



MEMORY AND CONTEMPORARY CITY: THE FEMINIZATION OF OLD AGE

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 11th September, 2019

Received in revised form

28th October, 2019

Accepted 19th November, 2019

Published online 30th December, 2019

Key Words:

Collective Memory; City;
Feminization of Old Age; Social Role.

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ABSTRACT

This essay results from a literature review and aims to reflect on the collective memory of older women about their social role. Thus, it assesses the importance of anchoring memory in a social context, in this case, the urban space and considers collective memory as a valuable resource for the reintegration of older women in the city and in claiming their social role. Individuals adhere to the space in which they live, this fact enables memories to be perpetuated and reconstructed over time. To verify this phenomenon, it was used as theoretical basis, above all, the contributions legacy by Maurice Halbwachs in the field of collective memory, as well as collaborations of theoreticians of geographic science related to the city category and authors who deal with his writings on the elderly woman.

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Citation: Nádia Sampaio, Arianna Oliveira Santana Lopes, Luana Araújo Dos Reis et al., 2019. "Memory and contemporary city: the feminization of old age", *International Journal of Development Research*, 09, (12), 32422-32427.

INTRODUCTION

Memory has been appropriated as an essential object for understanding the functioning of society, culture, art, literature, among other topics. Thus, the collective memory of the various social groups is an important element for the reading of a city. Thus, the daily life of urban men and women is combined in an environment. After all, the city reflects the world in its continuous process of transformation, since the urban landscape is the sum of distinct times and times that are inscribed in the urban space. Urban society coexists with a multiplicity of forms, structures and functions that characterize everyday life. In this confluence, the social groups promote their arrangements in order to belong to a place and, therefore, enable their fixation and their identities. Thus, they are spatialized through work (formal-informal, productive-unproductive) and territorialized by power relations, especially symbolic.

It is known that the geographical space is a product, reflection, environment and condition of social reproduction and happens in the sphere of the lived. This allows the construction of a network of meanings and meanings that are intertwined by history, culture and establish identities, since social subjects recognize each other, since this is where life happens, because "[...] there is no memory that does not happen in a spatial context". (HALBWACHS, 2006, p. 170). In this convergence, transformations in society are read even through demographic changes in the urban space. In this sense, in Brazil, currently, there is an accelerated process of population aging that is one of the greatest challenges of the present century. With the increase in life expectancy in the urban space there is a longer and better survival among women, so there is no way to hide the phenomenon known as feminization of old age. However, old age has not been a subject of wide discussion related to older women and their social function, since contemporary society does not yet have an adequate perception of this social

category. Thus, older women have a relevant social role in the urban space, since their memories keep the times and the times as builders of each and the city itself, because social groups carry a collective memory that is alive and has a content practical and operative at present. Consequently, the elderly in the urban space have the possibility, through collective memory and the process of remembering, to claim the valorization of their social role as an active constituent in the reorganization of contemporary society.

Therefore, it is essential to question how cities are preparing themselves and if, in fact, they are for this new reality and, above all, to observe how this social category has (re) inserted itself in city spaces. In this context, one must evaluate how collective memory can be used as a fighting tool in order to experience promising and successful aging in the urban space. Thus, it is essential to know the memory of this social category of elderly women, which is inserted in the urban space and sometimes does not have the effective right to the city. Therefore, it is necessary a reading of the elderly woman who seeks new spaces, new movement and new achievements. In this perspective, the present essay aims to reflect on the collective memory of older women about their social role. This has the possibility of weaving a way of preserving memory, allowing the urban space to be experienced through the memories that make them feel integral and constituent of space. Thus, more than guaranteeing the preservation of what happened, memory could be a bet on the future (GONDAR, 2016). A possible conjunction between the almost instant past and future, and above all the right to perpetuate oneself.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Collective Memory: Maurice Halbwachs has established himself as an important sociologist and is responsible for the inauguration of the field of memory studies in sociology. Therefore, it points out as fundamental the understanding that social contexts should be considered in the exercise of collective memory reconstruction. The author considers that the individual is always inserted in society and in a given space and, therefore, belongs to one or more reference groups. Therefore, the memories are derived from a collective process and inserted in a distinct social context. This contextualization includes time and space as essential dimensions of each individual's experience and constitution. Due to the stability of space, one has the perception of its immutability and this provides the illusion of no apparent changes in space and this phenomenon helps people and groups to cling to the place where they live (HALBWACHS, 2006). To this end, *Los marcos sociales de la memoria*, launched in the 1920s, is a valuable study for understanding that social frameworks are relevant references for collective memories to be recalled and transmitted over time. The social frameworks anchor the reconstruction of memory, since:

The frames of what we talked about, and that would allow us to reconstruct our memories after they have disappeared, are not exclusively individual: they are common to the men of the same group. If, consequently, they extend to all recent events, if they include all of them, if you can indistinctly take one of them, it does not matter whether, as a reference point, they are all in the same plane, it is that the group as a whole it preserves them and the most recent events all have a more or less equivalent importance for the group (HALBWACHS, 2004, p.157).

In this bias, identity also has a close connection with the places where the history of a collectivity has been inscribed and memory remains alive. Here, location and memories refer to a space, material and symbolic, for individuals who developed their existences and in a group establish their memories. As a result,

[...] space is a reality that lasts. [...] It is space, our space - the space we occupy, where we often go, to which we always have access and which, in any case, our imagination or our thought has to be fixed so that this or that category of memories reappears (HALBWACHS, 2006, p. 170).

Thus, the places are remembered by the groups, by the people, because in them were made possible the experiences of daily life, daily struggles, conquests and resistances. According to Halbwachs (2004, p.111): "From every age of our life, we keep some memories, we constantly reproduce, and through the heavens the feeling of our identity is perpetuated, as by the effects of continuous filiation." It is essential to understand that collective memories are not inscribed in urban landscapes as hard, immortal and concrete images. It is not the gatherings of visible spaces that prove the existence of a group's memory. It is not urban heritage in itself, loaded with meaning. But the forms of space are full of meaning, even though they are mute and immovable, full of meaning, familiarity, and decipherable (HALBWACHS, 2006).

In this sense, memories are linked to this or that place - not because it still exists or has not changed in its functionality - but precisely because the lives of many people were made up of what happened there, what was experienced by the importance of what was built in that environment and what was perpetuated. After all, "[...] if memories are kept in the group's thinking, it is because it remains established in the soil, it is because the image of the soil materially remains outside of it and it can resume it at any moment" (HALBWACHS, 2006, p.167). Thus,

Every aspect, every detail of this place has a meaning that is only intelligible to the members of the group, because every part of the space it occupied corresponds to so many different aspects of the structure and life of its society, at least what was in it more stable (HALBWACHS, 2006, p.160).

Then there is the rooting of groups, of people with the place where their lives are established, they are enjoyed. Rooting is part of the human essence in its entirety. Rooting is a fundamental human right and the denial of this right has serious consequences for culture and life in society (BOSI, 2013).

Related to this, the accumulated experiences are directly linked to the feeling of belonging to a group, to a place, that is, "[...] when a human group lives a long time in a place adapted to its habits, not only its movements, but also their thoughts are regulated by the succession of images representing their external objects" (HALBWACHS, 2006, p.163).

From this perspective, it can be considered that memories allow an intrinsic connection with the representation of the city not only to the physical environment, but to what it means.

That is, all memory develops in a spatial framework (HALBWACHS, 2006). Everyday life tends to be understood based on memories imbued with historical value for a social group and each memory in particular depends on the memory of the group. For Halbwachs (2004, p.169) the memories “[...] are the result that the memory of men depends on the groups that surround them and the ideas and images in which the groups have the greatest interest. Thus, collective memory is reinforced as they have common notions and are experienced by an entire group. It is the bond that binds your memories Halbwachs (2004, p. 174) points out that:

The individual memory is nothing more than a part and an aspect of the group's memory, as of any impression and of all fact, even in what is apparently more intimate, a lasting memory is conserved as long as it is reflected on it, that is, it has been linked to thoughts coming from the social environment.

In this context, the vision, for example, of a city by a particular group, with its past experiences also establishes their daily lives, and these experiences, in one way or another, mark the space. The inhabited place is marked by a group and the group is marked by the place it inhabits (HALBWACHS, 2006). As these spaces are apprehended, materially and immaterially, they are susceptible to the construction of identities, affection and feelings of belonging. In this dynamic, the urban space is filled with symbolism, culture and memories, and this is being “written” by those who appropriate it, gain new meanings and objectify life (CARLOS, 2007).

It is worth remembering that the urban landscape is durable for the time necessary to exercise its functionality. It changes according to the transformations arising from political and economic relations, above all. For Santos (2007, p.54):

The landscape has nothing fixed, immovable. Each time society undergoes a process of change, the economy, social and political relations also change at varying rates and intensities. The same thing happens in relation to space and the landscape, which changes to adapt to the new needs of society [...] The landscape, like space, changes continuously to be able to follow the transformations of society. The form is changed, renewed, deleted to give way to another form that meets the new needs of the social structure.

Although there is a mutability of the urban landscape, it is full of symbolism, meanings, belonging and affectivities that create identity for its inhabitants. The sphere of the lived is a necessary reading for the understanding of how the urban landscapes are produced and perceived, since it is possible to establish the daily life, the collective social practices, the signs, the consensus, the disagreements, the encounters and disagreements that write the history and perpetuate the memories of certain social groups in the urban area. Halbwachs (2006, p.159) defines that:

When inserted into a part of space, a group molds it into its image, but at the same time bends and adapts the material things that resist it. The group closes in the context that built it. The image of the outside environment and the stable relations it maintains with it comes to the forefront of its idea of itself.

Thus, city spaces include various groups and their struggles and perspectives. After all, the city allows the adhesions that associate people, families and groups with each other and this binds their memories (ABREU, 2018). It is good to emphasize that the language, the speech in the group will not always be homogeneous. Still, they are close by the sense of belonging to the city or place or various places in it. Places are established and imbued with material and immaterial elements that only make sense for the experience. The memories are linked to the moment, the time and spaces experienced. They are seen as symbolic supports, which take days and years to build upon, as they are forged in daily work, in the spatial contradictions of the collectivities that build and / or enjoy the places by giving them importance. Benjamin (1993, p.70) adds: “[...] the reminiscence founds the chain of tradition, which transmits events from generation to generation. It corresponds to the epic muse in the broadest sense. It includes all varieties of the epic form”. From these findings, it remains to know how these memories are sought and remembered in this period called present. People are linked to various social frameworks, as they are oriented and influenced by various aspects that each social framework contains, whether religious feeling, language, family, time and space. As stated by Halbwachs (2004, p.167-168)

[...] the existence of permanent groups of which we have been and are an integral part, because we are linked at less distant intervals, and because we adhere to them permanently. We have recovered and defined the past of these groups, the events and the personas, but it seems that our thoughts constantly guide each of their aspects.

Memory can be seen not only as a tool for storing one's own data, but also mainly as a capacity for reorganizing things and oneself. A possible reconfiguration of such data stored in memory that is aroused by recollection. Given the above considerations, it is essential to evaluate that social frameworks welcome memories in a spatiotemporal “scenario”. As a result, memories are located and referenced somewhere or in something. In this context, we have the city as the privileged scenario that makes the realization of human life possible. The residents of a city produce their lives and, in so doing, build their own space for the realization of human activities in daily life (VERDI; NOGUEIRA, 2017). Thus, the city is perceived as a place of coexistence of individuals and social groups, as well as a place of trade, the influx of goods. In it there is the development of the technical networks, place of transport, people and goods circulation establishing an inseparable set of fixed and flows inherent to urban life.

The Contemporary City

The city is tangible and changeable, even if there are permanencies, since its production is constant. In this way, the urban landscape carries elements of distinct times and epochs. Always brings the marks of the past and the present together. It has multiple forms and functions by the productive and transforming force of society. For this, work (formal-informal, productive-unproductive) is the driving force of this arrangement. City spaces are generated through the impositions of the current system, since it aims at the capitalist production of space, since the capitalist system has its own dynamics of constant expansion and, therefore, reshapes the world in which we live permanently. At times, the processes aimed at meeting the capitalist production of space direct the

city to meet the mandates and mismatches of the globalizing process. Today, information overlaps with knowledge. The essential becomes ephemeral, because in the urban space, the celerity is destined to the immediate stimulus of the fundamental consumption for the reproduction of the capital. Thus, Brazilian cities do not differ from global reality, and these have a fast pace, inserting them in a model considered as modern, agile, hurried, technological and sustainable. These attributes characterize the city and shape its inhabitants and become peculiar. That is, this movement gives shape to the urban space and its residents. Given this, the city is inclined to agility, rapid traffic, changes in landscapes. Get to know the dynamic movements of commerce with all its advertising, sales and consumer claims. Over time, there are changes in their forms and structures. In light of the changes, Carlos (2007, p. 51) comments:

The flow of information and goods is generalized throughout the planetary space, since capitalism, at first, circumvents the national borders to reproduce itself [...]. In this perspective, the urban no longer designates the city or city life, but instead designates the society that constitutes a reality that encompasses and transcends the city as a place, because everything that exists contacts the whole world, connecting isolated points of the planet.

In this occasion, it is indispensable to emphasize that ambiguities are part of cities, because it simultaneously congregates and segregates its residents in the most varied ways, either through class division, in spatial production through the peripheries, neighborhoods. Therefore, it is also understood as the most radical intervention of man in the landscape, after all the production of urban space is a dialectical movement (CAVALCANTI, 2001). Within this analysis, it is evaluated that the urban space is composed of a combination of material and immaterial elements that comprise the city. Spatial production is surrounded by its inhabitants in time and space historically determined. Therefore, there is a material basis and historical context in which urban life unfolds, becomes effective. Social relations materialize in concrete territorial bases revealed in the spatial practice of society. Halbwachs (2006, p. 161) states that:

Thus, not only house and walls persist through the centuries, but every part of the group that is in constant contact with them and confuses their life with the life of things remains impassive, because they are not interested in what actually happens outside their circle nearest and beyond your immediate horizon.

The pointed realities are present and are constituent elements of the urban space, however, the various readings of this scenario still grant other imbrications. There is no denying that cities reflect the economic mode of production. However, it is not restricted to this category, although dominant. Other spheres linked to it in this elaboration and that are associated in the spatial construction, are these cultural, symbolic, environmental and, above all, social. In this way, the city can be understood dialectically, that is both as a product of capital as a condition and means for the reproduction of social relations, every day that provides the realization of human life (CARLOS, 2007). In this sense, it holds content that is fundamental to assessing its nuances so that its understanding becomes ever more comprehensive and revealing.

In the meantime, cities are thought of as a revolutionary place as they bring together all the complex elements and objects for their production / reproduction. And it still contains the interests of all the collectivities that build it, with their clashes, their contradictions arising from the dynamics of the process of its (re)production. It shows the continuous process of its spatial (re)organization as a result of the existence of differentiated values among its inhabitants. In this, it is necessary to point out that each society cuts the space as it suits it and thus always finds its memories (HALBWACHS, 2006). The memories of a city refer to the various ways in which different groups live and enjoy it daily. In this daily life, there is the spatial production that takes place through various actions, sometimes repeated, so that there is reproduction as a society. To think of the reconstruction of these memories is to consider the perpetuation of the past, the experimentation of the present, and to create conditions for imagining the future through the collective memories generated. This allows the recognition of themselves, because the collective memories portray the production of the city and in these are involved the forgetting and silencing that are part of the construction of the daily work of each group. The anchoring of memories in space produces identity, belonging, gives meaning to places and life itself.

The feminization of old age: old women and their social role

Growing old today can be linked to the preservation of beauty, the almost unchanging body, the little wrinkled skin, the use of miraculous cosmetics, the aesthetic procedures to look younger and younger. However, to speak of good old age, it is essential to realize that all people are subject to aging, the natural limits of this process, and not necessarily social exclusion, ugliness or lack of dignity. Many of the older women in the urban space still have many to teach the new generations, because this new phase of life can be a way of reinventing old age, a future of discoveries, news and teachings for those who will come. The phenomenon of feminization of old age in Brazil is growing and has an elderly population that is one of the largest in the world, in absolute terms. Census data from Brazil show that the female contingent over 60 years of age increased from 2.2% in 1940, to 4.7% in 2000; and 6% in 2010, and by 2050 women will remain the majority, with an estimated population of 7 million more women than men. This population of 60 years and older has grown, especially the number of women, that is, the female gender is more relevant the older the segment, especially in urban space (NERI, 2007). In this way, old age needs to be rethought, reconsidered in all its nuances so that the process of aging is perceived under new expectations. Associated with the longer life of women compared to men, there is a growth of these older women in the labor market and a greater number of them as heads of household.

Tied to these questions, we can see the vision of society around old age. In other words, "[...] the individual is conditioned by the practical and ideological attitude of society towards him". (BEAUVOIR, 2018, p.13). In this confluence, the question deepens: What is the meaning of aging? It is conflicting to belong to a city that is predominantly a place for young people, for those who are productive. Neri (1991, p.31-33) questions:

What does it mean to be old in Brazil today? Feel and be seen as an operative, accepted, valued, integrated individual? Or the reverse? [...] be evaluated and evaluated positively or negatively? Anyway, would there be a unique answer to this question? [...] But what old are we talking about? Where do you live? What are you doing? How old are you? What are your health conditions? Is it male or female? What is your personal aging experience?

Throughout human existence, different concepts and attitudes towards old age have been presented. These are socially constructed and transmitted to children, adolescents and youth about the aging process. Mostly, especially in Brazil, the idea of old age is communicated by television media, religion, art and the Internet, among others. Thus, many of these concepts and teachings spread the fear of getting old, of becoming old, because dependence, fragile health, loneliness and loss of dignity are often associated. This enables the creation of prejudices and stereotypes that result in hasty and unsubstantiated conclusions about the productivity and often the competence of the elderly. In this understanding, there is no way to hide the inherent difficulties of old age, but conditions are neither determinant nor exclusive. It is well known that the elderly, in general, naturally have a slower, calmer pace, greater mobility difficulties, as well as increased health problems. They need more time to adjust to the natural limitations of aging and the rhythms imposed by economic and emotional conditions. The human organism has its singularities. Behavioral changes are presented that will change the relationships with daily life, with the world and other ways of seeing oneself and others, as, and at any age, the way of life ends up being determined by the society in which it is inserted (BEAUVOIR, 2018).

In this connection, we present the elderly women who, when moving away from the labor market and moving away from the public space, have their sociability weakened, since it was often built mainly on the basis of labor relations (formal-informal, productive-unproductive). For modern life reflects a logic based on economic productivity and the subjection of individuals to it (DEBERT, 2004). Associated with this, the stereotype of the elderly woman faces challenges, as there is discredit in her, since the old woman - as it is considered in most circumstances - is capable of arousing fear, indifference, if not considered, because who is "lame" or no longer aware of what he says. In the children's stories, it is the old woman who mistreats, who haunts, who is ugly and makes witchcraft. As Beauvoir points out (1949, p.23) "[...] the drama of women is this conflict between the fundamental claim of every subject who always stands as essential and the demands of a situation that constitutes her as inessential." The social identity of older women is affected by other ways of living old age. Having an older life with more longevity, health, and possibly greater participation in social life, may contribute to new experiences during this period. Given this reality, it is important to examine the social role played by elderly women in this brand new scenario of feminization of old age. Still, it must be ascertained how collective memories can be instruments of struggle in the reconstruction and preservation of their lives and rights as challenges to become subjects of their time. How well do you write Zuben (2001, p.182). What will be the bet or challenge of the third millennium on the problem of aging? I dare to hope that it will be to understand each generation - in the chain of hominization - in its specificities and to assign to each one

the task that fits him, guaranteeing him, no matter his age, the responsibility of its destiny. Nevertheless, it can be seen that, today, older women have assumed primary roles in modern society. They are roles that were not previously assigned to them. Heading the house has always been a male task. Working away from home for some was a necessity, for others an income supplement, but domestic service was constantly delegated to women. However, at this stage of life, roles are being redefined. For married older women and their husbands are sick or have died and they are widows or have not taken over as head of the household. In other situations, it is grandparents who have often taken on parental responsibilities and taken care of their children for themselves. Some older women share their homes with sons and daughters who have returned to their paternal home after divorce, but it is the older women who keep their homes financially by receiving their retirement. In this profusion, they promote a reordering in the conception and meaning of aging, even if they do not realize this process and, thus, the social role of women is changing over the lifetime.

The fall in labor income at the end of the life cycle, for the most part, obliges these older women to have an extra income that is sometimes linked to handicrafts that in their youth did not have enough time to do so, and in this period. Now, they can still market the manufactured product. Some alternatives are sought to minimize the impacts of lowering income, such as ironing clothes from other families, making minor adjustments to clothes, making homemade cakes, among other examples. In this way, a reintegration into the contemporary city, sometimes symbolic, is allowed, as it does not only represent the return to paid work or the routines of work outside the home. It is a process of symbolic reintegration into the city's spaces, since there is a reinvention in the ways of managing time, work, leisure, coexistence, places and social bonds (DEBRET, 2004).

It must be understood that old age has become a female issue and as such, the strategies for greater visibility of older women have been as varied as possible. As a result, support networks have grown as they decide that living in collectives helps them rebuild their lives and daily life. It is noted that the elderly "[...] redefines what is the experience of aging, turning it into a period of life to be lived more mature and fruitful" (DEBRET, 2004, p.149). One feature that contributes to older women being more active in old age is the fact that they tend to establish and maintain lifelong friendships. More time is available for maintaining more stable and secure interpersonal relationships. A greater opportunity for closer family ties, whether between children, grandchildren or spouses. They tend to expand their social relationships with family, friends, neighbors, and other women. Thus, it is common to realize that in community groups, living together, the female presence is the majority. As a result, the elderly women's living groups are places of approach, camaraderie, companionship in the performance of countless activities that contribute to the process of building collective memory. This articulation of the elderly strengthens their memories linked to the urban space. In this context, the city for older women has a profound significance, as they are rooted in it. They are linked to the neighborhoods, the neighborhood, the streets, the church, the shops, the fairs, because they are components that govern their daily lives for long years. The social role of the elderly is closely linked to the new attributions and life experiences that built them and that give them identity and recognition.

In this convergence, the collective memory of elderly women from the connivance groups can be conceived as a valuable resource in the struggle to recognize their social role today. That is, for older women, belonging to a city is not restricted to owning immovable property, having a fixed address or moving from one place to another. However, the process of remembrance of this group allows the understanding that the right to the city is beyond these conditions. This right is based on the need to embrace the urban space conscious of its social role. Since they are possible producers of new images of aging, as well as essential in the reconfiguration of the concepts about old age that are still archaic and ineffective. Therefore, the process of remembering the various groups of elderly women becomes significant, as it represents a possibility of building spaces for struggle for the recognition of their social role and their reinsertion in the enjoyment of urban space in its various functionalities of living. This implies realizing that the strength of older women is qualitative, productive, and innovative when it comes to reinventing old age.

Conclusions

The urban space is composed of materialities and immaterialities that articulate the productive forces and, at the same time, conceives the idea of an urban construction, woven by social relations that give meaning to daily life, produces identity and is linked to the place of the known and, in which social groups recognize each other. From this connection, collective memories are constructed and are embargoed with meaning, because they portray experiences of a past time that is combined in the present moment and can be a resource of political action, struggle and resistance in the now and for the future. Thus, it is assumed that older women, through the accentuated process of feminization of old age and, above all, based on the construction of their collective memories, are protagonists in the process of reinvention of old age. In this process, collective memory serves as an instrument of struggle for the viability of recognition and the strengthening of themselves. Thus, they have the possibility of being builders of claims regarding the recognition of their social role by the current society, as well as in the transformation of the conceptions about old age and its social construction.

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