Ethics of documenting cultural losses as a manifestation of memory dispositif in the context of armed conflict

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The article is devoted to the analysis of the ethics of documenting cultural losses as a local manifestation of a memory dispositif in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Based on contemporary approaches in the philosophy of memory and the theory of dispositif, the study offers a conceptual framing of the notion "memory dispositif" and argues for the need to highlight the ethics of documentation as an important component of this configuration. The article argues that documentation in the context of war goes beyond technical or procedural action and functions as a complex networked practice within which meanings, regimes of truth, and the documentarian's agency are formed. This perspective allows us to interpret the documentation of cultural losses as an element of the cultural heritage protection system, which in modern conditions acquires a new security dimension and is integrated into state policy to counter genocide, memory erasure, and information manipulation.

The inquiry is grounded in viewing memory as a dynamic dispositif, where documentation functions not as passive recording, but as a process of forming meanings, responsibility, and agency. In this logic, the ethics of documentation is defined as a concept that encompasses the normative, epistemic, and ontological dimensions of the documentarian's activity. The ethics of documentation is set apart from the ethics of archiving and the ethics of testimony, highlighting that it addresses the pre-archival phase of document creation and the documentarian's mediation between trauma, fact, and social interpretations. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of contemporary Ukrainian practices of documenting cultural losses (in particular, the activities of HeMo and the Crimean Institute for Strategic Studies), which form an interconnected network of knowledge production, legal legitimation, and ethical interaction with communities. The Crimean material (the demolition of the Kosh-Kuyu I settlement and the Kirk-Azizler necropolis) is considered as a test case that most clearly demonstrates how a memory dispositif works: here, the documentarian finds himself at the intersection of colonial practices of displacement, legal invisibility, and ethical responsibility for giving voice back to cultural objects.

The article also analyzes the "Roadmap" for interagency cooperation as the materialization of a memory dispositive – a network infrastructure within which power structures, knowledge regimes, and ethical practices circulate The findings reveal that documentation, in this configuration, is not a merely technical act but an ethical and discursive practice within which regimes of truth, norms of loss legitimization, and the documentarian's subjectification take shape.

The authors conclude that the ethics of documentation operates as a localized manifestation of a memory dispositive – one in which cultural loss is transformed into a socially significant fact, and the documentarian assumes the role of an ethical subject responsible for shaping collective regimes of memory under wartime conditions.

Introduction

The issue of preserving cultural heritage in conditions of armed conflict in global and Ukrainian humanities is traditionally viewed through several dominant perspectives. First and foremost, the protection of cultural property is examined through legal and institutional mechanisms grounded in international humanitarian law, the implementation of the 1954 Hague Convention, UNESCO initiatives, and specialized instruments dedicated to safeguarding cultural heritage. Parallel to this, a growing body of research investigates how museums, archives, and other memory institutions operate during wartime, with particular attention to managerial, cultural-political, and museological dimensions. Within the broader

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field of trauma and cultural memory studies, significant focus is placed on the symbolic implications of destruction, the impact of war on collective identity, and transformations of memory regimes.

Despite the breadth of these domains, a number of key thematic areas remain underdeveloped. First and foremost, these include the philosophical and cultural understanding of documenting cultural losses as an ethical, epistemic, and socio-institutional practice, as well as the conceptualization of memory as a dispositif – a dynamic network of power, knowledge, and ethical relations within which regimes of memory are formed. These areas are virtually absent from contemporary Ukrainian memory studies and constitute "blank spots" in both theoretical and applied terms.

The concept of *dispositif* is one of the fundamental categories of poststructuralism. Its first systematic application can be traced back to the works of Jean-Louis Baudry *(1970)*, who described cinema as an integral configuration of technical, architectural, and perceptual elements that shape the viewer's regime of visibility and subjectivity. In the works of Michel Foucault, dispositif acquires the status of an analytical category denoting a network of relations of power, knowledge, and normativity that structures the field of action and possibilities of the subject. Further interpretations by J. Deleuze and G. Agamben deepen the understanding of dispositif as an unstable, mobile, and decentralized configuration within which the production of truth and the formation of agency occur. In Ukrainian humanities discourse, the concept of *dispositif* is developed by Olha Briukhovetska, who applies it to the analysis of media practices, the political optics of visual culture, and the mechanisms of meaning production (*Briukhovetska, 2009*).

At the same time, the potential of the concept of *dispositif* remains largely untapped in the field of cultural memory research, humanitarian security, and the documentation of cultural losses. This is especially true in the Ukrainian context after 2014 and 2022, when documentation became not only a technical operation but also an instrument of public testimony, humanitarian security, legal legitimization of losses, narrative formation, and decolonial reinterpretation of the past. Despite the scale of these processes, there is still a lack of systematic philosophical and cultural analysis of the ethics of documentation and its dispositif nature.

Under current conditions, the documentation of cultural losses in Ukraine is emerging at the intersection of technical, legal, humanitarian, and ethical practices. However, there is no conceptual model that would allow considering documentation as a networked dispositif configuration within which the production of knowledge, meanings, regimes of truth, and the documentarian's agency take place. The following topics remain understudied: the ethical aspects of documentation as a pre-archival practice, the influence of power regimes on what becomes fact and memory, the role of the documentarian as a subject mediating between trauma, evidence, and public interpretation; the mechanisms of memory formation as a dispositif in conditions of war and colonial pressure; and the Crimean context as a space where documentation takes place in conditions of legal invisibility and political displacement.

The *purpose of the research* is to conceptualize the documentation of cultural losses as a local configuration of the memory dispositif in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war and to identify the ethical, epistemic, and power dimensions of this practice.

Research objectives are as follows:

• To analyze the concept of *dispositif* and assess its applicability in the field of memory studies;
• To conceptualize the notion of ethics of documentation, distinguishing it from the ethics of archiving, the ethics of testimony, and other related concepts;
• To analyze contemporary Ukrainian documentation practices as part of a memory dispositif and trace the mechanisms of the documentarian's subjectification;
• To examine Crimean cases as a space for the action of colonial memory regimes and ethical dilemmas of documentation;
• To evaluate the "Roadmap" for Interagency Cooperation as a tangible manifestation of a memory *dispositif* and to determine its role in the formation of regimes of truth, legitimization of losses, and networked ethical interaction.

Research methods

Methodologically, the study draws on an interdisciplinary approach that combines hermeneutic analysis, the Foucauldian dispositif method, and memory studies tools. Dispositif analysis allowed us to consider documentation as a network configuration of interaction between power, epistemic, and ethical elements, within which regimes of truth regarding cultural losses are formed. Ethical analysis was used to develop the concept of "documentation ethics" and distinguish it from related ethical models. Through case studies of Ukrainian documentation practices (HeMo, CISS) and Crimean cases (Kosh-Kuyu I, Kirk-Azizler), it became possible to delineate the mechanisms of the documentarian's subjectification. A structural-functional approach was used to analyze the "Roadmap" as a material manifestation of a memory dispositif in the cultural heritage protection system.

Results and Discussion

Since 2014, Russia's war against Ukraine has had not only a military but also a humanitarian dimension, in which the struggle concerns the very foundations of national identity such as culture, language, memory, and heritage. Mass displacement, losses, the occupation of territories, and the destruction of settlements have been accompanied by targeted attacks on cultural objects. After 2022, such assaults became systematic: monuments of architecture, sacred buildings, museums, libraries, and archives have been destroyed, while works of art and artifacts have been looted. These actions result not only in material devastation but also in the symbolic erasure of Ukraine's historical memory and cultural presence within its own space. According to the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, as of October 25, 2025, the total number of cultural heritage objects affected is 1,612, of which 149 are monuments of national importance, 1,311 are of local significance, and 152 are newly discovered objects (*Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, 2025*).

At the same time, Ukraine is undergoing a profound reconsideration of the humanitarian and security dimensions of cultural heritage in the context of armed conflict. Amendments made in 2025 to the Law of Ukraine "On National Security" stipulate that the protection of cultural heritage and national memory is an integral part of ensuring state sovereignty and identity. According to the updated provisions, the preservation of cultural heritage is aimed at preventing crimes of genocide, the theft of cultural property, the levelling of unique traditions, the substitution of historical concepts, and attempts by the aggressor state to erase national memory. Thus, culture is increasingly

recognized not as a secondary sphere but as a strategic resource for state security. In this context, the protection of cultural heritage is seen not only as a set of protective procedures but as an integrated configuration of policies, institutions, and practices of memory that determine the conditions for the existence of culture and become critically important in situations of armed conflict. This lays the foundation for a new, security-oriented positioning of cultural heritage, where memory and culture emerge as one of the key, "fourth" fundamental interests of the state, alongside territorial integrity, political independence, and economic stability.

The protection of culture in wartime takes place not only at the level of physical preservation of objects but also through documentation practices that transform the recording of losses into a way of remembering and preserving the meaning of what has been lost and a tool for rethinking loss as part of cultural existence. All of the foregoing creates conditions under which the documentation of cultural losses becomes not only a technical procedure but also one of the mechanisms of a broader system of working with the past – something this article defines as memory *dispositif*.

In this respect, recording the destruction of cultural property begins to play a dual role. On the one hand, it is part of the institutional security system that serves to collect evidence of crimes against culture and restore justice; at the same time, it is a humanitarian practice that deals with trauma, memory, and community identity. As a humanitarian practice, documentation becomes a way of remembering that ensures the continuity of historical experience even in situations of destruction, i.e., an act of meaning-making – a process that combines cognition, ethical reflection, and rethinking loss as part of cultural experience, thereby counteracting oblivion. In this sense, documenting cultural losses becomes a form of protecting memory itself as the basis of national resilience, thereby acquiring an ethical dimension.

At the level of the general systemic configuration of cultural heritage protection during armed conflict, three interrelated planes can be distinguished, to wit: authoritative (regulatory decisions and institutional protection mechanisms), epistemic (production and systematization of knowledge about losses), and ethical (ways of experiencing, comprehending, and transmitting trauma).

The alignment of these three dimensions forms an analytical field in which a specific mode of working with the past becomes visible. In this study, this mode is conceptualized through the concept of documentation ethics. The latter does not have an established disciplinary status, but its peculiarity lies in its multi-level nature, combining three interrelated dimensions, namely:

• normative, as an ethical framework for action that defines the moral principles of recording cultural losses: what to consider a loss, what facts and how they should be recorded, how to act in situations of trauma and uncertainty.

• analytical, as a humanitarian perspective that describes the modalities and forms of expert knowledge;

• philosophical, as an ontology of responsibility, in which the act of documentation becomes a means of moral presence; the documentarian becomes the subject through the experience of testimony, responsibility, and moral participation in the preservation of memory.

In our view, this tripartite structure does not indicate methodological vagueness; rather, it reveals the interdisciplinary nature of the concept, which

simultaneously describes, comprehends, and guides action.

The **research hypothesis** is that the ethics of documenting cultural losses functions as a local manifestation of a memory *dispositif* – a dynamic configuration of power, epistemic, and ethical relations through which society forms regimes of remembrance in conditions of armed conflict. In this context, the ethics of documentation must be clearly distinguished from related ethical traditions. In particular, the latter include the ethics of archiving, which primarily concerns the regimes of preservation, classification, and access to already created documents; its subject-matter is stabilized forms of knowledge. In contrast, the ethics of documentation covers the pre-archival phase in which the document is initially created, i.e., determining what exactly will be recorded, how, and what forms of violence, destruction, or cultural loss will acquire the status of fact (*Maklad, 2024*).

Similarly, the ethics of testimony focuses on the moral status of the voice of the victim or witness who conveys their own experience of trauma, while the ethics of documentation describes the ethical dimension of the activity of those who record, interpret, and represent the event (*English Department at Manchester Metropolitan University, 2025*). These are different modes of agency: the witness is a first-person narrator, while the documentarian is the one who creates the conditions for testimony to emerge as a socially significant and epistemically valid act.

Accordingly, the documentarian emerges as a new type of subject, who is neither an archivist, nor a historian, nor a journalist, nor a witness. Their role is to mediate between trauma and evidence, between an event and its future interpretations, between an act of destruction and the possibility of understanding it in legal, cultural, or humanitarian terms. It is this mediating function – transitional, intermediate but at the same time decisive – that creates the need to form a separate ethical framework, since none of the existing models describes the complex moral challenges inherent in the work of a documentarian in the context of war and mass cultural losses.

Thus, the ethics of documentation can be seen as a way of constituting the subject of memory: It is through this that it is determined how destruction becomes fact, and fact becomes collective memory.

However, the documentarian does not operate in a neutral environment; rather, they work in a field of different modes of interpreting the past such as public narratives, civic initiatives, academic institutions, media representations, and occupation ideologies aimed at displacing and replacing local memory. It is at this stage that various regimes of truth are formed, determining what will be recognized as a documented cultural loss and what will remain invisible.

In this situation, the ethics of documentation goes beyond the purely procedural dimension of collecting facts: it involves an awareness of the modes of power within which cultural heritage objects have historically functioned and through which they have become carriers of political or ideological interpretations. At the same time, the ethics of documentation encompasses an understanding of how the very act of recording influences the formation of collective memory and determines possible forms of remembrance in the future.

Its subject matter is not only the reliability or accuracy of data but also the ethical reflexivity of the documentation process – how it unfolds the relationship between knowledge and responsibility, between technical recording

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and testimony, between the reconstruction of losses and the preservation of cultural identity. In this regard, documentation emerges as a practice in which regimes of power and knowledge intersect and the responsible position of the documentarian in the space of memory is formed.

That is why the ethics of documentation cannot be reduced to procedural correctness; by questioning the way in which the documentarian relates to the of truth, trauma, and the Other, it takes on the features of a moral philosophy of responsibility. Here, elements of Foucauldian ethics of self-care – understood as the formation of the subject through work on one's own practices of truth – are combined with the Lévinasian understanding of responsibility as a primary ethical obligation to the Other (*Gapon, 2019*; *Morozov, 2014*; *Hrynchyshyn, 2020: 14*).

From this perspective, documenting cultural losses not only records events but also shapes an ethical regime of interaction between modes of power and forms of expert knowledge and responsibility in conditions of cultural destruction.

Thus, the three levels of documentation ethics form a sequential process of structural subjectification: regulation – reflection – formation of a subject capable of acting responsibly. It is in this movement that the ethics of documentation acquires the features of a dispositif – a dynamic network of meanings, norms, and practices that determine possible forms of action in a situation of cultural loss.

It opens up an ethical perspective on documentation – a special perspective where evidence of destruction is transformed into a form of empathy, and observation into an act of moral participation in the preservation of cultural memory. However, this participation is not limited to empathy: it involves rethinking the narrative of loss through transforming the experience of destruction into a new form of meaning that preserves the features of the object before destruction and at the same time articulates its new existence after it. Thus, the act of documentation becomes a process of empathy, reflection, and reconstruction of memory in which trauma loses its status of finality and acquires the potential for cultural renewal.

In this context, the role of the documentarian takes on particular importance. They appear not only as a technical executor, a neutral recorder of facts but as a subject included in a complex network of power-knowledge-ethics, responsible for the way of seeing, interpreting, reinterpreting, and transmitting trauma.

The documentarian does not simply record the fact of destruction – he determines the framework of its appearance in the space of public memory: what is considered a loss, what is the status of the damaged object, how trauma becomes knowledge. This is where his involvement in the power dimension of a dispositif lies, where the very act of recording shapes possible regimes of truth.

It is the documentarian who determines the boundary between recording the fact and the ethics of testimony, between distance, empathy, and philosophical reflection on the event as an experience. This transition from technical execution to moral self-reflection is a process of individual subjectification – the formation of the subject through the ethical mastery of one's own role in the formation of memory.

On an analytical level, the documentarian functions as a node of knowledge circulation: they combine field data, expert assessments, legal standards, local voices, and international verification mechanisms. Their agency is formed at the intersection of these flows, where knowledge becomes a responsible interpretation of the experience of loss, involving a rethinking of the narrative of loss – the transformation of the experience of destruction into a new form of meaning in which the features of the object before destruction are preserved and, at the same time, its new existence after destruction is articulated.

It is here that the ontological level of the ethics of documentation manifests itself most strongly: the documentarian acquires agency not because he or she possesses the technique, but because he or she takes ethical responsibility for how the trauma of war will be described, transmitted, and incorporated into the future memory of the community.

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In this movement – from recording to interpretation, from interpretation to responsibility – the subjectification of the documentarian as a moral subject unfolds. They not only become a bearer of knowledge but also acquire the ability to act ethically in the field of power configurations that shape the contemporary regime of memory.

It is this perspective that allows us to see documentation as a living form of dialogue between the past and the present – a space where the act of recording not only preserves but also recreates the meaning of cultural existence. Through empathy and reflection, documentation forms a new framework of cultural presence in which memory appears not as an archive of the past but as a process of ethical creation of the future.

In this sense, the documentarian emerges as a subject of a memory dispositif, acting at the intersection of power expectations, epistemic criteria, and moral guidelines, and it is precisely because of this that they become the bearer of new practices of truth and new forms of ethical responsibility.

In this respect, we can also consider contemporary documentation practices in Ukraine, which combine technical accuracy, legal legitimacy, and humanitarian sensitivity. The common intention of these initiatives is not only to record the fact of destruction but also to rethink it as part of a shared experience – to transform loss into a resource for restoring and strengthening cultural memory. Together, they form a network of memory dispositifs – a set of practices through which the recording of losses becomes public, legal, and symbolic knowledge. In this network, institutions are not just performers of individual functions but nodes of a dispositif – points of intersection between power decisions, epistemic practices, and ethical regimes of testimony.

One systemic example is HeMo: Ukrainian Heritage Monitoring Lab, created to promptly record damage and destruction of cultural objects in de-occupied and Ukrainian-controlled territories. Its activities combine digital technologies, data archiving, and fieldwork with volunteers and specialists in the field of cultural heritage. In the interpretation proposed by the authors of the article, HeMo acts as a technical-epistemic node in a dispositif on three levels:

- technical level (drones, satellite data, databases);
- epistemic level (verification, classification, loss maps);
- ethical level (public testimony and trust building).

Concurrently, non-governmental research institutions focusing on specific regions play an important role. In particular, the Crimean Institute for Strategic Studies (CISS), where the author of this article is employed, monitors the state of protection of cultural heritage in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine – the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk regions – and analyzes the main trends in developments in this area and records violations of international humanitarian law regarding cultural property by the occupying authorities. According to the research hypothesis, CISS functions as a line "knowledge + ethics," where knowledge is analytics, research, and decolonial interpretations, and ethics is recording traumatic events, representing the voices of communities, and advocacy.

It is the practice of the Crimean Institute for Strategic Studies that gives documentation a dimension of "historical justice" and includes it in the decolonial discourse, which is key to the logic of the struggle for memory.

These initiatives not only record the facts of destruction but also form a comprehensive information infrastructure that serves as a basis for further processes of restoration and accountability for crimes against culture. At the same time, the collected materials have humanitarian as well as practical value: they open up a philosophical and cultural space for understanding loss as an experience that shapes memory and poses moral challenges to society. Civic initiatives form the third line of dispositif – an ethical line of action, where documentation becomes a practice of solidarity, participation, and representation of local voices. Through them, documentation ceases to be merely a vertical state function and takes the form of networked, distributed subjectification.

In this configuration of dispositif, the context of the memory processing of the object – how and why it comes into the focus of documentation – changes. Such objects often include not only indisputable losses (destroyed monuments, museums, or artifacts) but also cultural objects that are the subject of ongoing public debate about their place in the contemporary narrative.

It is this ambiguity that highlights the work of a dispositif in which the subject of documentation is formed:

• normative expectations determine modes of action (power level);

• institutional knowledge structures perspective and method (epistemic level);

• the framework of responsibility sets ethical positioning (ethical level).

In this field, the documentarian not only performs procedures but also inevitably participates in the formation of meanings: they decide what to record, how to interpret an event, and how the loss will be inscribed in the collective memory. This logic is particularly evident in cases involving monuments and archival complexes from the period when Ukraine was part of the Russian Empire, whose significance cannot be reduced to either simple condemnation or unconditional preservation.

In such cases, the documentarian acts not only as a witness to destruction but also as a mediator in the process of ethical rethinking of the past because it is through the recording, analysis, and public reflection on these objects that society forms new criteria of memory, responsibility, and cultural presence.

The ethical dilemmas of documentation in occupied Crimea are one of the most acute dimensions of the practice of recording cultural losses, as it is here that the clash between power, knowledge, and memory manifests itself with maximum intensity. In this context, documentation appears not only as a technical process but as a space where decolonial interpretation, moral choice, and responsibility to the community overlap. It is the Crimean material that allows us to see documentation as a manifestation of dispositif – a field in which power structures, recording technologies, and ethical practices form a special regime of meaning-making.

The documentarian of the Crimean case faces a double ethical dilemma. On the one hand, they must record the facts of destruction, even when the objects do not formally fall under the legal category of "cultural heritage," that is, they exist in the legal field as "invisible." On the other hand, they must interpret these events in the broader context of colonial policies of displacement aimed at erasing the cultural presence of the Crimean Tatars. In such a situation, documentation becomes not only an act of data collection, but also a form of ethical positioning in which the documentarian takes on the responsibility of speaking out where official institutions have deprived memory of its right to a voice.

The Crimean material particularly clearly demonstrates the functioning of a memory dispositif within which documentation becomes a means of resisting practices of erasure, colonial redefinition, and symbolic exclusion.

A telling example is the illegal archaeological pre-demolition excavations of historical settlements, in particular Kosh-Kuyu I, which ceased to exist after the deportation of the Crimean Tatar people in 1944 (*CISS, 2023*). Such work is carried out by the Russian occupation authorities under the pretext of implementing large-scale infrastructure projects such as the construction of the Tavrida highway connecting the cities of Kerch and Sevastopol (*Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Ukraine*), which are temporarily occupied by the aggressor country. Although the settlement is not included in any state register of Ukraine, its archaeological layers cover periods from the Mesolithic to modern times, reflecting the continuity of the peninsula's cultural history and the autochthonous nature of the Crimean Tatar community. The destruction of such objects turns them into "invisible figures of memory" – elements of the past that are deprived of legal status but retain critical cultural value. In this case, the documentarian finds him/herself at the intersection of power decisions, factual knowledge, and ethical responsibility. Their task, therefore, is not only to record the loss but to restore the object's visibility and significance through the act of testimony.

A similar situation occurred with the destruction of the Muslim necropolis Kirk-Azizler ("Forty Saints"), one of the oldest cemeteries in Crimea (Ukraine) (*CISS, 2023*). The 12th–15th century tombstones with Crimean Tatar epitaphs in Arabic script are material evidence of the continuity of the community and its self-designation as "Qırımlı." The destruction of the tombstones and the cemetery itself in 2015–2020 under the pretext of "improvements" is not only an act of vandalism but also an attempt to erase the historical agency of the Crimean Tatars from the peninsula. In this situation, the documentarian is dealing not just with a violation but with the destruction of a symbolic structure of memory; therefore, their work is at once an act of resistance, representation, and preservation of the voice of those who cannot speak for themselves.

Such cases demonstrate that documentation in Crimea cannot be understood outside the logic of dispositif. Three

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levels collide here: authoritarian, epistemic, and ethical. The documentarian finds themselves at the intersection of these forces, and their action becomes a form of subjectification – the process in which they take on the role of bearer of truth, interpreter, and defender of cultural memory.

In this dimension, documentation becomes a practice of truth – a way in which knowledge about loss enters the realm of ethical understanding and responsibility. Here, the act of recording takes on the character of an ethical gesture that recognizes the right of culture to exist even in a state of destruction. It is through such practices that the community not only restores data about the past but also rethinks its own history, forming a new framework for collective memory. Thus, the Crimean material demonstrates that documentation is not only a reaction to loss but also a profound philosophical and ethical practice in which memory is preserved through testimony, interpretation, and meaning-making.

However, it is necessary to distinguish the processes of documenting cultural losses from other models of understanding memory developed in contemporary cultural studies.

Contemporary memory studies widely use the concept of memory regime introduced by Jan Assmann (*1995; 2011*). It outlines an orderly system of institutions, symbols, and practices through which communities determine what to remember and what to forget. Within this approach, memory is interpreted as a structured system of heritage that encompasses museums, archives, monuments, rituals, and official narratives designed to preserve the past in recognizable forms. This model is characterized by institutional stability but also by a certain inertia, for memory is fixed within established forms of representation.

Jan Assmann distinguishes between two basic levels of memory functioning: communicative and cultural (*Karkowska, 2013*). The first conveys the experience of direct intergenerational communication, while the second ensures its long-term preservation through material carriers of culture and symbolic practices. Thus, within this concept, memory appears primarily as a legacy – an institutionally organized narrative that interprets the past through the lens of the present.

However, against the backdrop of armed conflicts, particularly as regards the destruction of cultural heritage, memory ceases to be a neutral sphere of "heritage" and increasingly emerges as a field of struggle for meaning. Its formation is no longer limited to traditional institutions – the state, museums, or academic structures. New institutional and technological actors are actively involved in the process of memory creation, namely volunteer initiatives, journalists who document stories of destruction, OSINT groups that record attacks on cultural objects, digital archives such as Google Heritage or online repositories of war testimonies, and civic platforms that enable communities themselves to create their own narratives of memory.

As a result of these changes, memory is becoming polyphonic and decentralized. It is no longer just something that is preserved but also something that is acted upon – politically, ethically, and legally. When activists document a destroyed temple, it is not just an act of preserving the past but a political gesture against the erasure of culture; when journalists publish evidence of war crimes, it is a tool to influence future justice; when digital archives are created, it is an attempt to recreate an alternative space of memory.

From this perspective, memory ceases to be a static system of representations and moves into the realm of dynamic meaning-making, which directly intervenes in political, legal, and moral contexts.

It is at this intersection – between "institutional" memory carriers and power-knowledge relations – that the concept of memory dispositif emerges, which allows us to describe documentation not as fixation but as an ethical and political action in the field of memory (*Haux, Dominicé, Raspotnig, 2020*).

It is in this dimension that the possibility of reading memory as a dispositif arises: not as a legacy but as a network of actions in which authorities, knowledge, recording technologies, and ethical practices of testimony circulate. In this configuration, the documentation of cultural losses acquires a special status. It is not only included in the institutional regime of memory but also modifies it, transforming the field of memory into a space of ethical interaction, where the past is not only preserved but constantly reproduced through acts of testimony, interpretation, and public articulation of trauma.

Applying this framework to the analysis of documentation shows that the practical process of recording losses functions as a local configuration of the same dispositif: it is an area where power, technical, and moral relations are most intensely manifested. This refers not only to the institutions responsible for documentation but also to a broad network of interactions between state and civic initiatives, international structures, technological platforms, and value orientations.

Theoretical framework: Foucault's concept of dispositif and its application to the ethics of documentation. In Michel Foucault's philosophy, the concept of dispositif is one of the key tools for analyzing the interaction of power, knowledge, and practices of meaning-making. Foucault defines dispositif as a "heterogeneous" ensemble – a system of relations between "discourses, institutions, laws, technologies, architectural forms, moral propositions, and forms of knowledge" through which power becomes "visible" and effective. It is not a static structure but a dynamic field of forces in which flows of power, knowledge, decisions, and control strategies circulate. Foucault does not equate dispositif with a mechanism or instrument in the literal sense; rather, it is a mode of organizing experience through which "the invisible becomes visible" (*Bilko, 2011*).

The authoritative nature of the dispositif lies in the fact that it does not simply reflect social order – it creates, determining who has the right to speak, in what way and about what, and creates conditions for the formation of knowledge. As an "authoritative instance-producer of discursive practice," the dispositif does not exist outside of language – on the contrary, it sets the mode of speech and vision within which discourse itself is formed. Thus, discourse is a manifestation of the dispositif, while the dispositif itself encompasses a broader system of relations between power, knowledge, and morality.

Thus, the dispositif emerges not as a separate structure but as a methodological framework that allows us to see the places where discursive practices are formed, i.e., the points where knowledge, norms, or cultural values are born. It can be viewed as a reflexive tool that allows us to describe how knowledge and power interact to shape reality.

Gilles Deleuze later developed this idea by introducing the concept of "lines of subjectification" – trajectories along which an individual becomes a subject within the dispositif. These lines are not fixed; they define a space of possibilities in which the subject can develop a position, a

course of action, and responsibility. In this study, this aspect is interpreted as a space of ethical subjectification – a field in which the individual learns to act, take responsibility, and become a bearer of meaning.

Contemporary cultural interpretations of the theory of dispositif (in particular, by Briukhovetska) emphasize that the dispositif describes the positioning of the subject in the system of relations, i.e., the way in which he sees and acts; the dispositif itself in such a configuration is a process. In this sense, a dispositif is an analytical shift from things to relations, from mechanisms to practices, which opens up the possibility of analyzing humanitarian and cultural processes not as the result of external influences but as an internal configuration of relations within which truth is born.

This perspective allows us to see the ethics of documentation as a local configuration of a dispositif, where power relations, recording technologies, mechanisms of legitimation, and processes of subjectification of the documentarian overlap. In this space, documentation becomes not a technical operation of collecting facts but an ethical-discursive practice in which the act of testimony becomes a way of producing knowledge, forming a public understanding of the loss and restoration of cultural memory.

That is why in this study, Foucault's understanding of dispositif is specified as a memory dispositif – a reconstructed analytical configuration of institutions, norms, technologies, practices, and discourses through which society produces forms of remembering and forgetting that take on particular importance in wartime.

The Concept of a Roadmap for Interagency Cooperation between Central Executive Bodies, Investigative and Prosecutorial Authorities, Local Self-Government Bodies, Intergovernmental and International Organizations, Scientific Institutions, and Civic Associations, which was prepared with the participation of the author of this article as part of a group of experts (E.N. Ablialimova-Chyihoz, D.V. Yashnyi, K.I.Busol, D.O. Koval) within the framework of the project "Violations of international humanitarian law in armed conflict: Protection of Cultural Heritage," supported by the International Renaissance Foundation in 2023 (*Yashnyi et al., 2023*).

The roadmap demonstrates the circulation of power, knowledge, and ethical responsibility through which cultural loss acquires social status.

It forms a systemic vision of cultural heritage preservation not only as a collection of objects from the past but as an element of state policy, security, and identity. In this logic, the document appears not as a normative-managerial structure but as a concrete manifestation of a dispositif – a space where power relations, knowledge regimes, mechanisms of legitimation, and practices of subjectification of the participants in the process are intertwined. As in Foucault's dispositif, it combines heterogeneous elements – from legal procedures and interdepartmental protocols to technical instructions, recording standards, and communication strategies – which together form a regime of action within which cultural loss acquires the status of a socially significant fact.

The document records a key shift in the understanding of heritage – from the category of "what to preserve" to the question of "how it works, what it gives and can give," that is, to the awareness of heritage as a factor of social transformation and a moral resource of the nation. The roadmap is seen here as the materialization of a memory dispositif – a network of power-knowledge-responsibility

that specifies the idea of preserving and protecting cultural heritage through the interaction of various institutional actors, in particular:

the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine in terms of "forming and implementing state policy in the areas of restoration and preservation of national memory, arts, cultural heritage protection, museum affairs, export, import, and return of cultural property";

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine in terms of advocating the idea of protecting the cultural heritage and national memory of the Ukrainian people as one of the security dimensions of foreign policy;

investigative and prosecutorial authorities of Ukraine in terms of legal actions in the investigation of crimes against cultural property;

media as a channel of communication with internal and external audiences;

professional scientific institutions, civic associations, etc., whose activities in the field of study become the basis for publications in the media and the basis for the representation of heritage, the transformation of its perception, and the formation of self-identification (*Yashnyi et al., 2023: 11*).

The stages of interaction are:

1. documenting violations/monitoring/recording, carried out by state bodies, scientific institutions, civil society organizations, and international expert groups;

2. informing Ukraine and the world (implemented by state bodies, civil society organizations, and media);

3. prosecuting violators (implemented by investigative bodies and prosecutors);

4. setting up processes of restitution/substitution/compensatory restitution/reparation of cultural property (implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy (MCIP), civil society organizations, UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation (ICPRCP));

5. countering narratives/producing new narratives (implemented by the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, the MCIP, the Ministry of Science and Education of Ukraine, media);

6. consolidating partners (implemented by MFA, civil society organizations, professional scientific institutions, cultural institutions, including museums, media (*Yashnyi et al., 2023: 12*).

The logic of its construction corresponds to what Deleuze describes as "lines of subjectification": each stage sets a specific position of the subject in the power-knowledge system. At the same time, power in this dispositif is not centralized – it circulates between nodes of connection, manifesting itself in various practices of determining truth. The documentarian, prosecutor, journalist, diplomat, scientist, or community representative become participants in a single process, but their roles are determined by different regimes of responsibility and influence on memory.

Each stage of the roadmap forms a holistic circulation between institutional nodes. It is this circulation – from documentation to restitution – that forms a space in which knowledge, power, and ethics interact in motion rather than in a fixed hierarchy:

• government institutions form normative and communicative frameworks that give documentation official status and integrate it into the sphere of state memory policy;

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- law enforcement agencies and the prosecutor's office transform this framework into a mechanism of accountability for crimes against cultural heritage, implementing the principle of justice of memory and giving documentation the legal force of testimony;

- scientific institutions and the media act as intermediaries in the production of knowledge and meanings through which society interprets losses and gains experience in the ethical understanding of destruction;

- civil society organizations perform field and analytical work on documentation, whilst also mediating between government structures, international institutions, and local communities to ensure the exchange of data, trust, and solidarity in the system of humanitarian interaction.

Together, they form a disposition of mutual responsibility in which knowledge, power, and ethics are combined in a single movement—from trauma to action, from action to memory. Thus, the Roadmap reveals itself as the materialization of the disposition of memory: it sets the infrastructure within which cultural loss acquires meaning, fact acquires status, and the documentarian acquires ethical agency.

Conclusion

Summarizing the analysis, it is fair to argue that documenting cultural losses is a local manifestation of a memory dispositive – a system of power, epistemic, ethical, and subjectification processes through which society produces forms of remembrance during armed conflict. Documentation goes beyond technical action: it becomes a practice of moral responsibility that influences the preservation of the dignity of affected communities, the establishment of truth, and the counteraction of memory distortion. The ethics of documentation are defined as a normative-epistemic framework that regulates the awareness of the limits of power and the documentarian's own position; responsibility for the way of seeing and interpreting, adherence to the principles of memory justice, respect for the dignity of the communities whose trauma is being recorded. At this level, the documentarian is not a neutral observer but an active participant in the process of meaning-making.

The processes of subjectification give the documentarian the status of an ethical subject. Subjectification encompasses the formation of a professional perspective, the experience and reflection of trauma as a cultural experience, the acquisition of the ability to bear witness and represent loss, and participation in the collective production of memory. This role is most evident in Crimean cases, as the documentarian here opposes colonial practices of memory erasure and legal invisibility of objects.

Deleuze's understanding of subjectification allows us to conceive of the documentarian as a subject of truth production within a memory dispositive – the bearer of responsibility for the visibility of loss, its interpretation, and its meaningful representation in the public sphere. That is why further attention to the ethics of documentation opens up prospects for the development of Ukrainian memory studies and a deeper philosophical analysis of cultural losses.

Thus, documentation in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war should be understood as an ethical-discursive activity in which cultural loss acquires the status of a socially significant fact, and memory emerges as a process of resistance to oblivion and colonial reappropriation of the past.

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Етика документування культурних втрат як прояв диспозитиву пам'яті в умовах збройного конфлікту

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Стаття присвячена аналізу етики документування культурних втрат як локального прояву диспозитиву пам'яті в умовах російсько-української війни. Спираючись на сучасні підходи у філософії пам'яті та теорії диспозитиву, дослідження пропонує концептуалізацію поняття «диспозитив пам'яті» та доводить необхідність виокремлення етики документування як важливого складника цієї конфігурації. Авторки обґрунтовують, що документування в умовах війни виходить за межі технічної або процедурної дії та функціонує як складна мережева практика, у межах якої формуються смисли, режими істини та суб'єктність документатора. Така перспектива дозволяє інтерпретувати документування культурних втрат як елемент системи захисту культурної спадщини, що в сучасних умовах набуває нового безпекового виміру та інтегрується у державну політику протидії геноциду, стиранню пам'яті та інформаційним маніпуляціям.

Вихідною позицією є розуміння пам'яті як динамічного диспозитиву, де документування функціонує не як пасивна фіксація, а як процес формування смислів, відповідальності та суб'єктності. У цій логіці етика документування визначається як концепт, що охоплює нормативні, епістемічні та онтологічні виміри діяльності документатора. Розмежовано етику документування з етикою архіву та етикою свідчення, підкреслюючи, що її предметом є саме передархівна стадія створення документа та медіаційна діяльність документатора між травмою, фактом і суспільними інтерпретаціями.

Окрему увагу приділено аналізу сучасних українських практик документування культурних втрат (зокрема діяльності НеМо та Кримського інституту стратегічних досліджень), які утворюють взаємопов'язану мережу виробництва знання, правової легітимації та етичної взаємодії зі спільнотами. Кримський матеріал (знесення поселення Кош-Кую I та некрополя Кірк-Азізлер) розглянуто як зондувальний кейс, що найвиразніше демонструє дію диспозитиву пам'яті: тут документатор опиняється у точці перетину колоніальних практик витіснення, правової невидимості та етичної відповідальності за повернення голосу культурним об'єктам.

У статті також проаналізовано «Дорожню карту» міжвідомчої взаємодії як матеріалізацію диспозитиву пам'яті – мережевої інфраструктури, у межах якої циркулюють владні настанови, режими знання й етичні практики. Доведено, що документування в цій конфігурації є не технічною процедурою, а етико-дискурсивною практикою, у якій формуються режими істини, стандарти легітимації втрат та процеси суб'єктивації документатора.

Зроблено висновок, що етика документування функціонує як локальний прояв диспозитиву пам'яті, у межах якого культурна втрата переходить у статус суспільно значущого факту, а документатор набуває ролі етичного суб'єкта, відповідального за формування колективних режимів пам'ятання в умовах війни.

Ключові слова: диспозитив пам'яті, етика документування, культурні втрати, суб'єктивація, колективна пам'ять, збройний конфлікт, гуманітарна безпека, деколоніальна оптика, документатор, режими істини, міжвідомча взаємодія, культурна спадщина.