

CULTURAL HERITAGE AS A COMMON SPACE/

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Abstract. This article explores the relevance of common space in the context of cultural heritage conservation, emphasizing the stimulation of collective memory awareness regarding cultural heritage. In their work, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that there are currently two main types of commons: natural commons and social commons, which they further subdivide into five distinct categories. Among these, cultural heritage is classified as an intangible common good of ideas and cultural products.

Furthermore, Stavros Stavrides explores methods to stimulate collective perception of cultural heritage, arguing that collective memory can be stimulated and reconfigured. These methods involve creating an emotional attachment of people to cultural heritage, thus facilitating increased awareness and a deeper appreciation of it.

The article employs a mixed methodology, combining the theoretical analysis of the works of Hardt, Negri, and Stavrides with empirical studies to investigate and verify the effects of methods that stimulate collective perception of cultural heritage. This approach involves examining public space projects where these methods have been integrated into the design process, demonstrating the importance of strategic use of common spaces to enhance awareness and conservation of cultural heritage. The conclusions emphasize that a strategic use of common spaces can lead to a deeper appreciation and conservation of cultural heritage.

Introduction. In the past two decades, interest in the concept of common space has grown significantly, alongside increasing concerns for the development of urban communities. This interest has emerged against the backdrop of rapid urbanization and population growth in major cities worldwide. In this context, the theme of community involvement in urban planning and development has become increasingly relevant, highlighting the necessity of active resident participation in decision-making processes related to the built environment.

Thus, the concept of common space has gained a more prominent presence in the discourses of architects and urban planners. Traditionally associated with the idea of collectively owned resources or spaces, common space is now reinterpreted as a way of perceiving and interacting with urban public space. It is no longer viewed as a static entity but as an artificial construct composed of knowledge, traditions, and practices, defined by the dynamics of human interactions and collaborations. [1]

In their work *Assembly*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue for the existence of two main types of commons: natural commons and social commons, which they further subdivide into five distinct categories. Among these, cultural heritage is classified as an intangible common good, consisting of ideas and cultural products. [2]

Therefore, this article aims to explore the concept of common space in the context of cultural heritage conservation, highlighting the importance of raising awareness of the collective memory associated with it.

Common Space. This re-symbolization of common space is reflected in the ability of a public space to become common through its active use by people. Through constant interactions, individuals develop an attachment to these spaces, which drives them to actively engage in or, at the very least, show interest in their management and transformation.

However, spaces are not inherently common; rather, they become so through a dynamic process of interactions and use. This process generates emotional attachment and community involvement, which are essential for the management and transformation of public space. Unlike other processes oriented toward a final outcome, the creation of common space represents an open process, characterized by continuous participation and constant transformation. Therefore, the primary goal lies in developing methods capable of stimulating and supporting this dynamic process.

Methods of Stimulation. In his work *Common Space: The City as Commons*, greek architect Stavros Stavrides proposes three methods to stimulate this process: defacement, image-thought spaces, and threshold spaces. Through these methods, Stavrides not only redefines the way we view and understand the city but also provides concrete tools to influence people's perception, enabling them to identify urban spaces as an integral part of their cultural heritage.

This article aims to analyze and test the hypotheses associated with the method of defacement. Stavros Stavrides argues that the process of creating common space can be facilitated through a shock to collective memory, a process he terms defacement. This method involves interventions that disrupt traditional meanings of public space, altering the representations that shape its perception. Through such interventions, the façades of buildings, places, or sites are blurred or completely transformed. More than mere physical modifications, these gestures create disruptions in collective memory, prompting comparisons between the initial state of the space and its subsequent transformation.

In some cases, it is demonstrated that collective memory can be illustrated and redefined through actions that reclaim public space, reinforcing it as a common good. [3]

In his research, Stavros Stavrides interprets collective memory as being closely tied to specific places where the community recognizes traces of past events. This collective memory perceives space as a repository of meanings, accessible to those familiar with navigating a place marked by socially recognized and accepted signs. [4] In his endeavor to define the concept of collective memory, Stavros Stavrides draws inspiration from Marc Augé's studies, which assert that memories are shaped through forgetting, much like water sculpts shorelines. [5] For Stavrides, this metaphor reflects a profound perspective: memory not only relates to space but also transforms and metamorphoses it.

"We can thus use Augé's metaphor to actually describe the relationship of space and memory. Hidden in this metaphor might be a potentially interesting knowl-

edge: memory, while being contested, not only employs space but also transforms space. If it is always a matter of struggling to define the porous border between memory and oblivion, then space too is created through a kind of heightened awareness about the role that outlines play, outlines defined again and again in practices of appropriating, inhabiting and evaluating space. And it is on the spatial as well as temporal intermediary zones (like the beach in Augé's image) that the temporary meaning of spatial outlines is at stake." [6]

Through this approach, Stavros Stavrides explores the logic of the specific memory process that contributes to the formation of these intermediary zones. He considers this distinct process to involve actions and gestures aimed at influencing the perception of public space, a process he terms defacement. Thus, defacement has the potential to temporarily transform public space into common space, generating forms of collective reinterpretation. To evaluate the effects of the defacement method, this article analyzes two public space projects, Rooftop Walk and The Podium in Rotterdam, designed by MVRDV. These projects integrate the method into the design process, highlighting the importance of strategically utilizing common spaces to enhance awareness and conservation of cultural heritage.

Above the City: Rooftop Walk, Rotterdam. A compelling example for verifying the effect of the defacement method in stimulating collective perception of cultural heritage is the Rotterdam Rooftop Walk project, created in the spring of 2022 by the Dutch architecture firm MVRDV. Essentially, this installation was part of a festival of the same name, reflecting a long-standing intention of the architecture firm related to the strategy of urban densification and the multiplication of urban spaces.

In an effort to “conquer” an otherwise inaccessible space, typically reserved for the private sphere, the architects transform and make available the rooftops of the city to its residents, thus redefining the boundaries of urban accessibility.

The architects argue that the desire to explore the city from above precedes the means by which this desire can be fulfilled. In this spirit, they designed a series of temporary, suspended platforms made of metal, connecting the rooftops of several buildings in the central area. [7] (FIGURE 1)

Therefore, the Rotterdam Rooftop Walk can be considered an act of defacement as it temporarily transforms the perception of buildings by radically altering the way people experience them. The installation not only adds a new dimension to the rooftops but also visually changes the appearance of the buildings, temporarily reconfiguring their aspect and significance within the urban landscape.

Visitors benefit from a spectacular perspective of the city from a height of 30 meters, with views overlooking one of Rotterdam's main streets. At the same time, they are offered a unique opportunity to participate in interactive activities spread over a 600-meter walkway. These activities include gardens, installations, innovative technologies, and original art exhibitions.

In this dynamic space, various artists, designers, and architects challenged conventions by imagining ways to integrate rooftops into the perception of urban space. Through this endeavor, the architects aimed to raise public awareness about the challenges of contemporary cities, initiating a spatial

discourse focused on climate change, the housing crisis, and the transition to renewable energy sources. (FIGURE 2)

The primary objective of the project—to change residents' perception of the city—was undoubtedly achieved through the collective experience offered by the panoramic perspective. The sensation of visually dominating the territory, the joy of exploring the city's geography together with others, and the sharing of common stories and histories most likely contributed to raising awareness of attachment to the city and its public spaces.

According to data provided by the organizers, the Rooftop Walk event achieved significant success, attracting over 200,000 visitors during its 32-day duration. This impressive number highlights not only the popularity of the initiative but also the impact that such urban interventions can have on people's perception of urban space. In this context, Rooftop Walk not only redefines how people interact with urban space but also amplifies awareness of their connection to the city they live in. Thus, the project contributes to the development of collective consciousness and the strengthening of a sense of belonging to the urban community.

In conclusion, the Rooftop Walk project by MVRDV illustrates the potential of the defacement method in raising awareness of attachment to the city and its cultural heritage.

The Suspended Square: The Podium, Rotterdam. Another relevant example that demonstrates how the defacement method can stimulate people's awareness of the city as a common space and as part of their cultural heritage is The Podium project. Designed in 2022 by the Dutch architecture firm MVRDV, this project consists of a temporary installation that provides public access to the rooftop of Het Nieuwe Instituut. Initially conceived to draw attention to the exhibition MVRDV: The Living Archive of a Studio, the project became a central element of the Rotterdam Architecture Month 2022.

After June, the space was transformed into a venue for community activities, offering people the opportunity to explore the city from a novel perspective and to reflect on their connection with the urban environment.

The shape of the Het Nieuwe Instituut building, designed by Jo Coenen, was temporarily altered by the addition of a 600-square-meter platform placed on the building's distinctive pergola. Access to the platform was provided via an external staircase with 143 steps, as well as through the exhibition on the lower floor. To enhance the visibility of the installation, the architects chose to paint the platform pink, making it a distinctive feature. [8]

During its operation, the installation hosted a wide range of events, such as concerts and children's camps, offering visitors a unique perspective of the city. At the same time, it facilitated new forms of interaction with the urban space, strengthening the connection between the community and the built environment. (FIGURE 3)

The installation radically transforms the perception of the Het Nieuwe Instituut building, not only through the addition of the pink platform but also by opening up a new perspective on the city. This temporary intervention disrupts the traditional meanings associated with the building, inviting visitors to reevaluate their relationship with this space. The process of deface-

ment redefines both the physical and symbolic dimensions of the building, creating a new dialogue between it and the community. (FIGURE 4)

Through this intervention, MVRDV recontextualizes Het Nieuwe Instituut, transforming it from a conventional cultural institution into a dynamic urban space that acts as a catalyst for common space. In this case, defacement goes beyond merely altering the building's form, extending its function and highlighting the potential of public spaces to be reinterpreted and repurposed to meet collective needs.

Thus, MVRDV not only temporarily transforms the appearance of the building but also redefines its rooftop, converting it into a common space accessible to all. This intervention initiates an ongoing dialogue between visitors and the city, encouraging new forms of interaction and strengthening the sense of belonging to a space previously perceived in a different way.

In conclusion, The Podium demonstrates how the defacement method can enhance people's awareness of the city as a common space and an essential element of their cultural heritage. By transforming existing urban spaces, as illustrated by this installation, new opportunities for experiencing and interacting within public space are created. Such interventions play an important role in fostering a sense of belonging and connection with the city and community, redefining the relationship between people and the urban environment.

Conclusion. In conclusion, the research highlights the potential of the concept of common space in the context of cultural heritage conservation, emphasizing the importance of raising awareness of the collective memory associated with it. While traditionally linked to the idea of collective ownership or the shared use of natural resources, a new manifestation of common space has emerged, re-symbolized as a way of perceiving and interacting with urban places and their cultural heritage. Thus, it is no longer understood as a static entity but rather as an artificial common, composed of knowledge, traditions, and practices—a dynamic outcome of interactions and collaborations between people. This re-symbolization suggests that a public space can become common through active use, encouraging people, through constant interaction, to become aware of their cultural heritage, develop an attachment to these spaces, and engage in their management and transformation.

However, cultural heritage, defined as an intangible common good composed of ideas and cultural products, does not automatically generate awareness but requires stimulation through various methods. The case studies of the Rooftop Walk and The Podium projects in Rotterdam have demonstrated the effectiveness of the defacement method in fostering this awareness. Nevertheless, the main challenge of such an ongoing process lies in developing innovative methods that support and amplify both community awareness and attachment to the city and its cultural heritage.

References.

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7. <https://mvrdrv.com/projects/857/rotterdam-rooftop-walk>. Accessed 24 February 2025.
8. <https://www.mvrdrv.com/projects/878/the-podium>. Accessed 24 February 2025.

Figures.

FIGURE 1 – Image Rooftop Walk, Rotterdam. Source: <https://mvrdrv.com/projects/857/rotterdam-rooftop-walk>

FIGURE 2 – Image Rooftop Walk, Rotterdam. Source: <https://mvrdrv.com/projects/857/rotterdam-rooftop-walk>

FIGURE 3 – Image The Podium, Rotterdam. Source: <https://www.mvrdrv.com/projects/878/the-podium>

FIGURE 4 – Image The Podium, Rotterdam. Source: <https://www.mvrdrv.com/projects/878/the-podium>

