Youth, fear and urban space in Cochabamba

Jóvenes, miedo y espacio urbano en Cochabamba

ABSTRACT

For upper-middle-class young people in the city of Cochabamba, the limits of the habitable world are reached a few blocks away from the Plaza Colón, in the heart of the old city centre. Just metres further on begins an invisible wall that separates two worlds, two cultures and two aesthetics, where fear and insecurity play an important role. In this article, the authors share some of the findings from their research on young people and the decline of the public space in Cochabamba.

RESUMEN

Para los jóvenes de clase media alta de la ciudad de Cochabamba, los linderos del mundo habitable se cierran en el corazón del antiguo centro urbano. Metros más allá, comienza una muralla invisible que separa dos mundos, dos culturas y dos estéticas donde el miedo y la inseguridad tienen un rol importante. Los autores de este artículo comparten algunos de los hallazgos de una investigación sobre la declinación del espacio público y los jóvenes en Cochabamba.

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In statistical and demographic terms, young people are a group between the ages of 17 and 24. This indicates that youth is marked by biology or bodily development. Following Bourdieu, however, we can make a sociological reading of youth, understanding it as a power relationship: a young person is someone who engages in disputes with earlier generations. We can therefore read youth from two points of view: the physical and the social.

Accepting that youth is a culturally constructed category, we are interested in focusing on a particular way of being young in Cochabamba: belonging to the upper-middle class, which is characterised by having money, living in residential neighbourhoods in the North of the city, attending private schools and having one's own means of transport – a car – to move around the city.

Of course, as Carles Feixa (2004) points out, generations are not compact structures but rather "symbolic references that vaguely identify people socialised within the same historical coordinates." According to Feixa, "young people are natives of the present," and consequently bearers of a new episteme and sensibilities resulting from historical experience and the years when they were socialised.

There is no doubt that the old landowning elites who settled in the city of Cochabamba ceased to be a leading social class after the 1953 Agrarian Reform. The essence of their feudal and economic power collapsed when the bonded farm labourers were emancipated and turned into the owners of the land that belonged to their former masters.

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With regard to this, the journalist Demetrio Canelas noted almost half a century ago that as a result of this measure, "thousands of families who made up the traditional middle class were thrown out of their homes and condemned to destitution" (*Los Tiempos*, 30.09.1971). This is an explicit acknowledgement that Cochabamba's dominant class had been deeply affected and much of its economic power had vanished. The remnants survived by consuming their "reserves," but these were not just material goods – they included prestige, old influences in the world of trade, and friends who remained faithful. In one way or another, this would enable them to share some fragments of their old hegemony with the new social groups, through their more enterprising descendants.

Gordillo, Rivera and Sullkata agree with this idea, affirming that the members of the traditional elite whose old source of power had been their link with estate land "closed in on themselves and barricaded themselves behind ultra-defensive positions in response to the emergence of the new social groups" (2007: 71). Nevertheless, there are indications that a few members of this old elite attempted separately to adapt to the new modern times, not always successfully. They adopted a strategy of returning to the sphere of long-term power through their descendants. To achieve this, they did not hesitate to make huge sacrifices to enable their children to obtain the best university education, preferably abroad. These descendants would be the seeds of a new generation of business entrepreneurs, civil servants and public university lecturers who emerged in the 1970s and '80s and found fertile ground to consolidate themselves with the economic growth that followed the hyperinflation of 1982-1985 and the privatisation and market economy policies adopted in the 1990s. These are elites that have grown with the support of bureaucratic jobs in local and national government institutions.

In urban terms, their territories and spaces for socialising revolved around the city centre, in the area between El Prado, the Plaza Colón and the Plaza de Armas. This is not a large group: they may number no more than 2,000 to 2,500 families, who mostly live in the North of the city and congregate around clubs such as the Country Club or the Cochabamba Tennis Club. Their children go to "elite" schools such as Tiquipaya, Anglo Americano, Froebel or San Agustín. When they leave secondary school, they prefer to enrol at the

Universidad Privada Boliviana (UPB) or in certain degree courses at the Universidad Católica Boliviana (UCB) that will prepare them for the world of business.

This group of young people is a generation born between 1983 and 1990, i.e. in the time of transition from the society of the masses introduced by the 1952 Revolution to the elitist, individualist society of neoliberalism – a time of democracy, the political party system and institution-building. Their youth coincided, however, with the crisis of this system of references and the emergence of profound social conflicts and disputes for power at the local and national level. Between the water war of February 2000 and the violent clashes of 11 January 2007 was a seven-year period characterised by constant tension, the crisis of the republican system and the emergence of new social and ethnic groups at the regional level and in society as a whole.

How this context is influencing systems of representation, meanings or collective senses in Cochabamba requires further research. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that young people from the upper-middle class – members of a group called "Jóvenes por la democracia" ("Young people for democracy") – were a core component of the armed demonstrators who clashed violently with rural, indigenous and low-income urban groups on 11 January 2007, and that they have started to read social reality in terms of irreconcilable confrontation and polarisation with ethnic and class connotations, in response to the official discourse of Evo Morales and Álvaro García Linera which introduced a reading from the same standpoints. For the time being, we can suggest that the emergence of these new discourses called into question the *mestizo* identity and sense of belonging as a shared cultural space or the basis of the imagined community in Cochabamba introduced by revolutionary nationalism in the period following the Chaco war (1932-1935).

1. **Territory and the urban imaginary**

Youth cultures seek to open up spaces to inhabit where they enjoy freedom and are not told what to do by their elders. Like other human groups, they do not exist without a territory or without material and symbolic ownership of that territory. Under what aegis is the

territoriality of upper-middle-class young people in Cochabamba being (re)fashioned? How do fear and difference influence the occupation of these territories or exclusion from them?[2]

Territoriality "is the way of relating to the living space established by the individual" (Lindon, 2005: 145-172). A territory is much more than the material or physical space, as it includes a non-material or socially subjective dimension. Territory, in other words, is based on symbolic ownership.

As representations, territories are not visible to everyone. Or, to put it another way, they are visible to some and invisible to others. The state of visibility or invisibility cannot be considered without taking into account the individual who sees or does not see. Visibility is not structural but experiential, as it is associated with how encounters are represented. Urban groups judge the quality of places, attributing certain characteristics, meanings and senses to them. Shared identities are established in the territory, giving meaning to affective and symbolic interactions.

The sense of sight plays a key role in how we experience the landscape. As Alicia Lindón points out, it is through sight that we get to know the world: "invisible landscapes are those we do not see, and what we do not see, we do not usually know; the landscapes we see are the ones we know."

The territoriality of upper-middle-class young people in Cochabamba is expressed in time and space according to age, class and sex. It is a historical category that is constantly being transformed under the influence of socio-economic, technological and urban changes. Since the 1980s, an important shift has taken place in how the territory is used and represented by these young people, which we will examine below. Firstly, they have withdrawn from the public space occupied by the previous generation, or use it only sporadically and for specific purposes, and secondly they have taken over the night as an autonomous space for leisure activities and socialising.

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[2] In this article, we present some of the results of the research project "Decline of the public space and upper-middle-class young people in Cochabamba," sponsored by PIEB. The surveys, interviews and direct observation were carried out at the end of 2007.

The way in which the previous generation – the parents of these upper-middle-class young people in Cochabamba – lived and socialised in the space was different. In the 1970s and '80s, their timeframe was limited – or rather restricted – to the daylight hours and, occasionally, the early evening under the severe paternal gaze. Public spaces – squares, streets and street corners – were genuine territories for meeting and socialising, used largely without fear. The street markets were the preferred retail outlets where families bought their supplies and did their shopping. The state university was the space where school-leavers from public and private schools would come together. They shopped in the street markets and studied at the state university.

The situation changed at the end of the 1980s and, especially, in the 1990s, as this group withdrew to a different everyday life in the urban space. As we have already mentioned, the city fragmented with greater intensity and became segmented. The North of the city emerged as a solid reality, well-provided with urban services and distinguished by its own specific cultural and social nuances. Over the last two decades, the city of Cochabamba has undergone profound urban, demographic and social changes. As a result of the consolidation of the North of the city, other urban spaces that had been key sites for socialising, such as La Cancha, were consigned to the past, and the historic city centre ceased to be the space for meeting and gazing.

In this new scenario, under what parameters and representations do upper-middle-class young people in Cochabamba organise their territoriality?

The surveys, focus groups and interviews we carried out as part of our research (2007-2008) reveal that fear is one of the fundamental factors that determine the new subjectivities and the appropriation of new spaces when the time comes to decide whether to assert a presence in a public space or withdraw from it and take refuge in other, more private and safer spaces. A situation observed by Lucía Dammert in the Latin American context is being reproduced in Cochabamba:

Various surveys suggest that the fear of crime is a key factor in explaining why certain groups are continuing to abandon public spaces and prefer the safety of enclosed spaces (Dammert, 2008).

Of course, other factors such as distance or deteriorating urban infrastructure also influence the use of the public space, but as explanations for these changes they are not as important as fear. This is not fear of physical or technological disasters. It is a new type of apprehension: fear of living in the city, or, more specifically, of living in certain parts of the city where one may be the victim of violence.

Fear is a feature of contemporary society. Unemployment, the effects of the economic crisis, terrorism – these shake every generation (Bauman, 2007). But according to Martín Barbero, who agrees with Dammert, in the new ways of inhabiting and communicating in the urban fabric, fear is the key (Barbero, 2003). It produces a loss of ontological security with regard to everyday life in the urban space (urbus = civilised), formerly considered a safe, protective place compared with the hostilities of the rural world (rus = coarse, uncouth).

Fear is a symbolic representation that is both individual and collective, as it hardens individually but is socially constructed and culturally shared, as Dammert might say. The former, because it is the result of interaction between different people and the exchange of information between them, which creates an outcome that guides their behaviour. The latter, because fear is constructed on the basis of representations produced by people that do not necessarily correlate with the real world. Following Roberto Briceño-León (2007), we accept that it is subjective in nature. The fear of violence, this author goes on to say, is based on a calculation of probabilities that takes into account two interrelated variables: the information – possibly of doubtful accuracy – one has about similar events that occurred in the past, and one's own expectations of safety. Fear becomes insecurity due to the increase in crime and new forms of violence perpetrated by criminals. It is amplified by widespread dissatisfaction and suspicion regarding the ineffectiveness and lack of probity of the institutions – the police and the justice system – called upon to guarantee and administer public order and safety.

Crime itself admits two dimensions: the objective and the subjective. The former involves a reading based on the reporting of numbers and statistics on crimes that actually occur and are recorded and experienced in a specified area. The latter refers to an imaginary (and therefore fictitious) record of such crimes. Armando Silva speaks of an "imaginary of fear" that defines structures of meaning to interpret reality, leading to the emergence of unconscious ideas that are not an epiphenomenal or automatic reflection of that reality.

The imaginary is composed not of data or statistics – although these do count – but fundamentally of metanarratives, mythologies and cosmogonies (Silva, 2004). From this point of view, it is not relevant whether – in the figures on crime rates in Cochabamba or the statistics on criminal acts per inhabitant – a particular neighbourhood, street or square has higher or lower rates of crime than other areas. The essential thing is that the collective imaginary – and the imaginary of different age groups – registers it as having a high crime rate and group members act accordingly by withdrawing from it.

In other words, it does not matter whether the image of growing danger in the city of Cochabamba has a verifiable basis in reality. Reality and perception can become dissociated. The imaginary "has practical consequences because people will act in accordance with it, as though the ideas that gave rise to it were true" (Briceño, 2007: 36). Once the label of fear has been applied to a given space, it produces a real effect that influences people's practices and discourses, as though the label was a guide to action (Lindon, 2007: 7-16).

In fact, a report published in Spain in 2003 showed that the perception of insecurity is associated not with crimes against people or property but with the subjective sense of "widespread fear" resulting from a series of activities judged antisocial in a specific place (Goycoolea, 2008: 13). And this is what matters: in their subjectivity, in their mental images, the people of Cochabamba are experiencing a constant and growing sense of

insecurity.[3] Fear is felt by the rich, the poor, men, women, young people and the elderly, although for different reasons, in different places and at different times of day.

Fear is historically and socially specific, because it is experienced differently in each time period, it has a sociological and cultural dimension which varies, and it is marked by class, gender and age differences. Created by the mass media, by one's own experience or by rumour, or transmitted by parents or by one's circle of friends, fear is socialised through rumour rather than seen, although violence may be present on a daily basis in the city. People learn to identify the sources of danger and respond to fear. How should you behave? Where should you avoid going? How should you get there? Who should you go with? Reguillo (2000) mentions the contrivance of "urban survival manuals," a sort of "unwritten set of codes that prescribe and proscribe practices in the city."

The most striking consequence of fear is that it contributes to the development of a new relationship with "the other," with those who are different. As Dammert observes, "outsider status" is established in "the use of spaces in the city; it involves a casting a constant, negative gaze on those who are recognised as outsiders, and who are often perceived as frightening and violent." This situation leads to the sense of community being lost and eradicated, "through daily injections reinforcing distrust of the person who passes by you in the street" (Dammert, 2008: 243-258). Certain groups of people are stigmatised and the public space is abandoned. Similarity is good; difference is suspicious (Entel, 2007). Fear tends to be identified with insecurity, and this is how fear of human beings develops, obscuring everything else. "Suspicion" operates as the key factor structuring social relationships, which inevitably revert to fear and the branding and stigmatisation of certain groups.

How does this constant sense of fear affect the use of the city and urban spaces? The first thing we can say is that it increases the segmentation and privatisation of the urban space. The territory is organised as marked: known = safe; unknown = unsafe, or "the bad part of the city." As Dammert concludes in her studies of cities in Argentina and Chile, streets and

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[3] For an analysis of the situation in poor, peri-urban neighbourhoods, see Hinojosa Z., Eric *et al*, 2006.

public spaces are seen as unsafe, which obliges people to withdraw from them (Dammert, 2004: 87-96 and 2003). Various studies carried out by Rossana Reguillo and other authors likewise show that the sense of danger lessens when the territory is known (Reguillo, 2000: 185-201). Consequently, people reduce their exposure to open, public spaces. Insecurity erects a symbolic border between the known and the unknown. Our own, accredited territory is a source of security. As long as we stay in it, we will be protected (Guerrero, 2007).

We can identify several ways in which insecurity affects how the city is used and consumed:

a) Reduction in the time spent inhabiting the city because there are times of day when one does not go out or businesses cut back their opening hours.

b) Reduction in the size of the urban area that is used, because there are spaces such as streets and squares that are not used.

c) Erosion of the sense of citizenship and community because people do not go to spaces that facilitate social relationships.

d) Changes in expressions and dress, as people try to pass unnoticed in places considered dangerous.

e) Increase in isolation due to withdrawal from the public space or the need to subject it to private control.

f) Changes in the urban structure due to segregation and fragmentation of the city by building walls, barriers, etc.[4]

Narratives of fear segment the city because "they impose separations. They build walls, mark out and enclose spaces, establish distances, segregate, differentiate, impose prohibitions, and draw up rules of exclusion and separation" (Calceira, 2007: 28). The home becomes a small, well-equipped fortress where people can live in isolation but connected to each other through new communication technologies. The "bunker" house and

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[4] Cf. www.barcelona2004.org; Goycoolea (2008:11).

the gated community are symptomatic of a fragmented, reconstructed urban model where hostility to living in the city and its public spaces reigns (Lindon, 2006: 18-35).

2. Cochabamba, city of fear

Is Cochabamba a more violent and insecure society today than it was 20 or 30 years ago? To answer this, we would need a chronological data series on crimes committed by area and population, in order to arrive at per capita indicators or identify how crime and violence in general have evolved over time. Another option would be to carry out surveys or a "victim mapping" exercise, leading to a cartography of crime (Carrión and Muñoz Vega, 2006: 7-16). We do not have this information available, but its absence does not prevent us from taking our research forward.

As we mentioned earlier, *objective insecurity* is one thing and *subjective insecurity* – the feeling or representation – is another. Subjective insecurity is a socially-produced situation. It may be autonomous and have no direct connection to rising levels of violence. In other words, the feeling of insecurity may persist as a memory, even if crime has disappeared or fallen. The lack of quantitative information and statistics is not relevant to our research because it is not concerned with the extent of violence or the forms it takes. Instead, we are interested in representations of violence and how these lead different social, age and gender groups in the city of Cochabamba to develop defensive strategies in response to fear. As we saw earlier, these strategies have a significant influence on the use of the public space.

It is impossible to identify exactly when this collective and subjective sense of insecurity developed in Cochabamba, but most of our interviewees state that it began to take shape at the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s. They associate its emergence with various socio-political circumstances: growing poverty, neoliberal policies, increasing individualism and indifference, the proliferation of drug trafficking and drug use, the large numbers of migrants who have settled in the city, the loss of a sense of civic duty, faith or religion, and the new state discourse of empowering indigenous people. Or a combination of all the above.

In this hall of mirrors, when they look back on the Cochabamba of their distant youth, their discourse is one of decline: "things are going from bad to worse." Nostalgically, they take refuge in a benign, almost utopian view of a city which, in memory, always appears welcoming and safe.

Jorge Alberto remembers:

> Until I visited Bogotá in 1978, it had never occurred to me that you could feel fear in the city. When I arrived there on the bus, the first thing I saw in the newspaper was a survey in which about 80% of people stated that they had been victims of violence, theft, aggression and other things of that sort. The same newspaper offered a list of advice to avoid being mugged in the street. Friends advised me to be very careful when walking in the street. They said I should leave my money, watch, etc in the hotel safe. They also explained that there were places I shouldn't go or where it wasn't advisable to be after dusk. That was something totally strange to me. Cochabamba wasn't like that. (University professor, 54 years old)

Other parents of the young people interviewed for the study express similar opinions:

- "Nothing ever happened to me. I used to walk from Calacala to the university and back again."
- "I studied architecture and I used to leave the studio really late, in the evening. Sometimes I used to go home at two or three in the morning."
- "We used to walk home from parties and birthdays, laughing and playing around."
- "My children used to go to school on their own. They would go out to play in the park, even at night time."
- "I used to sit with my boyfriend in the Plaza Colón until nightfall. We weren't afraid."
- "I used to go with my mother to La Cancha market to buy vegetables and fruit – we never thought twice about it."
- "I used to go with my mother and sister to "Noche popular doble," which would end at about one-thirty in the morning on Mondays. We used to walk home."

Walking or cycling everywhere is remembered as a safe way of getting around. "The worst that could happen to you was to come across an aggressive drunk," says one interviewee. Perhaps the only place seen as unsafe was the red light district: the brothels along the Avenida Siles at the foot of the La Coronilla hill in the far south-west of the city. There were dangers posed by drunks and louts looking for a fight in very specific places, but this did not lead to a stigmatisation of the people who occupied that space, our interviewees affirm.

In fact, practically none of our interviewees can relate an actual incident of violence that happened to them in their youth. They are, on the other hand, able to describe an attack suffered by a family member, a son or daughter, a friend or themselves a few days ago or in the last month. When they compare the city today to the city of their youth, they feel fear which sometimes borders on paranoia:

- "Nowhere is safe."
- "When you go in a car you must keep the windows shut."
- "My children can't go out to play in the street any more."
- "I don't go out at night any more."[5]

If this was the only indicator available, we would say that violence perpetrated by criminals has increased in Cochabamba. What is important for our analysis, however, is not to validate or confirm this statement, but rather to verify the collective perception of insecurity, which does not involve a rational deployment of arguments.

In the subjective register of the upper-middle class, what matters is that in the streets, squares and certain areas of the city, and even in their own homes, they no longer feel protected to the same degree as in the past. Similarly to what has taken place in other countries, one response to this situation is to reduce and ration their presence in public spaces. The other – which does not rule out the first – is to shut themselves away in gated communities or apartment blocks, put railings round their houses, close off streets and hire private security guards to protect them.

The proliferation of private security companies is the best indicator of the wave of fear that has gripped Cochabamba and people's distrust of the National Police (the Special Force to Combat Crime). These companies first started to appear on a modest scale at the beginning of the 1990s.[6] Their proliferation, however, took place during the four-year period between 2000 and 2004. In March 2005 some 80 companies – both legal and illegal – were counted

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[5] Statements made in focus groups and individual conversations in Cochabamba at the end of 2007.
[6] The very first company was set up in Santa Cruz in 1982.

(*Los Tiempos*, 10.03.2005). By the start of 2008, it was calculated that the 3,000 private security guards were more numerous than the 2,500 police (*Los Tiempos*, 4.01.2008). Today there are six legally registered companies, seven that have applied to be registered and about fifty that are neither registered nor authorised to operate.

In the North of the city it is almost inconceivable for a school, an apartment block, a restaurant, a bank or a shop of a certain size not to have private security guards. They are also found in private houses and streets. The new generation of young people has grown up with them as a constant feature of their everyday life. These young people entrust their security to companies that have made a business out of urban fear and do not always operate under state regulation. The private security guard, however, breaks with the public space by introducing inequality into everyday life in the city. Citizen and guard are not equals, as the former has the power to give orders to and get rid of the latter, which is not the case with the police. Thus, crime prevention and punishment is also privatised and may be directed against those from whom the hirers of private security wish to separate themselves due to fear or difference.

3. The segmented city and young people's fear

As we saw in the preceding sections, urban fragmentation has not been absent from the history of the city of Cochabamba. The centre-suburbs distinction in the 19th century and the Prado-Calacala divide in the 1970s are reproduced today, though with greater intensity. Physically, there are at least two cities. What is new, however, is the segmentation of the social fabric and, especially, its polarisation; the decline – if not the death – of the public space as a meeting place and as an expression of diversity for all social classes and age groups.

The history and experiences of upper-middle-class young people now aged between 17 and 24 are those of a generation for whom the public space lacks a positive or emotionally affective connotation. They were born and grew up in a system of parliamentary democracy; they first learned to read as television was becoming popular and left high school in the age of the computer, with a mobile phone in their pocket and – for many – their own car at the gate. In their immediate sensations, they are not immune to the imaginary of fear because they have grown up being socialised in how to avoid it. Every young man and woman has recorded their own narrative of urban violence and each relates how they have suffered, seen or heard about it. Among their phantasmagorias are the "white car" experience with its repeated allegations of physical attack, the motorcyclists who snatch women's handbags, the thefts in broad daylight anywhere in the city and the "glue sniffers" or "feral children" who go around in gangs harassing pedestrians on bridges and in parks.

The sensation of loss is also fed by the political and cultural upheavals resulting from the exacerbation of social conflicts in Bolivia and Cochabamba after Evo Morales became president. This is another recent fear: fear of insubordination and of the social empowerment of subaltern groups undermining the ancestral foundations of domination by the city's upper-middle class. The tragic events of 11 February 2007 reinforced a dividing line that had been latent, activating the spatial segmentation of the use of the city between the class of "decent people" and the others, the subaltern classes. This segmentation is not free of ethnic connotations. The city's cultural diversity is proclaimed as a potential danger. In the city, as Jordi Borja (2003) correctly says, "one fears the other."

Of course, in a city whose urban sprawl is constantly expanding, difficulties of access determine and restrict how it is used, especially when public transport does not provide a good quality service. Greater distances need to be travelled and more time is required to get from one place to another. As we saw earlier, however, an increasingly larger proportion of education facilities, shops, entertainment and other similar services are located near the homes of the upper-middle class. Except in specific cases, this avoids the burdensome obligation to travel through the urban space.

Paradoxically, although upper-middle-class young people have more personal freedom to travel around the city than the previous generation, as well as the means to do so (cars and motorbikes), they feel obliged to confine their presence in it to a small, safe and socially homogeneous territory. To them, Cochabamba seems larger but at the same time more alien. For young people, moving around Cochabamba means organising a topology and a cartography to establish limits, boundaries and thresholds. It means leaving marks and stamps of ownership on one's territory and sending out warning signs and security alerts when one enters the territory of "the other."

We are therefore interested in the world of representations as it is lived and imagined rather than the material or physical world, without denying that the latter influences the former. It is thus necessary to explore the urban space as it is lived and understood. Young people represent and imagine the city with the aim of "expressing boundaries of difference." The purpose of this is to "construct their interactions (which may involve disputes, conflict, adaptation or negotiation)". As far as methodology is concerned, this implies that young people's spatiality must be examined both in terms of imaginaries and in terms of practices. Here, we would agree with Armando Silva (2005): "Maps are no longer physical, but psychosocial; they are felt rather than seen."

Maritza Urteaga argues that young people's "spatial experience" should be analysed along two explanatory axes: a) the tension between adults and young people, and b) the tension between young people. We would add a third dimension: the tension between young people and "the other." This leads us to explore young people's search for differentiation, not just in relation to other age groups or their peers, but with regard to social or ethnic groups that are different to the group in question – in our case, upper-middle-class young people (Urteaga, 2007: 99).

Having established this point, we can ask: How do upper-middle-class young people represent Cochabamba? What mental maps do they construct for their own use? What factors affect the construction and imaginaries of their territoriality?

From the point of view of this group of young people, the mental map of the city of Cochabamba is divided into two large territories: the North – positive – and the South – negative; the former is safer than the latter; the North is aesthetically pleasing, the South dirty and untidy.

The social representation of fear and the people who produce it can be seen in the most frequent responses to the question: Which area of the city of Cochabamba do you think is the most dangerous, and why?

More than 96% of the university students surveyed mentioned the South – or specific areas of it – as the most dangerous part of the city.

- "The South – there are loads of muggers there" (Juan Carlos, university student, 22 years old)
- "The South, because there are lots of gangs" (Eduardo, university student, 20 years old)
- "The South – I've seen on the news that it's not very safe" (Alejandro, university student, 23 years old)
- "The South, because the news shows more alarming and serious incidents happening there" (Karen, university student, 19 years old)
- "The South, because there are muggers in that area" (Marianna, university student, 24 years old)
- "The South – too many muggers" (Jorge, university student, 22 years old).

In some cases they mention specific places in the South, and for the same reason: fear. In other cases, the causes of fear are muggers, gangs of street children and glue sniffers.

- "La Cancha, because you get mugged or robbed" (Gustavo, university student, 23 years old)
- "La Coronilla, because glue sniffers live there" (Camila, university student, 19 years old)
- "The bus terminal – there are loads of muggers hanging around there" (Rodrigo, university student, 24 years old)
- "The bus terminal – it's not safe" (Stephanie, university student, 20 years old)
- "The area around the bus terminal in the South – there are loads of glue sniffers and muggers" (Jeannine, university student, 20 years old).

In some readings, insecurity extends throughout the city to other specific sites or specific times of day.

- "Most streets are unsafe at night" (Daniel, university student, 21 years old)
- "Bridges" (Marianela, university student, 24 years old)
- "Nowhere in the city is safe any more. You have to be careful where you get your mobile phone out or where you walk" (Camilo, secondary school student, 18 years old).

These, however, are the minority, because in the views of most young people fear is focused on the South of the city, imagined as where danger is concentrated. The disqualification of this urban space is also driven by other impulses. We asked young people of both sexes which area of the city they found the most unpleasant. An overwhelming majority once again named the South, particularly the central district of it around the La Cancha/La Pampa complex. Read in terms of the cultural aesthetics of residents of the North, their urban and social *alter ego* is represented as:

- "Dirty and disorganised" (Giovanni, university student, 21 years old)

- "Not at all hygienic and smells disgusting" (José Luis, university student, 22 years old)

- "Dirty and dangerous" (Denisse, secondary school student, 18 years old)

- "Too many people" (Caris, university student, 19 years old)

In contrast, when they are asked which area of Cochabamba they like best, the majority name the North, for the opposite reasons to those expressed about the other urban extreme:

- "Because it's not so chaotic" (Gustavo Alberto, secondary school student, 18 years old)

- "Because it's peaceful" (Miguel, secondary school student, 17 years old).

Also, though more sporadically, they mention specific places, likewise always in the North:

- "The Centro Patiño, because it's safe, there are lots of cultural activities going on, and it has beautiful gardens" (Stephanie, university student, 20 years old)
- "The Cine Center, because it's fun and there are lots of things to choose from to have a good time" (Verónica, university student, 20 years old)
- "The Cine Center – it's safe and pleasant" (Carol, secondary school student, 10 years old).

Note that safety is once again a decisive factor that forms part of the aesthetic assessment of a space.

The South, in contrast, emerges as a sprawling, asymmetric geographical space and a variegated presence where the bodies of crowds entwine or touch each other as they flow down the street, and where the air is heavy with the smells of food – unnameable to some – or "trashy" music. This leads to its devaluation and racial stigmatisation – a status that is reinforced when it is linked to insecurity.

As Patrick Süskind's *Perfume* shows, the obsession with hygiene and the olfactory culture are linked to social and historical processes. People learn or understand from infancy to filter and reject smells and link them positively or negatively to certain social or ethnic groups that their parents thought of as revolutionary. Today's young people do not uphold the discourse of the 1970s counterculture. Neither are they affiliated to radical left positions. Apolitical, they prefer to enjoy the world, taking advantage of the time allowed by the moratorium on social conflict – providing that their emblematic position of power and their territories are not challenged.

Furthermore, the order of things – a nineteenth-century positivist value – leads people to long for a city subjected to rules and regulations, without spaces that spill over and passers-by who walk along separately. As Miguel Delgado observes, the urban space spends the whole time organising itself (through planning), but it cannot escape from a destiny or fate that tends to turn it into something "unreadable" (understood as disorderly, chaotic), as opposed to the "readable" city (understood as ordered and rational) (Delgado, 1999: 183).

What is the South? What and where is being alluded to when it is named? Boundaries, like imaginaries, are shifting and historical constructions. They are not geographical or legal limits or filters but symbolic ones, characterised by appropriations and marked by meanings, loaded with the presence of people, smells, food or colours; in other words, they are socially signified.

The South – or rather, the imagined notion of what the South is – shifts constantly under the gaze of the upper-middle class. It is a mobile, shifting boundary. Until the 1990s, Avenida Aroma was the border between the South and the commercial centre (the old city centre), while the Plaza Colón marked the start of the North. One of the changes brought by the start of the 21st century is the weakening of this mental landscape. Events such as the takeover of the Plaza 14 de Septiembre by lower-class groups after the water war in the year 2000, the increasingly rapid growth of the informal-sector market trade in the surrounding streets, the relocation of many shops, mainly to sites in the North, and the functional and environmental deterioration of the old city centre have led to a shift in the geographical points of reference and the establishment of a new boundary between the North and the South.

Based on an ethnographic tour of the city, which involves "criss-crossing spaces as they are perceived by the passer-by" (Aguilar, 2005), and interviews with upper-middle class groups, we can identify a new imagined boundary, where Avenida Heroínas seems to act as the most recent fragile and shifting border between the South and the North. Like any boundary, it expands or contracts depending on the movement of different groups of people.

But there are also physical data that support and affirm the sense of this dual representation of the space. In fact, the spread of informal-sector trade around the 27 de Mayo market has not gone beyond this limit. The same is true of the informal market around the post office building: although it occupies both pavements at the crossroads between Avenida Ayacucho and Avenida Heroínas, it has advanced no further northwards. In any case, the

idea that Avenida Aroma separated the South from the rest of the city has long been superseded by the situation today. We might even say that the old city centre is being "swallowed up" by the South, and that therefore the boundary between the two areas is a disputed territory currently preoccupying the urban imaginaries of residents of both the North and the South of the city. A provisional dividing line – an artificial topography marking the superior/inferior status of a "poor," excluded South and a "rich" North – would obviously be Avenida Heroínas, although after the violent and bloody clashes of 11 January 2007,[7] the residents of the South perhaps imagine that the symbolic boundary between the two territories should be the River Rocha.

The consequence of these representations and phantasmagorias is to erect an invisible border or boundary between what is considered alien, shifting territory and safe, known territory; between people who are "cultured, decent," and those who are not - people associated with the causes of insecurity and criminal transgressions. Based on this observation, people decide where they can go and where they must not go; where they need to be careful and take precautions and where they do not; at what times of day and at what moments they are safe and at what times uncertainty reigns. Access to the city is restricted. A boundary is mentally constructed; it has openings allowing access the city while simultaneously closing it off. As far as they can, young people avoid going to the devalued, stigmatised area that is the South. If they cannot avoid going there, they take precautions and are on the look-out at all times.

From the subjective viewpoint of young people in the North, the South is imagined as a ghostly space full of threats and a disorderly chaos of copper-skinned crowds, with whom it is impossible to identify, share memories, feel any positive emotion or strike up a conversation. It is a space that acts as the polar opposite of the "emblematic places" described by Michel Mafessoli (2007) as sites of celebration, where "one meets people, recognises others, and thus recognises oneself"; in other words, where I coexist with multiple others, without whom my own existence would be inconceivable.

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[7] For hours that day, under the passive gaze of the police, thousands of residents of the North, mainly young people, fought in the streets with people from rural communities and young people from the South of the city. Three people were killed and hundreds injured. These violent clashes, which clearly had racial connotations, called into question Cochabamba's supposed (and vaunted) *mestizo* identity and unity.

3.1. The decline of the old public spaces

In the territoriality of upper-middle-class young people in Cochabamba, the limits of the habitable world are reached a few blocks away from the Plaza Colón: at the corner of Calle 25 de Mayo and Calle Ecuador and between the latter and Calle España, in the heart of the old city centre, very near Avenida Heroínas. A few metres further on marks the start (or end) of the invisible wall that separates two worlds, two aesthetics, two youth cultures and two levels of safety. The cafés along Calle España and the one on the corner of 25 de Mayo and Ecuador are the last frontier.

This imaginary marking out of the city provides evidence that upper-middle-class young people re-create the city differently to their parents' generation. A decade earlier, young people's spaces for socialising gravitated around the centre and south of the city. Today, these are seen as dangerous areas, as well as being a long way away from the neighbourhoods where these upper-middle-class young people live.

Our interest in examining this hall of mirrors is to emphasise that now, as never before, we are witnessing a radical rupture in the use of the urban space by the city's elites, and especially by their offspring. To make a comparison with similar times, we would have to go back to the end of the 19th century, when the dominant groups reorganised the city with the aim of designating the centre as their own space, where they were the only ones allowed to express their culture and way of life. The difference is that in those days young people did not mark out a territory of their own; neither did they enjoy autonomy from their parents. Young people could either socialise in the public space, open to all gazes, or in private spaces, under the watchful eye of their elders.[8] This situation persisted almost unchanged until a century later, when a combination of internal and external, urban and cultural events brought about a radical break with the idea of the urban space as a place for meeting one's peers and others.

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[8] In this article we do not analyse nocturnal youth culture, which is the territory that young people have kept to themselves, away from their parents and neighbours, since the end of the 1980s. The culture of the night is likewise organised by fear of and differentiation from those regarded as "other."

In order to understand the above statement, the first thing we must point out is that upper-middle-class young people mainly move and live in the North of the city or in satellite towns such as Bella Vista and Tiquipaya. They willingly admit that the North "is like a city, because there's no reason to leave it." It is like an island or a well-stocked fortress. They are not exaggerating. As we indicated earlier, the North is well-supplied with a wide and growing range of services, turning it into a kind of citadel surrounded by imaginary walls like a medieval fortified city. The difference is that this time the enemy is not just outside but within the walls as well.

Outside these borders are the urban spaces that previous generations used, now relegated to the status of *terra incognita.* Why does the new generation of young people not inhabit or use them? Why do they prefer to move in, use and occupy different territories? Once again, we could attribute this to distance. Getting from the North of the city to La Cancha/La Pampa, the Plaza 14 de Septiembre and its surrounding streets implies crossing much of the crowded city centre with its slow-moving, snarled-up traffic. However, this would be an insufficient and partial explanation. Upper-middle-class young people travel greater distances every day to attend the Universidad Privada Boliviana (UPB) private university, seven kilometres along the Blanco Galindo main road. At weekends, seeking entertainment and to enjoy their leisure time, they travel to the Country Club, an enclave on the southern fringes of the city.

The situation should instead be understood as the result of a lengthy process of cultural change in young people's subjectivities and their new patterns of consumption. These prioritise safety and the affirmation of a distinct identity that separates these young people from the rest of the urban population. Based on the globalised consumption of symbolic objects, these distinctions enable them to feel part of global identities, as García Canclini observes.

In fact, there is something even deeper and more decisive. All the generations born since the mid-1980s have been educated in the habit of insecurity and fear of moving freely around the city. For years, they have watched and listened to the media using

sensationalism and stigmatising social groups and places, thus helping to create an atmosphere of insecurity. This has become even more evident and obvious with the institutional crisis in the police force (see Rey, 2005).

As part of the new culture for living in the city, the imaginary of insecurity comes from the parents who transmit it to their children on a daily basis. In our focus groups and individual interviews, we recorded pieces of advice such as the following – taken together, they aim to provide an entire lesson in how to deal with insecurity:

- Be careful. Don't go on your own.
- Don't take your mobile phone to the stadium. You'll get it stolen.
- If you're going to La Cancha, don't go on your own. Wait for your brother, or go with me or your father.
- Don't leave your car in the street. It'll be safer in a car park.
- Don't get into a random taxi in the street. Phone for a minicab, and make sure it's a firm we know.

Young people in Cochabamba, who internalise fear of being in certain areas of the city at an early age, respond with a strategy of "putting on armour" that protects them against real and fictitious threats. This leads to changes in the use of urban spaces in comparison with how the urban elites behaved in the recent past: young people now withdraw from the streets or public market-places. The squares (and streets) have lost their shine as places for socialising, leisure and enjoyment. El Prado or the Plaza de Armas are seen as dangerous, disorganised or dirty places occupied by untrustworthy people. In reaction to this, these young people take refuge in safe places that may be private or public, but with private rules of behaviour and a security and control system.

The pursuit of "clean and tidy" places – such as the Cine Center, which opened in 2007, steeped in modernity and a consumerist aesthetic – allows them to avoid sounds and smells society has taught them from infancy to identify as unpleasant. Inscribed in the unconscious, these provide fertile ground for urges that lead to social and racial differentiation and boundary-setting. This has resulted in the segmentation of Cochabamba

that has become more visible following the triumph of Evo Morales in the presidential election at the end of 2005, and now seems to verge on a daily confrontation.

The Cine Center, which is comprised of a food hall and twelve small cinemas, helps to shape a restricted form of socialising and endogamous interaction that is closed in on itself, limited to peers, to people who already know each other. There is no risk, no possibility of chance encounters or coming face to face with difference, which should be an integral part of living in the city and exercising citizenship. It acts as a huge theatre or private box, where one goes solely for the pleasure of being there and seeing one's social equals.

The Cine Center is embedded in the urban fabric, but it lacks a historical frame of reference, as its points of reference are universal, extraterritorial (Sarlo, 2000) and correspond to the so-called "sites of transitory sociability" that Augé (1993) speaks of. These are urban spaces that people pass through in transit, characterised by flows of pedestrians, vehicles, etc, which operate as sites for fleeting encounters. They lack historical references, memory and therefore visual and architectural distinctions. A "place", on the other hand, would imply actual and symbolic ownership of the space, giving it an emotional and affective resonance for those who inhabit and use it. The same can be said of the late-night discos such as Mandarina and Life.[9] These have constructed "semiotic filters" which, in a frankly discriminatory way, bar entry to young people not considered "the right sort," meaning those who cannot flaunt the "trophies" of skin colour or surname. Diversity is perceived as a threat and the owners of these discos take steps to ensure that their clients do not come across strangers in the shadows.

The presence of young people is not passive. On the contrary, they seek to conquer an anonymous place and transform it into a space for communication and belonging that allows them to recognise themselves as members of the same social and cultural circle. They thus erect symbolic boundaries of exclusion that distinguish them from other young people in the city. They construct imaginary spaces – behaviours, gestures, clothes – that

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[9] Now closed down.

they use as markers to close themselves off from the threats posed by those who are socially and racially "different".[10]

The city of Cochabamba – or, rather, the spatial image that upper-middle-class young people make of it – revolves around these enclosed consumer centres that are isolated from an urban fabric which they simultaneously are and are not part of. This reflects the crisis and decline of the public space in Cochabamba. The previous generation also had its own spaces, such as El Prado or the cafés along the old Calle Perú. However, we should not exaggerate the comparison. These were genuinely public spaces, open to everyone. They had no formal rules of exclusion, although some people would be excluded due to custom, dress, or the level of expenditure involved in spending time in these places.

The urban *agora* of today's middle-class young people, in contrast, is consumerism. It is in this capacity – as consumers, not as young people – that they are received in these segmented spaces. They lose the status of citizenship – as an inhabitant of the city – and adopt a provisional and impersonal identity as a result of being forced to submit to a contractual relationship with the owner of the business. In other words, within its walls one is not a passer-by but a consumer or purchaser of the services of a commercial institution, whose codes and regulations one must abide by. With the proviso, we would add, that the young people who frequent these commercial centres have no interest in going out and about, in the sense of exploring and experiencing the city and its diversity. Instead, as we mentioned before, they prefer to withdraw and take refuge in a space they consider culturally their own, exclusive to them.

4. Territoriality and gender

Our surveys and interviews do not reveal major differences with regard to how women and men appropriate and construct their imaginary of the urban territory. Their grammar of fear

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[10] We have taken these ideas from the thought-provoking work by Inés Cornejo Portugal (2007: 191 *et seq.*)

is practically the same. Like men, women cut the city in two: the safe North, the unsafe South. They also live in a divided space.

The collective identity that they share, in terms of belonging to the same class and age group and having similar life experiences, provides a set of rules, routines and representations that enables them to construct a "we" almost free of gender gaps. This self-identification, which is constructed first and foremost in contrast to those others outside the group, makes it possible to assert symbolic ownership of the territory, whereby men and women mark the limits and boundaries separating their ingroup from the outgroup through a shared set of signs such as clothes and the same tastes, fears, desires and subjectivities. However, although it might be assumed that young people's territory is a setting of shared representations and imaginaries that provide it with a largely homogeneous identity, one issue that is starting to be elucidated by the literature is the extent to which this territoriality constructed by young people reveals uses and senses of space differentiated by gender. Put another way, the question is how gender power relations structure different ways of naming territories, imagining their limits and moving around them as physical entities (Gómez, 2005: 74-104; Velásquez and Añadía, 2003: 74-104).

In a patriarchal society like that of Cochabamba, where the public space is symbolised as masculine, men are the ones who – from a position of power – exercise their autonomy and freedom to name their spaces and place limits on movement within them. Men are the ones who feel safe walking along streets and pavements, while women move through these spaces with a sense of fear and risk, which dissipates as soon as they find someone to accompany them.

Our interviews show that while men move around with greater freedom at night or in places classified as risky, women are more vulnerable and fragile as they traverse these same spaces (cf. Lindon, 2006: 13-32). They are able to access these spaces only if accompanied by women friends, family members or a man. For many years, leisure time has been the prerogative of men, especially at night, although young women have won their place in the city's nightlife. Men and women alike go to discos, but women prefer enclosed spaces

where they can chat, have a coffee or smoke a cigarette. Men, in contrast, prefer open spaces where they can meet in groups, express themselves more uninhibitedly and show off their daring defiance.

More restrictions are placed on upper-middle-class women and they are under increased surveillance because they are seen as more vulnerable. They also undergo a lengthy socialisation process that educates them for a life of fear. As Manuel Delgado correctly observes, women continue to receive "a sexist education, whose messages include those that inculcate them with a reverential fear of what is outside the door of their homes, where the dangers that await them are much worse than those that threaten boys" (2007: 326).

In Cochabamba we find that:

- "When I was young, I used to go to the ballet and walk home at about 11 o'clock at night. I never had any problems. Now, my daughters don't go out at night on their own – I take them and I go and collect them" (Mónica, teacher, 44 years old).

- "When my daughter goes out at night, someone in the family takes her or, when we can't, she goes in a minicab from a firm we've used for years. It hasn't changed much since I was at university and my parents used to take me to parties and come and collect me afterwards. And the city was much safer then than it is now" (Virginia, university teacher, 59 years old)

- "Because I live a long way away, my mum or my dad takes me to parties or discos, or to a friend's house. Or sometimes I go with my boyfriend" (Sofía, university student, 20 years old)

- "I'm not allowed to go out on my own or come home on my own. If they don't come and collect me, I have to look for someone I know to bring me home" (Andrea, secondary school student, 17 years old).

In the new generation of young women, the vast majority goes to university and has high expectations of getting a good job. For that very reason, they feel more resentful about not being able to occupy every leisure space in the same way as men. Women's freedom is curtailed and they are placed under more restrictions and surveillance, although they feel that they have more freedom than their mothers who were sheltered at home.

In a growing city, getting from one place to another is seen as a problem. Public transport is not even an option in the daytime, let alone at night. It is considered unsafe, dirty and unpleasant. The car offers the freedom to go out at any time one wants, but fewer girls than boys have a car available, and even if they do, the shadow of insecurity once again hovers over them. It is feared that they will be attacked in the street or while they are going into the garage. Incidents of women being attacked, recounted repeatedly at get-togethers and social gatherings and amplified by the press, serve as a powerful deterrent.

The greatest fear – of being the victim of moral or physical crime – reflects Cochabamba's cultural fabric in terms of the socialisation process for women. Studies carried out in different countries show that the level of fear of the public space is higher among women than it is among men (Dammert, 2008: 63). Beset by gestures and gazes, women's bodies and sexuality become the site of fear that constrains women's autonomy and their presence in streets, parks and open spaces. Women's greater vulnerability in comparison to men surely lies in the possibility of them becoming the victims of sexual aggression or bodily behaviours that invade their privacy, sexist remarks or unwanted touching – a more subtle and everyday violence known as moral violence (as distinct from physical violence) which gives rise to street harassment or sexual harassment.

5. Conclusion

During the last decades of the 20th century and the first few years of the 21st, Cochabamba has been undergoing a process of urban transformation and fragmentation, leading to the emergence of at least two spaces that have very few links between them.

In contrast to previous generations, young people living in the residential North of the city today do not use the whole of the city for their leisure, social and educational activities. On

the contrary, they have barricaded themselves behind imaginary walls and marked out their own private territory. These young people consider the residents of the South be dangerous and avoid coming into contact with them or visiting that area of the city. In other words, fear has caused them to withdraw from public spaces. These attitudes, which have hardened following the changes that have taken place in Bolivian politics and the victory of Evo Morales in the 2005 election, have strong racist connotations and express a naked fear of living alongside "the other".

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