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# From Spatial Production to Memory Production: The Inscription Mechanism as an Analytical Model in Heritage Contexts

**Zhen Liu** [a],[*]

[a] *School of Literature and Media, Nanfang College, Guangzhou 510970, China*

## ABSTRACT

Heritage spaces are commonly treated as stable containers of historical meaning, yet their significance is continuously produced, mediated, and reactivated through spatial arrangements, visual representations, and social practices. Although theories of spatial production and collective memory have each addressed aspects of this process, the mechanisms connecting spatial production to memory production remain insufficiently articulated. This article introduces the inscription mechanism as an analytical model for understanding how collective memory is produced in heritage contexts. Drawing on Paul Ricoeur's concept of inscription and the medial turn in spatial theory, inscription is conceptualized as a mediating process operating across temporal, spatial, visual, and practical dimensions. The article develops a four-dimensional model that highlights the governing role of temporal organization in coordinating memory activation. By reframing heritage spaces as memory-producing systems, this study offers a theoretical and methodological framework for future research on spatial narratives and public memory.

## INTRODUCTION

Heritage spaces are commonly approached as stable containers of historical meaning, valued for their material authenticity, stylistic coherence, or documentary significance. Within this object-oriented perspective, architectural remains, monuments, and historic urban landscapes are often treated as passive repositories of the past. However, such an approach struggles to explain how heritage meanings persist, transform, and circulate across historical periods and social contexts. Heritage spaces do not merely preserve historical content; rather, their significance is continuously produced, mediated, and reactivated through spatial arrangements, representational systems, and social practices.

This problem has been addressed from multiple theoretical directions. On the one hand, theories of spatial production have demonstrated that space is not a neutral container but a socially produced and relational construct. Henri Lefebvre's seminal work conceptual-

izes space as the outcome of social relations, structured through the interaction of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space (Lefebvre, 1991). From this perspective, space is continuously produced through everyday routines, institutional planning, and symbolic experience. Subsequent developments—most notably Edward Soja's formulation of Thirdspace—further emphasize space as a lived, performative, and mediating field rather than a fixed physical entity (Soja, 1996). While these approaches provide powerful tools for understanding how space is generated and organized, they remain comparatively less explicit about how spatial products endure and function as collective memory over extended temporal horizons.

On the other hand, theories of collective memory have emphasized that memory is fundamentally social rather than purely psychological. Building on Durkheimian sociology, Maurice Halbwachs argues that memory is structured by social frameworks that shape what can be remembered and how it is interpreted (Halbwachs, 1992). Memory, in this sense, is not a static archive of the past but a process of continual reconstruction in relation to present social contexts. Pierre Nora further highlights the growing reliance of modern societies on spatialized memory anchors—monuments, heritage sites, and symbolic locations—to stabilize collective identity in the absence of living memory (Nora, 1989). Yet within much of the memory studies literature, space often functions primarily as a backdrop or container for memory rather than as an operative mechanism through which memory is actively produced and governed.

Between these two bodies of theory lies an analytical gap. Spatial production theory explains how space is socially generated, while collective memory theory explains how the past is socially framed. What remains insufficiently articulated is the mediating process through which spatial configurations become stabilized as memory-bearing structures, and through which they are repeatedly mobilized, visualized, and enacted as shared historical experience (Olick & Robbins, 1998). In other words, the central question is not simply how space is produced, or how memory is socially framed, but how memory itself is made.

Before introducing the inscription mechanism, one clarification is necessary. The reference to a "medial" perspective in this article does not imply the existence of a distinct theoretical school or a formally articulated "medial turn" within spatial theory. Rather, it denotes an analytical reorientation in the interpretation and application of spatial production theory. Building on Henri Lefebvre's conception of space as a socially produced

and relational structure, later spatial theorists and heritage scholars have increasingly emphasized not only how space is produced, but how space operates as a mediating structure through which social meanings, memories, and practices are organized, circulated, and reactivated. In this sense, the medial perspective does not replace spatial production theory, but foregrounds its operative dimension—namely, the role of space as an active interface between time, representation, and practice.

It is within this interpretive framework that the inscription mechanism proposed in this article is situated. Drawing on Paul Ricoeur's understanding of inscription as the externalization of memory into durable forms, inscription is conceptualized as the process through which memory becomes fixed, encoded, and rendered publicly accessible (Ricoeur, 2004). Inscription is not a neutral act of recording; it involves selection, formalization, and institutional mediation, through which certain memories gain visibility and authority while others are marginalized. By extending this concept beyond textual archives to spatial, visual, and practical domains, this article defines inscription as a mediating mechanism operating across temporal, spatial, visual, and practical dimensions.

Building on this definition, the article develops a four-dimensional analytical model of the inscription mechanism, consisting of temporal inscription, spatial inscription, visual inscription, and practical inscription. These dimensions do not function independently but operate in a coordinated structure governed by temporal organization. Through this model, heritage spaces are reconceptualized not as passive containers of historical meaning, but as memory-producing systems in which collective memory is continuously activated, stabilized, and transformed.

This article adopts a theoretical and methodological approach. Rather than presenting a comprehensive empirical case study, it aims to construct an analytical framework that can be applied to diverse heritage contexts. By articulating the inscription mechanism as an interface between spatial production and memory production, the article provides a transferable conceptual tool for future research on heritage spaces, spatial narratives, visual archives, and embodied practices of public memory.

# COLLECTIVE MEMORY: SOCIAL FRAMEWORKS AND INTERPRETIVE TENSIONS

## Social Frameworks and Collective Memory

The concept of collective memory emerged as a critical response to psychological individualism in early studies of memory. Rather than locating memory exclusively within individual consciousness, sociological approaches emphasize that remembering is structured by social frameworks that shape how the past is perceived, interpreted, and shared. From this perspective, memory is not a purely internal faculty but a relational phenomenon embedded in social relations, institutional arrangements, and symbolic systems.

Maurice Halbwachs's formulation of collective memory is foundational to this approach. Building on Durkheimian sociology, Halbwachs argues that individual memory is always situated within social frameworks that provide categories, reference points, and interpretive boundaries for recollection (Halbwachs, 1992). These frameworks include language, norms, spatial settings, temporal markers, and group affiliations, all of which enable individuals to recognize their memories as socially intelligible. Memory, in this sense, is not retrieved intact from the past but reconstructed in relation to present social contexts. What is remembered, forgotten, or emphasized depends on the frameworks through which memory is organized.

A key implication of this theory is that collective memory is dynamic rather than static (Olick, 1999). Because social frameworks evolve, memory is continually reshaped to accommodate new social conditions and interpretive needs. This dynamic quality distinguishes collective memory from institutionalized historical knowledge, which often aspires to coherence, linearity, and objectivity. Whereas history seeks to stabilize the past through documentation and critical distance, collective memory remains closely tied to lived experience and group identity, allowing for plurality, contestation, and revision (Halbwachs, 1992; Assmann, 2011).

At the same time, collective memory does not exist independently of material and symbolic supports. Social frameworks are sustained through external anchors that stabilize memory beyond individual lifespans. These anchors may take the form of spatial environments, commemorative practices, narratives, or visual representations. Without such supports, collective memory risks fragmentation and disappearance. This insight underscores the importance of examining how memory is externalized and maintained through durable forms.

Later theorists have further elaborated the relationship between memory and social mediation. Aleida Assmann, for example, distinguishes between communicative memory, which operates through everyday interaction and personal recollection, and cultural memory, which is stabilized through institutionalized media, rituals, and symbolic forms (Assmann, 2011). This distinction highlights the role of mediation in extending memory across temporal distances. Cultural memory depends on processes that fix and transmit meaning, allowing memory to endure beyond the immediacy of lived experience.

Despite these advances, much of the collective memory literature treats space as a contextual condition rather than an operative mechanism. Spatial settings are often acknowledged as important for remembrance, yet their role is frequently limited to that of a backdrop against which memory unfolds. What remains under-theorized is how spatial configurations themselves participate in structuring memory—how they function as active frameworks that shape what is remembered, how it is remembered, and when it is reactivated.

This limitation points to the need for an analytical model that can account for the material, spatial, and temporal mediation of collective memory without reducing memory to either individual psychology or abstract social structure. By foregrounding the processes through which memory is fixed, encoded, and circulated, the concept of inscription provides a means of extending collective memory theory toward a more spatially and materially grounded analysis. In this sense, social frameworks of memory are not only cognitive or symbolic structures, but also spatially and temporally organized systems that enable memory to persist and operate within heritage contexts.

## Interpretive Debates: Individual, Collective, and Historical Memory

Despite its wide influence, the concept of collective memory has been subject to sustained interpretive debate. One central concern revolves around the relationship between individual memory, collective memory, and historical memory. Critics have questioned whether collective memory risks reifying the group as a unified subject, thereby obscuring individual experience, internal diversity, and conflict. Others have argued that the concept blurs the distinction between socially shared remembrance and formally institutionalized historical narratives.

These critiques have prompted scholars to draw clearer analytical distinctions. Individual memory refers to personal experience, affective recall, and embodied perception. Collective memory, by contrast, denotes socially mediated forms of remembering that are

shared, negotiated, and transmitted within groups. Historical memory occupies yet another position, often associated with formalized, institutionalized, and critically regulated representations of the past, such as historiography, archives, and official narratives. While these categories are analytically separable, they are deeply intertwined in practice, shaping and transforming one another over time (Olick, 1999; Kansteiner, 2002).

Jeffrey Olick has emphasized that collective memory should not be understood as a thing possessed by groups, but as an ongoing process of social remembering. From this perspective, memory is enacted through discourse, practice, and mediation rather than stored as a stable content (Olick, 1999). This processual understanding addresses the risk of reification while preserving the insight that memory operates beyond individual cognition. Similarly, Wulf Kansteiner argues that collective memory emerges at the intersection of intellectual traditions, media structures, and social interests, highlighting the role of cultural transmission and power in shaping what becomes publicly remembered (Kansteiner, 2002).

Another line of debate concerns the relationship between collective memory and history. While history aspires to critical distance and methodological rigor, collective memory is often oriented toward identity, continuity, and meaning. Pierre Nora famously characterizes modern memory as increasingly dependent on lieux de mémoire—material, symbolic, and functional sites that compensate for the decline of lived memory (Nora, 1989). However, this reliance on spatialized memory anchors also introduces tensions between historical complexity and mnemonic simplification. Sites of memory tend to condense heterogeneous pasts into legible narratives, privileging certain interpretations while marginalizing others.

Paul Ricoeur offers a critical intervention into these debates by reframing the problem of memory attribution. Rather than asking whether memory properly belongs to individuals or collectives, Ricoeur shifts attention to the processes through which memory becomes communicable, verifiable, and transmissible (Ricoeur, 2004). Central to this shift is the notion of testimony and its transformation into archive. Memory, in Ricoeur's account, gains social durability only when it is externalized through inscription—when lived experience is fixed in material or symbolic forms that can circulate beyond the immediacy of personal recall.

This intervention has two important implications. First, it dissolves the rigid opposition between individual and collective memory by emphasizing mediation rather than ownership. Memory becomes collective not because it resides in a collective subject, but because it is inscribed, shared, and recognized through socially structured forms. Second, it reconfigures the relationship between memory and history. Historical knowledge does not replace memory; rather, it depends on inscriptional processes that transform memory into documents, images, monuments, and spatial traces subject to interpretation and contestation.

From this perspective, debates over individual, collective, and historical memory converge on a common problem: the mechanisms through which memory is externalized and stabilized. While existing theories acknowledge the social framing of memory, they often stop short of systematically analyzing the material, spatial, and temporal processes that enable memory to endure and circulate. Addressing this gap requires shifting analytical focus from memory as content to memory as process. It is precisely at this juncture that the concept of inscription becomes analytically productive, offering a means to connect social frameworks of memory with spatial production and material mediation.

## THE INSCRIPTION MECHANISM: FROM SPATIAL PRODUCTION TO MEMORY PRODUCTION

### Conceptual Origins and Theoretical Lineages

The concept of inscription occupies a pivotal yet often under-theorized position in discussions of memory, history, and mediation. Rather than referring merely to the technical act of recording, inscription designates the process through which transient experiences, events, and recollections are externalized into durable and socially retrievable forms. In this sense, inscription marks the threshold at which memory moves beyond individual consciousness and becomes subject to circulation, verification, and institutional negotiation.

A central philosophical articulation of inscription is found in Paul Ricoeur's analysis of memory, history, and the archive. For Ricoeur, memory becomes historically operative only through a process of exteriorization. Inscription transforms lived memory into material supports such as texts, images, monuments, and architectural forms, thereby enabling memory to enter regimes of documentation, interpretation, and critique (Ricoeur, 2004). Crucially, Ricoeur emphasizes that inscription is not a neutral act. It involves selection, formalization, and authorization, through which certain memories acquire legitimacy and durability while others are marginalized or excluded. Inscription thus constitutes a decisive moment in the transformation of memory into social knowledge.

**Table 1 | Differentiated contexts of "inscription"**

| Context | Theoretical origin | Core meaning |
|---|---|---|
| Ricoeur | Philosophy | Texts, architecture, images, and other material forms as processes through which memory is externalized and stabilized |
| Nora | Historiography | The crystallization of historical experience into material sites, spatial nodes, and symbolic forms |
| This article | Heritage spatial studies | A mediating mechanism through which collective memory operates across time, space, visual representation, and social practice |

From a historiographical perspective, Pierre Nora's concept of lieux de mémoire further foregrounds the spatial dimension of inscription. Nora argues that in modern societies, where living memory has been weakened by processes of modernization, memory increasingly depends on material, symbolic, and functional sites to endure (Nora, 1989). These sites—monuments, museums, archives, and commemorative spaces—operate as condensed inscriptions of collective experience. Rather than preserving memory in its original form, they crystallize selective narratives that require continual interpretation and ritualized activation. Inscription, in this context, functions as a mechanism that stabilizes memory by anchoring it in spatialized forms.

Critical perspectives on the archive complicate this understanding by revealing the power relations embedded in inscriptional processes. Jacques Derrida conceptualizes the archive as a site governed by authority, law, and institutional control, emphasizing that inscription simultaneously enables preservation and enforces exclusion (Derrida, 1996). What is inscribed gains visibility and normative force, while what remains uninscribed risks disappearance. This dual character underscores the political and ethical dimensions of inscription, highlighting its role in shaping collective memory through regimes of inclusion, omission, and control.

Despite these diverse theoretical engagements, inscription is often treated as a descriptive term rather than a systematic analytical concept (Stoler, 2002). Studies tend to emphasize either the temporal dimension of inscription, as in archival historiography, or its spatial manifestation, as in monuments and memorial sites. Less attention has been paid to inscription as an operative mechanism that integrates temporal organization (Jones, 2011), spatial configuration, representational mediation, and embodied practice into a coherent process of memory production.

In response to this gap, this article advances a working definition of inscription tailored to the analysis of heritage contexts. Inscription is defined here as a medi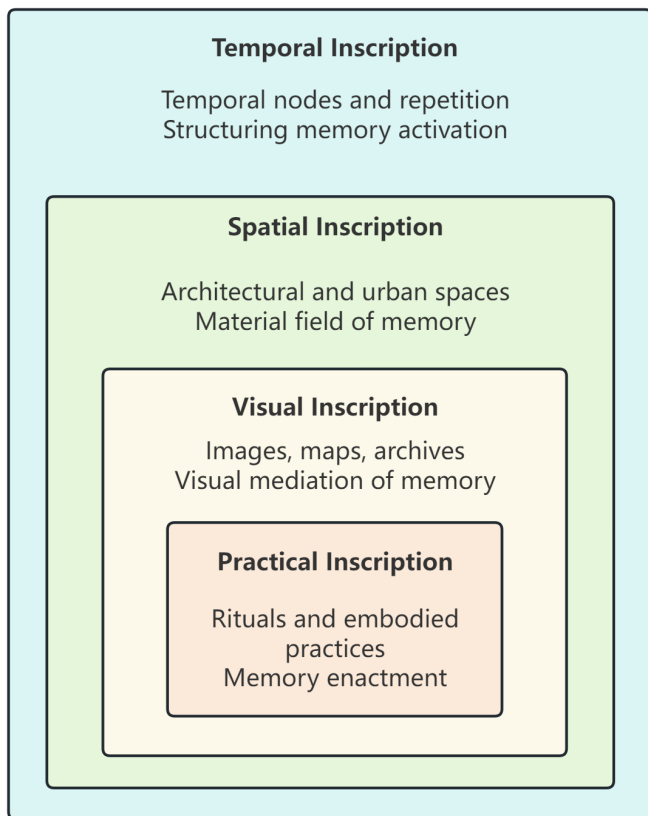ating mechanism through which collective memory is fixed, encoded, and circulated across four interrelated dimensions: temporal organization, spatial configuration, visual representation, and social practice. This definition shifts analytical focus from inscription as a static trace to inscription as a dynamic and relational process. Memory is not simply stored in heritage objects or archives; it is continuously produced through the coordinated operation of time, space, representation, and practice.

To clarify the differentiated theoretical lineages and analytical scopes of the concept of inscription, Table 1 compares its usage in philosophy, historiography, and heritage spatial studies. By situating the present definition in relation to existing interpretations, this comparison demonstrates how inscription, in this article, is neither reduced to textual recording nor limited to commemorative sites, but is conceptualized as an operative mechanism linking spatial production and memory production.

By conceptualizing inscription as a mechanism rather than an artifact, the present framework foregrounds its processual character and analytical utility. Inscription does not merely preserve the past; it structures how the past can be accessed, interpreted, and enacted in the present. This reconceptualization provides the conceptual foundation for the four-dimensional model of the inscription mechanism developed in the following section (**Table 1**).

## Four Dimensions of the Inscription Mechanism

Building on the working definition of inscription as a mediating mechanism of memory production, this section articulates the inscription mechanism as a four-dimensional analytical structure. Rather than treating inscription as a singular act or a static trace, the model conceptualizes inscription as a coordinated system through which collective memory is stabilized, activated, and circulated across time. The four dimensions—temporal inscription, spatial inscription, visual inscription, and practical inscription—do not represent discrete categories of heritage elements, but interconnected modes

**Temporal Inscription**

Temporal nodes and repetition
Structuring memory activation

**Spatial Inscription**

Architectural and urban spaces
Material field of memory

**Visual Inscription**

Images, maps, archives
Visual mediation of memory

**Practical Inscription**

Rituals and embodied
practices
Memory enactment

**Figure 1 | Structural model of the inscription mechanism**

of mediation through which memory becomes socially operative.

To move from conceptual definition to analytical structure, the inscription mechanism must be visualized not as a list of components but as an internally organized system. **Figure 1** presents the structural model of the inscription mechanism, illustrating how temporal, spatial, visual, and practical inscription are arranged in a layered and nested configuration. Rather than depicting four parallel dimensions, the model emphasizes their asymmetrical and hierarchical relationship. Temporal inscription forms the outer and governing layer, providing the rhythm and historical segmentation through which memory becomes periodically activated. Within this temporal framework, spatial inscription establishes the material and locational field of memory, visual inscription organizes representational mediation, and practical inscription operates at the core through embodied action and participation.

Temporal inscription refers to the organization of memory through time. Rather than conceiving time as a neutral chronological background, temporal inscription highlights how historical experience is segmented, marked, and structured through symbolic temporal de-

vices. Foundational moments, anniversaries, commemorative cycles, and institutionalized calendars transform continuous historical flow into identifiable temporal nodes. Through repetition and ritualization, these nodes establish rhythms of remembrance that govern when memory becomes publicly accessible. Temporal inscription thus provides the ordering logic of the inscription mechanism, determining the moments at which spatial forms, images, and practices are activated as carriers of memory.

Spatial inscription designates the material and locational anchoring of memory in physical space. Architectural remains, urban topographies, monuments, and heritage sites function as spatial condensations of historical meaning. However, spatial inscription does not reside solely in material presence. It emerges through positioning, visibility, accessibility, and relational configuration. Spatial inscription enables memory to be encountered, navigated, and revisited, transforming abstract historical narratives into situated experience. In this sense, space operates not as a passive container of memory, but as a structured medium through which memory is made present.

Visual inscription concerns the encoding and circulation of memory through representational forms. Images, drawings, maps, photographs, archival documents, exhibitions, and mediated visual narratives translate historical experience into reproducible and transmissible formats. Visual inscription plays a critical role in stabilizing memory across spatial and temporal distances. At the same time, it is inherently selective. Through framing, sequencing, and aestheticization, visual representations organize perception and guide interpretation. Visual inscription thus shapes not only what is remembered, but how memory is seen, recognized, and normalized within public culture.

Practical inscription emphasizes the role of embodied action in the production of memory. Memory is activated and sustained through practices such as rituals, commemorative ceremonies, guided tours, everyday movement, and participatory behaviors. These practices do not merely consume pre-existing meanings; they enact and reproduce memory through bodily engagement. Practical inscription highlights the performative dimension of memory, in which repetition, movement, and participation render memory socially present and experientially meaningful.

Although analytically distinguishable, these four dimensions operate in a mutually embedded configuration. Spatial forms acquire mnemonic significance only when activated at specific times; visual representations gain authority through spatial display and institutional repetition; practices derive coherence from temporal

rhythms and representational scripts. Among these dimensions, temporal inscription occupies a governing position. By structuring cycles of activation and repetition, temporal inscription coordinates the interaction of space, image, and practice into a coherent regime of memory production.

Conceptualizing inscription through these four dimensions shifts analytical focus from heritage objects to heritage processes. Memory is not stored in space, images, or practices as static content, but continuously produced through their coordinated operation. The four-dimensional model of the inscription mechanism thus provides a structural framework for analyzing how collective memory is stabilized, mobilized, and transformed within heritage contexts.

## Structural Logic of the Inscription Mechanism Model

While the four dimensions of inscription describe distinct modes of memory production, the inscription mechanism operates through their structured coordination rather than their simple coexistence. Understanding inscription as a mechanism therefore requires attention not only to its constituent dimensions, but also to the internal logic through which these dimensions are hierarchically organized and relationally embedded within a single operative system.

At the structural level, the inscription mechanism can be understood as a layered configuration. Temporal inscription constitutes the governing layer of the model, establishing rhythms of commemoration, cycles of repetition, and historically marked moments through which memory is activated. Temporality does not function here as a neutral background or parallel dimension. Instead, it operates as an organizing condition that regulates when spatial forms, visual representations, and social practices become mnemonic agents. In this sense, temporal inscription provides the structural precondition for memory activation rather than merely its chronological context.

Within this temporal framework, spatial, visual, and practical inscription function as mutually reinforcing layers. Spatial inscription provides the material and locational conditions through which memory becomes situationally accessible. Architectural configurations, urban layouts, and landmark sites do not carry mnemonic significance in themselves; they acquire such significance only when activated within specific temporal rhythms. Visual inscription, in turn, organizes representational mediation by translating historical experience into images, maps, documents, and narrative formats that stabilize memory across spatial and temporal distances. Practical inscription operates through embodied action—rituals, guided movement, commemorative performances, and everyday use—rendering memory experientially present and socially reproducible.

The logic of the inscription mechanism is therefore relational rather than additive. Collective memory is not produced by accumulating spatial objects, images, or commemorative practices, but by aligning these elements within a temporally governed structure of activation and repetition. It is this alignment that transforms heterogeneous materials into a coherent mnemonic regime. Stability is achieved through repetition, institutionalization, and spatial fixation, while transformation occurs through shifts in temporal framing, spatial configuration, representational emphasis, or modes of practice.

This relational logic also explains the dynamic character of the inscription mechanism. The model does not describe a fixed state of heritage memory, but an ongoing process through which memory is continuously produced, negotiated, and revised. Changes in any one dimension—such as the reorganization of commemorative calendars, the reconfiguration of spatial access, the circulation of new visual narratives, or the emergence of new participatory practices—can recalibrate the entire mechanism. The durability of collective memory thus coexists with its susceptibility to reinterpretation and contestation.

To clarify the theoretical positioning of this model, **Table 2** situates the inscription mechanism in relation to Lefebvre's spatial triad, mapping temporal, spatial, visual, and practical inscription onto spatial practice, representations of space, and spaces of representation. This correspondence does not imply a direct translation. Rather, it demonstrates how the inscription mechanism extends spatial production theory by introducing memory-oriented operations—particularly temporal inscription—as a governing dimension. Through this extension, the inscription mechanism functions as an analytical interface linking spatial production to memory production.

By articulating inscription as a structured yet dynamic system, this section establishes a conceptual bridge between theories of spatial production and studies of collective memory. The inscription mechanism shifts analytical attention from isolated memory carriers to the relational logic through which memory is organized, activated, and sustained. This structural understanding provides the foundation for the methodological discussion that follows, where inscription is approached as an observable and operational analytical framework.

**Table 2 | Correspondence between the Inscription Mechanism and Lefebvre's Spatial Triad**

| Inscription Dimension | Primary Function | Correspondence in Spatial Triad | Theoretical Extension |
|---|---|---|---|
| Temporal Inscription | Historical nodes, commemorative cycles | Spaces of representation (symbolic time experience) | Introduces temporal governance into spatial production |
| Spatial Inscription | Architectural remains, urban form, landmarks | Representations of space / Representational space | Emphasizes material-symbolic anchoring of memory |
| Visual Inscription | Images, maps, archival representations | Representations of space | Integrates visual regimes into memory mediation |
| Practical Inscription | Rituals, tours, embodied practices | Spatial practice | Highlights performative reproduction of memory |

## OBSERVING INSCRIPTION: METHODOLOGICAL PATHWAYS

If inscription is understood as a mediating mechanism through which collective memory is produced, a methodological question immediately follows: how can such a mechanism be observed and analyzed without reducing it to isolated objects or subjective impressions? Unlike material artifacts that can be directly measured or catalogued, inscription operates through relational configurations of time, space, representation, and practice. Observing inscription therefore requires an interpretive approach attentive to process, context, and mediation rather than to discrete empirical units alone.

From an epistemological perspective, inscription cannot be treated as a neutral or transparent object of observation. Memory, even when externalized through material and symbolic forms, remains mediated by interpretation, institutional positioning, and power relations. Acts of observation are themselves situated within interpretive frameworks that shape what counts as evidence and how meaning is assigned. Consequently, the study of inscription does not aim to recover an original or authentic memory, but to trace the mechanisms through which memory is structured, stabilized, and mobilized in the present.

This position challenges purely objectivist approaches to heritage research that rely exclusively on documentation, classification, or material analysis. While such methods are indispensable, they are insufficient for capturing the operative logic of memory production. Inscription becomes legible not through the exhaustive listing of heritage elements, but through the analysis of their effects: how temporal rhythms organize remembrance, how spatial configurations guide perception, how visual representations frame interpretation, and how practices enact repetition.

To operationalize the inscription mechanism as an analytical framework, this article adopts thick descrip-tion as a methodological strategy(Tolia-Kelly, 2010). Originally articulated within interpretive anthropology, thick description emphasizes the contextual interpretation of social action, symbols, and spatial arrangements as meaningful practices embedded within cultural and institutional systems. Rather than isolating variables, it reconstructs the layers of meaning through which actions and representations acquire significance.

Applied to the inscription mechanism, thick description functions along four interrelated analytical pathways corresponding to the model's dimensions. First, temporal inscription can be observed through commemorative calendars, anniversaries, cycles of repetition, and historically marked moments that regulate when memory is activated. These temporal structures reveal how remembrance is governed and synchronized within institutional and social rhythms.

Second, spatial inscription becomes observable through the analysis of spatial hierarchies, access patterns, visibility, circulation routes, and locational emphasis. Rather than treating space as a static backdrop, this approach examines how spatial configurations structure encounter, movement, and attention, thereby shaping mnemonic experience.

Third, visual inscription is analyzed through the close reading of representational materials such as images, maps, exhibitions, archival documents, and mediated narratives. Attention is paid to framing, sequencing, modes of circulation, and aesthetic conventions, revealing how visual regimes stabilize particular interpretations of the past while marginalizing others.

Fourth, practical inscription is approached through the observation of embodied actions and participatory practices, including rituals, guided tours, commemorative ceremonies, and everyday patterns of use. These practices are understood not as secondary expressions of memory, but as primary sites where memory is enacted, reiterated, and socially reproduced.

These four pathways do not function as separate methods but as interconnected perspectives. Temporal

structures condition spatial activation; spatial arrangements shape visual display; visual narratives inform practical scripts; and practices, in turn, reinforce temporal rhythms. Thick description allows these interdependencies to be analyzed without collapsing them into a single explanatory variable.

By adopting this methodological orientation, the inscription mechanism becomes an observable and operational analytical interface rather than an abstract theoretical construct. The framework enables researchers to examine how collective memory is produced through coordinated processes of temporal organization, spatial mediation, visual representation, and embodied practice. In this way, methodological interpretation becomes an extension of the theoretical model itself, translating inscription from a conceptual proposition into a practical tool for heritage research.

## CONCLUSION: THE INSCRIPTION MECHANISM AS AN ANALYTICAL INTERFACE

This article has proposed the inscription mechanism as a theoretical and methodological framework for analyzing how collective memory is produced within heritage contexts. By positioning inscription as a mediating process between spatial production and memory production, the study addresses an analytical gap between spatial theory and collective memory studies. Rather than approaching heritage spaces as static repositories of historical meaning, the inscription mechanism conceptualizes them as dynamic systems in which memory is continuously stabilized, activated, and transformed.

At the conceptual level, the article reframes inscription from a descriptive notion into an operative analytical mechanism. Drawing on philosophical, historiographical, and critical perspectives, inscription is defined as the process through which memory is externalized, structured, and rendered publicly accessible across temporal, spatial, visual, and practical dimensions. This reconceptualization shifts analytical attention away from isolated memory traces or symbolic artifacts toward the relational processes through which memory acquires durability, authority, and social relevance.

At the analytical level, the four-dimensional model of temporal, spatial, visual, and practical inscription provides a structured means of examining memory production without reducing it to any single medium or scale. By identifying temporal inscription as the governing layer of the mechanism, the model clarifies how rhythms of repetition and activation coordinate spatial configurations, representational forms, and embodied practices.

This structural logic accounts for both the persistence and the mutability of collective memory, enabling heritage spaces to function simultaneously as sites of continuity and arenas of reinterpretation.

At the methodological level, the article demonstrates how the inscription mechanism can be operationalized through interpretive analysis. By adopting thick description as a methodological strategy, inscription becomes observable as a relational process rather than a collection of discrete indicators. This approach preserves the complexity of memory production while maintaining analytical rigor, allowing the framework to be applied flexibly across different heritage contexts, materials, and scales.

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. As a theoretical and methodological contribution, the article does not present a comprehensive empirical case study. While illustrative references inform the conceptual discussion, systematic empirical application remains the task of future research. In addition, the operation of inscription mechanisms may vary across cultural, political, and institutional contexts, requiring comparative investigation and contextual adaptation.

Despite these limitations, the inscription mechanism offers a transferable analytical interface for future studies of heritage spaces, spatial narratives, visual archives, and embodied practices of public memory. By bridging theories of spatial production and collective memory, the framework provides a foundation for examining how heritage spaces operate not merely as remnants of the past, but as active sites of memory production in the present.

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