



Museum-house: the transformation of residences into sociocultural memory spaces

Renata Carlos de Oliveira Gonçalves

renatacogoncalves@gmail.com

Lusófona University, Lisbon, Portugal

Abstract:

The present study proposes a reflection about the transformation process of houses that belonged to representative residents into museum spaces, as well as the relations established with the society and its surroundings. A space considered as a holder of socio- cultural memory represents the daily life and customs of a society during an era and it is able to expose beyond the material legacy of someone or some family. The representation of the daily life and customs of the residents and its interpretive programs promote a cultural understanding with the local community and visitors. The house is often seen as a connection of architectural legacy with memory, identity, and social representation (Bourdieu, 1989). Thus, the conversion of use is very interesting and attractive, but some difficulties are encountered, such as the adaptation of the program of needs accessibility, legibility and imageability (Lynch, 1960, p.10). The transformation of a space previously designed to be private and intimate considers conceptual issues of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, the fundamental principle of the museum-house is the treatment given to a private place that was not designed for exhibitions, but its collection is what fosters this event. Therefore, these are spaces created from the inside out, from the inner to the outer part, respecting the symbolic singularity of each collection and sometimes resulting in inviting solutions for new experiences depending on the methodology of the approach used in the mediation process. Thenceforth, it is possible to understand the ambiances perceived and realized by the individual and their experience of the space.

HOME: MEMORY, IDENTITY AND AFFECTIVITY

Architecture as a residential place proposed for a family is capable of creating very strong relations of identity and memory. Its architecture needs program, as well as its structure and details, are a result of an addition of materials and deeds reinterpreted, although capable of acquiring other layers of meaning, as poetic images. When talking about poetry, some concepts are important to be presented initially. The first of them, the *habitus* is a notion that allows us to analyze characteristics of social identity, from biographical experiences, where choices can be conscious or unconscious. It is a cultural matrix that predisposes individuals to preferences that somehow make social identities possible.

Bourdieu presents us with the social world from three different perspectives, however, in this article we will focus on the phenomenological, which is the one that considers the family environment and its relations as the first experience of the individual, where he absorbs it naturally, but under the influence of others, and the praxeological where the object goes beyond the objectivist knowledge that is built, but also the dialectical relations and a double process of exteriorization and internalization (Bourdieu, 1983b, p. 46- 47). Therefore, the concept reconciles the opposition between external social reality and individual realities.

The habitus is a socialized subjectivity (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 101), so it is a conceptual tool that allows us to analyze behaviors in the social world and thus, generate a social representation about a given object associated with the construction of worldviews, expressing the identities of social actors and the interrelationships built by them (Jovchelovitch, 2008). Therefore, the second concept to be discussed is about social representations, where diverse meanings are constructed about something to be represented and in diversified contexts produce varied views about it. Such social representations can be recognized, for example, from the definition of personal and social identities, sense of belonging, conduct, and affective implications by the internalization of experiences (Wagner, 1998).

“As a moment of legitimization, social representations show themselves to be a space of dispute between different groups with the intention of making their worldview legitimate. Once this dominance is established, the symbolic field acts as a field for wielding power. A power that does not physically coerce, but builds within individuals the values necessary for the maintenance of social structures, justifying certain social practices to the detriment of others. It is the representations that each society, or social group, creates to identify itself and the material world that gives unity to the collectivity, thus forming the symbolic links of the identity groups. Being a symbolic space where the social identities of different groups in society are built, the social imaginary, at the moment it informs the vision that each individual has of himself and of his group, is a powerful facilitator of social practices”.

(Pacheco, 2001, p. 10, our translation)

From the general understanding of representations and affectivity, one can infer the value of the home also in a social sphere, even more so when it concerns someone important in the city and who deserves some recognition. However, the architectural proposal changes when the program of needs of a building is changed, but what happens to its legacy? This essay's aim is to make a brief analysis of the transformation of residential space into a museum, from the perspective of social memory.

Such change in use, as the proposal of reforming the residence into a public space for visitation and turning it into a space-exhibition, as a Museum-Home, is to induce the visitor through the intimate life of another person to self-reference, or rather, identify themselves through their own memories (Afonso & Serres, 2016). The first residents or the honored person of that place are no longer present, but their habits and memories are present in the organization of the place and arrangement of furniture details that are able to tell a story. Scarpeline (2012) argues that the space of the house carries with it the life and relationships built in that place, embracing its surroundings, neighbors, nearby shops, and services. "It is cultural and intellectual, food and hygiene, religious and leisure habits forming a set of relationships that serves as a bridge between the public and the private." (Scarpeline, 2012, p. 78, our translation).

The environment and ambiance

Therefore, the representation of places and their surroundings is comfortable in a practical daily sense, but also emotional for an individual, such as the hospital where he was born, his grandparents' house, the street where he lived during his childhood, and the daily path to work. The represented image needs identification or familiarization with the object. So, to better understand such subjective analyses, for example, the memory activated in the individual during a visit to a certain place, it can be done through the study of ambiances. This helps in the analysis of the concomitant and reciprocal process of interaction between man and the environment (Thibaud, 2000).

It is through it, one may have a theoretical-conceptual instrument capable of analyzing the dynamics of interaction between the environment and social practices through relations with space and with the senses. According to Thibaud, there are three possible interaction dynamics: acclimation, qualification, and reconstitution, where each one corresponds to the typology of the relationship established considering social, spatial, and sensorial abilities.

Thus, the adaptation is configured as if the subjects and their surrounding environments were confused, establishing a clear relationship between the space and the activities in it. Qualification happens when the environment can provide components that were once idealized but are underused, and the meaning of these components is appropriated by the occupants. Finally, reconstitution is the production, by the public itself, of sensitive conditions for the desired transformation in the practical field.

THE NARRATIVE OF PRIVATE LIFE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: MUSEUM-HOUSE

The transformation of a residence into a museum space is a special typology, since it corresponds to the domestic space that portrays the daily life of a prominent social character in their community, regardless of social class, at a certain time. To achieve this effect, the exhibit - which at first was not designed to be public, prospects someone's memory and at the same time entertains curious visitors wanting to know the intimacy and it generates identification. Such an approach registers a social memory that commonly aims at the preservation of the building and its collection, besides keeping the memory alive by presenting the enclosure arranged in a customary form so that visitors have the impression of peeping into that family arrangement (Horta, 1997, p. 113 - 114).

The veracity of the proposed experience depends directly on the preservation of the setting, for "[...] the house is no longer just an architectural object, nor even just a cultural object. The house becomes the holder of a content, carrying a greater meaning" (Horta, 1997, p. 113, our translation).

“[...]When one enters house museum, beyond the systems of domestic life, observing the objects in their original form or close to it, this one will enter directly into the intimacy of somebody else, a person who is often introverted and who never had thought of this space being enjoyed by strangers. [...] Personal memory, reflected in a private space, becomes collective memory; personal space becomes public space, sought by those who want to get into the depths of a certain personality.”

(Ponte, 2007: 26, our translation)

Authors Afonso and Serres (2016) discuss the possibilities of the roles people assume as an individual who has only home as a refuge, for each corner reflects both their identity and their personal conflicts. However, when the reality that someone is about to be portrayed, the interpretation the tourist might have will be conditioned by expographic decisions that can emphasize qualities and/or hide defects, in order to create a more attractive character without interfering with the originality of the plot.

During a visit, a museum-house offers many sensations that take the visitor back to their own memories, through the smell and noise of the furniture or the organization of the dining table carrying the visitor to another moment of their life. It is through the awareness of this perception that it is possible to reframe them through memory.

In this regard, it is often necessary to reform the environment to adapt it to the new typology, this includes possible remodeling of the building, inclusion of accessibility to all public, the feasibility of museological practices, adequacy of the collection and the

character, in addition to management, because the fact of being a residence does not exempt the museum from its institutional obligations.

CONCLUSION

The Museum-Houses have several singularities, but one must consider their importance as cultural equipment, some need adaptations or accessibility to change their function. It is important to mention that the change of typology needs to favor new practices and to this end, sometimes, some architectural alterations are necessary.

This essay aimed the reflection on the transformation of residential spaces into museums as a place of sociocultural memory, that being the case, we need the support of some concepts such as *habitus*, social representations, and the theory of ambiance. Such considerations allowed us to reflect on how the 'musealization' of social memory is not just about its architectural value, but a kind of spatial education, making us question who is the protagonist: the honored person or the built space? It is a complex interaction between the collection and the visitor, in order to awaken in them an apparent approximation of the exhibition thanks to the identification process.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

- Afonso, M. M., & Serres, J. C. P. (2014). Casa-Museu, museu-casa ou casa histórica? Uma controversa tipologia museal. *Contribuciones a las Ciencias Sociales*, (2014-11).
- Afonso, M. M., & Serres, J. C. P. (2016). Casa-museu, museu-casa, casa histórica: um lugar de memórias. *Revista VOX MUSEI arte e patrimônio*, 1(1), 39-47.
- Bourdieu, P. (1983). Como é possível ser esportivo. *Questões de sociologia*, 136-153.
- Bourdieu, P. (1992). *Pierre Bourdieu avec Löïc Wacquant; réponses. Pour une anthropologie réflexive*. Paris: Seuil.
- Da Silva, L. O. M., & de Siqueira Duarte, C. R. (2020). Ambiências urbanas no behaviorismo espacial e na fenomenologia da percepção. *Risco Revista de Pesquisa em Arquitetura e Urbanismo (Online)*, 18, 1-15.
- Gonçalves, R. C. D. O. (2020). *O museu como ambiente educativo: um estudo em Campina Grande-PB*.
- Horta, M. P. (1997). Mesa-redonda: A museologia e os museu-casa. *Anais do Primeiro Seminário sobre Museus-Casas*, Rio de Janeiro, Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa, 1997, p. 109.
- Jovchelovitch, S. (2008a) The Rehabilitation of Common Sense: Social representations, knowledge and cognitive polyphasia. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*. 38, 4, 431-448.
- Jovchelovitch, S. (2008b) *Os Contextos do Saber: Representações, comunidade e cultura*. Petrópolis: Vozes.
- Lynch, K. (1980). *A imagem do meio ambiente. A imagem da cidade*. São Paulo:

- Martins Fontes, 11-23.
- Pacheco, R. de A. (2001). Cidadania e identidade social: uma aproximação teórica para o entendimento das representações e práticas políticas. *Mneme: Revista de Humanidades, Caicó*, v. 2, n. 03, 2001.
- Ponte, A. (2007). Casas-Museu em Portugal: teoria e prática. Porto: Universidade do Porto. Dissertação (Mestrado em Museologia). Faculdade de Letras.
- Ricoeur, P. (2007). A memória, a história, o esquecimento. Unicamp.
- Scarpeline, R. (2012). Lugar de morada versus lugar de memória. *Musear*, 1(1), 77-91.
- Thibaud, J. (2000). Contextualisations sensibles de la ville. In: LEROUX, Martine et al. (orgs.). *Compositions sensibles de la ville: Ville émergente et sensorialité*. Grenoble: CRESSON, 2000, p. 102-121.
- _____. Por uma gramática geradora das ambiências. In: SCOCUGLIA, Jovanka (org.). *Cidade, Cultura e Urbanidade*. João Pessoa: Editora Universitária da UFPB, 2012b, p. 27-70.
- Wagner, W. (1998). Sócio-gênese e características das representações sociais. In: MOREIRA, A. S. P.; OLIVEIRA, D. C. de (org.). *Estudos interdisciplinares de representação social*. Goiânia: AB, 1998.

