

FEAR AS AN URBAN SOCIAL IMAGINARY IN THE CLOSED RESIDENTIAL COMPLEXES IN THE CITY OF VALLEDUPAR

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Abstract -This scientific article aims to interpret fear as an urban social imaginary linked to relationships in closed residential complexes in the city of Valledupar. The methodology is oriented, from the parameters of the qualitative approach, the use of the ethnographic method and the application of data collection techniques such as observation and semi-structured interviews, as well as the analysis of the arguments proposed by authors such as Wirth, (1938) and (2008), Tuan (1974), Lang and Danielsen (1997), Moscovici (1997), Certeau (1999) and (2000), Reguillo (2000), Baeza (2004), Londoño (2001), Silva (2001), Roitman (2003), Borsdorf (2003), Pinto (2005), Ludeña (2006), Lindón (2007), Hiernaux (2007), Hevia and Tijoux, (2008), Fuentes and Rosado (2008), Rosin (2009), Martínez (2013) Martínez (2012), (2014 and (2021) among other social science authors who reflect and study fear as an urban social construction.

Keywords: Fear, social imaginaries, closed residential complexes, Valledupar, neighborhood life.

INTRODUCTION

Fear is an elementary emotion that human beings experience in their daily lives, it is a vehement, unpleasant and uncomfortable manifestation that man manifests when he feels violated, this sudden alteration has been gaining prominence in Colombian cities and the city of Valledupar is no stranger to this phenomenon. For this reason it was decided to study this problem as an urban social imaginary from the closed residential complexes.

Gated communities have become an important urban phenomenon that has grown in recent times, transforming the physiognomy of Latin American cities. These residential phenomena have the characteristics of being conglomerates of separate dwellings or flats, which have a common infrastructure and are distanced from the public area by walls, fences, gates and security devices.

The increase of gated communities in the capital of Cesar is transforming and reconfiguring the city, since not only the physical territoriality is observed, but also in the discourses and social relations of the residents, who share beliefs, feelings and forge other cultural elements, founding spaces loaded with meanings and among these spaces urban social imaginaries are created, which are social facts inherent to the human being. The urban universe is deeply anchored to social imaginaries (I.S), which, according to Baeza (2004), are multiple shared mental constructions about the practical significance of the world with which life can be given meaning. He also points out that the imaginaries allow to verify the ways of thinking and lead the human being to relate socially recognising them as their own in the society; so an interpretation of the real world is achieved from the imaginaries in which alternatives and different thoughts about the same society are created through the compressions of the symbols and cultural elements that each person handles; these imaginaries are mentally constructed from what is seen, observed or lived within the social context.

Social imaginaries have a fundamental function in interpreting reality. According to the above, it can be said that anxiety is a problem that can be interpreted from social imaginaries because they are social schemes constructed from experiences based on behaviours, traditions, beliefs, symbols and other elements created by a community.

The existing theoretical debate around the problem studied is led by the foundations and arguments proposed by authors such as: Harris and Ullman (1945), Tuan (1974), Berger and Luckmann (1986), Lang and Danielsen (1997), Certeau (1999) and (2000), Reguillo (2000), Londoño (2001), Silva (2001), Roitman (2003), Borsdorf (2003), Wirth (2005), Pinto (2005), Ludeña (2006), Lindón (2007), Hiernaux (2007), Hevia and Tijoux (2008), Rosin (2009), Martínez (2013), Martínez (2013) Martínez (2012), (2014 and (2021) and other scientists that help to delimit and support the hypothesis that argues that Valledupar is an intermediate city in the Colombian Caribbean that has experienced an accelerated growth in the

construction of gated communities. These scientists help to delimit and support the hypothesis that Valledupar is an intermediate city in the Colombian Caribbean that has experienced an accelerated growth in the construction of gated communities. This type of construction is transforming the physiognomy of the city, causing changes not only in the urban landscape, but also in the symbolic universes of the people who live there, specifically in relation to the fear of solitary spaces and strangers. This article is a subjective study that interprets fear as an urban social imaginary, related to social relations in gated communities in the city of Valledupar, through the interaction of two scientific disciplines of the social sciences: urban sociology and anthropology. The research methodology was guided by the parameters of the interpretative paradigm and the qualitative approach, as well as the implementation of the ethnographic method. The unit of analysis was 3 gated residential complexes created and inhabited in the last 20 years in the city. Each complex has a minimum of 20 dwellings, where the symbolic universes linked to fear as an urban social imaginary were analysed from two important aspects: the space and the external inhabitants that produce distrust.

1. Frame of reference

The theoretical discussion in relation to the categories of analysis such as the city, the neighbourhood, gated communities, social imaginaries and fear, are supported by the contributions proposed by the following social scientists: Hobbes (1651), Harris and Ullman (1945), Yi Fu Tuan (1974), Berger and Luckmann (1986), Lang and Danielsen (1997), Certeau (1999) and (2000), Reguillo (2000), Londoño (2001), Silva (2001), Borsdorf (2003), Roitman (2003), Pinto (2005), Wirth, (2008), Ludeña (2006), Lindón (2007), Hiernaux (2007), Hevia and Tijoux, (2008), Fuentes and Rosado (2008), Martínez (2013) Martínez (2013 Martínez (2012), (2014 and (2021 and others. Authors who help to support how fear can be interpreted from the urban social imaginaries, in the closed residential complexes of the city of Santos Reyes.

1.1. The city

It is not easy to reflect on what the city is and its evolution, for example, Louis Wirth, in 1938, published his sociological text entitled *Urbanism as a way of life*, edited and republished in Spanish in 2005, in its content he defines the city as a relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of socially different individuals. In it, heterogeneity, division of labour and a different way of life, as opposed to that of small rural communities, are produced mechanically and spontaneously (Wirth, 2005).

In the text by Tuan (1974), entitled *Topophilia*, the following concept is found:

The city is defined by the experiential perspective of its inhabitants, the different ways of understanding and elaborating a reality. Thus, the learning of space and its transformation into a place, conceived as a focus with a culturally or individually determined meaning or intention, is reconstructed (Tuan, 1974, p. 204).

Nowadays the city is observed as an urban construction that moves out of its living space, due to the surprising emergence of new needs. "It quickly moves away from the human and becomes unreachable, bureaucratic, complicated and strange, a centrality that Lefebvre calls: emptiness, point of accumulation, of coexistence, which appeals to a content" (Hevia and Tijoux, 2008, P. 9).

Bearing in mind the previous paragraphs, it can be inferred that the city is a macro urban space, organised by communes, localities, neighbourhoods, open and enclosed complexes; in the city, society builds its values, and in the axiological practice, customs, traditions, identity, among other cultural manifestations are built, but as man is a rational and conflictive being, he also creates a number of problems that produce and mediate in daily interaction.

Certeau (2000). In his text *The Invention of the Everyday*. He reflects on the city arguing that "it is a place of transformations and appropriations, an object of interventions, but a subject constantly enriched with new attributes: it is at the same time the machinery and the hero of modernity" (Certeau, 2000, p. 107). (Certeau, 2000, p. 107).

The city observed from the contributions of Wirth, (1938, 2005), Yi Fu Tuan (1974), Certeau, (2000) Hevia and Tijoux, (2008), and from the point of view of the writer, is a territorial complex characterised by a high population density, governed by a functional political, administrative, economic, social and cultural organisation. The city is a space that is constructed in a homogeneous and heterogeneous manner according to the needs of its inhabitants and its geographical extension. For example, an intermediate city such as Valledupar is homogeneous when its inhabitants share the same language and construct and use a series of beliefs, customs and traditions in a similar manner. But it is also heterogeneous, because the individuals who inhabit it have a disparate and unequal life, with different ways of thinking as a result of their experiences and relationships with the geographical environment and physical, socio-economic, political and cultural development.

1.1.1. Valledupar

It is difficult to conceptualise the city, and even more so to interpret a city like Valledupar. At present, it can be said that the city is an urban mega-space where people live in society, building multiple political, economic and socio-cultural relationships.

Valledupar is known as the capital of the Department of Cesar, located on the western bank of the Guatapuri River at the foot of the last foothills of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. The urban centre has a north-south length of 8.3 km and an east-west length of 6.2 km. The city has developed from its beginnings towards the west, north and south; towards the east it has grown very little, due to the limitation of being a riverside city bordered and bathed by the river. This territory has a moderate population density derived from a relatively large urban area, its urban centre was designed and built concentrically, i.e. its starting point was its centre (business and commerce centres), and it grew towards the peripheries, (Martinez, 2012).

At present it can be affirmed that Valledupar is an intermediate city with an internal structure similar to the model of multiple or polynuclear nuclei proposed by the geographers Harris and Ullman (1945), these urban researchers in their model explain how the city grows around nuclei of growth separated from each other, different land uses are arranged, whose origin is a consequence of factors such as: "The activities subject to concrete existence of location: commerce and finance are agglomerated in sectors of maximum accessibility for the inhabitants of the city and factories in places suitable for circulation and transport:

- "Activities subject to the concrete existence of location: trade and finance are agglomerated in sectors of maximum accessibility for city dwellers and factories in places suitable for their circulation and transport.
- Similar activities tend to cluster in the same locations in order to favour complementary relationships between them and to benefit from cost reduction advantages.
- Activities that are detrimental to each other seek to be located separately, so that higher status residential areas tend to be separated from industrial and commercial facilities". (Harris and Ullman, 1945).

Valledupar is organised as follows:

1. There are several business and financial epicentres. In areas such as the city centre, where we find stores, banks, galleries, offices, among others. In the north (the Guatapuri Shopping Centre and the Unicentro Shopping Centre, in the south the Mayales Plaza Shopping Centre.
2. Areas of small and medium-sized industries (located in the centre, north and south of the city).
3. Middle class residential area, made up of economically stable population with the capacity to meet their basic needs (spatially located around the city centre, and communes 1,2,3 and 4.
4. Lower class residential area, made up of families who have difficulties in satisfying basic services (generally located on the outskirts of the city).
5. Upper class residential area, made up of families with the capacity to meet their basic needs, (located spatially towards the north-west and north-east of the city, between communes 5 and 6).
6. Suburban area, which extends between 30 and 60 minutes away from the city centre.
7. Peripheral business districts such as the Free Trade Zone to the south.
8. Suburban residential areas, located towards the outskirts of the city, (Martínez, 2014 y 2021).

As Valledupar is a very large territory, the decision was taken to select as the unit of analysis 3 closed residential complexes created and inhabited in the last 20 years in the city, with at least 20 dwellings. The three selected complexes were: Alto de Ziruma, San José los bloques and Calleja real.

1.1.2. The neighbourhood

In this section we discuss the subcategory of the neighbourhood, which has been recognised as:

The primary socio-economic unit of the urban environment, given that in it community relations and solidarity are established that generate behaviours with a sense of collectivity, which are expressed both in playful situations experienced by the collectivity, as well as in conditions of risk and communal security. There are also other types of manifestations, of different scope, that give social and functional content to the term we have coined as neighbourhood, which will obviously be mentioned as we delve deeper into the complexity of this heterogeneous and changing unit (Londoño, 2001, P.1).

Certeau (1999), in his text *La invención de lo cotidiano* volume 2, draws on Lefebvre's concept to refer to the neighbourhood as "a gateway between qualified spaces and quantified space" (Certeau, 1999, p. 6). He goes on to say that the neighbourhood appears as the domain in which the space/time relationship is the most favourable for a user who moves on foot from his or her habitat. It is therefore that part of the city that crosses a boundary that distinguishes private space from public space: it is what results from a succession of steps on a street, little by little expressed by its organic link with the dwelling.

Continuing with Certeau's contributions (1999), it can be said that the neighbourhood is a domain of the social environment, a portion of the urban space, that is to say, it can then be understood as that portion of the public space (generally anonymous to everyone) where a particularised private space is gradually insinuated due to the practical daily use of this space. Fixity, the habitat of the users, the reciprocal customs derived from neighbourliness, the processes of recognition and identification that take their



place thanks to proximity, to concrete coexistence on the same territory, where neighbours, through the repetition of actions (greetings, conversations, gestures), make everyday life possible.

In addition to being a territory that is part of the city, the neighbourhood is an urban space conceived and designed so that the inhabitants can interact and thus achieve well-being, in the midst of social, economic, cultural and political differences. In the neighbourhood, man builds open and closed residential complexes, and in them urban social imaginaries are constructed according to need.

Ludeña (2006), in his studies of urban historiography, argues that the neighbourhood becomes:

A space previously thought out and planned as a construction of the city, even in the case of neighbourhoods created by the spontaneous action of their inhabitants. In many cases, depending on its size and scope, it may coincide with, exceed or be contained by the limits of the "political-administrative neighbourhood" or the "anthropological neighbourhood". However, in either case, the neighbourhood delimited in the urban sense pre-exists as a sort of material and ideological historical landmark, a sort of moment zero (Ludeña (2006, p. 84).

Paraphrasing Ludeña (2006), suburbs, from the urban development point of view, can be understood in different ways according to their functionality. Commercial, residential or service neighbourhoods have been built. In the present text, the type of neighbourhood that is assumed as the basis of the study domain is the residential neighbourhood taking into account its social diversity.

In the last decades, the structure of the neighbourhoods has been transformed, it is very common to find within them, open and closed residential units; the open ones have the particularity of having a structure or facade of homogeneous houses and the closed ones are characterised not only by being a set of houses organised in a homogeneous way, but also by sharing common areas, separated from the rest of the neighbourhood, by security devices, such as walls, fences, guards, etc.

1.1.3. Closed residential complexes

Closed complexes are residential areas isolated by walls and barriers that have 24-hour surveillance. Some security devices prevent free access by non-residents. These new urban developments have been designed with the intention of providing security to their residents and preventing the entry of unknown people. The privatization of previously public urban space is what distinguishes them as a new urban residential phenomenon.

Let us remember Certeau (1999) a little; he, in his contributions on the neighborhood in relation to habitual use, says that in a way the suburb can be considered as the progressive privatization of public space. It is a practical device whose function is to ensure a solution of continuity between the most intimate (the private space of the home) and the most unknown (the city as a whole or even, by extension, the world): there is a relationship between understanding of housing (an 'inside') and the understanding of the urban space to which it is linked (an 'outside'). Interpreting these words it could be said that this is how it is conceived, close to the closed residential complex.

The majority of closed residential complexes are located in suburban areas, where there is land available for carrying out this type of venture. This has generated an important change in urban land use patterns, since previously neighborhoods were built with state subsidies, intended for lower-income social groups, those located on the periphery of the city. Closed residential complexes are generally located near expressways to facilitate movement from the place of residence to the central areas of the city, where daily activities take place. Likewise, being located in peripheral areas of the city, makes social contrasts become more evident.

In general, urban researchers point out that closed residential complexes are established as new forms and manifestations of residential segregation (Borsdorf, 2003), which further deepens the social inequalities present in large-scale residential segregation. This is how, in general terms, these complexes refer to private property for collective use, where the value of what is restricted constantly devalues the open and public space in the city, since they are physically delimited and isolated by walls, fences, empty spaces or the installation of extensive security devices (Caldeira, 2000).

These urban spaces offer a wide range of services, including maintenance, 24-hour security, waste collection and recreation on natural and artificial lands such as swimming pools or green areas (Glasze, 2005; Roitman, 2003).

Roitman (2003) states that closed residential complexes are not directed towards a homogeneous socioeconomic group. However, in the case of Latin American countries, their residents generally belong to the medium-high and upper social sectors, and, finally, they are quite homogeneous environments.

1.1.4. Urban social imaginaries

For Pintos (2005) social imaginaries are those socially constructed schemes that allow us to perceive, explain and intervene in what each social system is considered reality. Pinto affirms that social imaginaries have to do with an alternative rationality of spontaneous knowledge; It is a kind of unquestionable collective unconscious. In other words, they are collective representations that govern the social identification and integration systems that allow us to see social invisibility (Martínez, 2013); Therefore, it can be deduced that the social imaginary allows us to go beyond social reality, that is, it

transcends the most internal part of the human being, thus showing his thoughts and his way of seeing the world.

In urban studies, a concept coined by Hiernaux (2007) is being used, who argues that imaginaries can be defined as dynamic and socially constructed meaning schemes through which we can give meaning to the social environment that surrounds us. which can become institutionalized, generating an external and explicit character for the subjects involved in social reality. Similarly, Lindón (2007) in his article titled *The city and urban life through urban imaginaries* argues that:

Imaginaries are collective, they are social, they are socially shared, which should not be assumed to be universal. They may be anchored and recognized by small social circles or by extensive social worlds, but they are always a product of social interaction between people. They are built from discourses, rhetoric and social practices. Once constructed, they have the capacity to influence and guide practices and discourses, without this implying that they remain immobile (like the language with which they are molded, while they are in force they are modified) given the variant and changing condition of the language itself. (Lindón, 2007, P. 9)

The contributions of Hiernaux, (2007) and (Lindón, (2007)), help to understand that, in neighborhood life, there are symbolic dimensions constructed by the inhabitants of urban environments. Within these dimensions, in which the urban social imaginaries of people (neighborhood residents), two can be mentioned that are the most important: 1. Social Relations in neighborhood life and 2. Identity.

Berger and Luckmann (1986) specify that:

The reality of everyday life is also presented as an intersubjective world, a world shared with others; in turn, this intersubjectivity establishes a marked difference between daily life and other realities of which one is aware. In reality, one cannot exist in everyday life without continuously interacting and communicating with others (Berger and Luckmann, 1986, P. 40).

According to what was mentioned above, imaginaries can be conceived as symbolic universes which, in turn, these symbolic universes are problematic since they are part of human construction because they are historically produced through the activities of man. This intrinsic problem is accentuated if some groups of inhabitants come to share divergent versions of the symbolic universe (Berger and Luckmann, 1986); On the other hand, they also ensure that social phenomena develop particularly from social contexts; The latter may also be threatened by direct clashes with other societies with a palpably different universe.

Finally, it can be said that urban social imaginaries have the gift of urban ubiquity, that is, they are throughout the city, they are collective constructions that the urban being constructs mentally and materially on the experiences and relationships with the geographical space, which is transmitted through language and are represented through common feelings such as love, fear, rage or illusions, and they can also be expressed through human creations such as texts, sounds, images, urban architectural designs, among other creations.

Urban social imaginaries are constructed as a material and immaterial scheme used to interpret the socially legitimate reality founded in the subjective world and mediated from the multiplicity of political, economic and cultural exercises.

1.1.5. The fear

Fear is a feeling associated with alertness, comparable to pain; the human being feels pain when a stimulus is harmful to physical or mental balance. It is an unpleasant sensation induced by the perception of danger, which may be real or supposed.

From social sciences and especially from psychology, fear is an emotion achieved through experience, that is, it is a defensive resistance to avoid a dangerous event. He also argues that dread is the consequence of an unresolved problem.

About fear Thomas Hobbes in 1651 published his philosophical book entitled *Leviathan, or the Matter, Forme, and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiasticall and Civil*. Edited and translated by Mellizo, (2009), where he reflects on fear stating that Man cannot live in tension, with a paralyzing fear of the other, that is why he gives up part of his freedom and gains security, provided by the State.

For Hobbes (2009) and (Robín, 2009), fear is an element that promotes the creation of a large organization that controls men and forces them to live together in a community, moderating the aggressive feelings of some against each other, thus preventing anarchy, or the absence of state power. Robin, (2009), interprets Hobbes (1651) and states the following:

Peace between men will be an end that must be pursued, and the only way by which it can be achieved is by submitting to a higher power that regulates coexistence between men. The latter must cede to the Leviathan (State) those rights that by nature correspond to them, therefore, fear in Hobbes will be a positive mechanism that helps men live in community. Fear, unlike the pejorative character that can be given to it, is transformed and becomes a benefit that helps men organize and achieve community living. Fear does not betray the individual, it completes him (Robín, 2009. P. 68).

The previous paragraphs make it clear that fear is an emotion that humanity experiences relatively, that is, it is a disturbing manifestation for man, but it is also a mechanism of social control, which regulates



coexistence.

According to Fuentes and Rosado (2008), “Fears are constructed from experiences and messages about objective and subjective conditions where various agents and media participate” (101).

Dread can be interpreted as an evil imaginary, which is socially constructed through a process that includes: objective and subjective conditions and situations.

- Objective Condition, this situation can be seen expressed in statistics and reports on urban violence (increase in robberies in homes and businesses, assaults, homicides, kidnappings in public and private spaces, etc.).

- Subjective condition, qualities that can be appreciated through indirect experiences with criminal acts, stereotyped information, rumors and stories of the victims; and media, such as the press, radio and television and the Internet, that disseminate news and messages about urban violence to large audiences. (Fuentes and Rosado, 2008)

2. Methodology

This research was approached from the perspective of the interpretive paradigm, where reality is understood in a dynamic and heterogeneous way aimed at the meaning of human actions, social practice, understanding and significance.

The methodological framework that will be used in this project is oriented from the parameters of the qualitative approach (subjective and interpretive world), as well as the implementation of the investigative tradition of ethnography, (to theoretically interpret the categories of analysis), to within the which works with data collection instruments such as non-participant observation, participant observation, semi-structured interviews that will be carried out with key informants to describe the perceptions of security and insecurity of the students (population under study), will serve of input to interpret reality based on individual and collective subjectivities.

Among the data collection instruments we will use observation and semi-structured interviews. The sample to be used is intentional with a non-probabilistic nature; 3 closed residential complexes created and inhabited in the last 20 years in the city of Valledupar will be used as a base, with at least 20 homes (6 interviewed per group).

3. Results and Analysis

In this section, fear is interpreted as an urban social imaginary linked to the relationships in the closed residential complexes in the city of the holy kings. This primary emotion manifests itself as a characteristic of similarity in the speeches and actions of the inhabitants of the residential complexes. closed, in this case the three selected. This phenomenon is related to the vision, often stereotyped, that the residents of the complexes maintain with respect to the spaces and inhabitants that generate fear. The persistence of this feeling of fear of spaces classified as dangerous, despite the conditions of social isolation in which they live, thanks to bars and security devices, is a relevant aspect visualized in the studies of these urban spaces.

Fear personifies one of the most fundamental alterations of man and is related to anxiety, anguish, terror and panic; All of them are part of the multiple modalities that fear occurs in people and societies. Regarding terror, anguish, panic and anxiety, the psychologist André (2005) argues the following: anxiety as an anticipated fear; It is the experience associated with waiting, feeling or the proximity of danger. Anxiety is anxiety with numerous physical signs. Both appear “without a physical object”, the danger does not yet exist, but it produces fear. Panic, terror, dread, are levels of fear that are characterized by an extreme intensity that is what is important: they can occur in the absence of danger, simply by evoking or foreseeing it, and they manage to make those who suffer from them lose control (André, 2005, P. 34).

According to Reguillo (2006), human beings can be completely safe and yet fall prey to deep fears when faced with the perception of evil; That perception is part of the wealth of experiences shared by social groups. Fears are individually experienced, socially constructed and culturally shared.

Appealing to what was stated above, it can be said that fear is an urban social imaginary, because they are socially constructed through experience with the mission of manipulating the lifestyle of the people who found it and share it.

Fears can also produce stereotypes, which according to Giddens (1997) and Goffman (1995), are opinions based on rigid and uninformed images of the sociocultural environment of which the characterization is made that may be wrong. Stereotypes are often a negative attribute that creates discrimination against people or groups of people.

Street dwellers, sex workers, drug addicts, criminals, and other unknown characters are regularly the most stigmatized urban actors, who are given characteristics such as being “disheveled, wearing dirty and torn clothes, disfigured, with scars.”, ugly, with an intimidating look. There is a tendency to generalize that the poor make the city ugly and embody the subjects who carry danger and insecurity” (Niño, 2002: 195). Thus, stereotypes about them emerge as social representations that, according to



Moscovici (1997), allow us to go beyond the level of interpersonal relationships, the study of how an individual is perceived by others and the causal explanation of behavior.

Fear becomes an important property experienced in a similar way in the three closed residential complexes analyzed, it is strongly related to one of the main explanations that have been given to this urban phenomenon, in terms of the patterns of fear and insecurity that people They experiment in the open spaces of the city. In this sense, it is noted that, in the specific area of current metropolises, both the perception of insecurity and the fear of widespread crime continually affect social relations in localities, opening spaces for self-confinement and avoiding public spaces of encounter (Caldeira, 2000; Dammert, 2004).

However, in the three closed groups, feelings of fear of the foreign space with a dangerous reputation are presented; these are mobilized by perceptions constructed from chronicles and experiences of others, without visualizing stories that express a direct and real link with some constitutive action of fear of these spaces.

In this way, it can be highlighted that several times the insecurity and fear of the open society is an impression that little or nothing is shown in reality, because safe and insecure territories can be interpreted as a subjective perception within which The barriers built by public discourse may be one of the main causes of this type of perceptions (Janoschka, 2005). Therefore, the fundamental difference between real crime and subjective insecurity is a concrete fact within the urban social imaginaries of an identity nature that the residents of the three closed residential complexes experience in their daily lives.

When asking some residents of the closed residential complexes Altos de Ziruma and Callejas, about the spaces and characters that generate fear in the neighbors inside and outside their respective complexes, they answered the following:

What makes you afraid are those invasions... hahahaha... in invasions there are thieves, you are afraid to go out to the store because they rob you, in the invasion there are good people but there are also bad people, they hide thieves, drug addicts (Araujo, personal communication, July 11, 2014).

The insecurity that we have outside, that is, I am afraid to go outside at 9 at night because we are surrounded lately by some subnormal neighborhoods, those that we have have harmed us a lot because there is a lot of robbery, robbery, now (Arias, personal communication, July 16, 2014).

Within the complex there is space that generates fear, especially at night, the places are the goal, the soccer fields, the pool and the bars that are around... in the goal, street vendors, beggars and strange people approach, around drug addicts and thieves pass through the bars, there is a lot of loneliness in the pool... (Martínez, personal communication, March 7, 2017)

Another interviewed resident of Altos de Ziruma states that:

Nearby there are many low-income neighborhoods, such as the new Lorenzo Morales towers (in the background), on this side are the Nando Marin towers next to the Nelson Mandela School, there are also Nuevo Milenio, Mareigua, El Páramo, Chiquiriqui, Villa Heidi and some others, those neighborhoods are very dangerous because there are a lot of marijuana users, "chirrete", thieves, robbers, pure scourge, who go out to do their thing at night, they don't forgive anyone, that's a hotbed of criminals, this panorama scares me, my family and all the neighbors, which is why I go out very little and even less at night (Palomino, personal communication, March 19, 2017)

Another opinion that is worth analyzing are the voices of the interviewees from the Callejas Residential Complex, who argue the following:

Around this complex, what there is is, in front at the main entrance an avenue, across the avenue some fast food restaurants, a church and a little further away a gas pump and there is a private university down below, I think the Andina, behind a preschool and primary school and an open complex that I don't remember what it's called, on the west side a street that leads to the school you mentioned, what there is is large fattening plots, for future complexes or houses. On the other side, that is, to the east on my right hand side, we find another single street, which leads to other groups of houses that are not closed, but nearby, not a few feet away, there are many large residential complexes similar to these, there are Villas Ligia, 1,2,3 and 4, Rosario Norte, Marsella, and others, but between them there are many lots that separate them, that makes this whole area look lonely, attractive to thieves and robbers who come from nearby neighborhoods like Nevada, and Bello Horizonte, all that is scary (Martínez, personal communication, March 18, 2017)

Look for me at the places that scare me and the neighbors inside and outside of this complex are, within the complex, the area where the garbage is placed, that is dark at night and permanently during the day the recyclers come to look for bottles and cardboard. Parking lots also make me a little afraid, afraid that children playing in the parks will be run over, they are very close, this complex is surrounded by bars and walls, outside sometimes they throw stones and garbage, dead animals, that too It's scary... Outside I'm not even telling you, it's hot around here, a lot of drunks and criminals from La Nevada, Bello Horizonte and El Refugio pass by, outside everything around you is just streets, it's scary to go out and walk the streets, fear of a robbery, of rape, near the main streets many vans and cars pass at high speed,



I do not dare to go to the neighboring church alone, walking or crazy, much less to fast food restaurants, the journey is close but very risky, they are lonely streets, I'm afraid of getting hurt. I wouldn't go to the gym alone, I have gone out alone during rush hours, but never at night. All the outskirts of the complexes are very lonely, we have around other complexes, lots, small and large schools, a university, the shops and supermarkets are somewhat far away, the closest is La Olímpica and this opposite of Villa Ligia 3, you cannot get there on foot, you have to go by car and accompanied, or ask for addresses. Behind this complex there is a small private school Semillitas del Reino, there are people only in the mornings, but in the afternoons and evenings it is very lonely, it is scary to walk through there (Ramirez, personal communication, January 26, 2017)

It can be said that fear is a feeling of anguish and distrust experienced by the residents of the Alto de Ziruma and Callejas closed complexes, when they find themselves or perceive that they are outside or in areas close to their complexes; the mere reference or presence of people who live in the surrounding low-income sectors (Nuevo Milenio, Mareigua, El Páramo, Chiquiriqui, Villa Heidi, Las Torres de Lorenzo Morales and Las Torres de Nando Marín (in commune 3) and La Nevada, Bello Horizonte, El Refugio (in commune 5), deserve a classification of unwelcome persons, with a criminal profile. It can also be said that there are spaces considered dark, such as the round trip to places such as churches, restaurants, parks, supermarkets, stores, gyms and other places at night.

The above is evidence that there is coherence in the characteristics of fear attributed to both the inhabitants of the surrounding sectors and the nearby urban spaces of the closed residential complexes. In order to determine and interpret which are the spaces of fear, considered by the residents of the closed complex San José los blocks, it was necessary to carry out several observation visits, as well as the application of semi-structured interviews, a sample of them is in the following fragments product of field work:

The spaces or places that make me and my family afraid inside and outside the blocks are: in the patio of the blocks, at night there is a place in the garden of block b, which is very dark, there are people who say that They hear cries, I don't know if it's the cats crying or the real crybaby, that scares me and I don't go there, outside the complex, there are many spaces, for example the park, nearby there are also very lonely and dark places like the government square, the outskirts of the Palace of Justice and there are close to the Gardens of Fine Arts and the Carrillo Library, in those places strange people pass and arrive, to smoke, play, talk, that makes anyone afraid or distrustful, (Heredia, personal communication, January 10, 2015)

Personally, I'm not afraid of anything, but I know that many people who live here in the blocks are afraid of the patio, which has dark areas, but they don't do anything to change that... Outside there are very lonely places at night, if you look nearby, about 300 or 400 meters away is the Palace of Justice and close by is the library and further down the governor's office, there are some homeless people sleeping in those places, many street children also go there, and I know that Many robberies happen, whoever gives papaya (Barriosnuevos, personal communication, January 11, 2015).

In the case of the closed complex San José los blocks, it was possible to find in the discourses studied a lack of knowledge of the other who lives or transits in the surrounding sectors, there is a negative reference to certain nearby urban spaces, using as input the impressions of people who live in the sets. In this sense, a knowledge of the environment is established as spaces of fear (especially at night), within which sectors such as the Cesar Government building, the Palace of Justice, the Rafael Carrillo Luqués Library and the headquarters of Fine Arts (Faculty of Art and Folklore of the Popular University of Cesar), places located near the closed complex San José los blocks.

Through the closed residential complexes, taken as units of analysis, it was possible to study how the Valduparenses interact through language constituting urban social imaginaries, which are interpreted as elements that create in the context where they live.

To conclude this section, it can be stated that fear is an urban social imaginary that is closely linked to the territory, in this case the closed residential complexes, where two important variables can be identified, such as fear of solitary space and distrust. towards strange people.

It is worth remembering that identity is a socially constructed state of meaning that helps people recognize the social groups to which they belong, the spaces where they live, beliefs, traditions, stereotypes, prejudices, tastes, economic resources, among other aspects that are shared and even differences with other individuals.

In the neighborhood, identity is expressed as a process of social and relational constitution of the individuality of human beings based on the interaction that these people carry out in the field of urban spaces. Urban identity processes in the neighborhood are articulated to physical units (boundaries, monuments, supermarkets, shopping centers, schools, parks, among others) and non-physical units (values, beliefs, traditions).

Urban social imaginaries related to fear are built from experiences and discourses about subjective conditions where various agents and media participate; In the closed residential complexes selected as the unit of analysis in Valledupar, emotions related to threat and risk were found, produced in open

spaces, outside the complexes, classified by the residents as frightening, not only because they were dark and frequently alone, but because they are occupied and visited by strange people: sellers, street dwellers, robbers, dealers and drug users, among other people.

5. Conclusions

It is known that social reality is impossible to understand in its entirety. But it is necessary to approach it, from this research an approach is proposed from subjective investigations, where the urban social imaginaries linked to fear are interpreted, investigating the symbolic universes that are built in life in the suburb (in this case the closed residential complex).

Social imaginaries constitute a study, a referential scheme to interpret socially legitimized, intersubjectively constructed and historically determined reality. That is, social imaginaries are a frame of reference or semantic field that serves as an interpretation scheme to understand and apprehend socially given reality.

The accelerated construction of closed residential complexes in Valledupar is a phenomenon that is transforming the physiognomy of the city, in the last 3 decades more than 200 complexes have been built, causing changes not only in the urban landscape, but also in the symbolic universes of the people who inhabit it specifically related to the emotion of dread of spaces and the people who generate distrust.

Fear is an element of similarity, which represents an important axis in the constitution of identity in the study of closed residential complexes, in this case the three selected ones. This phenomenon is related to the vision, often stereotyped, that the residents of the complexes maintain with respect to the nearby low-income (humble) spaces. The persistence of this feeling of fear of nearby spaces classified as dangerous, despite the conditions of social isolation in which they live, thanks to bars and security devices, is a relevant aspect visualized in studies of these urban spaces.


Urban imaginaries constitute a repertoire of meanings that have been authenticated in the social and cultural environment to interpret social behaviors and endorse certain ideal and cultural valuations.

Thanks to the interpretation of the urban social imaginaries in the city of Valledupar, it was possible to know how a traditionally conservative society accustomed to living in open spaces, with organicist conceptions, a lover of nature, which values freedom as a source of social cohesion; renounces many of the aforementioned privileges and decides to live segregated in urban spaces delimited by bars and security devices, where private property is horizontal and collective, and its uses must be agreed upon, where coexistence is mediated by rules and behavioral manuals. . The above is accepted with the promise of finding a stable emotional state away from the fear and danger caused by open, dark spaces, alone and visited by strangers.

The residents of the closed complexes justify their change of dwelling from open to closed, arguing fear of violence, darkness, loneliness and crime, however, it can be seen that the fear does not end, because the east is a distressing monster invented by humanity caused by the presence of a real or fictitious danger. Therefore, it is an inexhaustible sensation that will always be present in any social relationship. To conclude, it can be stated that this research allows us to account for the subjective dimensions of a symbolic nature that the residents of these prototypes of urban spaces build and represent in their daily lives, based on the descriptions made, and the common analytical properties visualized between the three closed residential complexes studied. The inhabitants of these urban phenomena constitute their identities based on the fear of strangers and lonely and dark spaces, despite the security provided by the walls, bars and security devices of closed neighborhoods.

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