast were predominantly white, as were my informants. So, diversity was limited. In this regard, the unity and inclusiveness depicted by the memorials and informants were perhaps never fully achieved, but still they were the core values that were emphasized in my interviews and at the memorials.

"Unity" for those who agree with Trump's opinions and policies has a very limited space for diversity. In contrast to the inclusiveness that many of the memorials and informants promoted, Trump's promises are based on exclusion. It is true that Trump did not win the popular vote, and not all who supported him are bigots—intense dislike for the Democratic Party's candidate was also influential in many voters' decision. Thus, Trump's views probably do not represent those of the majority of Americans. Yet, hate and fear have played a significant role in mobilizing Trump supporters and polarizing the society, and his success has legitimated such attitudes in the political and public sphere. Racist attacks targeted various groups—especially blacks and Muslims—the day after he won the election. White supremacists

celebrated his election as a victory and considered that they had been legitimized. On the one hand, Trump's presidency faces strong opposition. For instance, one of the largest protests by women took place the day after his inauguration. On the other hand, his administration's xenophobic policies are what many of his supporters asked for and they see no wrong in them.

When I think of my informant who told me "You are one of us now," the pace of change in the U.S. surprises me even more. If I were to start doing my fieldwork now knowing how Trump came to power, as an anthropologist from Turkey I would feel less confident. Perhaps I would choose not to do research in the U.S. because it is likely that Trump administration will continue to criminalize people from Muslim countries and restrict their entrance to the U.S. In these circumstances, there is no guarantee that Turkey will not be on the banned countries list, and that my stay in the U.S. will not be restricted.

Finally, it is known that not only American citizens died on 9/11, but also undocumented immigrants and people from other countries. The memorials have not categorized the dead based on race, ethnicity, religion, or citizenship: to the contrary, all are considered to have been victims. When telling their memories of 9/11, my informants often mentioned that the events brought everyone—the nation—together, and the moment they witnessed the attacks had become a medium of connection with others. This imagined unity is what has been disrupted by the Trump campaign and administration. The politics of the Trump era derive power from bringing people into opposition and manipulating fear and hatred. In this political and social climate, North American anthropology and the study of mainstream American culture remain crucial and can offer a lot to understand current dynamics. The study of these subjects by non-American anthropologists is especially important, since they can bring in different perspectives and provide

new insights, but to what extent current circumstances will allow such study is another question we have to consider.

## APPENDIX A

### FIGURES



Photo: The Red Knights International Firefighters Motorcycle Club

Figure 1 - Flag hanging from ladder trucks



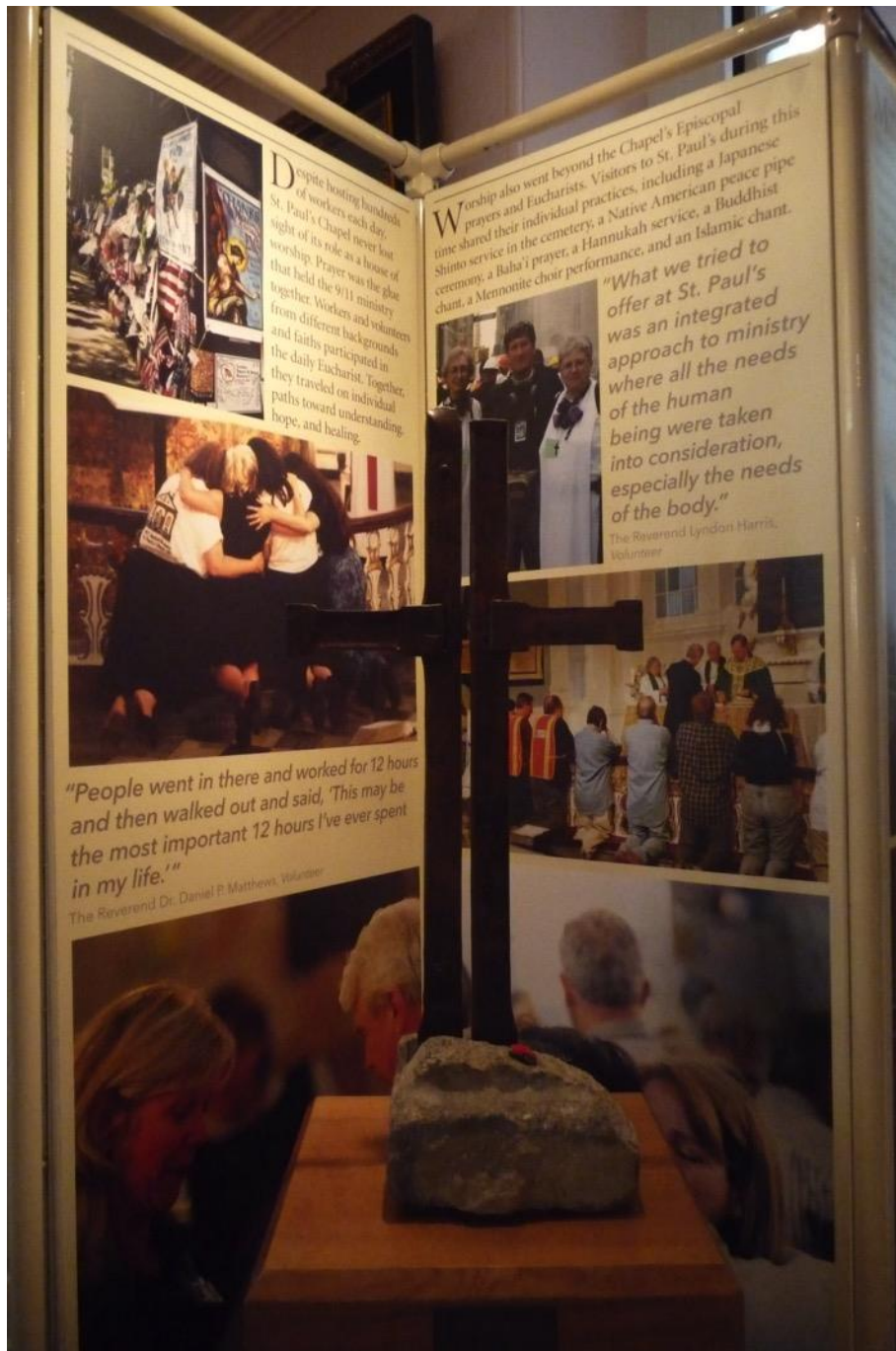
**Figure 2 - American flag on display in King of Prussia 9/11 Memorial, PA**



**Figure 3 - 9/11 Memorial, Shanksville Volunteer Fire Department**



**Figure 4 - Remains from Shanksville, Pentagon, and WTC in the Flight 93 Memorial Chapel**



**Figure 5 - A cross forged from WTC Steel, St. Paul's Chapel, New York City**



**Figure 6 - The 9/11 Memorial in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, New York City**



**Figure 7 - Tributes left for Garden of Reflection 9/11 Memorial, Yardley, PA**



**Figure 8 - The National September 11 Memorial & Museum, New York City**



**Figure 9 - "The Sphere" by sculptor Fritz Koenig in Battery Park, New York City**



**Figure 10 - Flight 93 National Memorial, Shanksville, PA**



Figure 11 - Anti-abortion billboard, Shanksville, PA



**Figure 12 - National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial, Arlington, VA**



**Figure 13 - Ielpi's letter and the steel tag framed inside a fire station in Clifton Heights, PA**



**Figure 14 - Indianapolis 9/11 Memorial, IN**



**Figure 15 - Acton 9/11 Memorial, MA**



**Figure 16 - Hudson 9/11 Memorial, NH**



**Figure 17 - The 9/11 Memorial in a fire station in Salem, MA**



**Figure 18 - Acushnet 9/11 Memorial, MA**



**Figure 19 - "Tempered by Memory," Albany, NY**



**Figure 20 - Pennsylvania Turnpike Road exhibit, Bedford, PA**



**Figure 21 - The WTC trident dedicated as a memorial to steel workers, the National Iron & Steel Museum, Coatesville, PA**



**Figure 22 – “Please Touch and Never Forget” Dracut 9/11 Memorial, MA**



**Figure 23 - The WTC steel and the Pentagon stone, Acushnet, MA**



Photo: The Red Knights International Firefighters Motorcycle Club

**Figure 24 - Members of the firefighters motorcycle club carrying the steel, Boylston, MA**



Figure 25 - The steel tag framed in the Hudson Central Fire Station, NH



**Figure 26 - People taking pictures of the Ten House's firefighters, New York City**



Figure 27 - Engine 26's memorial display, New York City



Figure 28 - Engine 205 Hook & Ladder 118's memorial display, Brooklyn, NY



Figure 29 - Engine 226's memorial display, Brooklyn, NY



**Figure 30 - The photograph that became the inspiration for the FEMA team's 9/11 Memorial, MA**



**Figure 31 - FEMA's 9/11 memorial in progress, MA (2015)**



Figure 32 – The site plan for the FEMA 9/11 Memorial, MA

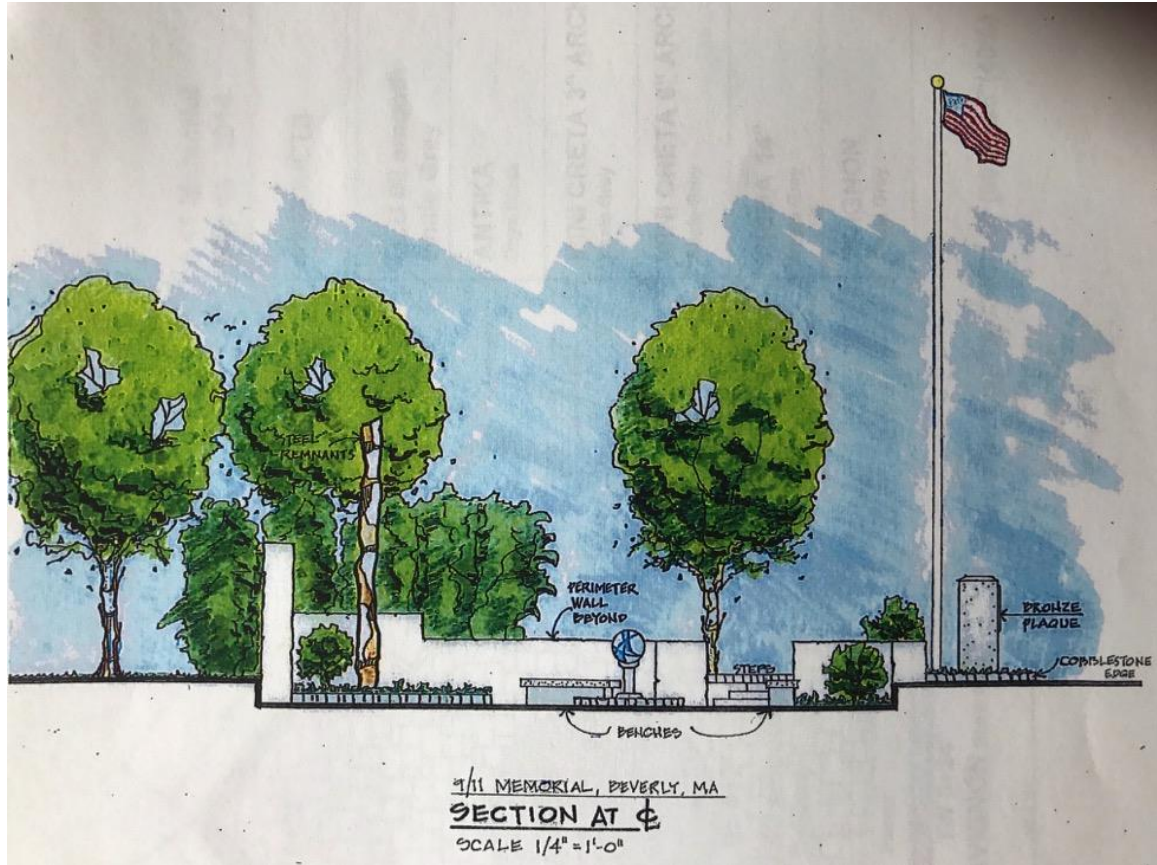


Figure 33 - The site plan for the FEMA 9/11 Memorial, MA



**Figure 34 - The stone from Shanksville on display at the Acushnet 9/11 Memorial, MA**



**Figure 35 - The WTC site reenacted on ground at the King of Prussia 9/11 Memorial, PA**

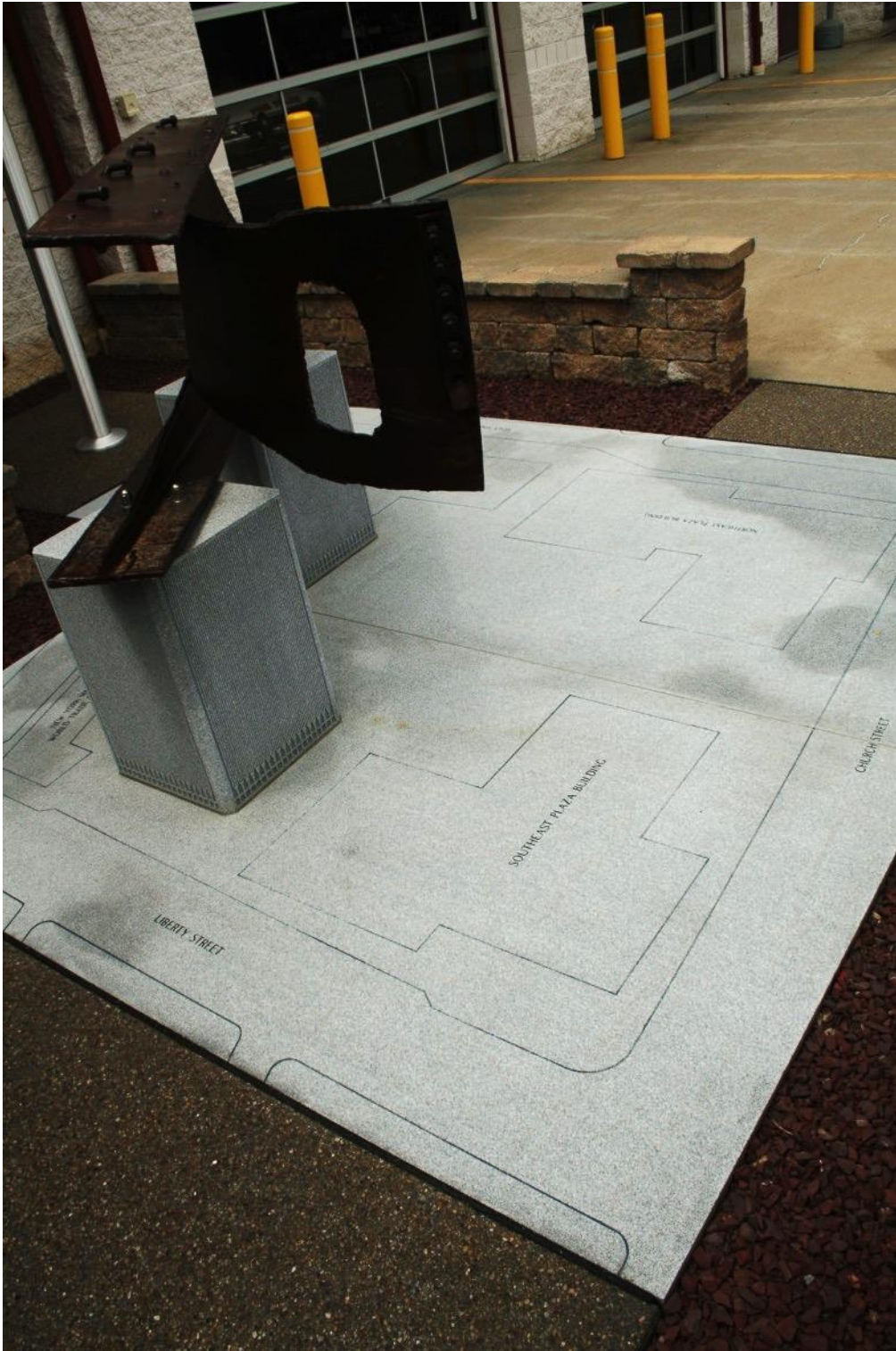


Figure 36 - The WTC site map displayed at the 9/11 memorial in a fire station, Cranberry, PA



**Figure 37 - The memorial stone at the 9/11 memorial, Cranberry, PA**



Photo: City of Suwanee, GA

**Figure 38 - Night view of the 9/11 Memorial in Suwanee, GA (Steel artifact visible behind the sculpture)**



**Figure 39 - The WTC steel on display inside the Chester County Public Safety Training Campus, Coatesville, PA**



Photo: Parma Heights Fire Department

**Figure 40 - Tributes buried in the construction of the Parma Heights' 9/11 Memorial, OH**

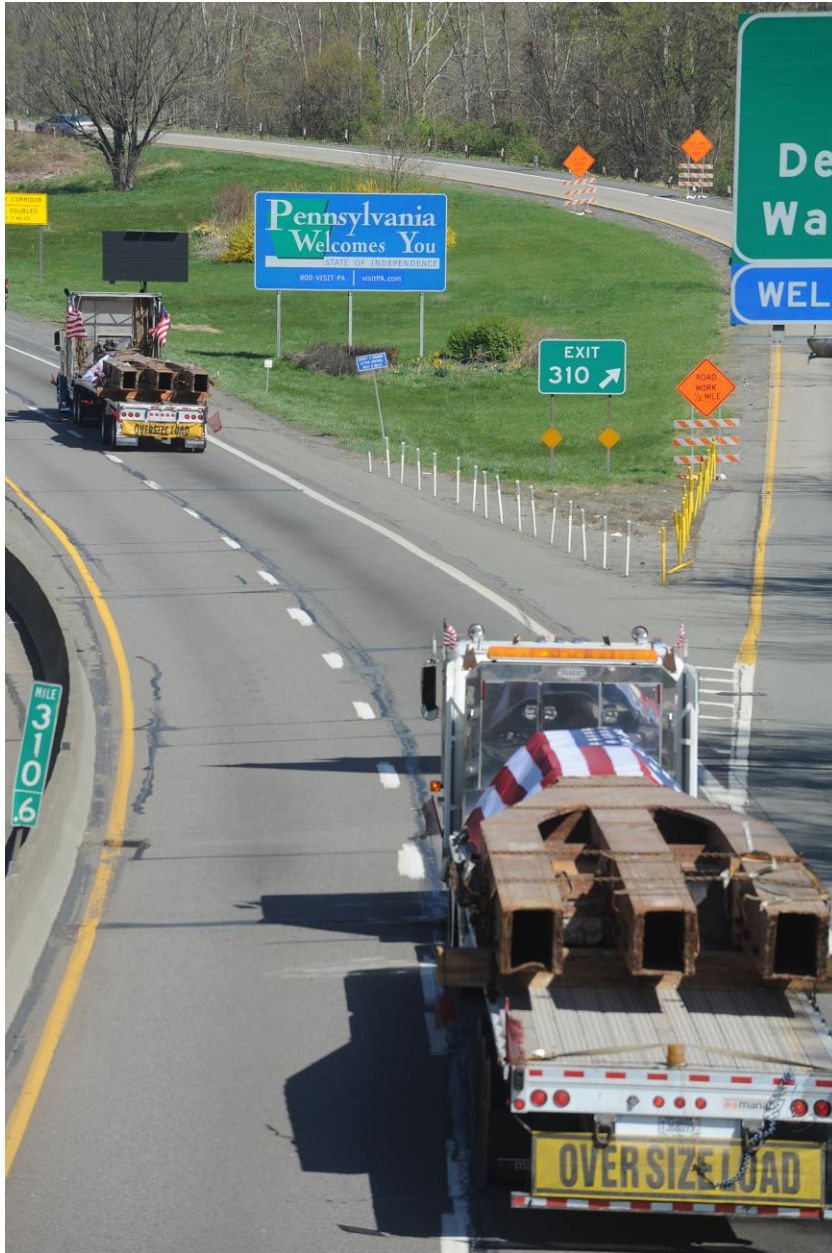


Photo: Photo By Robert Williams for the National Iron & Steel Heritage Museum

**Figure 41 – The tridents are “Coming Home” to Coatesville, PA**



Photo: Photo By Robert Williams for the National Iron & Steel Heritage Museum

**Figure 42 - People greet the convoy on its way to Coatesville, PA**



A picture from my informant's album.

**Figure 43 - The procession is bringing the steel to Indianapolis, IN (2011)**



**Figure 44 - The memorial display on 9/11 anniversary in front of the West Bridgewater fire and police stations, MA (2015)**



**Figure 45 - The memorial display on 9/11 anniversary, West Bridgewater, MA (2015)**



**Figure 46 - 9/11 anniversary at the Acushnet 9/11 Memorial, MA (2015)**



**Figure 47 - Dekalb County 9/11 Memorial, Dekalb, GA**

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