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### Abstract

This article addresses the construction of memory as an essential element for human condition. To speak of memory is to speak of the human present once memory enables people not only to situate themselves in time but also to belong to a space, thus, the formation of either collective or individual identities is associated to the memory. Memory refers to the past, but is constantly reformulated in present according to individual's available knowledge. It is therefore, work, as it needs this constant reconstruction of the past from the present references (Bosi, 1994). Thus, the core objectives of this article are: i) to understand how physical support becomes an essential reference for social practices and affirmation of identity, and ii) to discuss the preservation as instrument of power, from the understanding of production conditions and permanence of physical support. For such, this article seeks to recover and critically review the basic literature on the theme of memory construction related to the constructed types. As a result, there was an attempt to corroborate to the repositioning of belonging and citizenship values, including the own concept of heritage, adding to the study of permanence, the understanding of symbolic struggles involving them.

**Keywords:** Urban identity, Constructed typology, Memory and power

### 1 Memory and identity

Living in the city means being daily in touch with the different, even if the other is crystallized in inanimate physical structures. Through their spatial layout, the way that they are positioned or its configuration, such structures refer us to habits and customs of some groups to which we may be or may be not connected. It is by this relationship with the otherness through direct or mediated contact that we assure daily our individuality.

Although we individually constructed the social practice images individually while our references are created from individual memories, we need to rely on external reference points to evoke them (Halbwachs, 2006). According to the author, it is vital the participation of the social group and the collective memory in the reconstruction of recollections, making the memory a social phenomenon.<sup>1</sup>

The individual, however, is still determinant for social thought. Each person has a flow of entirely personal impressions of the social facts, that is, each individual memory has its own point of view of collective memory, and this subjectivity is related to the individual social stand, which also varies according to the relationships networked in other means.

In these relationships, the objects participate as a kind of silent society assuring the shaping of references set that adapt to our perceptions of present and ground our staying in the city. Such objects themselves present only material features, and their values and roles in social relationships are human attributions other than intrinsic characteristics of things. It is certain that the material features of objects - such as their raw material, techniques of production, shape, uses and signs indicating their operational conditions,<sup>1</sup> form a set of data allowing conclusions about the socioeconomic organization of individuals involved in

the existence of these objects. However, one must look for the meaning of things outside of such objects, even if their materiality allows such reasoning (Meneses, 1998). Moreover, if such production and consumption of meaning are human-mediated processes, they are historically marked.

Therefore, the memory - as the attribute that places human beings in time, giving them the perception of their finitude - needs these material structures that are closely linked to the maintenance of our capacity to remember in order to form and maintain the identities.

Identity can be defined as something that differentiates a social individual from others, something that grants peculiarity to biographies, and yet, as the individual's global understanding of their place in society. This process of self-affirmation takes place daily, at the same moment that we are in touch with the other and we confront psychic, ideological or aesthetic structures to the memory of what we claim to be.

Therefore, loss of memory would be associated to loss of identity. This phenomenon appears as one of the great threats in modern world: the work becomes constituted of mechanical and repetitive acts for which the learning of life loses meaning. The emergence of writing and the end of oral tradition, the immediacy of the present, individualization, among other factors, point to the loss of the values transmission and knowledge between generations (Bosi, 1994; Santos, 2003).

Within the perspective that memory should be built from social bonds, Hannah Arendt (1992) states that modern individuals live a "limited happiness" since they not only lose their memory but also their ability to think over that loss. Once individuals are made up of desires, longings, and behaviors that are not contained in themselves but in collective practices, the perception of the state of full happiness becomes unreachable without the reference of memory; "it is only on very rare occasions that the human mind is able to retain something entirely disconnected" (Arendt 1992, p. 31). Nevertheless, the author disregards the fundamental role of physical supports in the reflection of memory, inasmuch as she attributes her fundamental elaboration to social relations between human beings.

This fundamental link between memory and identity, where memory appears as the key element to the human condition, it has been explored in fiction films like, *The Blade Runner*, *Memento*, and so many others.

The first one<sup>2</sup>, directed by Ridley Scott, takes place in the year 2019 and chronicles the struggle of androids (creatures created to serve as soldiers) to survive beyond the four planned years for their adult life. Androids, called "replicants," have no memory, but they struggle to form their own identity. In this sense, the story of the replicant Rachel is significant because her identity is built up from implants of human memory fragments (from Tyrell's niece, the creator of the replicants) associated to objects referring to a family history in the past, such as photographs scattered through the house, for example. Memories are used as evidence to cover up her condition as android; that is, to understand oneself as human it is necessary to create some past to the present, no matter if it is false. That is why Rachel clings so much to the evidence of her past.

In "*Memento*"<sup>3</sup>, the protagonist Leonard loses his ability to convert short-term memory into long-term memory after suffering a head injury when he tried to save his wife from an attack. After this event, Leonard is unable to remember facts, people he meets, or his actions in the present; that is, his recent experiences are not lasting memory and disappear. Although his memories before the accident were not erased, the character's identity at present is not stable because part of his story was not recorded. Leonard does not know how long ago the accident happened; he does not recognize himself in the present and becomes a toy in the hands of other characters in the plot. To find his wife's killer, Leonard photographs, makes notes on paper, and tattoos the clues he finds important on his own body. The lack of memories on part of a period of his story breaks his understanding of time, destabilizes identity, disables conscious action in the present, and prevents future projections.

According to Le Goff (2003), it was exactly the unstable character of memory that led the surrealism to question it as a product of the fragile and misleading imagination while deserving André Breton's special attention in his *Manifeste du Surréalisme*, 1924. Halbwachs (2006) approaches this questioning when he states that the recollection is an image constructed through the available materials in the present and from our current perception - that varies along with time. To the past remembered in the present there are associated points of view, which makes memory something related to the time and spatial place occupied by the individual, that is, the "work"<sup>4</sup> of memory is made from fragments of the past inserted by fragments of the present.

Resulting from this process of re-elaboration of the past in contemporary times, when an old object (or an old building) has its original function transformed to integrate museum collection, decoration or to become a monument, various different values can be attributed to what it used to be in its origin. Features to exercise the original function remain in the object or in the old construction. However, when it becomes a monument, its value of use becomes cognitive only, that is, the original function can only be accessed through memory and the space works as a kind of support for memory. Objects or constructions have the property of evoking memories that, at present, contribute to the construction of identity in individuals.

## **2 Memory and Space: typology and urban identity**

*Disoriented with regard to the cardinal points, deprived of the plan that gave meaning to their knowledge, the natives rapidly lose their sense of traditions, as if their social and religious systems (we shall see that they are inseparable) were too much complex to dismiss the schema made visible in their ground-plans, and reaffirmed to them of their daily rhythm of their lives (Lévi-Strauss, 1957, p. 231, our translation).*

In this passage of *Triste Trópicos*, we can note not only the influence of the environment on the affirmation of identity but also the constant need of the work to the memory together as the place to make such an possible affirmation. The set of objects

that surround us, as well as the environment in which they are inserted, act as a driving element of this process in which memory and identity are reconstructed and restated daily.

There are objects that stand out from others because they represent a lived experience and are, therefore, stored and incorporated into the life of the owner as an icon through which memory accesses that memorable fact. Violette Morin (apud Bosi, 2004, p. 441) called these objects, biographical objects, for keeping the life memories of the owners as they are cherished to the point of aging together, giving the person the sense of continuity.

We can transpose the relationship between biographical objects and their owners to the built heritage. The constructions tell us an important part of the relations between cities and their inhabitants. The way they are laid out in space, the materials and techniques employed in their construction, or even the aesthetic standards used to give them form and color are elements that corroborate to bring up the memory of the individuals that are related in that space.

It is observed that the human adaptation to a certain place is favored by the permanence of the landscape and the immobility of the people. According to Halbwachs (2006), this appropriation of place happens when the thoughts and movements of individuals are bound to the external images, that is, when the individual's habits are settled on the materiality that surrounds them.

Buildings, therefore, participate in the formation of the identity of individuals at the moment the memory is activated - whether to guarantee spatial orientation, to refer to other places visited, or simply to bring back memories of personal or historical facts that occurred in that space, guaranteeing the sense of belonging to a culture and a historical time. Moreover, just as happens to objects whose forms lose their edges and are softened, reshaping and gaining expressiveness through constant manipulation (Bosi, 2004), the buildings become more meaningful to individuals as they are incorporated into their daily life.

Buildings that have resisted the passage of time, even though their original functions and forms had been altered, allow contemporaneity to witness the permanence of some values that are not only formal - despite its reference is material - but also linked to the social practices of players involved in its production and maintenance in the city. These buildings become testimonies of the permanence of these values in history.

However, the construction of the identity of individuals should not be associated with simple repetition or maintenance of traditions, because when transmitted values and knowledge are reworked in the present, they face changes, differences, and transformations that contribute to the affirmation not only of the identity of individuals, as of time itself (Guarinello, 1995).

The human condition is also portrayed in the inhabited space, in the city as a materialized history, since, according to Mumford (1938), the city is the material instrument of collective life where conflicts and consensuses are solidified, that is, the thought is shaped in the city, is materialized in both constructions and in the infinity of other human productions. At the same times that the thought is applied to produce forms in the city, these forms will also shape such thought. Architectural and urban forms enable the action of reason in the city, delimiting spaces, creating enclosures, proposing flows, plans, and compositions. Though devoid of meaning and context, form by the form itself may lose its capacity to fix people in space and in time (Halbwachs, 2006; Mumford, 1938; Rossi, 2001).

The impressions we have of places from their forms are only possible because of the memory of lived experiences in that particular space or in other similar spaces to which we also relate affectively. This connection between form and memory enables individuals to characterize and assign quality to the constructed space, that is, it allows humans to confer identities to places.

The constructions, as well as the materiality of which the city is mostly constituted, are products of human work - the exclusively human capacity to perform functions, even the contemplative functions. Based on the needs of individuals, the landscape is adapted while architectural forms are established as responses to the aesthetic and functional aspirations of each society. Linked to form is the type, which presents itself as a constant in architecture.

Regarding the origin of types, the authors Aldo Rossi (2001) and Giulio Carlo Argan (2001) present arguments that may initially appear conflicting. For Rossi, the type appears as an ideal that precedes and constitutes the architectural object, responding to formal and functional needs of a society at a given historical time, therefore, it represents a cultural element. The author considers the type as "the very idea of architecture, that which is closest to its essence" (Rossi, 2001, p. 27).

Argan claims that the type is not formulated a priori, but rather implied from a series of already existing examples, that is, the type is subject to the prior existence of a series of buildings that present formal and functional similarity to each other. However, the apparent contradiction between the authors positioning is because Argan actually writes about the type as a theoretical-architectural concept, in other words, the type can only be a concept when drawn from a series of existing buildings. However, Argan points out that it is previously exists as an idea, "in a given historical condition of culture as a response to a set of ideological, religious or practical demands" (Argan, 2001, p.10, our translation).

We can understand the type, from the two authors mentioned above, as a spatial scheme involved in a cultural and environmental aura, so, despite its prior determination of features of needs, the form is also driven by the technique, function, and historical moment. We can see, thus, the vagueness that the concept of type may suggest. Quatremère de Quincy (1832) quoted by the two authors, in discussing the formal changes that objects undergo over the years, points out the fundamental previous existence of an elementary principle of feeling and reason that, although stripped of its characteristics of form is preserved in the modifications of the object.

In this view, no type identifies itself with a form; although all forms are reducible to types, and this process is, for Rossi, the fundamental postulate for the study of form otherwise it would be impossible to problematize it, once it is a logical action of thought. Still according to the author, typology is the analytical model of architecture that can study architectural types in its complexity.

When we think of the type within this process of reduction, we should not understand it as a determinant structural synthesis, but as a principle or a scheme that allows endless formal variations. Argan (2001) adds to this, the idea that types can mutate when a new formal variant, requested to respond to the demands of its historical moment, is added to the previous formal series from which the type was deduced, that is, the inventive freedom enabled by the type promotes further modifications in its own structure.

Thus, inventiveness is subjected to respond to the needs of the historical moment of creation, overcoming the settled solutions transmitted by types. According to the two authors, it is concluded, that the history plays a fundamental role in the processes of creation and transformation of the architectural object and, consequently, in the construction of urban identities.

Nevertheless, the influence of history on the mutations suffered by the types and the material permanence of the typological series in the city is possible through processes where memory is the protagonist. In selections, intentional or not, between preserving and demolishing, memory is used ideologically to ensure the preservation of symbolic needs or aspirations of some groups at a particular historical moment.

### **3 Memory and Power**

Collective memory can be regarded as symbolic construction as it can be interpreted from representative facts of social groups that work as its support. However, for its preservation, collective memories constantly need to be reaffirmed and, therefore, structures, that promote such memory experience, are essential for its maintenance. In this sense, buildings become symbolic elements while their preservation in the city as a representation of society may be linked to processes of social inclusion or exclusion.

Several collective memories may coexist, but the sum of them does not result in the national<sup>5</sup> memory, which includes ideology and seeks to integrate and unify individuals through the avoidance of conflicts (Meneses, 1992). The State and dominant groups often ideologically use memories in favor of the construction of a so-called national memory, suppressing other collective memories.

However, within these reflections there are two memory features essential for its understanding as an instrument of power, namely: i) it is selective and, therefore, ii) memory is a constructed phenomenon. The selective character of memory is certainly essential for human life since it would be impossible for any individual to keep all the events that happened to them during their life, just as the city would collapse if it kept all its buildings from its origin. Forgetfulness, in this sense, is essential for the lives of both humans and the city.<sup>6</sup> Because of selectivity, some facts are recorded and others are forgotten, that is, the facts to be preserved in the memory of individuals are chosen according to personal or political interests related to a given moment; in this sense, both memory and oblivion can become an instrument of domination (Le Goff, 2003; Pollak, 1989; Pollak, 1992; Santos, 2003).

Within the city, the preservation of architectural work over time serves as a testimony of power. Even old buildings that remain in the city because they are located in forgotten areas also represent the power of some groups, which are strengthened to the extent that the condition of abandonment and precariousness determine the image to be rundown. Areas are transformed into documents, albeit involuntarily, in the sense attributed by Le Goff (2003), that is, document as monument is result from historical society impositions to create a certain itself image.

The historical approach, insofar as it reveals the discourses behind the maintenance of abandoned areas, reaffirms the understanding of their conditions of production and permanence. History becomes the access key to collective memory, and without it, the ability for forgetting and remembering would be at the mercy of power relations.

The distinction between collective memory and history is clear. Halbwachs (2006) argued that both worked with the past, but the way to approach them is a great distinction. For him, history analyzed the groups from an external higher position while the collective memory was part of the collective consciousness of these groups. For the author, history arbitrarily dealt with the past through compilations of larger facts, which are often too distant from individuals, presenting very few points of contact with their personal stories, and therefore, history and collective memory should not be mistaken. Likewise, the author considers inadequate the term "historical memory", since it associates two radically opposite expressions.

After the writings of Halbwachs<sup>7</sup>, with the extension of the awareness of document and the emergence of the documentary revolution, the interests of history are enlarged while it stops dedicating exclusively to the great deeds in order to deal with all men, the "sleeping masses", as Le Goff (2003) called it. In this context, Foucault elaborates his argument about the role of history in the approach of documents, making clear the distinction between memory and history. He understands memory as the object of history, as the social construction of a symbolic framework that helps to compose and reinforce individual or collective identity. Memory is, therefore, an ideological operation of self-representation that guides the performance of individuals in social relations and, therefore, must be reviewed in the domain of social representations. History is the cognitive operation, the intellectual and scientific procedure of questioning of documents, and this critical, investigative and methodological action that transforms documents into monuments (Foucault, 2000).

While Halbwachs perceived that memory, through a mosaic of lectures distant from great deeds, organized the society, Foucault sought to point out the strategies of power implicit in such discourses, assigning to them a disciplining and excluding meaning. Based on the Nietzschean concept of *Wirkliche Histoire*<sup>8</sup> or Effective History, Foucault defines the role of history just as that of investigating and analyzing this mechanism.

*'Effective' history rise again the event on its uniqueness and sharpness. One must understand by event not a decision, a treaty, a domain, or a battle, but a reversed relation of forces, a seized power, a resumed vocabulary turned against its users, a domination that is weakened, stretched, is intoxicated, and another power that makes its entrance, masquerade (Foucault, 1998, p. 28, our translation).*

Foucault also stated that history is always knowledge of perspective since historians review the facts from a certain point of view despite their unwillingness to reveal the moment and the place from which they look at it. According to him, Nietzsche's historical sense is aware of the injustice of this process and "the vision that knows both from where it looks and what it looks at" (Foucault 1998: 30). Likewise, the concept of "memory framing effort" proposed by Pollak (1992) which defines it as the work partially exercised by historians in order to frame the memory as the interests of particular groups involved in power disputes. It is here the objection of Meneses (1998) when he affirms that the artifact does not lie because its physical integrity obeys the objective truth; "The discourses about the artifact may be false though" (Meneses, 1998, p.4).

Cities history can also be assembled or framed from images that dominant groups intend to show to guarantee their economic interests. Ideological discourses of power can easily be identified in cities along their trajectory, for example, implemented through urban measures that value certain areas within the city or through areas selection and architectural works by the State, and by the "preservation" or permanence of buildings and areas due to abandonment and economic disinterest, among others.

The discussion about selecting either preservation or demolition by the relevant public management seems to be neutral in some cases in terms of the political role played by memory. In so many others, this idea of neutrality is passed on to the rescue memory itself, which has been taken as universal, in order to mask the interests that guide the State's action by elect one place to the detriment of others.

However, it is worth emphasizing that, in opposition to the discourses on the full preservation of cities, the construction of new is essential not only for the urban dynamics but also for the own re-elaboration of memory in permanence spaces, since this replacement is socially sustainable. Meneses (1992) proposes two conditions for this action:

*The first is the verification of the exhaustion of the functional potential of the asset in question, the impossibility not only of maximizing it (which, with modern technologies, becomes more and more feasible), but also of recycling it or simply, keeping it. Then, one must reasonably answer two primary questions: who is interested in the new? Who is responsible for the burden? This approach does not imply stiffness or immobility; on the contrary, it is open to the power of fertilization, creation, expansion of the new, but not to its forces of degradation (Meneses, 1992, p. 9, our translation).*

#### **4 Final considerations**

The study of permanencies within the city necessarily permeates the understanding of the processes involved in their formation and maintenance. We have seen that certain areas are maintained in the city simply because they are not yet targets of the market and their position of abandonment reveals and reaffirms the domination of some groups.

The election of the areas that should or should not remain in the city is subordinated to the interest of some social groups that, through ideological discourses, guarantee the maintenance of certain memories either due economic interests or strategies of social control. According to Pollak (1989), the struggle for preservation, and therefore, the construction of memory, is rather related to problems between minority groups and overarching society than to the opposition between society and a dominating State.

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1 According to Barros (1989), Halbwachs was adept to the thought of the French-Durkheimian sociological school, which sees the human being as the product of the social environment. For this reason, he is one of the first authors to include the presence of the social in the discussions about memory, which was up to then seeing from introspective visions.

2 The screenplay was written by Hampton Fancher and David Peoples, based on the novel *Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, science fiction written by Philip K. Dick in 1968.

3 2001 film, direction and screenplay by Christopher Nolan.

4 Mention to the thought of Bosi (1994) that associates memory with work because of the need to reconstruct, rethink, remake the past with the references in the present.

5 Pollak (1989) argues that for the nineteenth-century European tradition, national memory was the most complete form of a collective memory, and this thought, according to the author, is reflected in Halbwach's work, especially when he implies a negotiation process between collective and individual memories, according to which individuals should yield in favor of adjustment to a single basis.

6 According to Santos (2003), this question refers to Nietzsche's reflections on the eternal return that according to the author would be the greatest difficulty to be faced by humans, since life is impossible without forgetting - not in the sense of loss of memory, considered irremediable, but as a prerequisite for existence. Contrary to Milan Kundera's theory, In: *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, for whom human life would become unbearable free from the weight of the past, Nietzsche argues that without remembrance human beings would be happy.

7 His publications are from the early twentieth century, being *The Collective Memory*, 1950, posthumous publication. Maurice Halbwachs, a socialist, was arrested by the Gestapo after a Nazi occupation of Paris and was deported to the Buchenwald concentration camp where he was executed in 1945.

8 According to Foucault (1998), Nietzsche opposes the concept of history as a research of *Ursprung* (origin) and *Wirkliche Histoire* as a research of *Herkunft* (provenance) and *Entstehung* (emergence). As a critique of the traditional model of history which sought the beginning of things in a state of perfection (*Ursprung* / origin), Nietzsche proposed a model of study that took the dynamics or propulsive forces of origin (*Herkunft* / provenience) and when and how they come to the surface (*Entstehung* / emergency). In this way, "genealogy reestablishes the various systems of submission: not the anticipatory power of meaning, but the hazardous play of dominations" (Foucault 1998: 23).