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TRANSGANG White Paper
Gang Policies and Mediation in the Context of Overlapping Crises

TRANSGANG is a study of transnational gangs as agents of mediation in the 21st century. It aims to respond to the persistence of youth street groups (the so-called 'gangs') and the social discourses that often represent them as "problematic". We are interested in studying the 'transnationalization' process of these groups from two directions: 'from above' (imaginaries, symbols, criminal and police policies to deal with them) and 'from below' (imagined and practiced communities of mutual aid, through migratory processes and virtual interactions). This document explores public policies and gang prevention strategies as well as processes of community mediation and resistance in the twelve cities of the three TRANSGANG regions: Southern Europe (Barcelona, Madrid, Marseille, Milan), North Africa (Rabat-Salé, Algiers, Djendel, Tunis) and The Americas (Medellin, San Salvador, Santiago de Cuba, Chicago). The White Paper ends with a Decalogue about public policy recommendations on gangs and mediation based on the research outcomes.

Director: Carles Feixa-Pàmpols
Editors: José Sánchez-García, Adam Brisley, Nele Hansen

Eduard Ballesté, Kamal Boucherf, Candy Chévez, Paolo Grassi, Ligia Lavielle, Juan Camilo Mansilla, Fulvia Márquez, Margot Mecca, Sihem Najar, Maria Oliver, Mustapha Omrane, William Ross, Rachid Touhtouh

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Català

TRANSGANG Llibre Blanc. Polítiques de Bandes i Mediació en Context de Crisi Superposades

TRANSGANG és un estudi sobre les bandes transnacionals com a agents de mediació al segle XXI. Pretén donar resposta a la persistència dels grups juvenils de carrer (les anomenades 'bandes') i als discursos socials que sovint els representen com a 'problemàtics'.

Ens interessa estudiar el procés de 'transnacionalització' d'aquests grups des de dues direccions: 'des de dalt' (imaginaris, símbols, polítiques criminals i policials per fer-hi front) i 'des de baix' (comunitats imaginades i practicades d'ajuda mútua, a través de processos migratoris i interaccions virtuals).

Aquest document explora polítiques públiques i estratègies de prevenció sobre les bandes, així com processos de mediació comunitària i resistència a les dotze ciutats de les tres regions TRANSGANG: sud d'Europa (Barcelona, Madrid, Marsella, Milà), nord d'Àfrica (Rabat-Salé, Alger, Djendel, Tunísia) i Amèrica (Medellín, San Salvador, Santiago de Cuba, Chicago). El Llibre Blanc acaba amb un Decàleg recomanacions de polítiques públiques sobre bandes i mediació en funció dels resultats de la recerca.

Paraules clau
Bandes
Transnacionalisme
Mediació
Grups juvenils de carrer
Política pública

Castellano

TRANSGANG Libro Blanco. Políticas de Bandas y Mediación en Contexto de Crisis Superpuestas

TRANSGANG es un estudio de las bandas transnacionales como agentes de mediación en el siglo XXI. Su objetivo es responder a la persistencia de los grupos callejeros juveniles (las llamadas 'bandas') y los discursos sociales que a menudo los representan como 'problemáticos'.

Nos interesa estudiar el proceso de 'transnacionalización' de estos grupos desde dos direcciones: 'desde arriba' (imaginarios, símbolos, políticas criminales y policiales para enfrentarlos) y 'desde abajo' (comunidades imaginadas y practicadas de ayuda mutua, a través de procesos migratorios e interacciones virtuales).

Este documento explora políticas públicas y estrategias de prevención sobre bandas, así como procesos de mediación y resistencia comunitaria en las doce ciudades de las tres regiones de TRANSGANG: Sur de Europa (Barcelona, Madrid, Marsella, Milán), norte de África (Rabat-Salé, Argel, Djendel, Túnez) y las Américas (Medellín, San Salvador, Santiago de Cuba, Chicago). El Libro Blanco termina con un decálogo sobre recomendaciones de políticas públicas sobre bandas y mediación basadas en los resultados de la investigación.

Palabras clave
Bandas
Transnacionalismo
Mediación
Grupos juveniles de calle
Políticas públicas

English

TRANSGANG White Paper
Gang Policies and Mediation in the Context of Overlapping Crises

TRANSGANG is a study of transnational gangs as agents of mediation in the 21st century. It aims to respond to the persistence of youth street groups (the so-called 'gangs') and the social discourses that often represent them as "problematic".

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Abstract

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0   Foreword

TRANSGANG is a study of transnational gangs as agents of mediation in the 21st century. It aims to respond to the persistence of youth street groups (the so-called 'gangs') and the social discourses that often represent them as "problematic". In particular, we are interested in studying the "transnationalization" process of these groups from two directions: "from above" (imaginaries, symbols, criminal and police policies to deal with them) and "from below" (imagined and practiced communities of mutual aid, through migratory processes and virtual interactions).

This document explores public policies and gang prevention strategies as well as processes of community mediation and resistance in the twelve cities of the three TRANSGANG regions: Southern Europe (Barcelona, Madrid, Marseille, Milan), North Africa (Rabat-Salé, Algiers, Djendel, Tunis) and the Americas (Medellin, San Salvador, Santiago de Cuba, Chicago). In the TRANSGANG study, we have strived to understand the issues related to gang and youth street group conflict, violence and mediation in their socio-economic and political contexts.

The document is divided into seven parts. The first part is a summary of the theoretical and methodological background of the project and its main outcomes. The second part sets out the key concepts we have used in the TRANSGANG study: Transnationalism, Neoliberalism, Structural Adjustment, Precarity, Advanced Marginality, Mediation, Care, Mutuality, Postcolonialism and Gender. The third part depicts the legal and policy framework of gang issues in the ten countries of the three regions. Parts Four, Five and Six give overviews of the approaches to gang policy and mediation in the three TRANSGANG regions. For each region, we also include an in-depth empirical case study of on-the-ground mediations. Part Seven provides general reflections and recommendations. The document concludes with a Decalogue on Gang Policies and Mediation, and with the bibliographic references.

The collective authorship covers the different responsibilities and the contributions are as follows: the principal investigator was responsible for the main concepts, directing the research and final revision, the core team at the UPF edited the entire paper, and the transnational team of local researchers in the twelve cities produced multisited ethnographies and case studies.

01   Part One: The TRANSGANG Project

Gangs are described as an episodic phenomenon comparable across diverse geographical sites with the US gang stereotype often operating as an archetype. Mirroring this trend, academic researchers have increasingly sought to survey the global topography of gangs through positivist methodologies that look for universal characteristics of gangs in different cultural contexts. The TRANSGANG Project is an attempt to approach gangs from an alternative perspective, seeking to include and determine their diversity over time, space and culture, focusing on their relation to mediation. In this section we will present the main features of the project.[1]

1.1. The Gang

> Gangs flourish on the frontier (...). Gangs are gangs, wherever they are found. They represent a specific type or variety of society, and one thing that is particularly interesting about them is the fact that they are, in respect to their organization, so elementary, and in respect to their origin, so spontaneous.
> (Park, Editor's preface in Thrasher 1927/2013, ix)

Gangs – both their organizational form and their contemporary iconography and symbolism – are an American creation: first of North America, then of Central America and the Caribbean, and finally of South America. From the Americas – in the plural, to avoid identifying only with the United States – the culture and imaginary of gangs spread to Europe, where they mixed with previously existing subcultural youth street traditions, the result of migration processes and their own urbanization modalities, and from there to the rest of the world, in an irreversible process of gang globalization (Hagedorn 2008).

The gang model on which this organizational form and imaginary is based is not too far from the model studied by Frederic M. Thrasher (1927/2013) in his seminal study of the famous 1313 Chicago gangs in the

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1   This section is based on the TRANSGANG Concept Paper, *The (Trans)Gang: Notes and Queries on Youth Street Group Research* (Feixa et al. 2019), and on the *Methodology Handbook: Ethnography and Data Analysis* (Feixa, Sánchez-García et al. 2020).

1920s, almost exactly a century ago. His mentor, Robert Park, linked this gang model to the notion of the border (geographical and moral) and considered it to be a universal and widely spread concept. These are "elementary" and "spontaneous" gangs (the two adjectives that Park highlights), territorial, predominantly masculine, ethnically based, connected with the streets, an alternative socialization space to the family and school, prone to violence, and linked peripherally or centrally to crime. These gangs are profusely portrayed by cinema and the media, persecuted and punished by the "right hand" of the State (the security forces and bodies as well as criminal justice), addressed and monitored by the "left hand" of the State (educators and social workers, welfare services) and NGOs, and researched by a sector of criminology and other branches of the social sciences.[2]

Significantly, the gang imaginary was the first to spread, especially through Hollywood cinema, which invented the subgenre of "gangster films", at the same time that the Chicago school legitimized the study of "gangs". In the same year that Thrasher's book was published, what is considered the first gangster film in the history of cinema was released: *Underworld* (von Sternberg 1927). In one of the central dialogues of the film there is a conversation between the leader of the gang (Bull Weed) and his advisor (Rolls Royce), in which reference is made to an atavistic past of gangs during the barbaric invasions:

> Rolls Royce: Attila the Hun at the gates of Rome
> Bull Weed: Who's Attila? The leader of a gang of Italians?
> Rolls Royce: You were born two thousand years late. Today you won't get away with it.
> Bull Weed: They'll never catch me!
> Rolls Royce: What can I do to help you?
> Bull Weed: Help me? Nobody helps me! I help others!

Compare the above passage with the following quote from *The Gang*:

> The broad expanse of gangland with its intricate tribal and intertribal relationships is medieval and feudal in its organization rather than modern and urban. The hang-out of the gang is its castle and the center of a feudal estate which it guards most jealously. Gang leaders hold sway like barons of old, watchful of invaders and ready to swoop down upon the lands of rivals and carry off booty or prisoners or to inflict punishment upon their enemies. Sometimes their followers become roving, lawless bands, prowling over a large territory and victimizing the community. (Thrasher 1927/1913, 6)

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2   Pierre Bourdieu calls "the left hand" the social care services of the State to avoid violence and the "right hand" as the repressive ways of the State to content social dissidences. It is interesting to observe how these "right and left hands" of the State are also given a vision of gender. Thus, the right would be related to masculinity (punishment), while the left to the feminine side (care) (Bourdieu 1992/2002).

In the 1930s – after the crack of '29 – the gangster subgenre triumphed and became a typical American product: in three years more than 70 films were released, among which we can highlight *The Public Enemy* (Wellman 1931), *Scarface* (Hawks 1932) and especially *Angels with dirty faces* (Curtiz 1938). After the Second World War, the theme evolved through the film subgenre of young rebels, starting with two classic films, *The Wild One* (Benedeck 1953) and *Rebel without a cause* (Ray 1955), and culminating with the gang musical film subgenre, from *West Side Story* (Wise 1961; Spielberg 2021) to *Grease* (Kleiser 1978). In the same period, films on street gangs appeared across the globe, produced by important filmmakers, like *Los Olvidados* (Buñuel 1950) and *Rodrigo D: No Futuro* (Gaviria 1990) in Latin America; *Los Golfos* (Saura 1959) and *Perros Callejeros* (De la Loma 1977) in Spain; and *Ali Zahua, Prince of the Streets* (Ayouch 2000) in the Arab countries, among many others.[3]

Following this cinematographic imaginary, the gang culture and organizational forms also arrived through the transnational migratory processes of the second half of the 20th century, and especially of the beginning of the 21st, coming from the Caribbean and Latin America to Southern Europe, but also influencing other parts of the world such as North Africa, especially through hip-hop music. With globalization, the mass media and the new multidirectional transnational migration processes, both the culture and the American imaginary of gangs colonized part of the world. In parallel with this cultural Americanization, was the Americanization of security policies and gang legislation. Thanks to the advice given by the FBI and other American police agencies, there was a generalization of criminal "punitive" policies, the war on drugs, attempts to link gangs with terrorism (leftist, fascist or Islamic), and the intervention of private transnational security agencies, all of which, through *lawfare* or *prisonfare*, were used to justify converting the Welfare State into a neoliberal Penal State (Wacquant 2013; Rodgers and Baird 2016; Feixa et al. 2019).

1.2. Concept

Following Thrasher's classic definition, a gang is an informal group of peers with local roots, in conflict with other peer groups, and sometimes with adult institutions. Although crime is not the main issue around which gangs are formed, the police and political approaches in the United States have reinforced the criminal dimensions of gangs. When delinquency was not considered to be a fundamental attribute of youth street sociability, other concepts were used, such as peer groups, street groups, subcultures, countercultures, and lifestyles. The term "gang" was reserved for youth street groups with members from migrant or ethnic minority and lower social class backgrounds and was not used for other youth groups. Therefore,

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3   For the history of the cinema on gangs see Doherty 1988; Cousins 2004/2021; Ventura 2019.

when defining what a gang is, it is mandatory to refer both to the use of the term by informants and native actors (to their "emic" meanings) and to the use of the term by researchers and external actors (to their "ethic" meanings). In addition, the terms and meanings may vary according to the geographical locations and subcultural traditions that we consider.[4]

From an "emic" point of view, in the three regions in which our study has been carried out, the use of the term is far from homogeneous. In <u>Europe</u> (as in the United States) the term "gang" tends to have a pejorative sense associated with crime, so it is juxtaposed with other terms of local use. In Spain the term *banda* has two different meanings: music group and criminal group; this second meaning evokes the tradition of banditry of ancient origin and opposes the term *pandilla* (*colla* in Catalan), which does not have criminal connotations, replacing traditional terms such as *golfos* or *gamberros* (López Riocerezo 1970). In Italy the so called "baby gangs" is an Anglicism used also to describe bullying, or groups of young people related to the Mafia and Camorra in the South. When the *maras* appeared in Milan, newspapers started to write about gangs and *pandillas* to distinguish them from local youth street groups. In France, the term "*bandes de rue*" spread in the 60s related to the process of Americanization and the impact of cinema and mass media (Monod 1968/2002): it still does not have the criminal implications of the term gang.

In <u>Latin America</u> there are a lot of local terms to name youth street groups: *gangas*, *clicas* and *vatos* on the border between Mexico and the United States, *palomillas* and *chavos banda* in Mexico, *maras* in Central America, *galladas*, *parches* and *combos* in Colombia, *coros* in the Caribbean, *pibes choros* in Argentina, etc. Some of these terms refer to informal street groups, while others refer to criminal groups. In Cuba, for example, the names used have the opposite connotations to those in Spain: the term *banda* is associated with a musical group, while the term *pandilla* designates a criminal group. The terms can also change their meaning: at first in Mexico *bandas* referred to small groups of delinquents, but the punks took on the term as a counterculture; in Central America at the beginning the *maras* were informal groups of peers, but then evolved to become a criminal transnational organization.[5]

In <u>Standard Arabic</u> the general term used to refer to "criminal youth groups" is *iṣḥāba* while the term shila is used to designate a youth street group. However, there are other related terms for youth street group

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4   The literature on gangs is immense. For a general overview, see Feixa 1998/2006; Fraser and Hagedorn 2018; Hazen and Rodgers 2014. See also the contributions of the Eurogang Program of Research (Klein et al. 2001; van Gemert, Petersen and Inger-Lise 2008; Esbensen and Maxson 2012; Melde and Weerman 2020).

5   Among the studies on gangs in Latin America, see Nateras 2014; Reguillo 1995; Salazar 1990; Perea 2007; Valenzuela 1988.

coming from the national and local contexts and expressed in colloquial Arabic, such as *hittistes* (Algeria), *tcharmils* (Morocco) and *baltagiya* (Egypt), which designate different criminalized street groups from paramilitaries to organized clans. On the other hand, each youth group can use different categories to define itself. In Barcelona, Madrid and Milano, the Latin Kings define themselves as a "nation" or "organization", while the Ñetas define themselves as an "association". In El Salvador the Salvatrucha is a "mara" while the 18 is a "pandilla" or a "barrio". In the case of the North African region, young people do not use a specific name, but rather are identified with the neighbourhood (*al-houma*). In addition, some youth street groups propose using the term "street family" to avoid the term "gang" and to denote the horizontal fraternity and vertical authority relationships that occur among them. Others prefer to assume the word "gang" or "banda", converting the stigma into an emblem.

Based on the evidence established from ethnographic research in diasporic situations, as in our study of Latino gangs in Barcelona, we proposed the concept of "Gangs-In-Process":

> there are group-like networks and behaviours at an incipient phase, even if media tend to identify them with the criminal and durable organizations similar to the North American gang pattern. In this case, there are street-oriented youth groups, with names, symbols and long-time traditions, composed by youth of deprived social backgrounds. Some of their members have connections with illegal activities, even if these activities are not part of the core group identity. (Feixa et al. 2008, 65).

The concept highlighted is that there are networks and group behaviours in the incipient phase which the media tend to identify with criminal and lasting organizations, following the North American criminological pattern, although they do not respond to that attribute alone. According to these research studies, we observe that there are street groups, with names, symbols and established traditions composed of young people from disadvantaged social environments, in which some of their members have connections with illegal activities, although these activities are not necessarily part of the group's identity.

Taking these considerations as a starting point, the TRANSGANG theoretical perspective has used the generic term "youth street group" to refer to any meeting of young people, according to the definition of youth that exists in each context, who recognize themselves as a group and who use the public space, physical or virtual, to meet. We understand these groups as a *continuum*, in which at one extreme there are the delinquent groups, the gangs themselves, and at the other extreme the groups linked to leisure youth cultures. The project has not discarded any group, but rather has prioritized those that are located at intermediate points and that have hybrid features. We have been particularly interested in detecting conflicts, appropriations, mediations and translations in the use of this terminology by the different sectors involved.

For all these reasons, we start from an update of Thrasher's classic definition, incorporating the context of the network society (Castells 1997) and considering the gang not as a single model but as a "continuum". At one extreme we would find, always ideally, the underline classic gangs based on illegal activities and not formed just by young people, such as the *bacrim* in Colombia, the *maras* in El Salvador, the *tcharmil* in Morocco and the *quinquis* in Spain. At the other extreme, we find youth subcultures based on leisure and economic activities, such as the *hip-hoppers* and *punks* in Europe, the *Rastafarians* and *reggaetoneros* in America, and the *heavies* and the *rappers* in North Africa. And in the middle, there are a variety of hybrid groups that combine both strategies, such as the *naciones* in Latin America, the *hittistes* in North Africa and the *bandas latinas* in Spain. Therefore, we propose adding the following nuances (underlined) to the classic gang definition:

> A (transnational) gang is an interstitial group originally formed spontaneously and later integrated through conflict. It is characterized by the following types of behaviour: face-to-face (and online) encounters, fights (and fun), movement through space as if the group were a unit (and searches for intimate spaces), conflicts (and alliances) with similar groups and planning. The result of this collective behaviour is the development of a tradition, a non-reflexive internal structure (and the establishment of rules to regulate exchanges with other gangs and institutions), esprit-de-corps, moral solidarity, group consciousness and an identity linked to territory (in their homeland, in their new land or in cyberspace). (Feixa et al. 2019, 43; adaptation of Thrasher 1927/2013, 57)

Based on this new adapted definition, there are different indicators that allow an informal youth street association to be included among our research subjects. The existence of a gang implies the presence of five indicators: a) a name; b) an external label; c) an internal conscience; d) ordinary activities; and e) continuity over time for more than one year. Therefore, from these characteristics a gang can include deviant behaviour, but also nondeviant behaviour, people of different generations (adolescents, and young adults), genders (men, women and LGTBI), and ethnic, social and territorial origins. Consequently, their identity will be based on common rituals and symbols that form the basis of an imagined community that establishes limits for group membership (Barth, 1969). This conceptualization makes it possible to differentiate youth gangs from organized crime or from transnational criminal organizations, including terrorist cells, but also from informal groups without stable organization that are grouped exclusively around leisure. In short, we consider a gang as a dynamic cultural formation in a context of exclusion and social transformation. Youth street groups can evolve towards more associative, cultural, or sports forms, as well as specialize in some kind of crime.

THE GANG AS AN IDENTITY GROUP IS NOT A SINGLE MODEL BUT A "CONTINUUM"

Illegal Activities	Hybrid Activities	Leisure Activities
CLASSIC GANGS	STREET GROUPS	YOUTH CULTURES
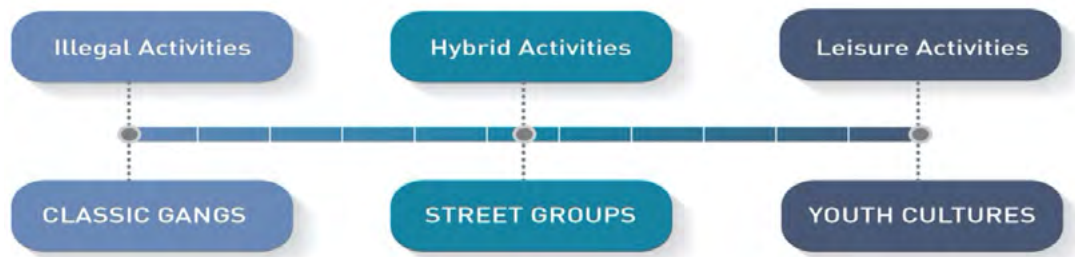
Figure 1. The TRANSGANG Continuum
Source: Own creation

1.3. Objectives

TRANSGANG has five main objectives, each of which will result in a series of deliverables.

1. <u>To review the historical literature on youth gangs in order to elaborate a theoretical synthesis.</u> Since F. M. Thrasher's (1927/2013) seminal monograph, gang theories have been focused on the (North) American gang pattern, which is mainly territorial, masculine, based on ethnicity, clandestine and highly influenced by the criminal justice system. This pattern has scarcely taken into consideration contributions from non-Anglo-Saxon countries and the advances made after the 1960s. The new synthesis will aim to fill these gaps.

2. <u>To develop a renewed model for the analysis of transnational youth gangs in the global age.</u> Since W. I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki (1918-1920/1984) The Polish Peasant in Europe and America, comparative migration processes have evolved by incorporating transnational approaches (Faist, Fauser and Reisenauer 2013). Our aim is to incorporate this perspective in gang studies, analysing the ways in which the neoliberal era, flexible capitalism and hybrid cultures affect the nature and function of gangs.

3. <u>To apply an experimental model for comparing gangs in two transnational groups: Latinos and Arabs.</u> Gang studies usually focus on a variety of gangs in one single city/ region, on a single gang, or on transnational gangs related to an ethnic or meta-ethnic background. While Latino gangs have been over-studied (looking into all the lifestyles of young Latino peoples through a "gang" and "leisure" lens), similar street-groups from Arab backgrounds are under-studied (looking into all the lifestyles of young Arab people through a "religious" and "survival" lens). Our aim is to

compare transnational youth street groups to understand the collective forms of behaviour that emerge from the two cultural backgrounds.

4. <u>To explore experiences in which gangs have acted as agents of mediation, as well as barriers that block these attempts.</u> Most of the research on gangs focuses on their deviant /criminal aspects. Sometimes they try to justify zero-tolerance policies and filtered police approaches. When violence reduction, political participation or cultural creativity are experienced, these are analysed as conjunctural, epiphenomic or not related to gangs. Our aim is to start from our own experience of working with gangs in Barcelona, incorporating other cases in which gang sections, NGOs, local authorities and police services have explored alternative discourses and practices.

5. <u>To determine more effective ways of intervening to prevent the hegemony of the criminal gang pattern that still appears so dominant in the neoliberal era.</u> The current hegemonic gang pattern is based on violent behaviour in the 'criminal' pattern of the Latino gangs, as well as in the 'radical' pattern of the Arab street groups. On one hand, only the negative effects of gang membership are taken into consideration, and on the other hand, the cities, regions or countries where there are no criminal gangs are under-studied. Our aim is to cooperate with gang leaders, ex-gang members, police officers, youth workers and other stakeholders to determine the most effective ways of preventing and intervening, including self-management by the peer groups of the social situation.

1.4 Methodology[6]

According to the objectives and the comparative aim of the project, we understand methodology as a way of organizing research "with the purpose of solving or transiting social problems and, simultaneously with related scientific problems, differentiating and integrating the knowledge of diverse scientific and social disciplines of knowledge" (Jahn, Bergmann, and Keil 2012, 26-27). To do this, it is necessary to go beyond a top-down approach and move towards definition and learning based on solid comparisons located within a broader structural context: appropriately, ethnography was the main method of obtaining a qualitative understanding of how other worlds are experienced.

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6   This section is based on the *TRANSGANG Methodology Handbook* (See Feixa et al., 2020).

Our theoretical standpoint combines post-subcultural studies and decolonial theoretical perspectives with critical criminology focusing on challenging traditional understandings and uncovering false beliefs about youth street groups (see Feixa et al. 2019). As a result, the combination of these theoretical frameworks has facilitated the immersion of the researchers in the field, taking into account social structure, class and status inequalities, and understanding that law and punishment of crime are connected to these structural frameworks as a means to produce and perpetuate this situation. The critical anti-colonial ethnography proposed by Brotherton (2015) has served as an epistemological guide of "good practices" for the case studies that have been carried out in Barcelona, Medellin and Rabat-Salé. These in-depth core studies have been contrasted with other cases in which other types of policies have been established: Madrid, Marseille and Milan in southern Europe; Tunisia, Algiers and Djendel in North Africa; Chicago, Santiago de Cuba and San Salvador in the Americas.
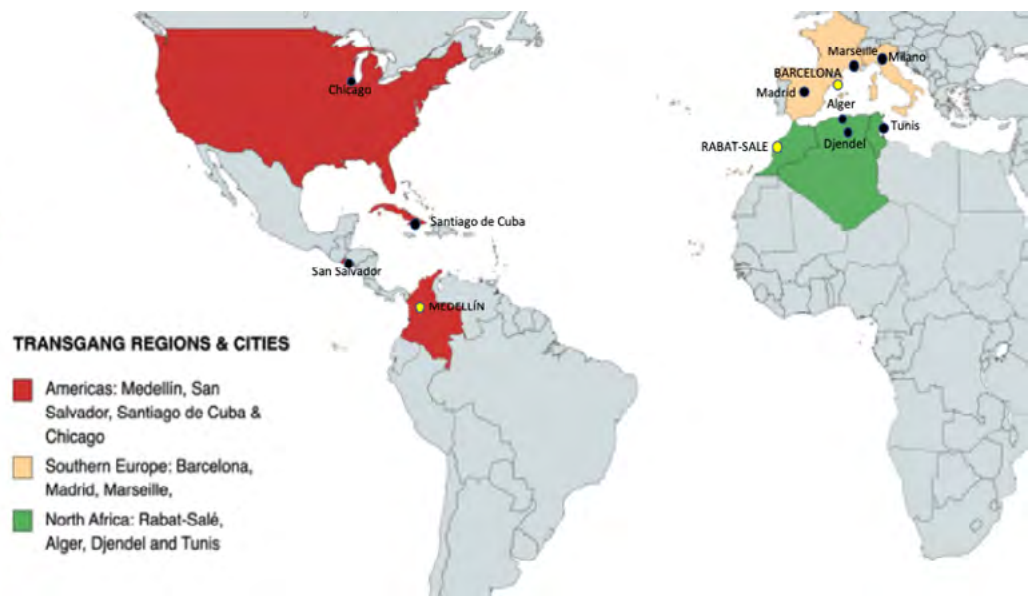
Figure 2. The TRANSGANG Regions and Cities
Source: Own creation

During more than three years, our research team has been sharing the worlds of gangs across three continents to obtain the *verstehen*.[7] From our perspective, ethnography is necessarily an open and dialogic mode of social research. Moreover, the style of ethnography practiced has allowed us to provide multiple forms of data, emphasizing the creative and agency capacity of the members of youth street groups as potential mediators. This form of comparative ethnography, however, is exceptionally rare. Long-term involvement in diverse social environments requires a bilingual cultural

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7   Following Max Weber, the understanding of the actions of people, *verstehen,* is the fundamental goal of ethnography. According to Schutz (1974), understanding has three objectives: to understand the meaning of an action (*aktuelles verstehen*); to understand the purpose of an action (*erklärendes verstehen*); and finally, to identify the specific meaning of a particular action (*deutendes verstehen*) (Schutz 1974).

sensitivity and an academic commitment that is as demanding as it is prolonged. The collaborative ethnographic methodology of Burawoy (1998, 2009) offers an alternative that is based on understanding the global forces, connections and imaginations in which, through deep observation, social realities can be perceived that are increasingly interconnected, although disparate.

An example of this approach can be found in Burawoy's (1998, 2009) Extended Case Method (hereinafter, ECM). An ECM approach also includes a commitment to multisite ethnography (Marcus 1995) and relational ethnography. In multisite ethnography, the research is carried out in multiple geographic and virtual areas as the actors move through the multitude of sites in which they act. The mediators of these activities are also a focal point: material artefacts such as documentation, more abstract structures such as rules and regulations, and acceptable and legitimated behaviours and practices. Above all, it is worth maintaining a file of juvenile artefacts from the daily life of the research participants: fanzines, writings, photos, videos, blogs and other communication materials.

Relational ethnography is an alternative group and place-based fieldwork useful in multisite ethnographies. Its scientific object is neither a bounded group defined by the members' shared social attributes nor a location delimited by the boundaries of a particular neighbourhood or organization, rather its scientific object is the processes involving configurations of relations among different agents or institutions. In our case, according to the comparative aim, more than studying gangs, we are interpreting processes with blurred boundaries in different locations with very different social, political and economic conditions. The focus of fieldwork becomes to describe a system of relations, "to show how things hang together in a web of mutual influence or support or interdependence or what have you, to describe the connections between the specifics the ethnographer knows by virtue of being there" (Becker 1996, 56). In consequence, more than to construct "subjects", "youth street groups" or "gangs" in an inductive or deductive manner, the objective of the ethnographers has been to determine the configurations of relations. The methodology has permitted us to construct the field, in our case "the micro-cosmos of youth street groups" encompassing those agents that are part of it (state, academia, media, the gang, themselves among others) to understand how this field works, what positions each of these agents occupies (although positions are variable), and see what dynamics are generated.
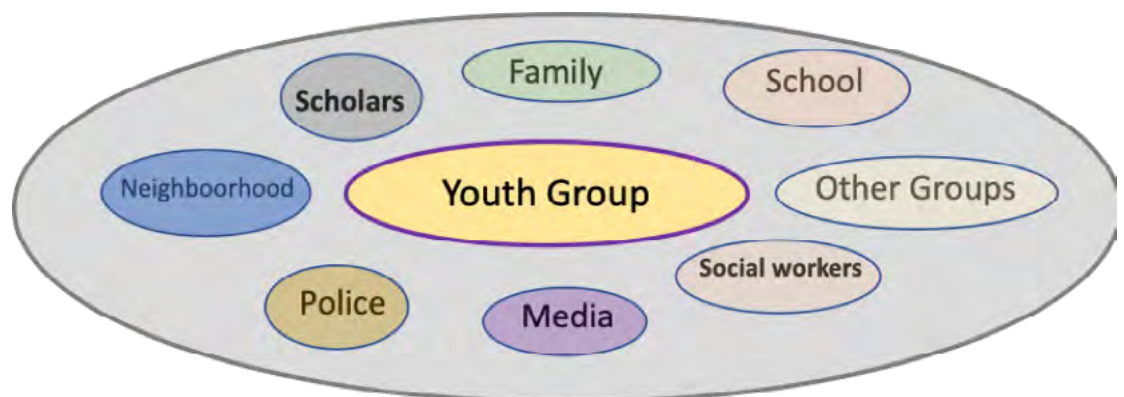
Figure 3. The TRANSGANG Micro-cosmos
Source: Own creation

In line with the theoretical and methodological perspective implemented, each ethnographic team or fieldwork researcher constructed their case study based on narrative interviews, focus groups, observant participation and life stories. This resulted in a series of Local and Regional Ethnographic Reports that were analysed comparatively. These analyses were conducted through Meta-Ethnographic as a method for 'synthesising' qualitative empirical data that is interpretive rather than aggregative in approach. When we use the term 'synthesis' in the specific TRANSGANG context, we are referring to the process of synthetizing data from local researchers to generate 'themes' (meta-codes/metaphors) that work at a trans-case (regional/transnational) level. This synthesis does not replace local or regional level analysis, but rather it provides an additional layer of analysis that can be presented as the added value of conducting multiple case studies in a large number of national and local contexts. Consequently, the project has adopted a synthesis approach to data analysis at the transnational level. The advantage of a synthesis approach is that it allows a 'bigger picture' to be constructed from profoundly contextualized embedded data. At the same time, the right synthesis approach can not only allow commonalities, but differences can also be elucidated and a significant amount of contextuality can be retained.

The first analyses and interpretations were produced by local researchers, while the second interpretation was made by the Ethnographic Area Coordinator (the project has three coordinators, each of whom is responsible for one TRANSGANG region) considering the analyses of the local researchers, bearing in mind the objectives of the project and implementing a synthesis of each researcher's results. This is the second interpretation according to all ethnographic researchers. In the third stage the Scientific Coordinator and the Principal Investigator interpreted this interpretation of the local analyses with the support of regional coordinators and local researchers.

In conclusion, the methodology adopted has allowed us to focus essentially on analysing the structures and processes that are evident in the (inter)relationships of youth gangs with each other and their environment
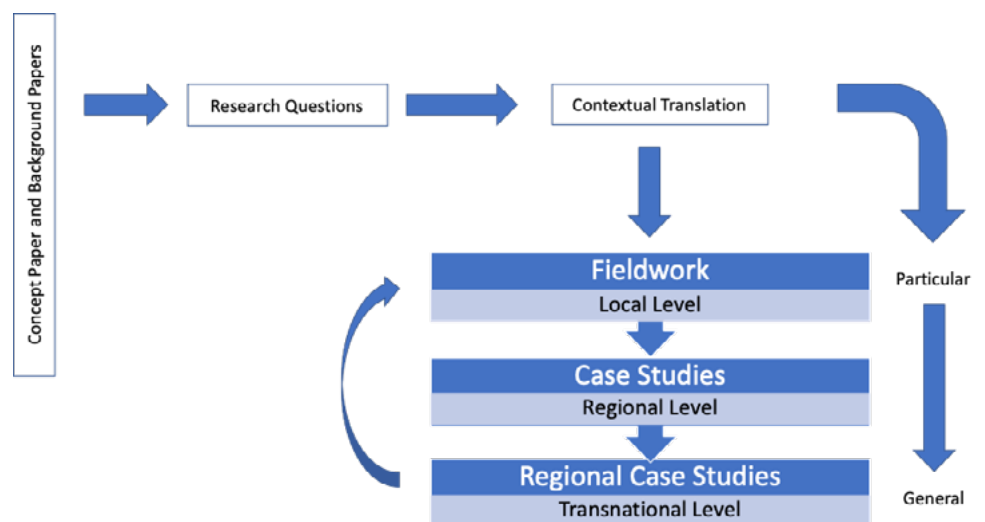
Figure 4. The TRANSGANG Methodological Approach
Source: Own creation

concerning mediation processes. The improved meta-analyses have allowed us to explore the datasets from each case with different issues related to the everyday life of street groups.

1.5 Outcomes

The TRANSGANG Project has been carried out over five and a half years – from January 2018 to June 2023 – with the last half year being an extension due to the pandemic. Throughout this period, the work plan has been followed in a flexible way, adapting it to the circumstances of the fieldwork and the limitations due to the coronavirus. In this section we will briefly present the project's background, the problems that arose in carrying it out, and the results obtained.[8]

In the <u>background</u> we must mention several research projects, both national and European, led by the Principal Investigator, which made it possible to lay the theoretical foundations, detect gaps in the state-of-the-art, and establish a solid network of academic contacts as well as contacts with youth groups. The most important was the JOVLAT Project (2005-2008), commissioned by the Barcelona City Council, which allowed the mediation process to begin with the Latin Kings and Ñetas and resulted in the book *Jóvenes latinos en Barcelona* (Feixa, Porzio and Recio 2006). In the following years we participated in five European projects on migrant teenagers (TRESEGY 2006-2008), young adults (EUMARGINS 2009-2011), gang policies (YOUGANG 2011-2013), North African youth after the Arab Spring (SAHWA 2015-2017), and cultural narratives of crisis and renewal (CRIC 2016-2018). The theoretical and practical knowledge gained from the previous projects was applied to the TRANSGANG project, which in 2017 obtained one of the Advanced Grants awarded by the European Research Council, financed with 2.4 M€. This was the first grant to be allocated to research on gangs. In 2018 a second project on gangs was awarded, led by Dennis Rodgers, with whom we have collaborated since the beginning of the two projects.

TRANSGANG began to be <u>executed</u> in January 2018, with the transfer of Carles Feixa to Pompeu Fabra University (UPF). The <u>first year</u> was dedicated to completing the state-of-the-art and bringing together the research team. First, ten researchers were hired at UPF: the scientific coordinator, a project manager, three postdoctoral researchers in charge of visual anthropology, ethics and public policies, three local researchers from Madrid, Barcelona and Marseille, and two research assistants linked to youth street groups, who facilitated contact with our informants. Second,

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8   The main outcomes of the project can be found at the TRANSGANG website: www.upf.edu/web/transgang. See also a complete list of the Documentary Films and the Publications at the end of the White Paper.

eight local researchers were selected to carry out fieldwork in the rest of the cities: Milano in Europe, the four cities of the Maghreb, and the four American cities. In October 2018, the Kick-Off meeting was held with the team members of the Scientific and Ethical Advisory Board to make strategic decisions about the project to be carried out.

The second year (2019) was dedicated to completing the rest of the team based on two types of subcontracting. First, three cross-sectional studies were commissioned on media representations, digital networks and an opinion poll on the social perception of gangs. Second, an international competition was held to select the filmmakers who would produce the documentaries. Finally, we laid the methodological and strategic foundations of the project, which resulted in a series of open access publications that make up TRANSGANG's research programme (see below).

At the beginning of the third year (2020), just when fieldwork was starting in the twelve cities, the pandemic broke out, forcing us to reconsider the work plan and find solutions for researching youth street groups when the public space had disappeared (see Sánchez-García et al., 2020). Making a virtue of necessity, we took advantage of the situation to schedule a periodic Training Seminar, in which the whole team participated and that served to share the initial results of the project.

During the fourth year (2021), with the pandemic still wreaking havoc, we were able to complete the fieldwork. We also began the audiovisual workshops that the documentary films were based on. Interim results in the form of books, articles and chapters also began to be published. As our research topic of gangs became increasingly visible due to the violent situations experienced by young people in the three regions and the reinforcement of the hate discourses and "mano dura" polices, we participated assiduously in the media, with a hundred interventions in the press, radio, television and internet.

In the fifth year (2022) we focused on applying the NVivo qualitative analysis software to analyse and interpret the data obtained at three levels: local analysis by each researcher, regional analysis by the three ethnographic coordinators, and transnational analysis by the Principal Investigator. During this year the four documentary films were finalized, and the rest of the Working Papers were published, as well as several books and special issues in indexed journals.

Finally, the six-month extension due to the pandemic in the sixth year (2023) focused on meta-ethnography, and also on organizing the final conference (May 2023) and the activities associated with it: premiere of the documentaries, exhibition ("From Gangland to Transgang") and dissemination activities.

There are basically three types of outcomes of the project. First, a huge amount of ethnographic material, produced by local researchers, transcribed, anonymized and stored on a secure server. Each of the three core cases collected 480 hours of participant observation, six in-depth interviews with members or former members of youth street groups, six interviews with stakeholders (professionals and people who interact with gangs, such as social workers, police, educators, etc.), six focus groups

and four life stories. The nine contrast cases involved half this amount of information. In total, we have collected 3,360 hours of participant observation and 154 ethnographic documents resulting from interviews, from which we derived twelve local ethnographic reports, three regional reports, and the final transnational report.

The second outcomes are the publications resulting from the project. Firstly, and the most relevant until now, are the seven volumes of the TRANSGANG Working Papers, which incorporate the preparatory documents for the fieldwork: the original Project presented to the ERC Advanced Grant (Feixa 2019); the Concept Paper, consisting of the development of the theoretical and conceptual framework (Feixa et al. 2019); the document on Legal Considerations (Sánchez-Garcia et al. 2019); the Methodological Handbook (Feixa, Sánchez-Garcia et al. 2020); and the regional Background Papers on the state-of-the-art of each city in terms of gang research (Queirolo et al. 2021; Sánchez-García et al. 2021; Feixa et al. 2023). Secondly, we promoted a collection of studies on gangs, from which three books have been published: the biography of the gang leader who started the process of forming associations in Barcelona: *El Rey. Diary of a Latin King* (Feixa and Andrade 2000); the translation of the classic study about gangs in Chicago with an introductory study: *The Gang / La Banda* (Thrasher 2021); and an essay published in Italy: *Oltre le bande* (Feixa 2020). There are currently three other volumes in preparation: *Maghrebi Youths* (Sánchez-García 2023); *Gangs In, Gangs Out* (Páez, Aramayona and Ballesté 2023); and *Young lives matter* (Feixa, Sánchez-García and Hansen, forthcoming). This last volume will collect a selection of twelve life stories, one per city, covering the different stages of the gang continuum (from criminal groups to cultural groups, through hybrid modalities). It is planned to publish the final monograph of the project with the transnational comparison in English by an international publisher. Thirdly, four special issues have been coordinated in international academic journals: *Youth & Globalization* (Feixa and Sánchez-García 2022); *Tracce Urbane* (Grassi and Sánchez-Garcia 2021); *Latin American Journal of Social Sciences, Children and Youth* (Muñoz and Feixa 2022); and *European Journal of Social Work* (Beremenyi, Sánchez-García and Hansen, forthcoming). Fourthly, thirteen articles have been published in indexed journals and fourteen book chapters by national and international publishers. Finally, seven dissemination articles have been published, including two European journals of impact: *Open Government* and *Futurum* (Feixa and Sánchez-García 2021, 2021b, 2023). In total, the project has generated a hundred scientific publications to date.

Last but not least, we would like to highlight the role of the special features, three particular outcomes conceived as innovative resources for action research and dissemination. The first special feature is Gangpedia, an attempt to translate documentary and ethnographic data into a collaborative wiki encyclopaedia focused on gangs and youth subcultures

in Arab and Latino communities.[9] The second is the four <u>Documentary Films</u> produced within the framework of the project. The purpose of these audiovisual products was not so much to portray fieldwork but to provide creative perspectives to our object of research: the agency capacity of young gangs.[10] To this end, we made an international public call to hire filmmakers, one in each of the core cases. Each filmmaker was given freedom to shoot the film based on the theme of the project and a similar methodology: visual anthropology workshops were held with young participants in the research, who co-produced the script with the filmmakers and local researchers, later incorporating elements of fiction. The result is four original documentaries that have a large impact: *Monte Tropic* (Duque 2021) filmed in Barcelona and Canet de Mar, focuses on the lives of two young people of North African origin who migrated alone to Catalonia; *Instructions for when I am not there* (Plaza and Arango 2022) portrays the lives of twelve young people from the communes of Medellín, who try to overcome the situations of violence they have experienced by forming a group together; *Al-Houma Dreams* (Svartzman 2022) explores the experiences of street youth in a working-class neighbourhood in Rabat-Salé (Morocco). A fourth documentary with which we have collaborated, *The sense of strings* (Zamora 2022), follows a group of girls who belonged to two of the Salvadoran gangs and went through prison, reintegrating into civilian life through their participation in a string orchestra. The third and final special feature is the present <u>White Paper</u>, a publication for policy makers, including information about good practices in this field, intervention experiences, and recommendations and resources for public policies and education.

1.6 The Transgang

> While there have always been gangs, today's urbanizing world is producing them faster than ever and in myriad forms and shapes. High levels of violence by 'nonstate actors' like gangs or terrorists have been an unsettling aspect of globalization. The evidence I present in this book leads to the uncomfortable conclusion that gangs are not going away soon, no matter what we do.
> (Hagedorn 2008, xxiii).

The gangs in today's world are no longer what they were. For better or worse, they have become (trans)gangs. Which does not necessarily mean that they are transnational gangs in the geographical sense, according to the model of corporations or international franchises, or that they behave as compact

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9   https://www.gangpedia.space/dashboard.

10   https://www.upf.edu/web/transgang/documentary-films. See Mecca and Feixa (2021); Mecca (forthcoming).

and centralized structures; in fact, it is even possible that some of them have accentuated their local dimension. If gangs are now (trans)gangs it is because they come together in three distinct and complementary processes of transnationalization: transnationalism from above; transnationalism from below; and multidirectional transnationalism (see Fig. 5).[11]

Transnationalism from above, or major transnationalism, includes processes driven by the States, international agencies, transnational corporations, and the mass media, in response to the global expansion of gangs (Appadurai 1996; Wacquant 2009). We can highlight five main processes.

1. First, economic and political neoliberalism with the dismantling of the industrial economy, which was a labour alternative for young people of the working class or migrant origin, and its replacement by an economy of services and information, based on *laissez-faire*, to which these sectors have no access. This coincides with the expansion of the drug market as the only alternative to self-employment, and also the dismantling of the remains of the welfare state, which has disappeared from many marginal enclaves or poor neighbourhoods.

2. Second, some of these gangs have expanded territorially as a result of deportation policies promoted by the United States government since 1996, and then by other governments, as evidenced by the emblematic case of Salvadoran gangs.

3. Third, security, intelligence, repressive and police policies, especially ones based on the "hard line" (*mano dura*), are nowadays exercised on a global level, using the strategies of *lawfare* and *prisonfare* promoted by transnational security agencies or by private anti-gang advisory agencies.

4. Fourth, strong urban segregation and gentrification, which expel gang members from their original territories and move them to marginal ghettos, where invisible borders or new forms of surveillance and control prevent or limit mobility, but at the same time promote a criminal economy that relies on large-scale smuggling.

5. Fifth, the culture and imaginary of the gangs is constructed in a transnational space, which originated in Chicago, but

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11   Transnationalism means the specific modes of mobility, exchange and emerging identities originating in the movement of people, cultural flows, media, technological devices, capital and ideologies (Appadurai 1996).

also in Medellin, San Salvador and Marseille, of which the television series about gangs or *narcos* are a by-product, and which even influence territories far from Western hegemony, such as Cuba or the Maghrib, and are transmitted through subgenres such as *gansta rap*.

Transnationalism from below, or minor transnationalism, includes the processes that are initiatives of social actors, whether the gang members themselves, their families and social environments, or the non-governmental organizations, formal or informal, with which they relate (Lionnet and Shih 2005; Sassen 2003). There are five main processes.

1. First and foremost, migration is an origin, a context and a possibility for the expansion of the gangs themselves, following three complementary directions: trans-local (from the countryside to the city or from war zones to refuge areas), trans-national (from the Global South to North America or Europe, by land, sea or air), and trans-oceanic (from the Americas to Europe, as a return journey of the original journey of Columbus, crossing the Atlantic Ocean).

2. Second, as a result of these migratory processes, the collaborative economy as an alternative or complement to the market economy, based on remittances, the informal economy, barter, the non-monetary exchange of goods and services, turning the gangs into a supra-family space without borders of mutual support and labour insertion.

3. Third, the transnationalization of gang symbolism and related lifestyles, based on personal face-to-face or written exchanges, as well as the dissemination of the literature of the largest gangs, that Hagedorn (2008) calls institutionalized gangs, on a route from the United States to Europe through Latin America.

4. Fourth, digital networks, especially social networks, have facilitated the "flow space" for contacts, exchanges and decision-making between the different nodes of the gangs, but have also generated a transnational "gang branding", as demonstrated by the interactions of Latin Kings & Queens from across the seas.

5. Fifth, hip-hop culture, with its four components (rap music, DJ, breakdance and graffiti) and in its different local versions, constitutes the maximum expression of the transnational space constructed in the "Latino Atlantic" (Queirolo Palmas, 2016), counterpart of the "Black Atlantic" (Gilroy 1993), which has been completed in recent times with the transnationalization of reggaeton, trap and some Arab music

styles. Hip-hop culture is the common culture present in the gang scene of all the 12 cities researched, becoming a sort of subcultural *Esperanto* that makes it possible to communicate and share imagined communities for a better life (what we can call <u>Gangtopias</u>).

Finally, <u>multidirectional transnationalism</u> includes processes of adaptation, interaction, opposition and mediation between the transnationalisms from above and below, in each of the ten processes reviewed above and in any other process involving gangs (Hannerz 2010; Feixa et al. 2023). We highlight five possible types of response.

1. Firstly, <u>active consent</u> involves the conscious participation of gang members or their environments in the creation of determined transnational spaces, such as corrupt links between State agencies and criminal groups or collaborative projects to prevent violence between international agencies, gang leaders and academic actors.

2. Secondly, <u>passive acceptance</u> implies gangs or their members exploiting the loopholes left by major transnationalism, such as creating a collaborative informal economy or converting ghettos into self-managed protected spaces.

3. Thirdly, <u>negotiation</u> involves different forms of intercultural mediation, such as truce attempts, the constitution of gang-based associations and experiences of preventive work and rehabilitation with prisoners or ex-prisoners.

4. Fourthly, <u>resistance</u> implies conscious actions to oppose or boycott greater transnationalism, such as mutual support networks to overcome barriers to emigration or confront "*mano dura*" policies.

5. Fifthly, <u>dissidence</u> implies gangs converging with broader social movements fighting for the rights of minorities, as evidenced by the processes of reform of the Latin Kings & Queens in New York, Barcelona and Ecuador, the politicization of football ultras in some Maghrebi countries after the Arab Spring, and the artistic and musical experiences against state and criminal violence such as the project "A Revolution without Death" promoted by Casa Kolacho in Medellin.

Youth gangs today constitute one of the many faces of globalization (Hagedorn 2008; Hazen and Rodgers 2014; Fraser and Hagedorn 2018; Melde and Weerman 2020; Fernández-Planells, Malea and Feixa 2021). Despite the persistence of political, police and media discourses aimed at suppressing or dismantling them, they always reappear in different

guises. Therefore, we can legitimately ask ourselves whether the aim should be to end gangs or rather reorient their purposes so that they produce less damage to the societies of which they are part as well as to their members. The results of the field work carried out in the 12 cities of southern Europe, North Africa and the Americas, give us some clues so we can answer these questions with a better understanding of the causes.
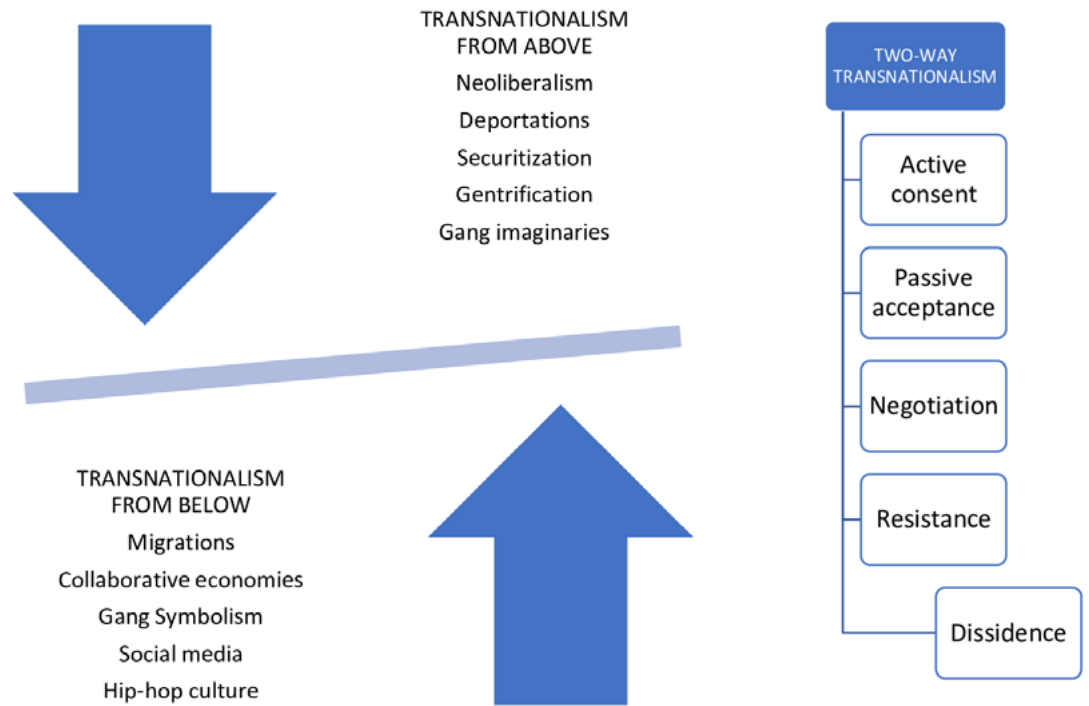
Figure 5: TRANSGANG and Transnationalism
Source: Own creation.

02

Part Two:
Gang Policy in Context

After presenting the general features of the TRANSGANG project, in this section we will make an overview of the research context, focusing on the gang context (transgangs), the socioeconomic context (precarity), the geo-historical context (postcoloniality), and the different models of the key issue of this White Paper: mediation in the gang field.

2.1. Trans-National "Gangs"

Since the neoliberal model of government began in the late 1970s, deregulation, privatization and the reduction in welfare and other state services under logics of fiscal austerity and structural adjustment have become epitomic of <u>neoliberal governmentality</u> (Bourdieu 1999; Harvey 2005; Wacquant 2008). In the context of recent political economic crises and associated processes of structural adjustment, precarity, poverty and marginality have come to characterize the experiences of many young people in the three TRANSGANG study regions: Southern Europe, North Africa, and the Americas.

However, the effects of these crises have not interrupted the flow of <u>migrants and refugees</u> from the global south to wealthier OECD countries in the global north. As capital flows across national borders, so too does labour, and for many young people in Africa and Latin America, the global north continues to promise a better life. In the TRANSGANG Study, we are interested in the <u>new identities</u> that emerge as people, media, technologies, capital and ideologies flow across national borders, and provide their members with an identity of resistance (Appadurai 1996; Castells 1997; Brotherton and Barrios 2004; Casas-Cortés 2019).

Historically, the identities of gangs and youth street groups have often been associated with processes of migration. For instance, groups such as the Latin Kings and Ñetas trace their origins to immigrant cultural associations that formed in Chicago in the 1960s and 1970s. Mara Salvatrucha (MS13) and Barrio 18, two of the largest gangs in El Salvador, formed in Los Angeles in the 1990s and spread to El Salvador as a consequence of migrant repatriation schemes run by the US government. In the early 2000s, gangs and youth street groups of American origin began appearing in Southern European cities, notably in Barcelona and Madrid (Feixa, Scandroglio, López and Ferrándiz 2011), Genova and Milan (Cannarella, Lagomarsino and Queirolo Palmas 2007). Since then, many

young people from North Africa have arrived in Europe and transformed the gang ecosystem in several European cities.

The concept of "gang" can be a deeply stigmatizing term, especially in locations where this concept is a foreign import and is seen as strange or unusual by local actors. In some of the contexts where we work, out interlocuters use terms like "gang", "pandilla" and "banda" to refer to themselves and the sub-cultural space they inhabit; however, others reject the use of these terms due to the association with crime that they evoke and refute a kind of neo-colonization, as in the case of North African youth street groups (Sánchez-García et al., 2021). For this reason, in this document, we use the more neutral term "youth street group" (see also section 1.2).

2.2 Precarity, marginality and violence

In each of the TRANSGANG contexts, conditions of economic and social precarity such as unemployment, underemployment and inadequate access to health and social security are increasingly the reality for large sections of the population (Paugam 2000; Lorey 2016). The flexibilization and deregulation of global labour markets was necessary to establish the hypermobility of capital (Harvey 2005; Wacquant 2009). As Judith Butler (2009) observes in her ontology of precariousness, in today's economic world, there seems to be a general lack of any solid present or future from which to build a stable life.

However, Neoliberalization has not been a neat or even process (Peck and Tickell 2002). As pools of surplus labour have proliferated and welfare and health care services receded, new zones of social abandonment and conditions of advanced marginality have emerged (Biehl 2013). We know that poverty and economic inequality are key determinants of violent crime. Horizontal violence between migrants and settled populations occur as marginalized social groups are forced into competitive economic relationships (Butler 2009; Lorey 2016).

We also know that various states around the world have responded to social problems caused by rising levels of precarity and marginality by expanding their police forces, carceral systems and security apparatus, producing what has been called a neoliberal penal state (Wacquant 2006). In many national contexts, the arrival of neoliberal policies has not only produced violence from above, but also resistance from below as social movements and mutual and cooperative networks have emerged. This is the case of the massive protests in 2021 in Colombia after the killing of young people in Cali, the Hirak movement in Algeria, and the demonstrations during 2022 in Tunisia to protest against the recent authoritarian ways of the president Kais Sayed.

In the TRANSGANG study, we are therefore not only concerned with the violence carried out by "gangsters" or members of youth street groups but also the violence to which members of youth street groups are subjected, especially violence perpetrated by government authorities,

security services and criminal justice systems. As illustrated in this document, approaches to gang prevention policies that propose one form of violence as a solution to another form of violence merely displace the violence rather than reduce the damage.

2.3 Mediation

However, at the same time that it is possible to identify a trend towards ever greater levels of violence from above in the neoliberal era, to characterize all policies in this way would be to ignore what Bourdieu describes as the "left hand of the state" (1999). As Harvey (2005) notes, despite the transformation of the State under neoliberalization it has never completely lost its role as a provider of social security. In Europe, the history of welfare over the past several decades has been one of retrenchment. In the Americas and North Africa, where the provision of welfare has never been as comprehensive, neoliberalization in relation to public policy has meant the failure to undertake efficient measures to fight problems of poverty, inequality and the uneven distribution of power and wealth (Bayat 2012; Bush and Ayeb 2012; Kadri 2012). This has ensured the resilience of youth street groups so far: the accumulation of global capital is reinforced by neoliberal ideology and then proceeds through encroachment and dispossession.

As this document describes, there have been a range of different approaches to gangs enacted in the TRANSGANG regions over the past few decades, including state-backed ceasefires and local government attempts to legally recognize the structures of youth street groups as cultural associations. In the TRANSGANG Study, we refer to these non-violent approaches to gang policy using the term mediation. Strictly speaking, mediation means the act of intervening in a conflict in order to bring about agreement or reconciliation. Conflict mediation is used to settle family disputes concerning issues such as child custody (Smith 1996; Moore 2014). It is used in commercial disputes as an alternative to arbitration (Binder 2019) and in the field of international relations as a means of resolving military conflicts (Lederach 1996; Wallensteen, and Svensson 2014), among other contexts. Processes that are termed "gang conflict mediation" may include State sponsored attempts to bring about ceasefires between heavily armed groups (Van Gestel 2018) or small-scale processes wherein opposing youth street groups are brought together in a "neutral space", such as a school, by a social worker or other professional to discuss their issues of disagreement (Mendelsohn 1991). Mediators may be individual professionals such as teachers, former gang or youth street group members, or they may be official State actors or international organizations, NGOs, academics, or religious institutions (Böhmelt 2010; Van Gestel 2018, Feixa et al. 2019). In the TRANSGANG Study, we use the term mediation to refer to a broad range of practices that all share the common aim of reducing violence or resolving tensions or conflicts between youth street groups, their members or other social actors such as neighbour or civil society groups as well as institutional and State entities.

2.4 Care and Mutuality based models of mediation

In the TRANSGANG study we do not view mediation as being about rehabilitation or reincorporating some deviant element into a greater normative whole, such as society, "as legitimate and legal actors", as others have (Rahman and Vuković 2019, 937). Instead, drawing on work on community mediation (Chereji and Pop 2014), we are interested in how mediation can rebuild the ties and relational bonds of the community and therefore help to displace the perception of social danger that arises in these contexts. This is especially important in the context of migration, when the bonds between communities are often undermined by the flexibilization and rapid movement of labour, and by the rising poverty and crime, and the horizontal violence that accompany these processes. We are interested in the ways that mediation is practiced by communities and collectives and the situated practices that support these aims in distinct cultural contexts.

Accordingly, we have developed two broad concepts to understand the differences between the approaches to mediation. The first we refer to as a care-based model of mediation, but this might equally be thought of as the "left hand of the State" model (Bourdieu 1992/2002). This category includes all those forms of mediation that are led by or rely on State or local authority services or financing. This model can be contrasted to the State violence-based policy approaches to gang prevention that we discussed above. Whereas policing, military, and imprisonment-based models (so called "*mano dura*" or hard hand type approaches) tend to view "gangsters" as social *Others*, care-based approaches position the State (or municipal and local agencies) as responsible for the interests of members of youth street groups as well as other parts of the community. Examples of this model may include youth services, street educators or broad programmes of "gang" legalization.

The logic of the care-based model can also be contrasted with what we term mutuality-based approaches to mediation. These are models that do not depend on State or municipal sponsorship and tend to be performed informally via networks of mutual support, civil society and religious organizations and the everyday activities of people living within affected communities. The presence of informal forms of mediation may be largely determined by the contingency of national, historical and cultural experiences. These types of mediation are often not called mediation by those involved but nevertheless make up the majority of the actual work that goes into maintaining community cohesion in contexts of advanced marginality.

Finally, we can also find mixed approaches to mediation (also called co-mediation), when there are synergies between experiences for resolving conflicts coming from the youth groups or related social organizations (mediation from below or bottom-up) and interaction with actors or initiatives coming from representatives of the State or academia (mediation from the top).

2.5 Post-colonialism and decolonizing mediation

According to the TRANSGANG theoretical perspective, several scholars and practitioners have recognized the importance of sensitivity to native ways of thinking and feeling, as well as to local rituals for managing, reducing, and resolving conflicts, avoiding ethnocentric mediation perspectives. When the failures and successes of mediation in the global south are debated, an incisive analysis of power and knowledge hierarchies is usually absent: this is a decolonization perspective of these processes. Mediation processes in the global south do not interrogate whose coloniality of knowledge and power or ontological coloniality influence mediation processes and how this shapes mediation. Normally, mediation is influenced by theories and practices carried out in the Global North and promoted by international organizations. This suggests that mediation is not sufficiently rooted in native thinking. Decolonizing mediation means taking into account epistemologies, concepts, and methods that local people can relate to their own understanding of mediation processes.

It also gives greater prominence to the views and voices of the marginalized, who are often excluded in institutional-driven mediation. This could change the nature and practice of mediation and make it more people-centred and people-relevant. Decolonizing mediation accommodates diverse approaches in different contexts. A decolonial approach aims to change knowledge and challenge power relations.

This perspective can change the mediation eurocentrism perspective and transform mediation in the global south. This is transforming coloniality, the unequal relations of power and knowledge between the global north and the global south, which persist in some TRANSGANG regions and places. While most Latino and Arab societies have historically relied on mediation to resolve conflicts, they tend not to trust approaches to conflict resolution that are rooted in colonial thinking. The findings of mediation research in the North African region reveal significant contrasts between established Western approaches to mediation and comparable Arab-Islamic approaches (Feixa et al. 2019, 58-59). In the end, what decolonized mediation is in practice can only be determined by local people in different places and contexts.

03 Part Three: Legal and Policy Framework

Understanding the legal reality of youth gangs is not a simple task. The EUROGANG Network whose objective is to develop methodological instruments for studying youth gangs and establishing comparisons between Europe and the United States, formulated the following common definition for the term youth gang: "a durable youth group with an orientation towards the street and other public spaces and with a group identity defined primordially by participation in criminal activities".[12] Moreover, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for the operators of the criminal justice system and social services to determine when a certain group of young people, some of whom probably perform criminal acts, is a gang or not. It is also difficult to establish whether a certain individual is simply a friend of gang members or a "member" of the gang. However, it would be wrong to think that all gang members participate in criminal behaviours. Although criminal acts should not go unpunished, the collective penalization processes towards certain ethnic, cultural or racial groups are part of the racist and discriminatory system. Neither can it be assumed that because a person belongs to a gang, they commit criminal acts (in many countries there is a presumption of guilt, contrary to the so-called presumption of innocence regulated in several penal codes).

In our perspective focused on mediation, it is essential that the situation be addressed from a prevention viewpoint, focusing the intervention on preventing that young members of youth groups enter criminal situations. For this, social intervention is essential from an intersectional and complex view and sufficient economic resources need to be allocated for the social problem. The combination of racism and social exclusion can generate processes in which the people who belong to youth gangs may be forced to commit a crime, or at least, they will be more motivated to do crimes the greater the social exclusion. Having looked at the legal situation in general, the section will now analyse the different current legislations in the countries where data were collected for the project.[13]

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12   See https://eurogangproject.com.

13   This section is based on the Background Paper on *Legal Considerations concerning Youth Street Groups in TRANSGANG regions* (Sánchez-García et al. 2019).

3.1 Southern Europe

Europe is one of the continents that most stigmatizes the youth gangs of extra-community origin, as these are defined with exclusively criminal connotations. It is interesting that groups of young people of Latin American or Arab (and others) origin, are labelled "street gangs" and other offensive terms based entirely on their ethnic origin, and the social alarm that this causes. That socially "alarming" behaviour can be seen in a different way, even in the terms of the law, for reasons of race and ethnic origin is a component of racist discrimination that translates into various forms in all of the legal codes that we are going to analyse (Kazyrytski 2017, 302).

In <u>Spain</u>, since the last decade, the Spanish Fiscal Ministry considers youth gangs, especially of Latin American origin, a truly worrying element and factor of criminality and recognizes them as criminal organizations. From the reform of the Penal Code of 2010, the new police behaviour models and the increasingly active role of prosecutors have all contributed to greater punitive pressure on gangs. These measures emphasize the solution of deporting gang members to their respective countries. In addition, the entry into force of Organic Law 8/2006, which modifies Organic Law 5/2000 that regulates the criminal responsibility of minors, signifies a hardening in the measures that can be imposed on young people if at the time of committing an offense they belong to a gang. Currently, according to Art. 10.b, if a minor has committed a crime and they are a member of a gang, their time at juvenile facilities can become six years compared to the maximum of two years as a general rule established in the law. From the point of view of the Spanish police, Latino street gangs are organized crime groups, which legitimizes the imposition of stronger sanctions against them. The repressive treatment of street gangs by the police has increased as a consequence of the large direct pressure from prosecutors and the judicial system. Notably, under the National Service Circular of Persecution 2/2011, Latino gangs are covered by Organic Law 5/2010 because they are considered highly dangerous and their criminal orientation turns them into a form of organized crime, according to Fiscalía General del Estado Español. Under this document, any street gang composed of young people of Latin American origin and which has a name of identification will be considered organized crime by default. However, in fact, only 1% of crime in Spain can be linked to these groups, but in prisons the percentage of inmates who belong to gangs is much higher.

In <u>France</u>, the fight against organized crime, in its recent history, dates back to 2004. The then president Jacques Chirac and his Minister for National Security and Minister of the Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, promulgated law 2004-204 of 9 March, 2004. This law substantially amends the French penal code and, consequently, the judicial treatment of youth gangs. The reform introduces the concepts of delinquency and organized crime into French criminal law, creates the aggravating circumstance of commission in an organized gang, and extends the list of criminal offences that fall within this field. In 2010, Nicolas Sarkozy, this time as president, promulgated law 2010-201 of 2 March 2010, which reinforces the state's combat against supposed group violence. The aim of the law is to control the youth criminal

gangs in the country's lower-class neighbourhoods (the so-called *banlieues*). Included in Article 222-14-2 of the penal code, this offence represents today the main legal tool of the French state for suppressing the emergence of all kinds of collective dynamics not authorized by the government, whether they are social movements, youth gangs or criminal gangs. For instance, sanctions against individuals belonging to identifiable criminal gangs, or acting in more or less organized ephemeral groups, are increased due to the fact of "committing offences in a collective-way" (Article 375-2, Code of Penal Procedure). Moreover, this is applicable to any offence under certain conditions if the penalty contemplated is not five years or more, which thus excludes any offence committed in a "collective-way". The only exception is drawings, or graffiti, committed in a collective way without prior authorization, on urban real estate or vehicles, which is liable to a fine of 15 000 EUR and to community service.

Gangs in <u>Italy</u> have been ambiguously associated with criminal associations since 2004, regulated by article number 416 of the Italian penal code. In the case of Latin groups, according to the social researcher Tommaso Comunale, the first police operation dates back to 2005 and was called "Street Fighter". The main gangs involved were the Latin Kings and Commando, mostly formed by young Ecuadorian and Peruvian citizens. From then, between 2012 and 2015 four police operations dismantled all the Latin American street groups. Five operations investigated around 200 people for criminal association, attempted murder, grand larceny, drug trafficking, illegal possession of weapons, extortion, and rape. In 2016 appeared the first criminal sentence against Latin groups of the "Giudice dell'udienza preliminare" (Preliminary hearing judge) of the juvenile court of Milan in 2010 (Sentence number 403, 4 May 2010), transforming Latin American gangs (Latin Kings and Commando) into criminal associations. Consequently, statistics on incarcerations do not say anything about gangs. In Italy, criminal associations also include Mafia organizations; therefore, these numbers are not reliable for the objectives of the project. In the last fifteen years, five police operations have weakened some of the main Milanese Latin American street groups. Nowadays, in contrast to other contexts, juvenile gangs in Milan seem to be a marginal phenomenon occasionally associated by the Italian legal system with criminal groups. The Milanese penal system "works", but this depends on the prison. In other words, some prisons are better than others in offering reinsertion programmes and alternative measures. At least on some occasions, gang members have reproduced conflictive dynamics in Milanese prisons.

Summarizing, Spain, France and Italy, in a context marked by economic and political crises, have implemented from the beginning of the century repressive policies under the process called lawfare; an abuse of laws and judicial systems to achieve strategic military or political ends. This process has its presence in the legislative codes that are essential for implementing the *prisonfare* through regularization of lawfare that applies criminal code to youth street associations. The objective of this spurious use of law is to simplify proving the criminal nature of these groups, applying different penalties for being a leader or a member, and the seriousness of the

crime.

3.2 The Maghreb

In the Maghreb region, Mediterranean Arab youth subcultures include street vendors, hooligans, graffiti artists, rappers, *hittistes* and *tcharmil*, all considered as illegal activities, with a gap between illegal and legitimated. In any case, the tradition of *gangs* as a form of youth sociability is alien to their own cultural forms, and therefore, legislations correspond to traditions far removed from North American criminology, although they can be influenced by the colonial processes that occur in the area.

The Moroccan criminal code devotes a whole chapter in the Penal Code to criminal acts as part of a group or "gang". Although the text does not refer explicitly to the notion of gang, there is an equivalent Arabic term "ishaba" used to mean "gang" but it is related to criminal drug gangs and terrorist cells. In particular, Chapter V of the Moroccan penal code entitled "Crimes and Crimes Against Public Security" is devoted to the criminal procedures applied to forming gangs and performing violence in the public sphere. The first section titled "Association of Malefactors and Assistance to Criminals" deals with all the aspects of forming gangs and crimes from article 293 to article 333. In the text, the Moroccan legislator does not use the term "gang" but "association"; therefore, any grouping of more than one person to commit a crime is a form of gang, and even the intention of the criminal act is penalized before the act itself. The Moroccan penal code also differentiates between forming a gang and conspiracy. The conspiracy crime is the prerogative of the State Police as it involves an attack against the social, economic and political conditions within the country. This is an example of lawfare, where the State adapts the penal code according to the political and social circumstances. Although the youth street groups such as *tcharmil* and football ultras do not have any organizational structure, they have been accused of muggings and robberies according to this law. These examples show the lack of a social and cultural evolution of the penal code in Morocco. It does not take into consideration the metamorphoses of forms of violence and riots in modern Morocco and urban cities like Casablanca. After 2003, the Moroccan justice system amended the penal code to include terrorism as a crime. The terrorist attacks on Casablanca, in 2007, accelerated the passing of the terrorism law. The diversification of crimes and their complexity obliges the Moroccan legislator to rethink the notion of gang, especially in the context of emerging digital crimes and virtual gangs. The Moroccan penal code takes into consideration new dimensions of gang formation; however, the complexity and the blurred aspects between civil disobedience, organized crime and criminal gangs makes the notion of gang in post-Arab Spring a complex issue. Moreover, the transnational dimension of gangs among the Moroccan diaspora in Western Europe is a multifarious concern that the Moroccan legislator should consider in dealing with local gangs and their trajectories.

The prosecution or arrest of a group of young people in <u>Tunisia</u> can be carried out based on a legal system composed of several legal texts which, for the most part, concern the breach of public order. Since the notion of public order is a vague notion that has not been defined by the legislator, it is essentially based on three criteria: morality, safety and health. The first text meets the criterion of morality: The Article 226 bis of the Tunisian Penal Code is related to the offense against morality, stating that "whoever publicly commits an offense against morality or public morals by gesture or speech or intentionally misleads others in a manner that is offensive to modesty shall be punished by six months' imprisonment and a fine of one thousand dinars". The second text responds to the motive of security and consists of Article 121 of the same code, which relates to rebellion, stating that "anyone who provokes rebellion, either by speeches held in public places or meetings, or by placards, posters or printed writings will be punished as if he participated in the rebellion". In the same vein, Organic Law 2015-26 of 7 August 2015, concerning the fight against terrorism and the repression of money laundering, is used particularly to control religious groups of young people. Finally, we can cite Article 245 of the Criminal Code on defamation which was the most used text to justify the sanctions against groups of young bloggers and which states that "there is defamation in any allegation or public imputation of a fact that affects the honour or the consideration of a person or a corporate body." In brief, the Tunisian Penal code uses four main texts with youth street groups according to their ideological tendencies: 1) the Terrorism Act against Religious Groups formed by young people; 2) Article 226 bis against Satanic groups and heavy metal groups; 3) Article 245 related to blogger groups (virtual terrorists); and 4) Article 121 concerning other types of groups such as drug sellers, informal sellers, graffiti artists or hooligans.

In <u>Algeria</u> the notion of *gang* or organized criminal group as a social scourge as it is known in the USA, Latin American and Europe is a phenomenon understood as foreign, which explains why it is not included in Algerian law. However, although the idea of a gang or street group does not exist as such, it is substituted by a "group of individuals which becomes object of judicial examination from the moment that its members are offenders of a crime against the public thing" or *bande* in French. In this context, the Algerian penal code deals with two phenomena related to collective violence: *mobbing* (Criminal Code, Title 1, Chapter II) and *the creation of criminal conspiracy* (Criminal Code title 1, Chapter VI, Section 1). A crowd or mob is prohibited by law when the individuals who compose it practice violence in any form. That said, practices are considered violent to varying degrees, to the extent that they undermine and are prejudicial to peace, tranquillity, security and public order. There are three main articles in the Algeria Penal Code that govern and repress the various cases of gatherings: a) Article 97 of the Algerian Penal Code stipulates that "any armed or unarmed gathering which may disturb public peace shall be forbidden in a public place". The sanctions against the gathering of individuals are recorded in Article 98 and 99 of the penal code. b) Article 98 of the Algerian Penal Code establishes a punishment by imprisonment

from two months to one year; c) according to Article 99 of the Algerian Penal Code, the imprisonment can range from six months to three years for anyone in a crowd who has been found carrying an apparent or hidden weapon or any apparent or hidden object used as a weapon or brought to serve as a weapon; and 3) in the case of text governing and repressing the various cases of criminal conspiracy and assistance to criminals, Article 176 of the Algerian Penal Code is extremely significative for youth street groups, states that any association or agreement, regardless of its duration and the number of its members, formed or established for the purpose of preparing one or more crimes or one or more offenses against persons and property constitutes an association of criminals, which exists due to the sole resolution of acting jointly, and is punishable by at least five years' imprisonment. Directly related to youth neighbourhood groups is the Ordinance promulgated relating to the prevention and the fight against neighbourhood gangs (*bande*). Within the meaning of this ordinance, a "neighbourhood gang" is considered to be "any group, under any name whatsoever, composed of two or more persons, belonging to one or more residential neighborhoods, who commits an act or more with the aim of creating a climate of insecurity, within neighborhoods or in any other space, or with the aim of ensuring control, by using moral or physical violence, exercised against third parties, by endangering their lives, their freedoms or their security or by damaging their property, with the carrying or use of visible or hidden bladed weapons". This law mentions that, moral violence "includes any verbal aggression likely to cause fear or panic in others, such as threat, insult, defamation, terror or deprivation of a right", and a edged weapon includes "all machines, all sharp, piercing or blunt instruments or utensils and all objects likely to harm or injure the human body or which may constitute a danger to public safety, as defined by the laws and regulations in force relating to weapons."

Summarizing, in the North African context, law is a mechanism of power to establish governability in a very arbitrary manner. In the absence of explicit legislation on the gang phenomenon, except in Morocco, in any of the North African countries, legislative discourses to define potentially dangerous behaviours, use, in a very precise manner, certain concepts (public security, conspiracy, terrorist, public morality, honour...) with floating meanings that have allowed governmental forces to repress the juvenile practices considered as deviant, which include from political dissidence to radical groups of soccer fans passing through sexual orientations that are considered immoral.

3.3 The Americas

In the Americas, youth gangs are groups that tend, perhaps unfairly, to be a large part of the security problems. In Latin America a gang is a street group organized in neighbourhoods with precise geographical limits.

Although they may have some criminal connections, the main function of these groups is sociability. They create a distinctive lifestyle that resolves conflict through music and dance challenges, for example. However, these youth associations have diverse legal situations according to legal rules in each country.

Various documents stand out in the Colombian legislation related to youth groups, with attention to children, adolescents and young people: 1) the document Conpes 3629 of 2011, issued by the National Council of Economic and Social Policy of the National Department of Planning defining the Adolescent Criminal Responsibility System; 2) Law 1098 of Children and Adolescents of 2006; the Statute of Youth Citizenship; and 3) Law 2216 of 2013 and a report of the Child Welfare Observatory. These documents are a tour of International and National regulations that provide the fundamental foundations for legislation on children, adolescents and young people in the country. The regulatory framework for the treatment of adolescents and young offenders of criminal law has been developed mainly in accordance with the perspective of comprehensive care of children and adolescents. However, when we discuss the purposes of this legal notes, we will refer only to those regulations directly related to youth street groups. The Criminal Responsibility System for Adolescents (SRPA) is aimed at investigating and judging the transgression with the support of specialized rules, procedures and authorities, and under the criterion of specialty and differentiation with respect to adults. In Colombia, adolescents who commit crimes are subject to the doctrine of comprehensive protection, which involves moving from a conception of minors as objects of guardianship and segregated protection, to being considered as full subjects of the law. All the rules and judgments reviewed show the co-responsibility of the State, the family and society in general, both for the guarantee of rights, as well as for the treatment and process of re-socialization and reintegration of children and adolescents and young people who are in conflict with the Criminal Law. Finally, despite that the laws issued are focused on rights, human development and human dignity, based on the concept of restorative justice, the Colombian State continues to give the leading role to the criminal justice system. Thus, it limits the possibilities that other facilitators or mediators (such as the community, social professionals, and interdisciplinary teams, etc.) could manage mediation processes and help build coexistence and justice (Alianza por los Derechos de la Niñez, Adolescencia y Juventud de El Salvador, and Observatorio de la Niñez y la Adolescencia 2021).

Although the presence of *maras* in Salvadoran neighbourhoods is recorded before the end of the civil war and in the nineties, it was not until July 2003 that the Government of Francisco Flores identified the gangs as a problem of the first order and declared them to be a threat to national security. With the implementation of the *Mano Dura Plan* (2003-2004) and the *Super Mano Dura Plan* (2004-2006), joint police and military patrols, sweeps of marginal communities and mass arrests of alleged gang members based on their physical appearance increased. These mass arrests, abuse of authority and violations of human rights generated a counterproductive effect of increasing rates of violence: homicides increased significantly

(the rate per 100,000 inhabitants went from 37 in 2003 to 65 in 2006) and from inside prisons the gangs strengthened both their structures and their criminal involvement. In this period, all the police actions were accompanied by extensive media coverage that presented the gang members only as criminals, separated from structural factors, and which argued that hard-line policies were the only possible response to such a problem. In 2009, and after two decades of right-wing governments, a leftist government came to power, and with it the possibility of reforming the security issue. The proposal to comprehensively address the criminal phenomenon had constituted an important campaign promise, and led to the formulation of a security policy document with a strategic approach and comprehensive intervention, which would later become the Policy of Justice, Security and Citizen Coexistence proposal. The policy formally adopted by the Ministry of Justice and Security called "National Policy of Justice, Security and Coexistence" was not implemented by the new Government. On the contrary, the leftist government increased the participation of the military in public security and more repressive measures were generated. In 2012, an attempt was made by the government to negotiate with gangs, which was not well seen by society or opposition parties. This led the government to deny this process and incriminate the people who had acted as "negotiators". In 2014, with the arrival of the second left government, a public declaration of war against the gangs was made, denying any possibility of dialogue and/or negotiation. This position strengthened military, repressive and punitive measures to address this problem. Finally, 2019 represents an uncertain period in terms of the State's security policies. On 1 June of this year, a new government of the GANA (centre-right) party started its administration. Although it was not clear what would be their security policy, this party had historically shown an extremely repressive and punitive attitude towards the issue. Currently, the laws that are in force to address *maras* or *gangs* in El Salvador are: a) Law prohibiting *maras*, gangs, groups, associations, and organizations of a criminal nature. Decree No. 458 approved in 2011; b) Special Law against acts of terrorism, approved in 2016. This law places *maras* and gangs in the category of "terrorists"; thus, worsening their image at the same time that the laws, punitive actions and repression by the police and military forces became harder. Also, in the case of adolescents and young people between the ages of twelve and sixteen who are involved in illicit groups, the juvenile criminal law is applied without ensuring the rights of the adolescents and young people. In conclusion, the approach for the criminal groups called *maras* or *gangs* in El Salvador has mainly followed two lines: 1) a repressive, military and punitive strategy that has increased the rates of violence and the denunciations of human rights violations by the police and military forces, especially towards young people; and 2) the prioritization of including churches and their programmes at different levels of intervention.[14]

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14   In our research we do not consider the effects of the declaration or a "regime of exception" in

Any approach to the <u>Cuban</u> penal code on youth street groups that commit crimes in the informal territorial framework of the streets immediately comes across a vacuum. It must be said that the official discourse of the Cuban state does not recognize the existence of such informal collectives, and this is what their information bodies express. This does not mean that there is no social impact of informal groups on public space, but rather the penal code does not refer to the treatment of criminal behaviour in street spaces committed in a group manner. Informal youth groups are represented in the penal code in the general norms of criminal law. Cuban Criminal Law is the platform for inquiring about the sanctions that fall on members of informal youth groups who manage or participate in criminal actions. For López Soria (2011, 4-5) the centre of Criminal Law is the Penal Code in its Law 62, of 1992, in which the infractions that serve as referents are indicated. The author also points out sub-sections of Criminal Law: Law number 93 against terrorist acts of December 2001, the Law on Military Crimes, and Law number 88 of 1999 for the protection of national independence and the Cuban economy, among others. Each crime is treated according to the infraction carried out by each subject of the group. Cuban law places more emphasis on the damage caused to people or the national heritage than to the characteristics of the infringing agents. In this sense, we can mention some infractions and crimes included in the Penal Code and that may be carried out by informal street groups, mainly juveniles. Firstly, Article 72 of the Penal Code: The Danger Index. This refers to the proclivity that individuals have to commit crimes, which is supposedly demonstrated in their public conduct, including drug consumption, performing public acts of violence or not engaging in any work while they are in the public space. The account of "damaged" behaviours includes, for instance, those who practice prostitution, and those who, although they are physically and mentally able to work, decide not to do so and are sustained at the expense of the work of others. Secondly, Title VI of the Penal Code on associations that are considered illegal and punishable when they make attempts against the Cuban political social system (Article 208 and 209) and are not registered in the law. On penalties, if we take a brief look at some penalties for the crimes and contraventions stated above, the common penalties are internment in a specialized work or study centre; being taken to a work collective for control and orientation of the subject's behaviour, and privation of liberty for one to three months for members of associations considered illegal. For the minors, a system is established based on a psycho-pedagogical conception, established by the Ministries of Education and the Interior. The administrative procedure is adopted for the care of children under 16 years of age who show behavioural disorders, antisocial manifestations, whether or not they become significant indexes of deviation or "social dangerousness", or participate in acts that

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March, 2022, and the "war on gangs" declared by the Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele, based on massive prosecution and incarceration.

the law classifies as crimes for adults.

The USA has one of the most punitive frameworks against the youth gang phenomenon, as the mere "conspiracy" to commit a crime is punished. Since the 1950s, in this country, gangs have mainly been investigated by the judicial police, who focus primarily on crime, leaving aside other aspects such as, for example, cultural practices. If, instead of stereotyping the gangs as violent and criminal groups, they are conceptualized as a particular form of social organization within a community, the debate overcomes the subjective judgment of good and bad and concentrates rather on the gangs, their acts and the repercussions of these. Gangs are just one of the many social actors in a community and which can have a positive or negative effect on communities, depending on the role they play. In some cases, they act as predators and cause fear and insecurity; in others, they offer a form of protection that the community does not receive from the State's security forces. This does not mean that they are dangerous or benevolent, but rather to understand the phenomenon of gangs, it is necessary to move beyond the mere evaluation of the threat that they pose. However, in the US, very punitive approaches to the problem have gained strength. The term "spaces without government" was coined by George Shultz, former US Secretary. Since then, it has gained prominence in the vocabulary of the armed forces of the United States and in the debates about failed states and wild cities. The concept captures the lack of an effective State presence in certain countries or cities. For the US government, the main concern is that ungoverned spaces can provide refuge for terrorist groups, such as Al Qaeda and other armed groups and gangs, which could take advantage of the lack of government presence in the areas where they operate. The State sees spaces without government as threats because they allow the power of armed groups to become established and expand, the free development of their activities, the alteration of the norms that are used to govern these places and the increase in illicit activities that usually contribute to the support of armed groups. In other words, spaces without government offer armed groups a base to plan, prepare and launch attacks against the State.

04 Part Four:
Overview of Southern Europe

In 2008, the global financial crisis that started in the United States hit the Southern European economies hard, resulting a dramatic period of market collapse and spiking unemployment rates. The following decade was marked by harsh programmes of fiscal austerity and structural adjustment enacted by the so called "troika" of the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Campillo Poza 2017; Buendía and Molero-Simarro 2018). The resulting rising levels of socio-economic inequality and falling levels of State spending and investment have affected all areas of public policy including, as we discuss in this section, approaches to youth street groups. However, these measures have not slowed inward migration. Southern Europe continues to be a major destination for young people, among others, from across the globe but in particular from Latin America and North Africa. In this section, we trace the transformation of "gang" and youth street group policy in four Southern European cities (Barcelona, Madrid, Marseille and Milano) and explore some of the State, municipality and community led social mediation initiatives launched that have emerged in recent years.[15]

4.1 Barcelona

In the mid 2000s, a programme carried out in Barcelona would result in the legalization of part of the local chapters of the Latin Kings and Ñetas as cultural associations. The processes were initiated by the JOVLAT project, a collaboration between academics, youth street groups, the Barcelona municipal authority and other public bodies, including the autonomous Catalan police (Mossos d'Esquadra) directed by the *Generalitat* (Autonomous Catalan Government). In the case of the Latin Kings, the processes started with the drafting of internal policy statutes for the governance of the organizations. The statutes were developed in collaboration with the Catalan

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15　　Parts 4, 5 and 6 are based on the Background Papers and on the Ethnographic Report Series written by the local researchers of the twelve cities of the three TRANGANG regions: Europe (Ballesté, forthcoming; Oliver, forthcoming; Mansilla, forthcoming; Grassi, forthcoming); the Maghrib (Touhtouh, forthcoming; Boucherf et al., forthcoming; Najar et al., forthcoming); and the Americas (Márquez, forthcoming; Ross, forthcoming; Lavielle, forthcoming; Chévez, forthcoming). See also the TRANSGANG Outcomes at the end of this document.

Institute of Human Rights and in accordance with Catalan law. The statutes were presented to the Department of Justice of Catalonia in 2006 and were subsequently approved, resulting in the foundation of the cultural association. The outcome of the mediation process was an end to the invisibility of the groups and the initiation of joint social projects related to music, sports and culture (See Box 1; Feixa, Porzio and Recio 2006; Feixa, Scandroglio, López Martínez, and Ferrándiz 2011; Feixa and Andrade 2020; Ballesté and Feixa 2022).

In the years following the end of the initiative, as migratory patterns and media discourses changed, the local government's approach to the youth street groups also changed. In the decade following 2010, migration and family reunification from Latin America to Spain decreased, while at the same time, formal and informal migration from Morocco and North African countries increased. Since then, the Spanish media has been focused intensely on a sub-set of North African migrants it describes as "MENAs" (a Spanish language acronym that refers to young migrants who are unaccompanied by parents or family). The increasing visibility of these young migrants was met by the toxifying of the media narrative surrounding migration in general. In media representations, young male migrants mainly from Muslim countries (in particular) are routinely associated with crime, terrorism and drug trafficking (Feixa et al. 2019; Ballesté, forthcoming; Sánchez-García et al. 2023).

Around the same time, the intensification of Islamic extremist terrorism and political instability in the wake of the financial crisis drew the attention of police and public policy away from its previous legalization work with "gangs" and youth street groups. This shift in focus coupled with falling public budgets meant that interest dwindled among Catalan police and policy makers for the kind of broad social mediation projects witnessed in the 2000s. In 2018 the shift away from a mediation model of gang policy in favour of a less costly criminalization model was marked by the indictment for belonging to a criminal gang of the same Latin Kings members who had participated in the legalization process a decade before. However, the trial of the defendants resulted in acquittals and with the judge rebuking the Catalan police for "fanaticism". Today, as illustrated in Box 2, mediation programmes that continue to exist are led by community associations rather than the police, city council or large-scale actors (Ballesté, forthcoming).

4.1.1. Box 1: The Latin Kings & Queens and Ñetas Associations

Members of the Latin Kings and Ñetas during the footage of *Unidos por el Flow*
(Photo: *Unidos por el Flow*, Nou Barris, Barcelona, 2008)

In the mid-2000s, the local government of Barcelona, some factions of the city's Latin Kings and Ñetas groups, together with the collaboration of the Catalan police and a group of university researchers led by Carles Feixa started a project to develop mediation and reduce conflict in the city. This project was called the "Barcelona Model" and received high international recognition as an innovative way of approaching and dealing with youth street groups.

One of the most important points of this process was the constitution of two institutionally recognized youth associations linked to each group: the Organización Cultural de Reyes y Reinas Latinos de Cataluña (2006) and the Asociación Cultural, Deportiva y Musical Ñetas (2007). While these associations were constituted, the young people who were part of them could access certain public resources, such as using youth spaces and participating in training courses. At the same time, the police also applied a new approach that was not based on criminalization and persecution. Between 2004 and 2011, the Mossos d'Esquadra (Catalan police) implemented prevention policies based on resolving fights and violent conflicts between gangs through mediation mechanisms: dialogue with leaders, coordination for prevention, and training, among others. This led to a shift in police strategy away from macro interventions that sought to imprison and prosecute as many members of the groups as possible, towards a way of proceeding based on the specific prosecution of certain crimes (individual rather than group prosecution of the perpetrators) and the creation of spaces for dialogue and mediation between the groups and the police. According to the Catalan Police, as a result of the Barcelona Model, violence on the streets was reduced among the groups, while at

the same time they enjoyed a certain public and institutional recognition as visible youth actors. In other words, the invisibility of these groups was eliminated and, by becoming public, the stigma attached to them and their practices was countered. As one of the main protagonists involved explains, this process had both positive and negative sides. The positive aspects were closely related to the decrease in police persecution and criminalization of gangs and also to the new training opportunities for gang members.

One of the leaders of the Latin Kings in the process assesses it as follows:[16]

King Manaba: *Honestly, it was a process that worked. I mean, a lot of people say, "No, did it work or didn't it work?" Those of us who were interested in that, that process worked for us. So, the people, the administration, the people who helped us and who were involved there, the ones who opened a lot of doors… We are grateful because thanks to them we can also know them and that they also know us, logically. And of course, that process also included that everyone was becoming adults, too. And they were maturing and seeing things differently. But I think everyone did their share of work well.*

One negative aspect was that not all members of the groups welcomed this relationship with police institutions or agents, and this also led to certain internal conflicts within the groups. The same leader explains:

King Manaba: *As well as good moments, there were also bad moments, in the sense of speaking inside our group, right? (…) In my time, talking to a policeman could mark you out for death, because he considered you as "chola", treacherous, sneaky, whatever. But here, we took the step (…), I was the spokesman at that time, but in truth the decision had been made by adults and there were many of us. Also, like most people they sometimes disagreed. But why? Because they were doing illegal things. We're not talking about us becoming "hermanitos" (little brother) with him (a policeman). That is, we are going to have a relationship that we're going to decrease their work for them and maybe we will have less of a bad time with police harassment. Then, (…) the hermanito who told us "no,*

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16   In the TRANSGANG Project we have used anonymized codes for the participants in the research. Nevertheless, in the following Boxes we use pseudonyms to personalize testimonials, with the exception of the cases of Barcelona (King Manaba) and Medellin (Jeihhco), in which we use their real akas because they are public figures.

we don't want to have a relationship with the police", "Look, the doors are open". So what did that tell us? That they were involved in acts (...) maybe drug dealing or other things. (...) But with all these things there were fractions, there were internal problems, they created other groups also with the same name of Latin Kings...

Around 2011, this process came to an end, mainly due to political changes in the government of Catalonia and Barcelona. These political changes meant a paradigm shift in policing and a return to heavy-handed policies. With this, the whole process of rapprochement and mediation that had been carried out in recent years was suddenly cut short, which meant a return to invisibility for the groups, their criminal persecution, a growing social stigmatization, and consequently an increase in mistrust between the groups and the institutions. Finally, in recent years, several of the factions of these groups (including those that have opted to establish themselves as recognized associations) have experienced police raids, mass trials and increased criminalization and persecution. A persecution that, as in the last mass trial of the legal branch of the Latin Kings in 2015, was confronted in the 2020 trial with the acquittal of most of the defendants, due to a lack of evidence proving the crimes. While the arrest featured prominently in all the media, the acquittal was only news in one digital media outlet. Nevertheless, the creation of stigma and criminalization of the group remained present with its (macro)appearance in the media.

4.1.2. Box 2: Les Mares d'Acollida de Canet de Mar and the MENAs

Young Arab and Latino people during the footage of Monte Tropic (Photo: UPF Workshop, Barcelona, 2021).

Today, in several of the cities that underwent broad scale mediation programmes in the 2000s, the only forms of mediation that still exist are run by local actors such as community associations and local activists. One example took place in the town of Canet de Mar near Barcelona. The project called "Foster Mothers of Canet de Mar" was initially supported by the local municipal authority (the *Ajuntament*), but this only lasted for two months. Afterwards, the members of the group continued the work. The programme was based on pairing female members of the local community with the so called "MENAs" (acronym for Non-Accompanied Foreign Minors), that is, the young people who regularly arrive in Catalonia without families, legal status or adequate access to employment and health and social care. According to participants in the programme we interviewed, the *Ajuntament* focused on displacing the sense of social danger that some residents were purportedly associating with the new arrivals. They wanted the mothers to spend time with the young people in public, to take them to the shops or to appointments with local authorities, or in the words of one participant, "for people to see them with us and not be afraid".

Maria, a woman in her fifties, was paired with Hatim in 2018-2019. In the beginning, Maria did not find the process easy, explaining that there were significant difficulties with communication:

Maria: *Obviously, no-one says that everything is easy... It's another culture, it's another way of being. We had a language handicap. At first it was an adventure every time we met them, because I would sweat because he would only say "yes" or "no". And I spent three hours thinking about the questions I was going to ask him, and then in the end, [our meeting] would end in just two minutes because it was "yes", "no"...*

Despite these early challenges, over time Maria formed a close bond with the young man, referring to him as one of her children and describing how her relationship with him is the same as with one of her daughters:

Maria: *Today... I'm his mom... And well, right now I'm fighting with him, but... I fight with my daughters every day. Well, it's the same with Hatim.*

Maria was critical of the original programme of the *Ajuntament*, explaining that it was designed in a way that was cold, insensitive and governed by rules that she considered arbitrary:

Maria: *I didn't like the way it was set up. What I've seen and how we've done it, and what the mentoring itself was... Because the mentoring itself was super cold. You couldn't let him into the house. Above all, "don't ask him about his family". Well, the day we met them: "don't give them two kisses because it's Ramadan". The first thing [pseudonym] did was jump around my neck and give me two kisses. And I said "can I touch you?" And he told me "of course, nothing happens". I said "I don't know, they told me I couldn't..." In other words, it was something that was sold to us as very cold. Very distant, right? I guess there are pairs who have stayed that way. Other pairs have evolved like we have, everyone has evolved in their own way.*

Maria said that the idea of the *Ajuntament* of being seen in public with the young people (but not letting them into your home) was like "taking them for a walk". One of the other mothers made a similar point, criticising the *Ajuntament* for wanting the mothers to be a reference in the town for people who were denied "any type of right". She described the focus of the *Ajuntament* on the social danger perceived by other residents as treating the young migrants as though "they were animals that [had to be] accompanied". Yet, despite their misgivings, the short-lived mediation programme resulted in enduring, long-term relationships of care between the mothers and the young members of the programme. As we discuss in the final section of this paper, there is much to be learned from this example in terms of how policy makers can ensure the long-term sustainability of the state or municipal funded interventions.

4.2 Madrid

The arrival of Latin American youth street groups in Madrid (notably, The Latin Kings, Ñetas, Dominicans Don't Play and Trinitarios) can be dated to around the turn of the 21st century, when migration to Spain from countries such as Ecuador and the Dominican Republic was at its peak. As with Barcelona and Milan, the emergence of these groups sparked local academic interest and led to a research project and some attempts at mediation with the youth street groups. Unlike in the other cities, however, the Madrid authorities never fully engaged in a programme of mediation and instead pursued rather a "*mano dura*" (hard hand) approach that aimed to prevent the spread of the groups (Feixa, Scandroglio, López and Ferrándiz 2011). This involved the Madrid police communicating with local schools. Teachers were told not to wait until a fight between youth street group members occurred, but instead to take a "proactive" approach and report suspected youth street group members to the police. The police would then approach the young person and, in the words of a police officer who was interviewed at the time, say "look, we know what you are doing and we see you" (Aparicio and Tornos 2009, 50).

Yet despite the police's confidence that their strong-arm approach was preventing the formation of gangs, the surveillance and criminalization of the youth street groups pushed them further into the shadows. The increasing invisibility of the groups meant that the focus of the media and police drifted onto other concerns while the Latin American youth street groups continued to grow throughout the 2010s (Oliver and Núñez 2019). In 2018, according to reports from Madrid police, the number of arrests made on charges of belonging to a gang doubled from the previous year. The re-emergence of gangs as a focus of police and media attention marked the return of *mano dura* policies. In addition, the Madrid police force has a special group called Guardian Agents, which is dedicated to the surveillance and education of young people. While the group does not overtly target gang members, its work is focused on areas of the city that are considered locally as "*bandolandias*" (ganglands), meaning members of youth street groups are often involved in the Guardian Agents' work (Oliver and Núñez 2019).

4.2.1. Box 3: Intercultural Mediation Training

Seminar on Mediation,
UPF-UAM-Asociación Rumiñanhi,
(Photo: Maria Oliver, Madrid, 2019)

Unfortunately, in the case of the Community of Madrid (the regional government), youth public policies have neither been homogeneous, nor have they favoured inclusive, mediating, and integrating policies that could be translated into long-term measures for youth street group members and the processes of mediation and social transformation. The Community of Madrid has shown, during the last 20 years, a right-wing orientation, so the policies and measures taken regarding gangs have been limited by right-wing public policies. In this context, from TRANSGANG we collaborated with the RUMIÑAHUI Association and the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM) to organize an Intercultural Mediation Seminar for youth street group members. This Training Seminar took place in Madrid, with a duration of 60 hours, during the months of November and December 2018. The idea of carrying out this seminar arose from the demands of the young people themselves to access training that could improve their employability, based on their own life experiences and contributing elements of what we have come to call their hidden curriculum. The young people requesting this seminar belong, or have belonged, to youth street organizations, commonly known in Spain as "Latino gangs", or been part of their environment. Contrary to the image that prevails in the collective imagination, these young people have qualities derived from their life experiences that positively complement the theoretical and practical bases of mediation. The objective of this seminar was to bring the two parties together and give young people the opportunity to learn about the profession and work of mediation in its different aspects, paying particular attention to community and intercultural mediation, with the intention also to enhance the figure of positive leadership. According to the president of the RUMIÑAHUI association:

President: *And then another thing is for this guy to go and communicate. And at the same time normalize the relationship. And then this guy would be turned into a positive leader, and he's pulling the rest in a positive way. There are a lot of elements that maybe we didn't even realize what they meant. The question is that this boy is a positive leader, that he is working, that he is learning... I think there are many elements. Also that they realize that we are not using them, and that is when it [the seminar] was born, seeing these young people incorporated here, seeing that they had no tools, then the training course that we gave in the framework of the TRANSGANG project was born, the issue of mediation.*

This Seminar had three main objectives. First, to introduce young people from youth street groups to the techniques and principles of mediation, in order to enhance their natural mediation abilities so they could use them not only in a professional way, but in their everyday lives. Second, by bringing together young people belonging to different youth street organizations, to turn the seminar itself into a mediation experience in a controlled environment. Finally, for TRANSGANG it was also a way to establish a first contact with the Latin Kings and Queens group in Madrid, who were already in contact with RUMIÑAHUI, and, if possible, with other youth street groups. The seminar was organized in order to better fit the schedules of the young people, so it consisted on six sessions of eight hours each, on Saturdays, with a lunch break, plus a weekend trip to a countryside house that included twelve hours of training. The lunch catering was provided by one member of the group who had a restaurant, thus contributing to the circular economy. Although it was not possible to bring together members of different groups, we did bring together members and non-members of the group, and we could observe, as the sessions passed, a very enriching progress, in which we witnessed how the group went from the original separation of members vs. non-members to a cohesive, heterogeneous unit, providing everyone with extraordinarily good work, communication, and learning experiences. During the seminar, the coordinating and teaching team witnessed the immense potential of these young people, who unknowingly applied mediation strategies in situations of their daily life, especially on the streets, and who contributed and complemented theoretical learning with real experiences that enriched both the teaching-learning process and the experience of the teaching staff. Once the training was finished, however, and with the information we have today, we know that although the participants liked it and found it useful for their daily management, it has not led to an improvement of their job opportunities.

Pablo was one of the members who participated in the seminar. After being in prison, he has become a positive leader for his group:

Researcher: *I mean, you do that function well, because you are someone who has already been in prison and...*

Pablo: *Of course, and I would like the best for my people... not that they walk around the streets in gangs.*

Researcher: *And with...? Did what you did here before help you?*

Pablo: *How?*

Researcher: *The mediation and all that... that we did.*

Pablo: *Yes! To relax a bit (both laugh) and say, you know what? You on your side and I on mine, neither you win, nor do I win.*

Researcher: *Did the mediation course help you with that?*

Pablo: *Yes, and to help people relax, convincing people that it's not all about fighting or anything.*

As mentioned above, the lack of continuity and coordinated youth policies in the Community of Madrid, together with the application of exclusively repressive policies regarding gangs and gang members, makes it difficult to develop and obtain long-term results and improvements, and this situation also affects the enthusiasm that young people have to participate in new initiatives in the future.

4.3 Marseille

In Marseille, gangs have never been a particularly significant social phenomenon. However, there are groups of young people who socialize in the street, live in poverty and have high levels of unemployment and sometimes engage in drug dealing and other forms of crime. Violence between young people is also a recognized social issue and there are various programmes designed to mediate between young people and avoid the escalation of conflicts. In a marked departure from some of the other European cities discussed above, in Marseille, large scale mediation programmes involving State and non-State institutional actors do not evoke controversy and are accepted across the political spectrum as an effective means of preventing urban violence. Mediation programmes and NGOs who conduct mediation work regularly receive public funding, although eligibility is restricted to non-religious organizations. Examples include ADDAP13, an organization that offers mediation between unaccompanied young people and local institutions in order to avoid conflict and encourage "insertion" into the local economy (Mansilla 2021, forthcoming).

4.3.1. Box 4: Les Grands Frères et Sœurs (GRAFS)

Young people in Marseille
(Photo: Juan Camilo Mansilla, Marseille, 2021)

In the LaFab neighbourhood, in the third district of Marseille, mediation is understood as a collective action focused on improving the neighbourhood, the lives of its inhabitants and their own life trajectories. LaFab's youth groups (highly stigmatized) play sport (soccer, boxing, basketball) or carry out illegal (sell drugs) practices in self-managed spaces (the street, the soccer field) or spaces supervised by adults (La Maison pour tous). In this type of spontaneous association, a community or informal mediation appears based on the initiative of the actual residents of the neighbourhood, both young people and adults. It is carried out without major institutional intervention, to respond to a specific problem of daily life, such as the accumulation of rubbish in the neighbourhood streets. This form of mediation is led by young people around thirty years old or more: the GRAFS (Grands Frères et Grand Soeurs). For example, these neighbourhood residents manage the inflatable boxing rings that Monarch, one of the GRAFS, installs in the streets of LaFab so that young people can "have fun in a respectful and joyful way". The rubbish collection was also initiated by Mahmoud. Digital social networks and the sociability of the neighbourhood were used to carry out the initiative without waiting for institutional financing. The playful and friendship aspects are combined in a practice that reinforces the collective identity of young people and LaFab, and even tends to revalue it and restore dignity to young people (historically marginalized) and to the neighbourhood.

As we can see, the intergenerational factor is a necessary but not sufficient cause of social mediation in the marginalized neighbourhoods of Marseille. Intergenerational ties foster spaces for conflict mediation in street gangs, between them and other actors in the gang field. In contexts of community associative experiences around sports or culture, the participation of older brothers or sisters, former gang members, between the ages of 30 and 40, can mean new ways of mediating conflicts for young gang members, in the new generations. Thus, the GRAFS are important figures in social

mediation among young Frenchmen of North African origin from the popular neighbourhoods of Marseille. The GRAFS use their past experiences as an example of positive transformation for those who are now living and working on the street, as can be seen in this example of a young man in his thirties who carried out a community rubbish collection project in LaFab:

Mahmoud: *I have made my life, here we are all mature, we are not brats [...] what matters is to mobilize the neighbourhood on a broad scale. I have experience and I want young people to take advantage of it, I, myself, have been a criminal (pauses and then continues) and I know how people live today, what these new generations think.*

From the institutions they are criticized for being "self-proclaimed mediators who have no training and are not even supervised" (Comité interministeriel des villes 2011, 12). Even so, the GRAFS are essential actors in their neighbourhoods. Their role as mediators and examples in the socialization of younger people evidence the social and family dynamics of youth street gangs. The GRAFS base their mediation relationships with the young people on the respect due to people with more experience (*les aînés*), and on trust and affective ties. They are distinguished from the parents essentially by using a non-prescriptive authority. The autonomy of the young people is the *leitmotiv* of their relations with the GRAFS, who are considered "more as a reference than a model", both for ways of mediating conflicts and for the exacerbation of forms of illegality. The GRAFS contribute to improving the neighbourhood environment and enhancing it, intervene in conflicts between gangs, their families and the school, and even give material aid to the young people. The GRAFS professionalize their role as mediators by integrating a position – precarious due to their contractual instability – in community associations and public socio-cultural and sports institutions in the neighbourhood, or by having a sports or musical career. It is therefore a relationship of advice and listening, in which the GRAFS make material capital available or life experience that is immediately useful in the project or particular situation of the young person and their ecosystem. The GRAFS have a reputation in the neighbourhood, which allows them to carry out actions to mediate and improve the quality of life of young people and residents. However, the biggest challenge for these mediation actions is the generation gap, as the GRAFS feel that it is not always easy to understand the new generation's way of thinking.

Monarch: *Today, most young people know me, because I am the older brother (GRAFS), in fact. And they want to look like me. They want to be like me in relation to sport, which makes them come to see me: "Monarch, how do we do this? Monarch, I want to learn to box. Monarch, I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that".*

And I give them good advice. If I don't know enough about it to give them advice, I guide them towards the people who can advise you. And what I do here, in the neighbourhood, is to do a lot of actions. I really do a lot of actions. For example, I take an inflatable boxing ring and put it in the middle of the neighbourhood, the young people come, put on their gloves, and laugh together. We collect the rubbish, all together, happily and with good humour... It is the most deprived neighbourhood in Europe, did you know that?

4.4 Milan

Since around the year 2000, a new social phenomenon became visible in several Italian cities. Groups of Latin American youths, notably from Ecuador, Peru, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic, began congregating on street corners, in public parks and outside night clubs. In Genoa, the appearance of these groups sparked academic interest and led to an in-depth programme of action-research aimed at mediating between these groups and agencies with whom the groups were sometimes in conflict (Cannarella, Lagomarsino and Queirolo Palmas 2007). Around the same time as the mediation programme was getting underway in Genoa, a group of academics of the University of Genoa, who also cooperated with the academics of Barcelona, associated with the independent research institute *Codici* along with the non-profit organization *Comunità Nuova*, began a similar project in Milan called "*Calle*". Working in the streets, *Calle* ran from 2005 to 2008 and sought to bring social workers, street educators and researchers in contact with informal groups of adolescents, most notably with members of the Latin Kings, Comando and Ñetas, as a way of defusing tensions and resolving conflict within and between these groups and the Milanese authorities. The project ended in 2008, when the municipality of Milan decided to withdraw funding from most street education activities (Grassi, forthcoming).

In the years following the end of the mediation project, as the global financial crisis and fiscal austerity measures that followed started to have their harsh effects, there was a distinct change in the direction of urban policy regarding young people in Milan. There had been one police operation against the youth street groups in 2005, but this repression intensified with a series of four consecutive police operations between 2012 and 2015. At the same time, new groups began to appear in Milan, notably Mara Salvatrucha (MS13) and Barrio 18, and violence between the groups intensified. Media reports of violence against members of the pubic led to moral panic that helped to legitimize the repression of the groups (Galli and Giuzzi 2015; Berni 2016; Grassi, forthcoming). The effect of the repression was that many of the Latin American groups disappeared from the streets. Today, there are still some smaller groups in operation and mediation continues to exist on an individual level with certain individual politicians visiting neighbourhoods to "investigate problems" and "offer assistance" (Grassi, forthcoming). However, there are no large-scale programmes with institutional buy-in or investment like there were in the early 2000. While mediation exists on this small scale, there are no longer the levels of investment in street educators witnessed prior to the financial crisis, and that made the legalization programmes possible.

4.4.1. Box 5: San Siro Crew

The neighbourhood of San Siro
(Photo: Paolo Grassi, 2021)

San Siro is a square shaped neighbourhood built between the 1930s and 40s in a then peripheral area of Milan to accommodate the families of workers employed in the local factories. Now located centrally due to the expansion of the city centre, San Siro has a population of about 12,000 inhabitants and is one of the largest public housing neighbourhoods of Milan (around 6,110 apartments). Many children and young people of San Siro were born in Italy, but, as for all children of migrants, national legislation does not allow them to obtain citizenship until they are 18 years old. On the contrary, the majority of the Italian residents are elderly inhabitants. There are sometimes problems between young migrants and elderly Italians related to living in the same area. In particular, these lead to conflicts about managing courtyards and public space. In recent years, San Siro has often been described by local and national media as a "casbah", an unassailable Arab fortress in the centre of the Lombard capital.

Daniel: *[San Siro] It's a normal neighbourhood. It's a suburb: it has its positive and negative sides. There are those who were born and raised in this neighbourhood and see it as their home. Maybe someone from the outside could say the opposite.*

How do the groups manage conflicts? Have they been involved in formal processes of mediation? In this sense, the research highlighted a single mediation process between street groups and institutions in Milan. It was carried out by Codici and Comunità Nuova from 2005 to 2008, a non-governmental organization managed by a catholic priest. Through this project, a group of Latin Kings formed a formal association called "Movimiento Real Juvenil" (Grassi, forthcoming). However, this association no longer exists and there are no organizations working on mediation processes with these adolescents and young men. Now, the model is the right-hand approach involving repressive actions against the groups. The left hand of the state seems to fulfil a palliative function. The educational interventions

have difficulty starting or are carried out based on short-term actions that struggle to place themselves in strategic planning horizons.

In this context, to avoid the marginalization of the neighbourhood, a group of six boys formed a rap crew – called Seven 7oo – that, since 2018, has progressively achieved success nationally and internationally. The six rappers of the crew are Neima Ezza, Sacky, Vale Pain, Rondo da Sosa, Keta, and Kilimoney. One of them has Latin American origins, four have North African parents, and one is the son of an Italian-Egyptian couple. Surrounding the crew there are young men of the neighbourhood of various ethnic groups. They are young men just over 18 years old who grew up together in the neighbourhood and became passionate about rap. Their crew is therefore a spontaneous, grassroots artistic formation that has been supported over the years by professionals linked to the music business. The rappers, on one hand, oppose the police and other law enforcement agencies, which have taken a particularly repressive attitude towards them in recent years. However, the rappers have relationships with other institutions, including some non-governmental organizations, schools and the municipality itself. Through rap, the stigma that marks that portion of urban territory becomes an emblem, and the neighbourhood and the city are re-defined and re-signified. The rappers of the Seven 7oo crew are not the only young people of San Siro who rap. This artistic expression can be referred to as a "scene", i.e., a non-homogenous space made of single individualities that subjectively re-elaborate and locally situate certain transnational stylistic features.

For instance, Soffien, a 17-year-old boy who was born in Egypt but grew up in San Siro, has a different point of view. His raps do not speak of drug dealing or weapons, but rather explore the working-class world and the Milanese social movements, without however, ever fully identifying himself with them.

Soffien: *I wrote about racism because when I went to middle school, I suffered from it myself. They made jokes about me because I'm Arabic. In the class there were boys from the upper-middle class... and those of us from San Siro were seen as barbarians. This is no longer the case now in high school, because in each class at least half of the people have a non-Italian origin. It's good.*

05

Part Five:
Overview of North Africa

Bush and Ayeb (2012) understand current youth marginalization in Arab Societies as a process by which certain attitudes, ideologies, values, practices, discourses and beliefs are "excluded" from the public sphere. Following Wacquant (2008), these processes of advanced marginalization are an unavoidable part of the capitalist system and have condemned different social groups to structural marginalization. Hence, marginalization processes must be understood as "a direct and important dimension of capitalist development, the improved incorporation of the poor and those on the outskirts of the market economy will not reduce marginality or exploitation, it will merely sustain the reproduction of it" (Bush and Ayeb 2012, 8). Thus, one of the major trends in North African social structures consolidates differences based on economic criteria, occupation and authority, similarly to those established in Western societies under neoliberal rules promoted by global economic institutions (Sánchez-Montijano and Sánchez-García 2019). However, as Bush remarks, "in this region, wars have served to dispossess the working people of their political and social rights as well as of their resources, leaving both the security of the labouring classes and national security exposed and vulnerable" (Bush 2004, 682).

 The "youth issue" in North Africa is often expressed, paradoxically, as both a problem and an opportunity. As a problem, it is related to security, anxiety about the increase of the youth population in an adult-centric society, unemployment, inequality, drug use, extremism and being victims and, sometimes, perpetrators of structural violence. As an opportunity, young people are perceived as a fountain of wealth for the country due to their work force capacity and their desire to migrate and send back resources to their families. Facing the social, educational, and cultural situation, young people seek dignity to live their youth, but especially to carry out their emancipatory life projects. Nevertheless, the changes in the structural conditions towards socioeconomic insecurity have a great impact on their aspirations, expectations and opportunities to plan future trajectories, creating various situations of disorientation and difficulty in solving their problems. Observing the impediments to emancipation makes it possible to understand one of the main effects of this failed transition: that young people want to migrate to Europe because one of the main driving forces of migration in Morocco is the

lack of expectations for the future.[17]

      While the North African context has been marked by specific transformations (post-colonialism, the demise of the welfare state, the protest movement that broke out in the mining basin in 2008, revolutionary processes and consequent repressive systems), the rampant changes experienced at a global level (the democratization of ICT use, the economic crisis, neoliberal policies, exclusion phenomena, social injustice and migratory processes, etc.) take shape in local spaces. The decline of institutions (including the absence of the State) has widened the gap between the different social groups that come into conflict, leading to the construction of the declared public enemy: youth street groups. In public spheres where there are no excessive democratic opportunities, as in Algeria and Tunisia, informal youth street groups can play a political role of action and contestation, as occurred during the revolts of 2011. The construction of street sociability by North African young people, a masculine model, is based on a structure that contains a process of homogenization that directly affects the different orientations dominated by adult-centrist discourses but which, simultaneously, escapes them. In this sense, it is necessary to think of the imposed colonial modernization, the traditional lifestyles of local populations and the specific historical socio-structure in which the category of 'youth' becomes a different layer of this production.

5.1. Mediation and Islam

In the region, the mediation processes (*wasata* in Arabic) aim to guarantee the rights and achieve the satisfaction of both parties through reconciliation. In other words, mediation allows each party to benefit from the situation. According to traditional sociability, there is a natural propensity to intervene in cases of conflict; first, to prevent the situation from getting worse, and then to restore the state of serenity and peace in the community. The ways of understanding mediation in North Africa are always related to the "community" rather than individual forms of conflict resolution as it is in Western mediation process model. In these contexts, the objective of the mediation processes is to rebuild the ties among the groups in conflict. From the Islamic perspective, a basic pillar of Maghrebi societies, every Muslim should practice mediation when necessary, and that it be accepted by the parties.[18] In addition to the corpus drawn from the Sunnah and Qur'an that promotes the peaceful resolution of disputes within the Muslim community, as well as between Muslim and non-Muslim societies, and between non-Muslim societies; Islamic traditions encourage mediation as an alternative

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17   See Sánchez-García et al. 2021, 2023; Feixa, Sánchez-García, Premat and Hansen 2022.

18   The Quran offers several passages regarding mediation, such as this very explicit verse on mediation and reconciliation: "If factions of believers quarrel, reconcile them" (Surah Al-Hujurât, verse 09).

to litigation between parties, always understood as collective agents, never individuals, since the conflict involves the entire community. In fact, in Islam, mediation emphasizes the reconciliation of harmony, solidarity and the restoration of the dignity of the individuals of the offended group, forcing believers to fulfil their duty in resolving conflicts, even when this decision may be slightly detrimental to their individual interests. The principles of justice and cooperation are at the base of these processes that aim to create beneficial positions for the parties involved and mutual respect.

As mentioned above, Islam is one of the basic pillars of Maghrebi societies. Accordingly, in institutional mediation processes, the imam becomes a fundamental agent based on principles such as neutrality, supported by his symbolic capital as heir of the Prophet and an expert in Islamic law. Therefore, the fundamental precept in mediation processes inspired by Islamic precepts is to achieve reconciliation between the parties through three elements: 1) the absolute prioritization of the peaceful resolution of the conflict, regardless of the ideology, faction or beliefs of the parties involved in the conflict; 2) the idea that mediation is a noble act and even mediation between Muslims and non-Muslims is accepted; and 3) mediation is not possible in cases in which religious precepts are clear and explicit. In conclusion, in Islam, mediation is part of the conflict resolution process within the framework of a perception of social and community appeasement, while bringing individuals closer to goodwill and guiding them towards reconciliation, even though the Prophet did not legislate about it or prescribe it by divine revelation. Consequently, any act is admissible in a mediation process as long as it does not contradict the principles of the precepts of Islam (Bouheraoua, 2008). In general, there are few studies on the relationship between youth groups and religious institutions and reconciliation processes. According to TRANSGANG results, in the region, young people tend to pay more attention to educational institutions that replace the mosque, perceiving the mosque as a place exclusively for worship and prayer. The status of the imamate as State officials contributes to this, increasing suspicion towards them. In some way, it would be a "left hand" of the Maghrebi States. Nevertheless, the imam still has a highly respected position in mediation processes. This role has begun to decline, being replaced by other official bodies such as schools, youth centres, sports associations, and structured and unstructured youth groups that can initiate the mediation process.

5.2. Rabat-Salé

In recent years, Moroccan society has been going through a series of profound cultural, political and economic transformations linked to the emergence of numerous social movements. Rachid Touhtouh (forthcoming) argues that while politically and socially distinct, these movements reflect similar sets of grievances with the severe economic realities of contemporary life for many Moroccans, particularly the young. Unemployment and poverty in the wake of the retreat of the Welfare State was the driving force behind

violent social unrest in Morocco in the 1980s and 1990s. In that time, the movement was led by students and labour unions. Today, however, urban and political violence in Morocco reflects more heterogeneous ideological and non-ideological positions and involves football hooligans or "ultras", radical islamists, *tcharmils*,[19] hard rock fans and other youth street groups. These groups are motivated by a range of religious, secular, ethnic and cultural factors but share a common experience of social marginality, precarity, lack of access to jobs and education and the retrenchment of the Welfare State (Touhtouh 2019; Cohen 2004).

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19   *Tcharmil* is an expression in Moroccan dialect that traditionally indicates a range of spicy marinated flavours for meat dishes that include garlic, olive oil and parsley. It is also currently used to designate a type of youth subculture and has been adopted by gangs of young people from the poor neighbourhoods of the country. Although they emerged in Casablanca, they quickly spread to Fes, Meknes, Agadir, Rabat, Marrakech and are appearing in other Moroccan cities.

5.2.1 Box 6: Shems'y Circus

Shems'y Circus in Salé
(Photo: Montserrat Iniesta, 2022)

Sidi Moussa, a poor neighbourhood in Salé-Rabat, is undergoing a gentrification process. Traditionally, the youth street groups were formed in a natural way based on belonging to the Al-houma area (the neighbourhood). Some young people get stuck and have no alternatives and so stay on the street all their lives; however, some young people search endlessly for better alternative perspectives. They are looking for a "second chance at life", which highlights the idea that it is a constant search for success, stability and visibility in a failing system. Young people fight daily to survive in the absence of state institutions, family support and mediation organizations. There is, however, one exception: Shemsy Circus. The Pirates of Today, this is the young people of the quarter involved in the Shemsy Circus[20] in front of the Atlantic Ocean; a National Circus School attracting street youth of Sidi Moussa to become circus performers instead of being in the street. The Shemsy Circus School has taught more than 400 boys and girls over the last ten years with the support of embassies, economic enterprises and elite families as patrons of the foundation. The social project works as integral non-formal educational orientation that teaches young people circus techniques. As a young women user of the school explains:

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20   See the story of these young people from Sidi Moussa performing in the circus. http://www.piratesofsale.com.

Fatima: *When I introduce myself to the other guys, I get the impression that I'm showing them what I can do, that I'm like them and now I see myself almost flying, doing complicated acrobatic exercises on the trapeze.*

The young artists are now role models for other young people like them, demonstrating that it is possible to escape their social exclusion.

Rachida: *When I started at the circus school, my world expanded and I discovered my female body because in the street I was like a boy, working and doing harsh things; I did not live my childhood. The circus gave this freedom of movement to my body, and I let go; the more I train, the more I feel relief from my family problems. The teachers feel that I am born innately for the circus; they train and exercise me a lot. I learnt quickly. My whole family is separated now. My father lives with his new wife; my two sisters live with their adoptive families; and I live alone in the association; they visit me from time to time and take me to their homes. When they visit me, they bring stuff, food and basic necessities for life. They sometimes give me pocket money and I also visit my grandmother. In the association, we have three meals. We sleep in the dormitory. We are like brothers and sisters in the association.*

5.3 Tunis

Tunisia has a youth population with around 25 % between the ages of 15 and 29. Unemployment among young people is 18 % (UNFPA, 2016). In contrast, the rate of participation in the informal sector of the economy is notably high. Informal activities developed after the revolution and today represent almost 50% of GDP and employ 40.2% of the workforce (Institut Tunisien de la Compétitivité et des Etudes Quantitatives 2019, 27). Just 3.2% of the population in Tunisia is literate. Moreover, participation of women in work and other arenas of public life is low throughout Tunisia (Najar 2021).

As with other locations in North Africa, the term "gang" or local language parallels do not tend to appear in Tunisian public discourse. TRANSGANG work in Tunisia therefore focused on three groups of young people engaged in different forms of cultural activity that are often criminalized by the Tunisian authorities. These are graffiti artists, music groups and young people who work in the informal sector of the economy. Sihem Najar, the TRANSGANG local team leader in Tunisia, relates youth engagement in these cultural activities to their disengagement in formal politics as well as their increasing marginalization from work and other forms of social belonging (Najar et al., forthcoming; see also Barthélemy 2000).

In Tunisia, young people have always expressed their demands to improve their economic and social situation in reaction to the indifference or lack of efficiency of the authorities in responding to their complaints. However, the strong participation of different youth street groups in the Yasmine Revolution – the local version of the Arab Spring – shows their awareness of the need to "relocate" their demands, which were often confined to the physical and symbolic space of the neighbourhood, and oriented towards the appropriation of the national public sphere to become political agents. They asked for all the actors and symbols of the established regime to leave, realizing that the resolution of their problems was closely linked to the expression in their society of concepts such as freedom, democracy and social justice. Slander and public order laws are often used by security services to target groups of young people and youth culture in general. There are no formal programmes of mediation and few avenues for communication between Tunisian authorities and youth that congregate in the street (Najar 2021). Political repression and marginalization due to forms of social belonging has created a "reservoir of contestation" among Tunisian youth. Faced with exclusion from formal politics, young people turn to other forms of political and cultural expression (Najar 2021; see also Wacquant 2008).

5.3.1 Box 7: DEBO Association

Debo Headquarters, Tunis
(Photo: José Sánchez-García, 2019)

"Underground" Tunisian artists and alternative music are scarce and sometimes persecuted for attacking the State and the public morality. In fact, these groups are considered to be "outside the law" and are regularly in conflict with state representatives and by extension the law. It is undeniable that the dialogue and mediation between these two parties is a failure. Even at the highest levels of government, it is possible to recognize governance failures in terms of mediation. Indeed, recognizing this need implicitly proves the existence of a communication and trust problem between individuals, groups and the government. This conflict impacts the economy and politics and happens repeatedly due to a lack of trust in the government but also to a lack of mediation. Tunisia institutionally established this mediation role in the administrative field. Since 1992, there has been a government position of "administrative mediator" (similar to the "Mediator of the Republic" that existed in France). However, the role of this institution is limited to mediating in cases of conflicts between citizens and the administration, and the large majority of citizens do not know about it. Socially speaking, certain groups have informally come together to act as mediators between the government and the political system on one hand and the different social actors on the other.

The DEBO group is one such case. DEBO was "officially" created in 2013. Its members are young people from several downtown districts of Tunis that represent a panoply of underground art forms. It unites rappers, dancers, videographers, composers and anyone who identifies with a culture in which hip-hop, rap and Mizwad (a genre of popular music based on North African Amazigh scale rhythms using the *mizwad*) are essential. In terms of status, DEBO distinguished itself from other associations by establishing its own production studio and association. Through these two structures, it ensures

continuity and authenticity. To protect intellectual property, DEBO created the concept of "*Tahamatas*" or the "Bike Sound System", a bicycle with a subwoofer that rides around selling DEBO's music and displaying its graffiti. The group takes an anti-establishment position and above all an interest in the problems and concerns of marginal and marginalized young people whose rights it asserts via artistic expression, playing a mediating role. As such, it has become a highly "formal" association even while preserving its anti-establishment stance (adopted by underground cultures) and especially its interest in the problems and interests of marginal and marginalized young people (street life, *ego-trip,* belonging, drug use, rejection of the system and politicians, etc.). The group makes atypical, anti-system statements and above all, it is in the middle of several worlds; including a world where *zatla* (cannabis) is allowed, alcohol is allowed, and many other illegal activities. Indeed, in this context, the importance of the relationship between the group and the institution comes down to the fact that the members of DEBO have institutionalized their exclusion. By placing their activities and events within an institutional framework, the group manages to publicize the underground and therefore the illegal. It shines a light on elements that remain illegal in Tunisia. The group stands out because it acts in the field, in the street, on the stage, within its localities, as well as on the internet. It has conflicts with other music groups (clans) that do not share the same ideological, political or cultural affiliations. The DEBO headquarters, in the heart of a city ravaged by the exodus, offers a social space that aims to transmit the values of acceptance of others, of expressions and of sharing. It offers a cultural space where it is possible to learn an artistic expression and also a trade. Through the links they establish, DEBO increases the expectations of young people who lack listening, empathy and motivation to empower themselves.

As Ramzi, a member of the crew, explains:

Ramzy: *Since I'm still there, I'm still learning things about hip-hop and our discipline, which is great, because in hip-hop culture there are several disciplines, which have several exchanges, because in the beginning the hip hop culture was born in the USA in the neighbourhoods where there is a lot of violence...*

The physical proximity of the headquarters to the Ministry of the Interior makes the neighbourhood a clear report on oppression and legal procedures. Young people can name behaviours that are illegal and where there may be risks. They are in the measured risk and in a process of formalization. The objective of DEBO's posture towards authority has evolved and matured through pragmatism. The DEBO Collective avoids any contact with the State and even uses the term "rupture": "*Yes, it is just a rupture with the State*" (Mohamed). Nevertheless, no member of the group has been convicted or

imprisoned. The members say that nothing connects them to the ministry apart from the paperwork: "*We are autonomous, but sometimes to get an authorization we have to go through the Ministry of Culture*" (Trappa). They even refuse to work and cooperate with State institutions: "*We avoid cooperating with State institutions by all means*" (Trappa).

In summary, the group's maturity and insight have allowed them to increase the resistance of a resilient attitude to be part of the public scene and get to know young people in difficult situations. Two pillars support their mediation process. As a broad collective, DEBO is capable of acting as an institution and an agent of mediation in a context of frequent conflict between Tunisia's disenfranchised youth and the authorities. The first is internal to DEBO. It consists in the creation of art workshops that allow young artists to create and other young people to be initiated in a language other than that of delinquency as well as values other than violence. The second is connecting and negotiating recognition or even support from the authorities, the media, the associations that until then have stigmatized and marginalized them.

Trappa: *We were a group, we met in cafes, we talked too much, because there were too many ideas, then we took action, we rented a room; at the start we were eight people, we had a table and a computer... In fact, there is the association but there is also the collective, the legal framework is provided by the association. To have a space, you have to have a legal framework and that's it. Freedom, being able to express and say whatever you think, gives the feeling of having power and great freedom. The closest institution to us is the Ministry of Culture, but it's not a Ministry of Culture either... and I feel that the State, such as it is today, doesn't represent anyone.*

While social discourses on gangs are not present in Algeria, violence by and among young people is a prominent public concern. Moreover, the recent years have been marked by the Hirak movement to start a democratic process and against the military government that started in 2018 and which still continues. Consequently, a myriad of youth pressure groups, such as the *baltagiya*,[21] as these groups are known in North Africa, have emerged in several cities and rural areas to carry out mediation processes among both political and tribal authorities, linking urban and political violence to material concerns such as the lack of adequate housing, drinking water, food and public services. These conditions reflect the way that capitalism has developed in Algeria in recent decades. The Algerian economy has been described as a "mono-economy" that is overly dependent on hydrocarbon exports, making it vulnerable to price fluctuations and resulting in periodic financial crises. Moreover, in the 1990s, Algeria was subject to a programme of structural adjustment that opened domestic producers to international competition, which led to a reduction in tax revenue and public investment (Boucherf et al., forthcoming).

Unemployment is a significant problem in Algeria and reflects broader inequalities, particularly in relation to gender, age and divisions between urban and rural populations. Only 18% of all jobs in Algeria are held by women. In 2018, unemployment was 24.6% among people aged between 16 and 24 years old, which has significantly decreased from levels witnessed during the global financial crisis, when unemployment among young people reached over 30%. For women of the same age group, however, unemployment continues to be at around 50%. Similar inequalities are present in education. While 96% of the urban youth population is considered "literate", the figure is only 87% for young people living in rural areas (Boucherf et al., forthcoming). Boucherf argues that these conditions have resulted in situations of advanced marginality among sections of the Algerian population, which in turn has exacerbated the "youth flight" from the country, that is, the high levels of emigration to Europe among the youth population.

Like several others of the TRANSGANG field sites, public discourses concerning young Algerian people can be deeply stigmatizing. Young people who are unemployed or who commit crimes and use illegal substances are often labelled "delinquents". While there are no policies or laws that specifically refer to youth street groups, Algeria's broad anti-

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21 *Baltagiya*: In colloquial Egyptian, literally those who carry the axe, to designate the loyal servants of the Ottoman sultan in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Currently it refers to groups of thugs or gangs, hired to attack regime objectors in the 1990s, when the Egyptian police decided to control them and turn them into a paramilitary force.

assembly laws are used by security services to target political protests and groups of young people when they congregate in the street. At the same time, however, despite the challenges Algeria faces, efforts are being made to address problems affecting young people and women. For instance, there is now a 30% quota for women in elected assemblies and the government has invested in education, training and job schemes specifically targeted at increasing youth employment (Boucherf et al., forthcoming).

5.4.1 Box 8: Gold Sellers

A Gold Seller in Algiers
(Photo: José Sánchez-García, 2019)

Field Diary: *One of the gold sellers shouted: the police!!! The other traders were quickly picking up their wares. There are those who carried the whole stall (chair, parasol and jewellery), others took their jewellery either in their hand or in a bag, most of them carry one. Some gold sellers ran to the building in front, there are apparently traders hiding in the buildings. Ramzi apologized too, quickly picking up his stall. The police vehicle parked in front of the Dlala and three police officers got out of the car. The traders who had been warned were watching the behaviour of the police officers. After about more than an hour, the police officers left the Dlala. A few gold sellers went back to their places after ensuring that the police officers had left, but they remain vigilant. Others left the place altogether. (Fieldwork diary, 18/03/2019)*

Bachdjerrah is one of the communes to have suffered violent events during the civil war in the 1990s, which led to growth slowing down. However, the informal market was a means of resistance for the populations and a way out of their socio-economic and spatial marginalization. The *Dlala de l'or*, which is located inside this informal market in the district of Bachdjerrah, in the middle of the houses, has become an important informal space for buying and selling gold for all Algiers. It is the expression of the social intelligence of vulnerable groups to adapt to their social reality, where the street is the main stage of these market practices. The market is set up on a road called *Trig Marseille* or Marseille Road, a metaphor illustrating this commercial dynamic and the connection of this market with an important commercial destination "Marseille". The informal trade in the precious metal is conceived by most of the sellers as a support for social de-marginalization, in order to cope with poverty and the shrinking labour market.

Two concepts are significant for understanding market practices. Firstly, *Al-houma*, the neighbourhood, as a social and moral space, which redefines the roles between men and women, and introduces informal mediation practices to avoid conflict between sellers, between sellers and the police, and between men (sellers) and women (buyers) based on the concept of *horma*, the way and procedures to preserve the collective honour of the members of the neighbourhood. The perception of these limits is rather more extensive insofar as this space is experienced as being a space of mutual knowledge and with which people identify: *"in the working-class neighbourhoods, however, people all know each other as brothers"* (Rachid); or *"this is our neighbourhood bro. This is everyone's home"* (Tawfiq).

Secondly, behaviours, trades and rules are judged according to Islamic morality. For instance, the sharing of sales space requires compliance with the codes of honour and common morality. The exchanges between the actors of the gold market are based on a verbal contract or the gift of speech based on trust, the Islamic debt system and the application of the principle of personal delivery that is built over time, and respect for codes of honour: *"Trust is number one, trust and respect"* (Rachid). Therefore, the standards of honesty are associated with the fear of punishment, which ranges from mockery to committing a crime, where relationships play the function of social control.

Among the conflicts and their solutions, we can identify three main sources. Firstly, the presence of groups of thieves and delinquents from the popular surrounding neighbourhoods of the area with violent practices. Under the influence of the majority model of Ouled al Houma, boys of the quarter, masculinity exalts physical strength and the practice of violence

according to the socialization process that the gold seller has received in the neighbourhood. The use of violence to avoid these behaviours means protection and resistance in this risky context because the trade is officially illegal (although socially legitimized) and it is impossible to appeal to police: "*Here when we catch a neighbour stealing, we teach him a lesson. This is what I received in return, a stab wound, I was stabbed in the back*" (Tawfiq).

Secondly the presence of the police is a source of conflict in the market. The traders refer to the police as '*addawla*' (the State), who is mainly responsible for their marginalized situation. They feed the feeling of injustice, *Al-Hogra*, especially because they have considerable losses when the police seize their merchandise. The 'addawla' not only confiscate their products, but also their dignity, *karama*. The search operations that the police carry out in front of the entourage of young merchants are humiliating. "*Many people are seized. Once, they seized two stalls in which the merchandise was worth 9 million dinars and another 5 million dinars*" (Ahmed). Moreover, police officers use their position to gain material advantage by confiscating goods of all kinds, taking advantage of their status as police officers. The solution is to "negotiate" with police officials to recover the goods, or inform them before the seizure operation, in return for a material benefit. The traders adopt pragmatic and rational behaviours to minimize their financial and material losses, and attempt to establish a profitable relationship with the police through negotiation. Some of them pay them sums of money and even a "salary" in return. In this case, gold traders are warned in advance of any raids and most use this strategy. This kind of mediation with police is required between gold traders in order to ensure the continuity of business and trade. They withdraw discreetly when the police arrive on the market, giving pretexts to their colleagues such as having things to do at home, or a relative who is ill, as a merchant testifies:

Ahmed: *Some people pay them bribes, even a salary and in return, they are warned in advance of any seizure operation, most use this strategy... Just a few, to whom we whisper in their ears, that's not all the people at the market who know about it to withdraw discreetly, they find excuses: things to do at home, a sick relative... An hour later, the police come to raid us".*

Finally, the third class of conflict is with "women clients". This category of women is considered more dangerous than the gangs of thieves in Bachdjerrah. They pretend to come and buy, and they slip the pieces of jewellery into their bags or their clothes. Even if the merchant is sure that the woman is stealing, he cannot report her to the police because he is working

in an illegal setting. He also cannot search her, which requires direct contact with her body, which is against social rules: the merchant can humiliate her verbally, but he can never touch her body. In this case, he brings in a neighbour to search her. This is how a merchant proceeded in this kind of situation:

Rachid: *Once it was in the middle of Ramadan, I was dealing with a pregnant woman. She wanted to sell me new gold. When I left to test it, I noticed that a ring was missing... Once, there was also a woman who pretended to come and buy, she stole jewellery from me twice [...] I couldn't get it back... She came back a third time and a friend of mine remembered her face. As soon as she left, the ring was out of place, so I followed her. I approached her to ask her nicely to return the ring to me and that we talk about it more. She denied the theft. I was starting to get angry, a friend of mine asked me to let him deal with it. A moment later I saw the woman crying and taking the ring out of her bag. I asked her why she had denied it at first until I humiliated her into giving the ring back to me. (Rachid).*

06

Part Six:
Overview of the Americas

Perhaps nowhere else in the world is more commonly associated with gangs and gang culture than the Americas. The four American TRANSGANG field sites are located in cities that have had long, interrelated and yet very distinct experiences with gangs and youth street groups (Feixa et al. 2023). Many of the most infamous Latin American gangs originated in the United States of America. Mara Salvatrucha (MS13) and Barrio 18, two of the largest gangs in El Salvador, were constituted in Los Angeles in the 1990s and spread to El Salvador as a consequence of migrant repatriation schemes run by the US government. Likewise, The Latin Kings and Ñetas trace their origins to immigrant cultural associations that gathered in Chicago and New York in the 1960s and 1970s. In the early 2000s, gangs and youth street groups of American origin began appearing in cities in Southern Europe, notably in Barcelona and Madrid (Feixa, Scandroglio, López and Ferrándiz 2011), Genova and Milano (Cannarella, Lagomarsino and Queirolo Palmas 2007). The cultures and the gang hierarchies of American countries continue to have an influence over the organizations that operate in Europe. However, what makes the American experience markedly distinct from that of the other TRANSGANG regions is the severity and frequency of violence and homicide within the communities where gangs originate and operate. As we discuss in this section, violence in these regions is a complex and contingent social phenomenon. High levels of homicide in Central and South American countries are not just a simplistic matter of violent criminals attacking local communities, but rather reflect multi-sided armed conflicts involving vigilante death squads with links to the State security services as well as international criminal mafias that profit from a drug trade that is driven by US consumption (Busch 2004).

6.1 Medellin

Like El Salvador, Colombia is a country with a long history of gangs, gang conflict and mediation attempts. It is also a country with high levels of extreme poverty and youth emigration, particularly to the United States and Europe (Márquez 2023). In the city of Medellin, since at least the 1990s,

the policies and initiatives have focused on improving the experiences young people have. Historically led by NGOs, these projects have often sought to change the negative perception of young people as dangerous delinquents and promote education and participation in sport, artistic and cultural activities as an alternative to participating in violent gang activities (Márquez 2023). Throughout the 2000 and 2010s, national and local governments became more involved in areas of youth policy and youth street group mediation, promoting ideas of peacebuilding and historic memory. At the same time, there were efforts to encourage young women and men to participate in public institutions and civil society (Márquez 2023). Today, there are numerous programmes aimed at developing life skills and increasing mediation capacities and conflict management among young people. These include youth clubs (*Clubes Juveniles*) and the Youth R Program, both organized and funded by the Medellin local authority; a programme for preventing young people having to live in the street, run by the Combos Corporation; and the Casa Kolacho project, an initiative led by young people that emerged in the Comuna 13 neighbourhood and aims to prevent youth involvement in armed conflict by engaging them in hip-hop practices and culture, and which promoted the successful initiative of the Graffitour (Márquez 2023; Feixa et al. 2022).

6.1.1 Box 9: The Graffitour

Graffitour in Comuna 13, Medellín
(Photo: Montserrat Iniesta, 2022)

Casa Kolacho is an art and culture centre located in Comuna 13 in Medellín, Colombia, that opened its doors in 2013. Since then, it has become an international benchmark for 'artivism' (activism through art) and for hip-hop culture, with high-impact initiatives such as Graffitour (neighbourhood tourist tours showcasing its graffiti art; see below), which, until the pandemic arrived, promoted community tourism and a form of circular economy as an alternative way of life in this marginal context, victims of violence of all kinds. The house's name is a tribute to a rapper killed in 2009 in the war between drug gangs following Pablo Escobar's era. The conflict dates to 2002, when President Uribe's Operation Orion, carried out by paramilitaries and law enforcement, escalated State violence, justified with the targeting of guerrilla enclaves, resulting in hundreds of civilian deaths. In response to these repressive policies, as well as to criminal gang violence (the so-called bacrims), Comuna 13's new generations of rappers joined together using music and art as weapons against (political, structural, daily, symbolic) violence in the neighbourhood.

Its story begins in 2000, when a group of young people decided to use art – namely hip-hop – as a way of responding to the violence that was taking place at that time in Comuna 13. To become Casa Kolacho they went through many processes of creation, reflection, resistance, and in 2013 they were born as a corporation that works with hip-hop, understanding it based on four elements: DJ, rap, graffiti and break dance. During those 13 years they created various initiatives such as the Kolacho School, which – from a philosophical and praxis point of view – has advocated a transformation through art, as a school, as a training space that contributes to the construction of life projects and to generate new opportunities for its

participants. Likewise, in 2011 the Graffitour was created, which, although at the beginning it was a workshop tour designed to show the history, memory and daily experience of the territory of Comuna 13, it eventually became a fundamental strategy even for self-management as a group. Today, Graffitour manages to be a journey through the memory of Comuna 13, of graffiti and of the entire history of hip-hop that transcends local, national and international borders. Other processes of searching, resistance, creation and organization have been added to Casa Kolacho's proposals and actions that were already being experienced and built as a group since the creation of the Hip-Hop Elite.

Below is the testimony of Jeihhco, one of the promoters of Casa Kolacho, whose life story – personal, collective, and social – can be read as a metaphor for the changes in Comuna 13, centred on a leitmotif: hip-hop as a strategy for a 'revolution without death' and as an effective way of reducing and preventing violence.

Jeihhco: *In 2013 we began to reconfigure this whole C15 process, to strengthen its artistic side, improving and showcasing stuff, allying with some people from Madrid, a cultural entity called Fabricantes de Ideas [Idea Makers]. And they created a festival called Fábrica de Rimas [Rhyme Factory] and they invited us to take part in it along with a Spanish rapper called Raiden and two Moroccan groups: one called H Kayne and the other called Disidrox. Also, we started this intercontinental project between Europe, Africa, and America. The idea was to be able to hold several shows. Due to passport issues, we couldn't travel to the Pirineos Sur festival – the International Festival of Cultures – so we held an online concert, but then it happened that, in December 2013, we travelled to Madrid. We held a beautiful and very cold concert because it was December, but we were very happy to be there. And then, in Morocco, we went to Rabat, we went to Casablanca first, where Disidrox are from, to see Casablanca and record a song based on the street corner to street corner philosophy I mentioned, except this one's called "De lado a lado" [From side to side]. We were talking about the neighbourhood's street corners in 2007 and, in 2013, we were already talking about street corners in Morocco, in Madrid, and it was very beautiful to see this sort of globalization of our music. Because, yes, we knew that hip-hop was all over the world, it was amazing for us to see groups with 20-year careers who had shows with very good technical and sound quality.*

Before that trip we already wanted a place and so we got some money together, made some savings, crowdsourced, received a donation from the American rapper Big Jones. She held a concert in Colombia and in every concert she has in countries of the, let's say, third world or underdeveloped countries, she gives 10% of her earnings to an organization working with children and young people in the arts. And we were selected to receive 10% of those earnings. And that took years to arrive because of taxes but being able to receive it was momentous. With that energy we said: let's go home. On 1 December, 2013, we got the keys to the first Casa Kolacho. It was a smaller house than the one we're in today, simpler, humbler, but since we'd never had our own house, to us it was gigantic, it was where the studio was gonna go, the shop, the workshops... Many years ago, to solve the problem of having somewhere for hip-hop meetups, we always dreamt of having a recording studio. Between 2010 and 2011, we created Graffitour, which isn't a small thing because, to this day, it's one of the most important projects we've created. It has been one of the main sources of financing for our project during the last 10 years, especially when it comes to self-management, because it's allowed us to remain financially independent, it's injected a significant amount of capital, but it also made us visible to the world. We have also delivered work and economic opportunities through tourism to a large amount of Comuna 13 people; over 60 families live off tourism today. This year marks 10 years of Graffitour, we'll celebrate with lots of things, among them we'll put out a book that systematizes this process so the world can know about how things happened and to make memories around it. So [in 2013] we added everything up. We dreamt of having a place for so long because, of the houses we were in, we said yes, very cool, but, for example, they wouldn't let us graffiti the walls in ACJ and they had an office schedule starting at 8 in the morning and closing at 5:30 PM and we couldn't do anything at night to record, on Sundays, all that. That's where the decision to have our own house specifically for hip-hop was born, for the sake of independence and doing whatever we wanted. Creating that house was a dream we'd already talked about with Kolacho. When we were house hunting, we said: what are we going to call it? We hadn't even talked

about the house... The term house was very important to me because it means ownership, a place where you live, where your family is; the term has a tonne of connotations that seemed to me to be important to maintain because, after all, the people who were building that place were like a family. From that energy we joined a music label we were friendly with, we brought together a small collective of seven people in total. And, in our search, we'd already determined that this place wasn't just going to be a creation centre, but that it would also be a place in memory of our comrades who aren't here anymore and, from that homage, have the strength to move forward. And we said: our house will be called Casa Kolacho. In 2009, when they murdered Kolacho, the school had already taken Kolacho's name; so we already had one of the most important things in our house, the Kolacho school, which is a place to hold our workshops, to hold our creative, learning, and educational meetings, we even thought about eventually just calling the house Kolacho School, which would be a school to learn and teach hip-hop. But we soon said no, let's call it Kolacho and the school will be one of its parts. In the end, Casa Kolacho is the sum total of La Élite, the School, and Graffitour; all those projects condensed into one. Obviously, behind every project were the people, artists, leaders, very powerful women, creators, who, today, are here with us; some have passed away, some have left, some have stayed, new people have arrived. In 2013 we started off strong. A little administratively disorganized; we had no idea how to manage a cultural corporation, the taxes, the DIAN, registering the RUT, the Chamber of Commerce, a tonne of things that were disastrous in that first attempt. But we were growing, above all we grew a lot because we made our own alternative economy, we set a shop up, began to offer artistic services, making graffiti, holding concerts, managing, Graffitour became a very powerful support... All that added up, connected more people who arrived and kept us going. Today, we are 25 artists in Casa Kolacho.

6.2 Chicago

The city of Chicago holds a special significance in the history and study of gangs and youth street groups. The first major academic study of gangs as social phenomena was carried out by Frederic Thrasher between 1923 and 1926 and published under the title *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago* (Thrasher, 1927/2021). Some of the gangs discussed in relation to the other cities above (such as the Latin Kings) trace their origins to the poverty and racist exclusion that Latino and African American communities faced in mid-twentieth century Chicago. As William Ross, the TRANSGANG Local Researcher in Chicago, notes (Ross 2022, 2023), in the intervening century, little has changed with regard to the socio-economic of Chicago's poorer neighbourhoods and large scale and highly organized gangs and youth street groups continue to operate throughout the city. Indeed, in 2018, the Chicago Crime Commission estimated that around 100,000 were members of gangs and that there were around 59 active gangs in the city (Chicago Crime Commission 2018). Of these, the majority are associated with the Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings and Black P-Stones groups.

Chicago has a long history of mediation programs and initiatives including prominent harm reduction programs such as CeaseFire Chicago (Skogan, Hartnett, Bump, and Dubois 2008; see also Ross 2023). The modern day significance Chicago holds in the history and study of gangs and youth groups is not rooted solely in their existence, but rather in the history of organized crime and the evolution of the Mafia as a result of the effects The Prohibition Era had on the United States. Another key ingredient to understanding the dynamics of the gangs in Chicago is the way the city receives, manages, and is sculpted by immigration from the Caribbean, Central and South America. It is important to understand organizations such as Cease Fire - despite their links to a decline in violence - cannot officially be credited for the decline. This is because the model employed by Cease Fire is one that cannot be quantified using traditional tools of ethnographic research (Skogan, Hartnett, Bump, and Dubois 2008). Gang research in Chicago is not about simply understanding why the gangs do what they do. Gang research in Chicago requires a delving into all that sets the stage for criminal activity to thrive in a city divided by socio-economic conditions and racial tensions

6.2.1 Box 10: Youth Clubs, Rainbow Coalition and CeaseFire

CeaseFire Demonstration, Chicago
(Photo: The Chicago Reporter, 23-03-2015)

Chicago is known for the expansion of a type of gang linked to crime, and for the heavy-handed and police policies of persecution against its members. However, it is also a pioneer in prevention, mediation and community work programmes that have emerged from academia, community-based entities, and from the gangs themselves.

Thrasher himself addressed these issues in the second edition of *The Gang* (Thrasher, 1936), on which our Spanish translation has been based (Thrasher, 2021). He added a third part entitled "The gang problem", focusing on crime prevention. This is particularly interesting as it is known that Thrasher was involved in developing a national crime prevention programme based on his study of the Boys' Club branch of Jefferson Park in New York, which was widely adopted by local communities in the United States. The author emphasizes two key policy elements that are still in place today. The first is that repression generally does not work, insofar as it can only be a temporary solution at best, as it does not address the underlying causes that contribute to the rise of gangs. Second, Thrasher laments the persistent "failure to recognize the group factor in crime". It has been proven time and time again around the world that treating gang members as individuals out of context, whether in relation to the gang or their wider social environment, does not work. That means that, for Thrasher, "the only alternative left, therefore, is to deal with the whole gang. This can be done by recognizing the gang and making a place for it in the community program, redirecting its activities to

healthier, socially meaningful channels". The author describes successful experiences, such as transforming the Holy Terrors gang into a Boy Scout group, the work of entities such as the Young Men's Christian Association, community centres, playgrounds, recreational areas, Chicago Boys' Clubs, and the Brotherhood of the Boys' Republic. Although this last procedure is more expensive, it usually gives good results. In any case, for the author the most important thing is to dignify the life of the boy members.[22]

In the 1960s, in the wave of the civil rights movement, mediation and pacification efforts emerged from the gangs themselves. The best-known example is the Rainbow Coalition, created in 1969 by Fred Hampton, the Chicago leader of the Black Panthers, to end street gang fighting, promote an alliance between them and work for social change. In addition to the Black Panthers, it integrated the Young Lords (which grouped the Latino community led by José Cha Cha Jimenez) and the Young Patriots (which grouped white working-class youths). Members of street gangs such as the Latin Kings and the P-Stones also participated informally. Later, more politicized entities were incorporated, such as the Lincoln Park Coalition of Poor People, the American Indian Movement, the Brown Berets, and Students for a Democratic Society, among others. The coalition promoted protests and strikes against poverty, police brutality and poor housing quality. While this coalition existed, the homicide and violence rate in Chicago's black and Latino ghettos declined. Unfortunately, it was boycotted by the FBI with espionage and harassment tactics, ending with the murder of Hampton in 1969, which led to a lot of frustration for young people and reinforced the criminal drift as the only alternative for many gang members.

In recent years, the best-known experience of pacification is the CeaseFire programme, promoted by local entities with the participation of the government and gang members, with the aim of reducing the number of murders caused by firearms due to clashes between gangs. The programme was launched in Chicago in 1999 by the Chicago Project for Violence Prevention at the University of Illinois at the Chicago School of Public Health. By 2004, there were 25 CeaseFire sites in Chicago and a few other Illinois cities. Some of the programme's strategies were adapted from the public health field, which has had notable success in changing dangerous behaviours. The programme's core activity was selecting "violence interrupters" to work on

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22   Hampton's home in Chicago is now home to a memorial remembering him. The example of the Rainbow Coalition and the murder of Fred Hampton is recounted in the recent film Judas and the Black Messiah (King 2021).

the street, mediating conflicts between gangs and intervening to stem the cycle of retaliatory violence that threatened to break out following a shooting. Outreach workers counselled targeted young people and connected them to a range of services. CeaseFire's violence interrupters established a rapport with gang leaders and other at-risk youth, just as outreach workers in a public health campaign contact and establish a rapport with a target community. Working alone or in pairs, the violence interrupters walked through the streets at night, mediating conflicts between gangs. After a shooting, they would immediately offer nonviolent alternatives to gang leaders and a shooting victim's friends and relatives to try to interrupt the cycle of retaliatory violence. Violence interrupters are not the same as community organizers or social workers. Many are former gang members who have served time in prison, which gives them greater credibility among current gang members; they are an example of "positive leaders". CeaseFire's message travels from violence interrupters to gang members, from the clergy to parishioners, and from community leaders to the neighbourhood through conversations, sermons, marches and prayer vigils. The message appears on banners at post-shooting rallies, which are a major part of the programme. The message is simple: "The killing must stop!". In 2009 an analysis based on an official evaluation of the programme after 17 years of implementation showed that, as a direct result of CeaseFire, shootings had decreased by 16-28 percent in four of the seven sites studied. The researchers called this decrease in gun violence "immediate and permanent" at three of the sites and "gradual and permanent" at the fourth site. Gang killings declined in two CeaseFire sites. The researchers also looked at the proportion of gang homicides that were sparked by an earlier shooting. This violence was a particular focus of the violence interrupters. At four sites, retaliatory killings decreased more than in the comparison areas. The apparent success of the programme allowed it to spread to other North American cities. However, the emphasis on the epidemiological dimension (the programme was run by an epidemiologist) the focus on weapons, the lack of continuity in the involvement of gang members, and the distrust of the police, are the other side of the experience, which has declined in recent years.[23]

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23   CeaseFire's model to employee former gang members was not without negative issues as per the members of the community who live the existence of violence daily. Interviews with gang members spanning from the Black and Latino community provided a general consensus that those regarded as "violence interrupters" were not always actually interrupting. At times, as the consensus states, the individuals working under the flag of CeaseFire were actually Gang Leaders manipulating gang activity to ensure the procurement of government fundings.

A resurrection of cultural awareness in Chicago has brought to light an organization calling themselves the "New Era Young Lords". This organization claims to be the next chapter of the Young Lords organization. However, recent internal division has produced a split between those who regard themselves as the New Era Young Lords and those who claim to be Young Lords under Cha Cha Jimenez (who simultaneously claims to not hold any leadership in the organization). While the New Era Young Lords have reestablished the Rainbow Coalition in Chicago, there have been no claims of creating a decline in violence. Rather, they are claiming to focus on reeducating the community as to why they need to be vigilant against violence.

6.3 Santiago de Cuba

In Cuba, the term "*pandilla*" [gang] is generally understood to refer to collective criminal acts, whereas the term "*banda*" is most commonly used to refer to musical groups. According to Cuban official discourses – including domestic academic and social studies institutions – the Cuban archipelago does not have gangs, but instead only isolated criminal acts. Yet, as Ligia Lavielle, the TRANSGANG Local Researcher in Santiago de Cuba, argues, the experiences of young people in Cuba are not irrelevant for this study. In Cuba there are vibrant youth sub-cultures that, while not evoking connotations with criminality, share characteristics with some of the youth street groups that exist in the other TRANSGANG locations (Lavielle 2023). Much of the domestic research on these groups has focused on the phenomena of "Calle G", a street in Havana where young people and members of youth street groups and sub-cultures come together: *emos, mickies, repas...*[24] (Lavielle 2023). "Calle G" constitutes the most recognized representation of the subcultural phenomena in Cuba, because of its spectacular visibility and central location. However, there are other kinds of groups scattered throughout the island, for instance, in the city of Santiago de Cuba. As Lavielle argues, in Santiago, many of them exist in a liminal space between a State that forms the central foundation of all the country's structures and an emergent consumer society. Indeed, the subcultural groups use consumer goods and styles to mark out their identities in much the same way as in capitalist societies. The socio-economic background of these groups also resembles patterns seen elsewhere in the TRANSGANG regions. As forms of poverty and economic hardship increased during Cuba's so called "special period" – a protracted period of economic crisis precipitated by the collapse of the Soviet Union – many young people faced exclusion from State funded leisure services and activities. Groups of young people who were vulnerable to exclusion appropriated public spaces such as certain marginal neighbourhoods, *Céspedes* Park and other town centre areas, turning them into symbolic spaces where collective, subcultural identities are enacted via fashion, dance, customs and music.

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24   *Emos* are young people that express their emotions through a dark style; *Mickies* are fans of the consumer pop culture, *Repas* are young people from poor neighborhoods (*repartos*): this word began to be used around the second half of the 21st century to designate those singers, mainly of reggaeton, whose scenic projection and musical style were more attached to the idea of the marginal (see Lavielle 2023).

6.3.1 Box 11: Rastafari / *Los Enviados*

Rastafaris in Santiago de Cuba
(Photo: Ligia Lavielle, 2021)

Both informal groups studied in Santiago de Cuba, Rastafari and the urban dancing group *Enviados,* have experienced processes of conflict resolution generated by the group itself. The Rastafari crisis is a consequence of the internal conflict among their members, whereas the dance groups (specifically *Enviados*) have their own rules to avoid problems. Rastafarians and the *Enviados* have also had conflicts with the State structure, which is more remarkable and systematic in the case of the Rastafarians because police officers have deployed unjust practices by abusing their power over the Rastafari community members. This attitude is due to not understanding the Rasta style and the close relationship of some Rastafarians with foreign people more than the Rasta ritualization of cannabis. It is therefore usual to find police in that patchwork of processes and individuals commonly called "Babylon" by Rastafari. These women and men have been excluded to some extent from public institutions (generally in the nineties) due to the prejudiced view with racist nuances of many individuals inherent to the public sphere, for instance: the services, culture and primary education. At the heart of these conflicts, informal mediators without preparation in this practice have defended these groups or their members. Furthermore, they have influenced some members to move away from the criminal field. In the case of the youth urban-dance movement, it is necessary to highlight that many teenagers and young people are proceeding to or are close to the crime environment built into their families, neighbourhoods and their fraternal relations with the backdrop of the informal (street) space. In this regard, both the dance groups and the main managers of the movement stand out as mediators in three dimensions: among groups to eliminate the physical violence among them, with members of the group so they don't fall into social deviance, and with the policy-makers in cultural institutions. Conflict mediation in the case

of the Rastafari is even more complex because their mediators advocate for rights for their cultural auto-determination facing the political players. The mediator's contribution is based on their specialization in African cultures. Hence, it is understandably the role of the institution "Casa del Caribe" (workplace of these experts), which is one of the few institutions underpinning this culture in the local territory. Some of the regular actions undertaken by these institutions include workshops for Rastafarians, reggae spaces, art expositions with the topic of Rastafari for and by the members of this community and invitations to the activities of academic institution. However, the mediators not only conduct this action without professional preparation but they have also deployed it among local politicians, law enforcement agents, police and Rastafari as a direct challenge to the first ones. The respect for the Caribbean cultural difference has been the guide to their actions. Finally, it is necessary to highlight that the influence of the Rastafarian conflict mediators among the conflictive community has not yet restored ties that are currently in the process of being lost.

The testimony of the Rastafari Queen explains the origin of the conflicts and how they are resolved:

Rastafari Queen: *Being a Rastafari woman is not only very hard, it is also very beautiful. We are queens. I feel I am, I am, and I feel like a queen, an African queen. Nobody made me be a Rastafarian, nobody. It is not like here (Santiago de Cuba), you have to be a Rastafarian because he is a Rastafarian. Nobody pushed me into it. It was spontaneous. I went to them to know how that life is. I saw shocking things here so different to the things that I saw in Havana. These people here, they do this and that. So, I went to Havana to live together with them, in the Rasta home. I lived together with them there and I began to see, soon they began to explain it to me. While they explained it to me I began to say to myself: I am Rasta. I have always been in opposition to what Rastas do here, in Santiago. If we are all Rastas we do not have to discriminate against each other because we are only one. We are one in the crowd. People who are not Rasta cannot understand what this phrase means. So much indiscipline and mistakes are made that then we are evaluated with the same measurement. And not all of us are equal. As I said to you yesterday: we have very right "brothers", they respect others and themselves. That´s*

why, I told you some names of them and wherever I see them... They do not judge me if I wear trousers, I will no longer be their sister. They are my brothers. If I see well, they are family more than blood family. Others due to their long "drela" feel superior to you. This is not brotherhood. This is low culture, no culture, little experience, and little knowledge. In this moment there are more Rastas without knowledge than with deep knowledge. The ones with deep knowledge are isolated. On the other hand, the policemen should comply with the established requirements, although they do not have to be so extreme. But often those who call themselves Rastafari are looking to challenge the police. But nobody ... the Cuban Constitution does not say that it is not allowed to sit in public parks. You are a Cuban citizen, you can go to parks, you can walk, I have sat in public parks. The policemen have never worried me ... I have no complaint about police, not here nor there. Although, well ... some of them have looked at me in this way. There are many kinds of policemen. There are extremist people and policemen. Because you are not licensed to tell me in the street, "get out". If you want to see, we should go to a place.

6.4 San Salvador

The United Nations backed peace accord signed in 1992 brought an end to 12 years of armed conflict in El Salvador. However, the post-war period was not marked by prosperity. Over the past few decades, poverty, inequality and emigration have all increased in El Salvador, while marginality, social exclusion and violence define the lived experiences of many El Salvadorians. Indeed, more people were murdered in the post war period than died in fighting during the armed conflict (Chévez 2023). Between 2002 and 2012, the homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants was 55.6, eight times the world average (Smutt 2013). The origins of El Salvador's two main and rival gangs, Mara Salvatrucha (MS13) and Barrio 18, is often traced back to the 1990s when a migrant deportation scheme run by the US government led to gangs that had formed in Los Angeles spreading to El Salvador. As the gangs arrived in El Salvador, they began to take over local structures. The two gangs are structured hierarchically (Murcia 2015). At the street level, geographical territories are occupied by *cliques* (for MS13) and *canchas* (for the Barrio 18). These local groups are organized into regional *programs* (in the case of the MS13) or *tribes* (in the case of B18). Ultimate control of the regional organizations lies with the national leadership, which operate from inside prison, where much of the training of members and organizational planning also occurs (Gómez 2013; Murcia 2015; Chévez 2023). It was recently estimated that there are 60,000 active gang members and more than 200,000 people linked to gang activity in El Salvador (Chévez 2023).

Approaches to the gangs by the El Salvadorian State have historically alternated between repressive, punitive campaigns involving the military, mass incarcerations, widespread human rights violations and accusations of extrajudicial killings, on the one hand, and programmes of mediation, and attempts of truces and social inclusion, on the other. During the 2000s, the repressive *Plan Mano Dura* (heavy hand) (2003-2004) and *Plan Super Mano Dura* (2004-2006) were implemented by Antonio Saca's centre-right government. The confrontation with the gangs proved counterproductive, however, and between 2003 and 2006 the homicide rate in El Salvador rose from 37 to 65 per 100,000 inhabitants. The possibility of reforming the *mano dura* plan came in 2009 with the election of a centre-left administration. However, initial plans for a comprehensive approach to the treatment of crime, which included programmes for social prevention and the rehabilitation of offenders, were never carried out, and instead the new government increased the participation of the military in public security (Chévez 2023, forthcoming).

In 2012 a truce was announced between MS13 and its main rival, Barrio 18 – both heavily armed gangs with origins in the United States. The truce was achieved through a negotiated process of mediation that involved a minister from President Mauricio Funes's national government, a Catholic priest and a former senior gang member. In March 2012, an agreement between the mediators and the two gangs was reached, resulting in a truce that lasted for 15 months. During this period, the homicide rate in El Salvador fell by 53% (Rahman and Vuković 2019). As one of the world's

largest and most high-profile gang conflict mediation programmes, the 2012 El Salvadorian truce drew significant attention from journalists, academics and international policy makers. However, in the end, the truce was short-lived. Criticism from certain sections of the public, who viewed negotiating with gangs as morally outrageous, as well as diminishing international support, eventually led the El Salvadorian State to withdraw from the agreement. Soon afterwards, the ceasefire collapsed and the levels of violence and homicide that had existed prior to the mediation programme returned (Chévez 2023).

Since the election of Nayib Bukele in 2019, El Salvadorian policy has once again shifted towards increased militarism, although this time with an unprecedented programme of mass incarceration of "suspected gang members". After the end of our fieldwork, in March 2022, the president of El Salvador declared the "state of exception" and started a general prosecution against any young person suspected of being a gang member. The massive incarceration of more than 60,000 young people (many of them without direct links to gangs), systematic violations of the human rights of detainees, including humiliation, torture and extrajudicial executions, denounced by international organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, the building of a huge prison, and the transfer in February 2023 of many of those arrested without charges during this period, is the latest outcome of this process, which has not been investigated in our research.

6.4.1 Box 12: Liberarte Ensemble

Ensamble Liberarte Members
(Photo: Candy Chevez, 2021)

"*Orquesta de Cuerdas y Ensamble Liberarte*" is a sociocultural experience that works with young people linked to the Mara Salvatrucha (MS13) and the Barrio 18 gangs, who were serving prison sentences in a Centre for Social Insertion. These young women were arrested as minors and served sentences ranging from 3 to 15 years. For the most part, they are not "jumped" gang members but "active civilians", a term used to refer to people collaborating with the gang and who must respect its rules in the same way as its members. Other young women are linked by their romantic relationship or they are the partner of gang members. This case is relevant, since in El Salvador traditionally the mediation processes with these groups have been based on religious or political processes; however, this experience is based on art and education and provides significant learning that can be used in the future. Similarly, focusing on an experience with young women significantly expands the studies on this topic.

Since 2015, the New Theatre Times Association (TNT) has been working with adolescent and young women from the Women's Centre for Social Insertion of the Salvadoran Institute for the Integral Development of Children and Adolescents (ISNA) through a proposal of art and culture that aims to contribute to providing a better quality of life through the awareness and humanization that the arts can bring. This effort led to the creation of the String Orchestra, in which the women receive musical training in string instruments, such as the violin, viola and cello. What had begun as a project of care for young women linked to gangs and deprived of their liberty, three years later had become a comprehensive proposal for a model of social insertion with the transversal axes of art, culture and human rights. "Women on the road" was a proposal that began during their internment in prison, but also continued once the young women obtained their freedom, thus becoming a bridge that connected with a new life project in more dignified

conditions. Given that the number of members outside of jail decreased significantly, the Liberarte Ensemble was formed so that the young women could continue to remain connected to music, as well as carry out tasks of sensitization towards the institutions of the State and society in general from their own experiences. The orchestra is led by a coordinator of the NGO who is responsible for establishing the guidelines and implementation routes. Secondly, there is a team of facilitators/educators from various disciplines who train the young women. At first, the orchestra was an experience that worked exclusively with young people deprived of liberty. Two years after its origin, it expanded to a second initiative with the young women who are already free. The young women are integrated into the training processes of the orchestra on a voluntary basis. Every year an artistic event is held in which the teachers give a small concert and later the young women are invited to join the workshops. After a period of classes, the young women audition to be selected for the orchestra. Although in the prison there is a separation of sectors by gangs, this is not the case in the orchestra, which implies that young women must be willing to live with the young people linked to the opposing gang. There must be no cross words nor looks. The first step is to be in the same space without attacking each other. To stay in the orchestra, it is required to accept and comply with the minimum agreements established: respect your classmates and teachers and do your classes.

The orchestra has two levels: one level formed by the young women and their teachers or facilitators; and a second level, that has more of an institutional nature represented by the NGO, where the most strategic decisions are made. At the first level, the young women participate to a certain degree in decision-making related to choosing the pieces to play, the costumes, and the organization of presentations. This helps the young women develop their self-esteem. It is important to mention two factors that contributed to this process: the teachers were young people of a very similar age to the members of the orchestra, they came from similar social contexts and the training process was free of stigmas about the condition of the young women and their history. The orchestra remains a collective with a vertical hierarchy structure at its core. However, at the level of relationships between the young women there is a horizontal structure that breaks the structure to which they were accustomed in the gang. No-one is in charge, and no-one tells them what to do, or what to say, rather they all have complementary responsibilities within the collective. The orchestra allows young women to recognize that there are other ways of organizing a group, living together and relating to environments. At first, the young women were very quiet and reserved. Conversations with outsiders were limited to monosyllabic responses. The young women were very suspicious and viewed with suspicion any external approach, using their own strategies to test people who sought to communicate with them. Over time, they began to feel that they could express themselves and that they could

have different opinions from the other young people, and that they should not just follow orders but rather decide for themselves. In the orchestra they learn to trust other people and to feel part of other spaces.

The testimony of Liss, a 24-year-old member of the orchestra, shows us a glimpse of the process of personal transformation and social mediation – with the other gang, with the institution and with the social environment – that the Liberarte Project triggered, as well as its limitations.

Liss: *I think it was after my son was born. Because somehow before I always looked to him, I mean, I always believed that he was going to change (the father of her son), that we were going to get out of this whole process, we were going to be a happy family and that my son was going to have his dad and that he was going to change. That he was going to support me, he was going to help me, and I never got him out of my mind. Until, at one point, I realized that he had been transferred to another centre and that he was active again with the gang and that at the time he was not active, but when they transferred him, he went back to the gang again. So, from that moment, from that day, I knew and I started to take him out of my mind, and I said no, he is not going to change. He's not going to do things right and that's not what I want for myself or my son and that's how I started to change. Already at that moment, I was already beginning to see myself, no longer like I was going to do all my life, how I thought before. Well, because before, I did not look at myself as a person with the potential to do something great, to continue studying, even with my pregnancy, I felt that all that was going to affect me, that I was no longer going to be able to study, that I was going to have to work in whatever it was, in a dining room, in whatever when I came out and I was going to have to look after my son and that I was not going to be able to aspire to something else. But, I think it was after I started to take my son's father out of my life, I began to empower myself and with so much talk and programmes that I had, that they gave me as that support, for example, music for me, was to realize that I could do something more than I thought, more than what everyone thought and that I could continue studying and that I could go to places and meet people through music at that time who could support me to be something different, and that was how everything changed.*

07 Part Seven: Reflections and Recommendations

In this last part we will present, by way of conclusion, some reflections and recommendations in terms of public policies derived from our fieldwork and that aim to explore experiences of good practices as alternatives to policies based on punitive populism and a "*mano dura*" standpoint. Starting from the assumption that policies travel as much as gangs and imaginaries, we will focus on experiences of care, mutuality and hybrid mediation models, according to our definition, that have been successful, not so much to apply them mechanically to any reality, but to verify that other policies for addressing the problem on a local and a global scale are possible.

7.1 How Policies Travel

We have tried to emphasise the cultural and historical embeddedness of logics and practices of gang and youth street group mediation. In the section on North Africa, for instance, we saw how Islamic logics of mediation form the backdrop for community attempts to work with young people and resolve conflicts. Likewise, the models of conflict mediation found in places like Chicago and San Salvador reflect the high levels of violence and homicide that characterize local experiences of gang conflict. Yet despite such broad ranging differences, models for performing conflict mediations between gangs and/or youth street groups circulate globally, appearing in academic literatures and policy documents concerning geographically, economically and culturally distinct contexts as practical tools with universal applicability (e.g. Rahman and Vukovic 2019). This raises questions regarding the extent to which models of conflict mediation developed in one context can be applied to another. In this section, we draw some broad conclusions and recommendations from across the TRANSGANG dataset, focusing on what can be learned in general from these diverse experiences of gang and youth street group mediation.

7.2 The shift to *Mano Dura* in Gang Policy

Over the past decade, there has been a trend in several of the TRANSGANG areas for gang policy to become more legalistic and authoritarian. In the European cities (Barcelona, Milano and Madrid) where State or municipal supported programmes of legalization were happening a decade ago, there has been shifts toward heavier policing and criminalization as a strategy to deal with youth street groups. Indeed, as discussed, in Barcelona this effectively led to the re-criminalization of the Latin Kings group. The return or emergence of the "*mano dura*" [hard hand] in these cities is mirrored in the experience of El Salvador over the past decade, where State backed mediation and ceasefires have been replaced with the increasing militarization of the police and the mass incarceration of "gang members" – it should be noted that many of those detained deny having any association with gangs. Yet while this strategy has been celebrated for reducing street crime and murder in El Salvador, it is best understood as a process of displacing violence rather than reducing harm. While there may well be less violence on the streets of El Salvador, a large underclass of predominantly young men is now subjected to the daily violence of the El Salvadorian prison system. In effect, *mano dura* does not dispel violence but rather displaces it. Instead of violence in the street, violence happens behind the locked doors of police stations and prisons.

     An additional problem with such approaches is that they tend to result in scorched earth in terms of the relationships between local communities and State agencies. For instance, the mediation programme that took place in Milan a decade or so ago was based on networks of street educators and social workers who had spent decades working within local communities. Today, however, after the austerity that followed the financial crisis in 2008, there are far fewer social workers and street educators in these communities. The work that would be necessary for any future attempts of a mediation-based approach is simply not being done. In addition, existing relationships between youth street groups/gangs and State/municipal agencies have been severed by increased State repression. In effect, then, another negative consequence of *mano dura* policies is that they undermine the possibility of engaging in nonviolent (mediation/legalization-based) approaches to gangs and youth street groups in the future.

7.3 State Backed Mediation: Problems of Sustainability

This shift in gang policy exemplifies much broader trends in social policy witnessed over the past decades. As Peck and Tickle (2002) argue, in the context of neoliberalism, State support for welfare and social programmes tends to be subject to roll-back and roll-out processes. By "roll-back neoliberalism", Peck and Tickle refer to the historical shift "to the era of neoliberal conviction politics during the 1980s (when state power was mobilized behind marketization and deregulation projects, aimed particularly at the central institutions of the Keynesian-welfarist

settlement)" (2002, 389). Peck and Tickel use the contrasting term "roll-out neoliberalism" to characterize the so called "third-way" politics of politicians in the late 1990s and early 2000s such as Tony Blair and Bill Clinton. Roll-out periods of neoliberalism are characterized by the expansion of the State and/or State services and investment coupled with market-based reforms (deregulation, privatization via outsourcing etc.). To update this thesis somewhat, we can consider the new period of "roll-back neoliberalism" (or "austerity") that occurred throughout Western Europe (and elsewhere) in the decade following the global financial crisis.

Herein we find the weakness of models of conflict mediation based municipal and State support, namely, that when political support and financing are taken away, the programmes cease to exist. What we find in the experiences of several of the cities mentioned above is that when State or municipal financing has been taken away from legalization or mediation programmes, *mano dura* (or policing as a method of managing youth street groups in general) returns as a default governmental strategy. The gang policy histories in El Salvador, Milano, Barcelona and Madrid that we presented above demonstrate that, in an era when financing and political support are often time-limited and project based, <u>policy makers should be aware of how to ensure the long-term sustainability of programmes of community, youth street group and gang mediation.</u>

7.4 Care Mediation Strategies

As we observed, there is, however, the possibility that mediation programmes that are initiated or initially funded by the State or municipal authorities produce socially beneficial and sustainable effects. From our perspective, we refer to this kind of mediation process as a care model, including all those forms of mediation that are led by or rely on State or local authority services or financing. In this category, we can include the case of Shansy Circus in Salé, which is an institutional initiative that provides the young people of the neighbourhood with a social benefit, as presented in Box 6. We can also include the cases of Youth Clubs and the Rainbow Coalition and especially the case of CeaseFire in Chicago, presented in Box 10. This last case was promoted in 1999 by the Chicago Project for Violence Prevention at the University of Illinois at the Chicago School of Public Health with the involvement of local entities and gang members, with the aim of reducing the number of murders with firearms due to clashes between gangs. Finally, we can highlight the process initiated by a local NGO in San Salvador to create the Liberarte Ensemble, an orchestra formed by imprisoned young women, as described in Box 12.

However, the most relevant initiative of this kind is presented in Box 2. In the Barcelona case study, for instance, we saw how a short-lived project to pair established residents with young new arrivals led to a meaningful and sustainable relationship of care between Maria and the young man she fostered. As Ballesté (forthcoming) notes in his analysis of the project in Canet de Mar, at present, the relationships that were

established continue to act as "safe spaces" for many of the vulnerable young people involved in the programme. The networks of mothers continue to function as a social reference for the young people as they struggle with the difficulties of not having official paperwork, not having a job and not having settled status. Importantly, in terms of conflict and mediation, the relationships also provide a safe space and someone to turn to when street conflicts arise. Summarizing, in this case we observe a model with a movement from care mediation to a mutuality mediation process when the official funding was suspended.

7.5 Mutuality Mediation Strategies

During the research process we collected some data on mediation processes that do not depend on State or municipal sponsorship and tend to be performed informally; we called this a mutuality mediation process model. The case of the GRAFS in Marseille described in Box 4 and the role of the rap and hip-hop culture in San Siro (Box 5) correspond exactly with this model. In the first case the big brothers and sisters have established a way to take young people away from the streets and drug trade. In San Siro, the musical production of several videos of neighbourhood musicians combat the stigmatization of the quarter and the community. The same kind of process is described in Box 11 for the Rastafarians in Santiago de Cuba.

Special attention should be paid to the case of Casa Kolacho, an art and culture centre located in Comuna 13 in Medellín, Colombia, that opened its doors in 2013, with high-impact initiatives such as Graffitour (neighbourhood tourist tours showcasing its graffiti art; see Box 9). Comuna 13's new generations of rappers joined together using music and art as weapons against (political, structural, daily, symbolic) violence in the neighbourhood. The Graffitour is now self-managed and self-funded to obtain the sustainability of the project without State help. Finally, the case of Gold Sellers in Bachdjerrah in Algeria is a mutuality mediation process that is very typical in the Maghreb region. As described in Box 8, the sellers formed an interest community to avoid and prevent bribes and confiscation of their wares by the police.

The different examples of mutuality mediation remind us that mediation processes are not just a relationship between State agencies and members of youth street groups, but processes that involve interpersonal relationships between community members. In the final analysis, the sustainability of attempts to mediate between youth street groups and reduce social harm may depend on the investment that is made in these communities, and the resultant capacities these communities have (in terms of time and material resources) to care for their most vulnerable members.

7.6 Between Care and Mutuality: Hybrid models

As the case of the Mares of Canet shows (Box 2), we can find a movement from the care model to the mutuality model; however, during the research process we also found movements from mutuality to care models. This is also the case of the pacification process of the Latin Kings and Ñetas (Box 1). This initiative was started by the Latin Kings and Ñetas groups with the mediation of researchers and it made it possible to discuss the situation together with policy makers, police agents, social workers and scholars. Similarly, the mediation training carried out in Madrid, presented in Box 3, was an initiative of the actual gang members supported by local NGOs to create a space to train the members in mediation processes. The DEBO organization described in Box 7 was born as a project of mutuality but, strategically, the group considered creating a legal association to obtain advantages from the Ministry of Culture and ensure the "legality" of various audio-visual productions and the events that they organize in Tunis. Finally, in the case of Ensemble Liberarte (Box 12) with girls from the two Salvadoran "*pandillas*", the care in prison thanks to the initiative of an NGO was transformed into mutuality and self-management when these women continued the initiative after their release. All these examples show that for the sustainability of mediation experiences, cooperation between different agents is a necessary tool, although it is insufficient.

7.7 Recommendations

After analysing all the data obtained in the twelve cities, we can now present some recommendations for improving the mediation processes and preventive actions when social work and policy making is carried out among youth street groups. These lines of prevention that we propose are guided by the <u>transnational nature of the phenomenon</u>, so that interventions are carried out going beyond national borders, interconnected and integrated in the territories involved in the processes of mediation due to the transnational nature of some of these groups. These recommendations can be applied in different contexts but, at the same time, it is necessary to dialogue with the customary ways of preventing conflicts and to avoid euro-centric mediation processes. In some regions, the mediation processes are not exclusive to "professional mediators". Opening the processes up to the entire community and not dealing with them individually means that the process is in more harmony with the local ways and thus conflicts and misunderstandings can be avoided.

The orientation of policies is generally focused on repressive measures; however, we centre our attention on mediation processes as the best way to prevent violence. This focus has permitted us to confirm that gang members and ex-members have significant qualities, capabilities and skills for implementing pacification processes in the three regions researched. In this line, we want to highlight the <u>role played by positive leaders</u>, who emerge from the groups themselves, and whose participation

as intercultural and intergenerational mediators is usually beneficial for resolving conflicts within the groups, between them or with the social environment. However, the model based on the "right hand" of the State has been proven to be insufficient and, in fact, to provoke more violence. When police intervene, we are already late for prevention because the event has already occurred. On the other side, the "left hand" of the State includes the initiatives managed by public bodies, and has been proven to be insufficient, undynamic and reproduce the management deficits of public administrations. Overall, the policy approaches do not consider the relational and emotional aspects of the mediation process and obviate the need to promote equal opportunities through greater support for the social status of the young people involved in youth street groups.

From our perspective, the role of public institutions is to provide "packages of opportunity", promote performative agency and place youth street group members at the centre of the planning, decision-making and management of the youth associations. The issue is not the organization of young people linked to youth street groups, nor the very existence of these groups, but rather that these youth associations are a key element for promoting and supporting social entities at the local level. The different administrations have sufficient resources to dedicate to this area; however, the problem is that other perspectives of intervention are prioritized, mainly coercive policies, without considering that in the medium and long-term, preventive measures are more efficient and sustainable. The problem emerges when these youth organizations turn to crime or use violence as a way of resolving conflicts. In this sense, the relationship of youth street groups with the administration and the State must be based on social intervention and social services: the right hand of the State, especially the police, can participate along with other agents, but should not become the main agents of intervention and relations with these groups.

Finally, public policies at local, national and international levels, can work to facilitate synergies between governments, social work professionals, researchers and youth street groups. The objective is that young people close to street groups, individually or through the group, become the main beneficiaries, both as users and creators of the safe spaces, and as professionals responsible for intervening in the world of street groups. We firmly believe that, it is necessary for academia, the groups and the rest of the actors to work on policies with a left-hand approach, to cooperate and collaborate in the long term, as this would be beneficial for both the young people themselves and for society as a whole.

7.8 Gangs Out, Gangs In

The objective is to transform what we can call the "Bermuda Triangle" of gangs, in which youth street groups disappear or become invisible, imprisoned or stigmatized, into a "Magic Triangle", in which youth street groups become visible, proactive and recognized actors (see Chisholm, Kovacheva and Merico 2011; Oliart and Feixa 2012).

1. On one side, the <u>Bermuda Triangle</u> is based on the principle of <u>Gangs Out</u>, exclusionary policies and reactive polices, managed by the Right Hand of the State, conducted through "*mano dura*" polices and the punitive "justice of the enemy", justified by media stereotypes and dualistic discourses that oppose goodness (Us) and badness (Them), and an imaginary focused on "<u>gangs-as-problems</u>" to be resolved.

2. On the other side, the <u>Magic Triangle</u> is based on the principle of <u>Gangs In</u>, inclusive policies and preventive polices, managed by the Left Hand of the State, NGOs and positive leaders from gangs, conducted through mediation policies and "restorative justice",[25] backed up by research, situated knowledge and critical discourses, and an imaginary focused on "<u>gangs-as-chances</u>" to be addressed (see Figure 6).

Gangs In, Gangs Out

| DIMENSION	GANGS OUT	GANGS IN
Policies	**Exclusionary**	**Inclusive**
Polices	Reactive	Preventive
State	Right Hand	Left Hand
Agents	Police, Criminal Justice, Prison	Social Workers, NGOs, Youth Street Groups
Legislation	Penal Law of the Enemy	Restorative Justice
Objective	Supresion	Redirection
Method	Policing	Mediation
Discourse	Goodness / Badness	Critical
Imaginary	**Gangs-as-problem**	**Gangs-as-chance**
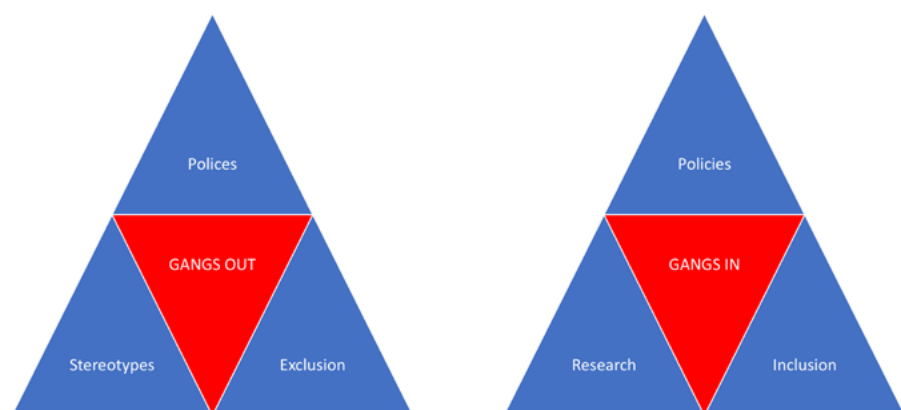
Figure 6: The TRANSGANG Policies
Source: Own Creation

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25   Restorative Justice is a process for solving the problem of crime by focusing on compensating for harm to the victims, holding offenders accountable for their actions, and also often involving the community in conflict resolution (see Calvo 2018).

08

Afterword:
Youth Street Groups and
Mediation: A Decalogue

We can conclude with a Decalogue that summarizes the principles and recommendations derived from the TRANSGANG Project.

1. Recognize that the members of youth street groups have the same rights and duties as any other citizen or group, including the right to freedom of association, meeting and expression. The objective of social work with youth street groups is not to suppress them, or remove young people from the groups, something that has proven impossible over the last century, but rather to redirect groups towards activities that reduce the damage to themselves and their environments.

2. Avoid short-term actions in favour of mid- and long-term application perspectives in public policies on youth street groups to obtain positive results. This will affect both the economic endowment and social welfare resources that must be consolidated, and possible political changes, which should not alter these policies.

3. Change the policy orientation from institutional top-down governance to a bottom-up strategy to ensure better conditions for providing cultural and non-formal education services for the members of youth street groups. Youth policies and street group policies should be based on the principle of subsidiarity, that is, the priority of the local level in the implementation of these policies. Only when this level is insufficient should it be expanded to the national and international levels.

4. Promote the active participation of the group members in the mediation and reform processes. It is essential to achieve the active participation of members and ex-members in the creation of spaces for sociability, cultural creation and non-formal learning. These centres can be self-managed by the members of youth street groups, which would ultimately open new spaces for youth participation and would indirectly strengthen youth public policies. It is also important to break

the visible and invisible borders that separate youth street groups and gangs from other youth associations, incorporating them into spaces like youth councils, houses and clubs.

5. Achieve the <u>involvement of civil society and/or local communities</u> in providing tools and spaces to become involved in the proposals of youth street groups. To do this, it is necessary to promote and strengthen existing neighbourhood and community networks that already work with youth street groups. It is essential to recognize them as a consolidated agent and integrate them into the public policy processes that are carried out.

6. Develop, in collaboration with local entities/institutions/young agents, a <u>professional training programme</u> (with official/non-official title according to the possibilities) for "<u>intercultural mediator</u>" and/or "positive leadership". In this sense, it is essential that members of different and even rival youth street groups are actively involved, and whose know-how in managing conflicts can be transformed into a professional competence to be applied in the streets.

7. Create spaces to facilitate young people's transition to adulthood without going through the itineraries proposed by the criminal gangs. Youth street groups are <u>spaces of resilience and adaptation to the transition from young life to adult life</u>. This could be done in two ways: a) By generating reversibility processes, taking advantage of the power of the media to transform stigmas into emblems of identity; and b) by working with the groups as a whole, rather than with individuals, trying to redirect the activities of the groups towards non-criminal activities, following a logic of reducing harm and damage.

8. Implement a <u>gender perspective to change and challenge roles based on hegemonic masculinity</u> in the social intervention with youth street groups. In this sense, the active participation of young women, especially those who have been involved in these groups, is an important tool in the pacification/reform experiences that are successful and sustainable. Coeducation can be promoted in schools but also in informal spaces from the actual youth street groups themselves.

9. Avoid and <u>restore the image of youth street groups</u> in the media due to its central role in the production of criminalizing imaginaries and the construction of "public enemies". In this sense, citizen journalism and new media such us podcasts and videoclips could be used to introduce alternative points of view and normalize the cultural expressions of youth street groups, especially music and street arts.

10. Promote <u>Youth Networks</u> in which the different sensitivities (members, ex-members, researchers, social workers, educators, NGOs and policy makers) can cooperate to produce models and protocols to improve policies concerning youth street groups.

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