Concept of 'matter' in home and city space security

Drawing on concepts and examples from the Security: Sociology and Social Worlds book (excluding chapter 2), discuss the view that matter plays a significant role in making our homes and city spaces secure.

The concept of " matter" is often used to analyze society, some ideas that start in the minds of people and end up representing themselves in a physical way. From the idea we turn to the material through the creation of objects that represent tradition, knowledge and History (the fundamental ingredients for culture). The material culture is a source of knowledge to study the past and present of the different societies, for all the knowledge that is transmitted has a trace. The material culture encompasses the remains that society leaves as representatives of its daily activity.

With the analysis of matter we can extract information on how a particular society is organized, what are the main currents of thought, what are they engaged with… etc. Ultimately, objects are manifestations of the activities and thoughts of the people. (p. 8)

Matter and the Social world are connected in the notion of co-production (p. 155-156) for the first time, the axis of sociological explanation is no longer put into the idea of society but assumed to be based on the co-production of symbols present in the interactions how society should be understood. Of course, there are structural elements but the important thing is to understand the permanent co-production of organizations through interactions. " The ways in which we know and represent the world (both nature and society) are inseparable from the ways in which we choose to live in it" (Jasanoff, 2004, pp. 2-3)

More specifically, matter plays an increasing role in creating a sense of security. On the one hand we have the explicit facts that originate acts of violence and on the other – simultaneously – we have the " public opinion" on those facts. The first thing noticed when analyzing the phenomenon is the gap between both elements, just as " temperature" versus " real feel", in general, there is a sense of insecurity and fear in society that is not related to the real and concrete events that originate that sensation. (p. 9)

Security is a concept of vital importance within contemporary societies. All different models of society have developed material security and control functions, but these have never reached the dimensions they are taking today. The field of action of security has become so broad that it has a multidimensional nature, connected with legal, political and economical institutions; and forms an order that demands a new type of society where conflict appears as something natural within the interaction process.

The " developed" societies believed that fortifying their territory with material means might guarantee security. They bet on shielding from what might seem " strange". But recent events might have questioned this idea, showing that " the place" no longer protects. The concept of security becomes diffuse, it becomes an extra-territorial problem as the current global insecurity is diluted in the confrontation between space and time. Due to this, there are no institutionalized mechanisms to face this insecurity. Each act of violence leads to a different response that in turn, generates another conflict. In addition, as the balance of powers and the spectrum of opportunities oscillates, those " tensions" of vital importance yesterday, are

sent to the background to tackle new battlefronts that arise as a consequence to the growing global insecurity.

Each conflict arises in a specific space and time, but its development has consequences for the entire planet due to the growing global interconnection. Trying to address these conflicts by applying measures that attempt to make tension disappear only in the area where it appears (only masking the problem), trying to stop insecurity from within a particular territory and using only the means available in this area, is causing what Zygmunt Bauman called a " security overload" (2002: 115); which translates into a deviation from the problems and concerns derived from insecurity into the field of active safety.

In today's society we see material surveillance grow through police controls, cameras, electronic devices to avoid theft, etc. These active security measures create the illusion of " something being done", because there is no policy in the world's order with the possibility of acting beyond the scope of active security.

The demand for material security has become part of the basic needs that the population seeks to cover. It is a great demand present in all countries, especially in its big cities, as crime and violence occur mainly in urban areas (due to a greater concentration of material wealth, financial movement and population). The criminality can be understood as a transgression of the established laws, but also as the violation of a certain order. In this sense, what citizens feel threatened " is their sense of order, that is, what makes life in society (city) and its place in it, intelligible" (Lechner, 1985: 3)

A city is the combination of public and private spaces but fear generates a subdivided city, which is divided within itself. The increase of closed urbanizations is a massive phenomenon in many countries, both by demand and by supply and in continuous growth. Insecurity, present in most large cities, has been a central element in the explanatory discourse of the presence and development of those closed urbanizations.

Closed neighborhoods, private urbanizations, country clubs, condominiums, gated communities, different names to talk about a specific residential product: residential complexes that have collective services and facilities managed privately, some of which also have controlled access and delimitation with the use of fences, walls or other elements (p. 124) These residential enclaves of privative type are not a homogenous real estate product, nor new, but they increasingly characterize, the new residential landscape. The globalization of real estate developments should not be seen like an anecdotal phenomenon, as presented by the media, but rather as a product that reflects the deepest changes happening in society and in the urban world in general.

The walls, fences and control of accessibility, are the elements that generate the feeling of security and are therefore erected. The gates of the closed communities and all the ornamentation that is usually located near the entrance have a symbolic and didactic function at the same time, like the one that describes the sign at the entrance of Disneyland: here, you leave the present and you penetrate into the world of the past, of the future and of enchantment.

The increase of material measures in access control and security (through the urban or architectural design), services (surveillance, security guards, patrols) or technological elements (cameras, alarms or sensors) occurs in residential developments of very different categories and are already a regular part of the community's sales language (Blakely and Snyder, 1999). 24 hour surveillance and control, surveillance patrols, controlled access, enclave with security measures, the same concept of closed neighborhood, is displayed in advertising brochures as one of the services offered to the community. The security factor ends up being commodified through measures that are incorporated into the development as any other service. Security thus becomes a consumer good that is incorporated into residential use, but a consumer good more accessible to those who can afford it.

Conclusion

The conception of security has varied widely in the course of history. From the determinism of traditional societies, the confidence of the modern world has begun to be undermined in postmodern societies. As a result of this continuous social change, the social collectivity is caught involuntarily in a paradox: it is needed to have mechanisms that ensure existence; and yet, the globalized world weakens the belief in progress and science as a basis for collective assurance, while global interdependence fosters new risks and makes it impossible to control risks. New vulnerable groups appear that are unable to cope with new risks.

In short, endemic insecurity seems to be one of the most relevant aspects of the new social order fostered by economic globalization, social and cultural

politics. The postmodern culture includes insecurity as one of its basic dimensions and, consequently, individuals structure their social self in response to the demands of an environment perceived as increasingly hostile. Subjective insecurity is already part of the postmodern collective consciousness. Security is fully a constitutive element of the social and political debate, being rooted in a new type of individual collective consciousness characteristic of our time. As Eduardo Sabrovsky affirms: " Insecurity is a peculiar state of contemporary consciousness, a diffuse and persistent restlessness, a malaise of culture, which cannot be explained as merely empirical" (1996: 55).

Insecurity and therefor, the need for security seems to have settled, then, as an ontological dimension of our societies, and not merely as a transitory phenomenon.

References

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