The (Trans) Gang:

Notes and Queries on Youth Street Group Research

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Abstract

Abstract: This text presents the key concepts of the TRANSGANG project in the form of answers to seven research questions: what, when, who, why, where, how and what for. We start by defining the conceptual triangle configured by the title: Transnational Gangs as agents of Mediation (What). The central chapters give the historical context: Neoliberal States (When); the central study subjects: Gangs (Who); the proactive approach: Mediation (Why); the border spaces to be researched in the three regions: the Americas, North Africa and Southern Europe (Where); and the methodological perspective adopted (How). The final concluding chapter explores the expected impact of the research, from resistance to resilience through empowerment (What For). The text includes a complete list of related literature ordered by topics and regions, and a specific Glossary.

Keywords: Transnational, Gangs, Mediation, Southern Europe, North Africa, The Americas.

Resumen: Este texto presenta los conceptos clave del proyecto TRANSGANG, mostrados como respuestas a siete preguntas de investigación: qué, cuándo, quién, por qué, dónde, cómo y para qué. Comienza definiendo el triángulo conceptual que encuadra el título: Pandillas transnacionales como agentes de mediación (Qué). Los capítulos centrales señalan el contexto histórico: Estados neoliberales (Cuándo); los temas centrales de estudio: Pandillas (Quién); el enfoque proactivo: mediación (Por qué); los espacios fronterizos que se investigarán en las tres regiones: América, el norte de África y el sur de Europa (Dónde); y la perspectiva metodológica adoptada (Cómo). El último capítulo conclusivo explora el impacto esperado de la investigación, desde la resistencia hasta la resiliencia a través del empoderamiento (Para qué). El texto incluye una completa bibliografía, ordenada por temas y regiones, y un Glosario específico.

Palabras Clave: Transnacional, Pandillas, Mediación, Sur de Europa, Norte de África, Las Américas.

البحث أسئلة على كإجابات موضح هو كما ، TRANSGANG لمشروع الأساسية المفاهيم النص هذا يقدم العنوان يوتر الذي المفاهيمي المثلث بتحديد ويبدأ .وماذا كيف ، أين ، لماذا :الخلاصة .من ، متى ، ماذا :السبعة النيوليبرالية الدول :التاريخي السياق إلى المركزية الفصول تشير .(ماذا) وساطة كعوامل وطنية عبر عصابات الحدودية المناطق ؛ (لماذا) الوساطة :الاستباقي النهج ؛ (من) العصابات :للدراسة الأساسية الموضوعات ؛ (متى) المنهجي والمنظور ؛ (أين) أوروبا وجنوب أفريقيا شمال ، الأمريكتان :الثلاث المناطق في فيها التحقيق سيتم التي خلال من المقاومة إلى المرونة من ، للأبحاث المتوقع التأثير النهائي النهائي الفصل يستكشف .(كيف) المعتمد خاص ومسرد ، والمناطق المواضيع حسب مرتبة ، كاملة أدبيات النص يتضمن .(ماذا) التمكين الأمريكتان ، أفريقيا شمال ، أوروبا جنوب ، الوساطة ، العصابات ، الوطنية عبر :المفتاحية الكلمات

Resumée: Ce texte présente les concepts clés du projet TRANSGANG, présentés comme des réponses à sept questions de recherche: quoi, quand, qui, pourquoi, où, comment et pourquoi faire. Il commence par définir le triangle conceptuel qui encadre le titre: Les bandes transnationaux en tant qu'agents de médiation (Quoi). Les chapitres centraux soulignent le contexte historique: états néolibéraux (Quand); les principaux sujets d'étude: les bandes (Qui); l'approche proactive: médiation (Pourquoi); les espaces frontaliers à explorer dans les trois régions: Amériques, Afrique du Nord et Europe du Sud (Où); et la perspective méthodologique adoptée (Comment). Le dernier chapitre final porte sur l'impact attendu de la recherche, de la résistance à la résilience en passant par l'autonomisation (Pourquoi faire). Le texte comprend une littérature complète, classée par thèmes et régions, et un glossaire spécifique.

Mots clés: Transnational, Bandes, Mediation, Sud d'Europe, Nord d'Afrique, Les Ameriques.

Sommario: Questo testo presenta i concetti chiave del progetto TRANSGANG, presentati come risposte a sette domande: cosa, quando, chi, perché, dove, come e perché fare. Inizia definendo il triangolo concettuale che inquadra il titolo: Bande Transnazionali come agenti di Mediazione (Cosa). I capitoli centrali sottolineano il contesto storico: stati neoliberali (Quando); le materie di studio centrali: bande (Qui); l'approccio proattivo: mediazione (Perché); gli spazi di confine da indagare nelle tre regioni: Americhe, Nord Africa e Sud Europa (Dove); e la prospettiva metodologica adottata (Come). Il capitolo conclusivo finale esplora l'impatto previsto della ricerca, dalla resistenza alla resilienza attraverso l'empowerment (Perché fare). Il testo include una completa bibliografia, ordinata per argomenti e regioni, e un glossario specifico.

Parole chiave: Transnazionale, Bande, Mediazione, Sud d'Europa, Nord d'Africa, Le Americhe.

Resum: Aquest text presenta els conceptes clau del projecte TRANSGANG, que es mostren com a respostes a set preguntes de recerca: què, quan, qui, per què, on, com i per a què. Comença per definir el triangle conceptual que enquadra el títol: colles transnacionals com a agents de mediació (Què). Els capítols centrals assenyalen el context històric: els Estats neoliberals (Quan); els temes centrals d'estudi: colles (Qui); l'enfocament proactiu: la mediació (Per què); els espais fronterers a investigar a les tres regions: les Amèriques, Nord d'Àfrica i Europa del Sud (On); i la perspectiva metodològica adoptada (Com). El capítol final explora l'impacte esperat de la investigació, de la resistència a la resiliència mitjançant l'apoderament (Per a què). El text inclou una completa bibliografia, ordenada per temes i regions, i un glossari específic.

Paraules clau: Transnacional, Colles, Mediació, Sur d'Europa, Nord d'Àfrica, Les Amèriques.

Foreword

The aim of this Concept Paper (CP) is to offer a **conceptual guide for the research as a whole**. More than an established *map*, we conceive it as a *compass* to help guide us in the journey we are undertaking; or better still an *astrolabe* to keep us on course, avoid sinking and arrive to port.

* * *

The text answers the seven basic questions that any scientific project must consider:

1. **What** are we going to research? (project description, the delimitation of our object of study in its framework, and the specific objectives and basic terminology of the project);
2. **When** will we carry out this research? (we need to understand the historical moment in which the research is carried out).
3. **Who** are we going to work with? (the project's subjects of action. In this case, youth street groups);
4. **Why** are we carrying out this project? (academic, social and political justifications of the project, related mediation experiences);
5. **Where** are we going to carry out the research? (the delimitation of the project's space of action. In this case, Southern Europe, North Africa and the Americas);
6. **How** are we going to carry out the project? (the general and specific research questions, the methodological approach, the methods and techniques that we will use to collect representative data, the research plan, and the case studies);
7. **What** are we doing this project **for**? (the project's expected impact on society).

These seven basic questions serve us as a starting point to produce a 'know-how' perspective. This facilitates applying qualitative methods to shape a polyphonic 'mosaic' of transnational gang mediation experiences in order to contribute to determining effective interventions for preventing the hegemony of the criminal gang pattern. Finally, it should be noted that this text is based on different formulations and reformulations made during the different stages of its implementation:

1. The original project written by Carles Feixa (August 2016);
2. The Grant Agreement signed between ERC and UPF (December 2017);
3. The first reformulation by the UPF core research team (May-September 2018);
4. The feed-backs received during the Kick-Off Meeting (October 2018) with the participation of local researchers and the Scientific and Ethical Advisory Boards;
5. The second reformulation by the extended UPF research team (November 2018-January 2019);
6. The third reformulation by the UPF team incorporating the feed-backs from local researchers and SAB members (February-March 2019);

7. The fourth and final reformulation arising from the linguistic revision of the English version, and its subsequent translation/reconstruction into Spanish, in which new doubts and restatements appeared (May-June 2019); and
8. The final publication of the two versions – in English and Spanish (July 2019).

* * *

We embarked on this journey with the images of the compass and the astrolabe, all that is left is to wish ‘bon voyage’ to all of you who will be sailing in the same ship in the following years.

1. Introduction

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, preface in Thrasher, 1927/2013, p. ix)

This paper details the conceptual foundations, epistemological emplacement and methodological procedures of the project *Transnational Gangs as Agents of Mediation: Experiences of Conflict Resolution in Street Youth Organizations in Southern Europe, North Africa and the Americas*¹ ([TRANSGANG](#)).²

The text is organized according to the project's main objectives:

- 1) To review the historical literature on youth gangs to make a theoretical synthesis;
- 2) To develop a renewed model for analysing transnational youth gangs in the global age;
- 3) To apply an experimental model for comparing gangs in two transnational groups: [Latinos](#)³ and [Arabs](#)⁴;
- 4) To explore experiences in which gangs have acted as mediation agents, as well as the barriers that block these attempts; and
- 5) To determine more effective ways of intervening to prevent the hegemony of the criminal gang pattern, which is still so dominant in the neoliberal era.

The CP is structured in seven chapters to answer the seven questions listed above (What, When, Who, Where, Why, How and What for), with different subsections that are organized thematically. Accordingly, the **first chapter** – What – introduces the three **key**

¹ The TRANSGANG Project won an Advanced Grant by the European Research Council in the 2017 Call. The PI is Carles Feixa Pàmols, Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona). The entire project data are: *Transnational Gangs as Agents of Mediation: Experiences of conflict resolution in youth street organizations in Southern Europe, North Africa and the Americas* (TRANSGANG). European Union: HORIZON-2020, European Research Council - Advanced Grant [H2020-ERC-AdG-742705]. This is a five years project: it started in 2018 and will end in 2022. There is another ERC Project on gangs, led by Dennis Rodgers (Graduate Institute Geneva), that won an ERC Consolidator Grant in the 2018 Call: *Gangs, Gangsters, Ganglands: Towards a Global Comparative Ethnography* (GANGS). Both Projects – TRANSGANG and GANGS – will collaborate with the aim to produce advances in comparative gang research.

² The hyperlinks used in this text redirect to the final Glossary. These terms are the base for the future GANGPEDIA (online encyclopaedia about gangs), which will be one of the results of the project. When the terms are in italics, it is because there are in languages other than English. When terms are in bold, it is because they are key concepts in each chapter.

³ In this text, we are using Latinos more than an ethnic label, we use it as a generic term for those people from migrant backgrounds who arrived from Latin America to Europe, even if their cultural and linguistic diversity is evident.

⁴ In this text, we use Arab more than in a cultural or linguistic sense, we use it with a geographical meaning to attend to the cultural and linguistic diversity in the region. In this sense, according to the cities selected in the region, Casablanca as a core case, and Tunis, Alger and Oran as contrast cases, we also use the term Maghrebi.

concepts included in the project's title – gangs, transnational, mediation – and explains the logic of the seven sections in which the CP is organized.

The **second chapter** – When – as a starting point, analyses the **sociohistorical context** in which the research is carried out. The chapter is divided into four sections: 1) section 1 analyses neoliberalism as the regulatory framework of our societies; 2) section 2 reviews the main critical theories produced in the southern contexts; 3) section 3 connects the global with the local and presents tools to situate the agents of this research (gangs and gang members) in this context; and 4) section 4 moves from the description of the global context to the specific sociohistorical contexts of each study area.

The **third chapter** – Who – establishes a (trans)**gang** definition and redefinition based on **emic** and **etic** perspectives, which are derived from academic definitions but also from institutional and the subjects' own uses of this term. In order to determine a definition of gang that includes an operative transnational perspective (focused on Latinos and Arabs) we consider different academic perspectives to establish the TRANSGANG theoretical perspectives. In short, we understand gangs as a primary and spontaneous mode of informal sociality, in Park's terms, that evolves to a more mixed, transgenerational, multi-sited, multipurposed, complex organization, which makes the group visible in their homeland (the transitional zone of the classic slum, mainly male dominated, teenager, territorial, marginalized and viewed as violent). The TRANSGANG project uses the term "gang" because it is used in daily life by most of the actors in the field – young people, adults, institutions, media, scholars – with different "emic" meanings. Nevertheless, in its more precise use, we will reserve this term to refer to the classical informal group associated with criminal activities, as it is used by hegemonic and media discourses, and we will use "**youth street groups**" as a generic term that includes different types of groupings: from those related to delinquency to those associated more with leisure and lifestyle. Sometimes we will also use the term youth culture or **subculture** to refer to specific generational or class lifestyles present in everyday life.

By **transnational** we mean specific modes of mobility, exchange and emergent identities originating from the movement of persons, cultural flows, media, technological devices, capital, ideologies and cultures (Appadurai, 1996). Specifically, we are referring to "**major transnationalism**" (or transnationalism from above) that concerns gang policies, imaginaries and institutional answers, and also "**minor transnationalism**" (or transnationalism from below) that concerns young migrants, subcultural traditions and living strategies (Lionnet & Shih, 2005; Sassen, 2007). At the same time, the current transnationalism can be physical (mobility of persons and things) or virtual (mobility of symbols through old and new media). In the project we will look at three main types of **transnational connections** (Hannerz, 1996/2010): North-South America (migration and gang culture transfer between the US, the Caribbean, Central and South America); South-North Mediterranean (migration and gang culture transfer between North Africa and southern Europe); America-Europe (migration and gang culture transfer between Latin America and southern Europe). There are also other triangular transnational connections between these three regions to be explored in the area of global youth and gang cultures, either mediated or subterranean.

The **fourth chapter** – Why – is devoted to discussing gangs as agents of [mediation](#). An operational definition of mediation includes the techniques used for conflict resolution, both formal and informal, used in gang relations. Because we are facing different cultures and subcultures – ethnic and generational – we are referring to intercultural mediation. And due to the fact that gang members are active agents in this process, interacting with other agents and stakeholders, we are referring to co-mediation without forgetting the specific mediation processes of native cultures involved in the research such as the ones found in Arabic countries. Specifically, our priority is to find forms of mediation that use youth culture languages, like music, dance, art, media, performance, sport and other daily activities experienced by young people. Some of these techniques are internal to the group itself, but others need the participation of other social actors, including other gang leaders and members, social workers, police, media, NGOs, political representatives, etc. Our aim is to prove that gangs have been and could be agents of mediation, learning from successful experiences, but also researching the barriers and failures in these processes.

The **fifth chapter** – Where – discusses the concept of [space](#) related to our research field. Hence, it is necessary to go beyond the physical space (which is also defined) to understand other dimensions, such as social space, cultural space, political space, “gang space”, etc. The key point used to relate the spaces (both physical and not physical) is the idea of border spaces, understood as the places occupied by youth street groups in the social space. Finally, the chapter makes a brief historical tour of gang development in each region, highlighting the local specificities. We end with a discussion on border thinking that arises from the clash between local traditions, global modernities and youth cultures in Europe.

The **sixth chapter** – How – establishes the **methodological perspectives** to be implemented in the ethnographic research stages. We describe the project’s methodological approach, the data collection and analysis methods, and the research plan we will carry out.

Finally, the **seventh and last chapter** – What for – discusses the project’s progress in and contribution to the field of study, and the expected scientific and social impacts that justify the entire research project.

From this point of view, the TRANSGANG project considers the continuities and discontinuities of the realities that shape youth street groups, the differences between insider and outsider perspectives, and the diversity of social actors.

The TRANSGANG research questions and the structure of this Concept Paper are summarised in Fig. 1.

Figure 1. The TRANSGANG Research Questions

What key concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gang • Transnational • Mediation processes
When context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neoliberalism • Advanced marginality • Post-colonialism • Local sociocultural specificities
Who Transgang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emic-etic perspectives • Theoretical perspectives: post-subcultural studies, critical criminology, de-coloniality • Gang as a "continuum"
Why Gangs as agents of mediation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal-formal mediation techniques • Intercultural mediation • Co-mediation • Cultural and local mediation practices • Successful mediation experiences
Where Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical space • Social, political and cultural space • Gang field as border space
How Methodological perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended case method • Multi-site ethnography • Meta-ethnography
What for Novelty and social impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gang as resilience • Gang and empowerment • Impact on public policies

Source: Own creation

2. Researching (Trans)Gangs in a Global Context

(...) the secret of modern and archaic power alike is its capacity to control “bare life” by excluding it from a meaningful social existence. Bare life is thus paradoxically made part of “the political” by the very fact of its exclusion.

(Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012, p. 182)

To understand the historical moment in which the TRANSGANG project is being carried out it is necessary to explain some contextual background to get some perspective. As the world we live in is not the result of pure chance, we need to expose the socio-economic and political processes that take place in each study region and area. These processes take place within a context of unequal global relations marked by a growing liberalization and empowerment of the economy market. This process can only be understood by analysing in detail the sediments that have settled over the years. This chapter aims to establish a general framework to analyse the economic and political situation in which the research is being carried out, considering this situation is different in each TRANSGANG region and city. Thus, firstly, we discuss the general characteristics of neoliberal governances as the global political context. The next section discusses precariousness and migrations as key effects of the current economic policies. The third section proposes an alternative framework based on post-colonial and decolonial studies to analyse global policies and governances with the aim of avoiding Eurocentrism. Finally, the last section provides an interpretation of the situation of advanced marginality in the research locations. In short, in this section we will highlight four topics: the “new” role of the States, precariousness and poverty as vital horizons, the violence that emanates from global re-adjustments, and the migration processes. We believe that these processes make it possible to understand how these global changes materialize in local spaces, in subjects and in peripheral youth groups.

2.1. Neoliberal States

If there is one thing that is characteristic of the global history of the last four decades it is the assumption/implementation of [neoliberalism](#)⁵ as the (almost) only possible economic, political, social and cultural paradigm and, with it, the reconfigurations that this change has implied (Harvey, 2005). With the neoliberal “tests” in Pinochet's Chile in 1973, the arrival of Deng Xiaoping in China in 1978, the entry of Paul Volcker to the Federal Reserve of the United States in 1979 and the consequent presidential victories of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan in 1979 and 1980, global neoliberalism was

⁵ As Peck & Tickell (2002) show that we should not focus on neoliberalism as an “ism”. We must understand it as a neoliberalization process, as it does not end and it is constantly adapting: “For, as Peck and Tickell suggest in their contribution to this collection, we are dealing here less with a coherently bounded “ism” or “end-state” than with a process, as they term it, of *neoliberalization*” (Peck & Tickell, 2002, in Brenner & Theodore, 2002, p. 353).

launched as the ultimate and “higher” model of “human development” (Fontana, 2011; Fukuyama, 1992; Harvey, 2005; Stiglitz, 2002). In that decade, “deregulation, privatization and the abandonment by the State of many areas of social provision” (Harvey, 2005, p. 9) occurred in a generalized manner. Although neoliberalism did not always penetrate all the countries in the same way, it appeared in a totality, which in most cases meant a general reconfiguration of the role of [States](#) (both as guarantors of individual property, and as “correctors” of the delays of the free market and the financial model).

Since the 80s, starting in the global power centres such as the United States and the United Kingdom, neoliberalism has expanded to the peripheral or semi-peripheral States. Captained by the countries that formed the G-7 and with the help of global institutions such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), market demands and interests expanded across the Third World through structural adjustments and austerity programs (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). In a way, the new neoliberal model surpassed the neo-imperialist ideal of development that modernity had to be brought to all the countries of the South (Escobar, 2007, 2012). This ideal was replaced with the belief that the market itself would put all countries in the same opportunity space (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). Even with this, the impact was not the same in the entire global geography, since, according to the scales, contexts and territories, there were different “adaptations” to the new rules marked by capital, financial power and neoliberal States. In general, the translation of “capital” at a global level provoked a reorganization of workplaces and the massive entry of “new workers” into these places, where the surplus and the large companies were located (Harvey, 2012). While the countries of the North sought to end the power of the unions and “create an army of industrial reserve” (Harvey, 2012, p. 19), in the South, with the help of the improvements in the communication systems, a new production in decentralized, precarious and flexible networks expanded (Sennett, 2006). As a result, throughout the world there was a “growing feminization of the proletariat, the destruction of traditional self-sufficient peasant modes of production and the feminization of poverty” (Harvey, 2012, p. 20).

Thus, continuing with the colonial domination frameworks, this neo-colonial constitution (Hardt & Negri, 2000) laid the foundations for changing the role of States (subjugated, in a certain way, to the interests of capital) (Harvey, 2005), reconfiguring the value of work in the lives of millions of people (Beck, 1992; Fontana, 2011), making cultural assimilation a commercial value and consequently producing global homogenizations (Appadurai, 1996). Some homogenizations at the same time produced an unprecedented cultural and mercantile export and a generalization of precariousness and [subalternity](#) as peripheral forms of life (Amin, 1997; Bourdieu, 1998). In short, the world, polarized since the end of *real socialism* (Fontana, 2011) and the triumph of predatory capitalism, generated “opportunity spaces” in which the new global hegemonic agents (banks, multinationals, etc.) lived and took revenue from the perpetual crises in the prevailing model (Amin, 1997).

As we said, in no case did this transition occur calmly, nor did it imply that the State's role as a social guarantor was completely lost (Fontana, 2011; Harvey, 2007). The arrival of neoliberal doctrines produced, in most countries, reactions ranging from uprisings or resistance to these changes, either in a revolutionary or more forceful way (Escobar, 2004; Pleyers, 2011; Seoane, Taddei, & Algranati, 2006; Tilly, 2010), to daily or “discrete” actions (Bayat, 2014; Gledhill, 2000; Scott, 1987). These forms of resistance to the implantation of the market also produced “non-existent” or “subalternized” subjects who, faced with the peripheral situation to which they were relegated, responded with organizational, cultural and daily contentions with which they sought to reveal the social paradoxes of the new model (Wacquant, 2008). It is in this conflictive space of poverty production as a vital form, where we can perhaps understand the role of youth street groups and the agents that comprise them in the 21st century (Wallerstein, 2010). This polarization, which is not only economic, and which has its roots in the political, social and cultural spheres, has certain common characteristics that can unite the three study regions.

2.2. Precariousness and Migration

As we have seen, one of the agents that has been most affected and redefined by neoliberalism is the State. The role that capitalist states had gained after the Second World War changed. The State's role changed from social redistributor, when socialism kept capitalism latent, to become an active agent of capital and neoliberalism in the 80s (Fontana, 2011; Hobsbawm, 1994; Judt, 2005). The State progressively abandoned the Welfare State through cut backs, austerity and public policies, and stepped forward to be the promoter of the free market and the circulation of capital. In this sense, neoliberalism is a political commitment with the project to radically transform the State's role in economic regulation, reducing the Welfare State, and increasing the penal State (Wacquant, 2008). This last is a direct consequence of the increase in poverty caused by the degradation of a social State. As Wacquant (2011) explains, [workfare](#) has joined [prisonfare](#) in order to cope with inequalities and poverty in a coordinated manner. These inequalities are caused, in turn, by the reduction in what Bourdieu calls “the left hand” of the State (social functions) and the expansion of the right hand (applier of the new economic discipline) (Bourdieu, 1999)⁶.

Although the works by Bourdieu and Wacquant usually deal with the United States or France, we can draw some general conclusions. The criminalization of poverty (through the mixture of *workfare* and *prisonfare*) can be read as an institutional innovation created in the 70s and 80s (Wacquant, 2011). An innovation that promotes social insecurity that, in turn, emanates from the fragmentation of waged work. As Wacquant (2009) noted, labour flexibility and deregulation of the market, while containing the storm that this

⁶ 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 (hard hand), while the left to the feminine side (care) (Bourdieu, 1999; Wacquant, 2011). At the same time, Queirolo Palmas (2017) reviews the evolution of Latino gangs in Spain through the vision of the right and left hands of the State.

causes in the working class, are necessary changes for the economic regime to establish the hypermobility of capital. In short, it is a punitive containment of urban marginality through the deployment of a police and prison network, together with a “normalized” health care network (Garland, 2005; Wacquant, 2011)⁷. Finally, Harvey's concept of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ shows how neoliberalism is maintained through four processes: the privatization of public services, the financialization of States, families and companies, the management of the crisis as spaces of opportunity for capital, and finally, the State redistributions of revenues (increasingly outdated) (Harvey, 2004).

These changes in the State consequently produce [precariousness](#) as a permanent life horizon for many agents. Lorey (2016), in one of the most important studies on precariousness, explains that it must be understood as a form of governance of bodies. A precarization that, in the post-Fordist world, increasingly affects those people located in the middle zone of societies (and not only people on the margins) (Paugam, 2000). That is, “precarious living and working conditions are normalized at a structural level and have therefore become a fundamental instrument of government” (Lorey, 2016, p. 73). Even with this generalization of the precarious condition, it is necessary to observe the margins to see the spaces where it has most impact. Moving away from the more generalist view of the precariat as a new potentially substitutive agent of the social class (Standing, 2011), we must understand that precariousness affects people in unequal ways and produces differentiated subjectivations.

It is necessary to emphasize how “subjective precariousness” is a system tool that reinforces precariousness itself by producing individualization and guilt, at the same time as a disposability of life (Reguillo, 2008, 2017). In relation to this form of government, biopolitical precariousness feeds on insecurity in the subjects to limit possible resistance (Lorey, 2016). This resistance often becomes a way of claiming security in the face of external or internal threats. This closes the circle of governance in the 21st century, since it is the subjects of precariousness themselves who are calling for an increase in state security policies (Butler, 2009; Castel, 1995; Lorey, 2016)⁸. Possibly, through this panorama, we can understand precariousness not as a new or recent phenomenon, but as a political process that has been present on the margins and peripheries for the last centuries (Wacquant, 2008). A process that has recently become widespread in other populations who have been led to see it as a form of global governance.

⁷ In Italy, the neoliberal state and advanced marginality interpretations need some adjustments. Welfare and state intervention are weaker than in the past, but still present. In any case, in Europe, we can find interventions and institutional abandonment maybe in a more interrelated way. We underline and avoid the idea of understanding the State as a “killer state”, which youth street groups and other marginalized social actors fight against. In this sense, we consider the state as present and trying to solve exclusion situations in some contexts of our research.

⁸ As Butler explains, such insecurity generates “a particular form of power that paves the way for creating the need for security as the ultimate political ideal, an ideal that serves up to accumulate power within the state and corporate institutions while producing a new type of subject. Populations are now defined, not by criticism and resistance, but by their need to alleviate their insecurity and, therefore, to value forms of policing and state control, promises of global investment and institutions of global governance” (Butler, in Lorey, 2016, p. 14).

Following the path marked out, these modifications of the neoliberal State, together with the appearance of precariousness as a vital condition, generate a climate of increased violence. Judith Butler (2009), in her analysis of a kind of “ontology of precariousness”, observes that in today's contemporary world there does not seem to be a solid present or future from which to build a stable life. These difficulties to obtain a certain level of stability provoke the appearance of at least three types of violence: violence from above ([oppression](#)), violence from below ([resistance](#)) and horizontal violence ([stigmatization](#)), discussed in depth in the next section. Nevertheless, it is meaningful to analyse the violence in peripheral urban spaces as a consequence of the [advanced marginality](#) processes. A new violence has appeared as a result of the flexibilization of labour, the loss of social support from Welfare in Western societies, the loss of common recognition spaces, such as trade unions, and the growing individualization. This kind of violence is expressed from the peripheral groups towards other peripheral groups that normally find themselves in an equal or worse situation (Auyero, Bourgois, & Scheper-Hughes, 2015; Wacquant, 2008). This is clearly seen in migration-receiving societies. Normally, these new arrivals settle in the traditional working class neighbourhoods, and the stigmas that have historically fallen on the working class now fall on them. In other words, the working class, as a strategy for getting rid of stigma and repositioning itself in society, reproduces marginal roles towards those who are a little worse off than themselves (Bourdieu, 1977; Goffman, 1986). Therefore, it is necessary to analyse the migratory processes that are generated in our societies as a key point for understanding the sociability of youth street groups.

The issue of [migration](#) is doubly central to this project. First, it is central to the contextual framework because it is one of the most characteristic processes of this 21st century. Second, it is central to the project itself because many of the agents studied here live, have lived or perhaps will live migratory processes. Economically, the labour flexibilization and decentralization, characteristic of post-Fordism societies, provoke the mobilization of people as a direct cause of the movement of workplaces (Castells, 1997; Portes, 1997). At the same time, neoliberal implementation processes, economic readjustments, neo-colonialism of the new century and global dualization (internal and external to the countries themselves) also produce movements of people in search of more dignified or “existing” futures. The workers’ need for mobilization in the market comes up against restrictions on the free movement of people (Fontana, 2011). In this sense, it is necessary to understand internal migration movements in North Africa and the Americas; basically, people move from rural areas to urban areas and are concentrated in the peripheral urban areas.

In cities, “the spatial concentration of disadvantaged ethnic minorities leads to the creation of real black holes in the urban social structure, where poverty, deteriorating housing and urban services, low levels of occupation, lack of professional opportunities and criminality reinforce each other” (Borja & Castells, 1999, p. 6). This differentiation between “them” and “us” produces national reaffirmation processes that generate an increase in marginalization, stigmatization and the appearance of racist violence (Wacquant, 2013). However, in the case of the Americas and North Africa, the process

of marginalization, stigmatization and associated violence corresponds more to social class issues than to ethnic issues. Simultaneously, these processes of flexibility and migratory mobility generate the construction of weak identifications (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000) that allow us to observe the confrontation between global and local processes. They generate cultural [border spaces](#) from which cultural identities fork into new forms and formats that generate processes of adaptation but also of resistance to oppression. In short, this construction of peripheries within the margins helps us make the traditional frameworks of oppression/domination more complex in order to try to complete them with contributions located in subaltern spaces and in the South.

2.3. Other voices from the South: from the world-system to the decolonial theories

One of the main pillars of the project and to break with the Eurocentric vision is to elaborate a conceptual framework from three main traditions: subcultural research, critical criminology and post-colonial studies. These three traditions compose “[border thinking](#)” (Mignolo, 2015), which will be explained in depth below. Although they have not always gone together, they make it possible to construct a complex framework of interpretation that integrates the perspectives of the analysis subjects (youth street groups) at the same level as academic or policy approaches. At the same time, dividing the study into different areas and regions makes it necessary to adopt Southern (or non-Eurocentric) views, which enables us to understand processes beyond the West.

Through “[decolonization](#)” processes and the entry of “new countries” into the global free market, people experienced processes of internal and external restructuring. In the mid-twentieth century, the “development theory” expanded as a new economic model that would place Third World countries within a space of opportunity in the global market. The so-called “dependency theorists” studied this proclaimed development (modernization) by analysing the structural crisis that Latin America went through in the twentieth century, and developed a theory that placed these countries in a position of dependency with regard to the metropolis (Gunder Frank, 1967). Precursors of the “world-system theory”, they analysed the Third World’s role as a supplier of natural resources while remaining relegated to a dominated role both through economic constraint processes and through war or armed conflicts.

Influenced by these researchers, Wallerstein developed the theory of the “[modern world-system](#)” as a way of understanding the unequal global relations that were produced (Wallerstein, 1974, 1980). This theory is characterized by understanding the world through three regions or spaces: centre, peripheries and semi-peripheries. Each country is placed in a specific space that has specific functions for the development of the neo-imperial capitalist model. Thus, the centres articulate the subordinate position of the rest of the regions through the needs (not only economic, but also political, cultural, etc.) that the model itself has. Wallerstein's theories opened the way for making visible the thoughts that occurred beyond the centres (the cultural metropolises) and that sought to reinterpret the processes of domination in an, apparently, non-colonial phase. These critical theories that proposed the expansion of analytical tools beyond the West, remained, as we will see

later, in the political sphere and, especially, in the economic sphere. Focusing on the domination of resources, merchandise, labour and political regulation that must be exercised in order to achieve this, in some cases they forgot to analyse the impact of colonization on other social, cultural and identity aspects. This is the case of post-colonial studies that, with the works of Fanon (1961), led the way to listening to the voices of those who had personally lived colonization. This opened the space for postcolonial studies that, in short, sought to express the direct voice of those who had experienced colonial subalternity and who, with it, had been systematically silenced or excluded from the capacity “to be and to speak” (Spivak, 1988). Similarly, Said (1978) conceptualizes orientalism as a way to understand the construction of this “estranged” group as opposed to the Western, and that reaffirmed its own constitution. This is a relationship of power and domination in the construction of opposing worlds that colonized both Western and Eastern imaginaries. In the end, the western construction of the “oriental” drastically reduced a whole set of cultures and histories to a single and homogeneous body (the non-Western one). The conformation of this image is important for understanding the violence against North African people in European cities and peripheral spaces.

The thread of the hegemonic construction of the vision of the “Other”, Spivak (1988) raised the need to observe who, how and in what way the subalterns speak. From postcolonial studies, the aim was to show the need to implement a critical vision with the representation of the world that is exercised from European and North American social sciences, claiming the need to think of a “history of others” and giving them the ability to speak and represent themselves by themselves (Gledhill, 2000). In short, and this is directly related to the vision of youth street groups, subalternity is based on the characterization and definition of these subjects through the vision of “us” over “them”. This means an [agency](#) and a voice is constructed that does not arise from the agents themselves but rather is produced in the central spaces of the world (Bhabha, 1994; Gledhill, 2000; Spivak, 1988). This production is created through the generation of knowledge about “them” through different means: media, the State and its discourses/policies, and the academic world, among many others. This framework allows us to follow a path to understand who has the voice in the construction of an imposed identity that places subordinate people in an imposed position of society. This is the “[matrix of domination](#)” in each case. Thus, it is necessary to understand who speaks for the young people in street groups, who generates knowledge about them and ultimately who defines what they are, what they do and how they do it.

Subaltern Studies appeared following, or accompanying, the thread of Postcolonial Studies. The idea of subalternity arises mainly from the works of Antonio Gramsci that he wrote during his time in the prisons of Mussolini in the 1930s (Gramsci, 1935/2011). This author analysed the subaltern position (of exclusion) that certain subjects occupy for reasons of “crossed oppression” related to social class, ethnicity and gender, among others, but also due to their counterhegemonic potential (Gramsci, 1935/2011). In the post-war years, Ernesto De Martino applied Gramsci’s postulates to study popular culture in southern Italy, and studied some incidences of youth violence associated with the “new gangs” (De Martino & Feixa, 1948/2008; De Martino, 1962/1980). Later, Guha (2002)

inaugurated the Subaltern Studies Group. His main contributions focused on analysing the role played by a certain nationalist elite that manifested the interests of the colony and confronted the "subordinates" or the dominated. This view is necessary for understanding the modern processes of colonization and their impact on the construction of local or national elites that maintain the status quo necessary for the West. In this line, other works, such as those of Chakrabarty (1999), analysed the need to rethink the dominant concepts that had appeared since the European Enlightenment and through colonialism. In connection with postcolonialism, subaltern studies allow us to expand our gaze beyond the Western. Not only focusing on the ideas emerging from the South, but also analysing and criticizing the Eurocentric epistemological expansion produced, for example, through the colonialism of knowledge in the local elites, and the reproduction of the imposed model.

Finally, from the Critical, Postcolonial and Subaltern Studies, in the last decades a decolonial vision appeared to join these traditions and to provide new analysis tools (Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel, 2007). This vision attempts to promote an argument about coloniality beyond the political and the economic, focusing on the coloniality of knowledge. As Quijano (1989) says, if knowledge is an imperial instrument of colonization, one of the urgent tasks that lies ahead is to decolonize knowledge. Through this, and receiving all the influences previously described, it is necessary to diagnose and analyse three types of coexisting colonialities: power, knowledge and being (Mignolo, 2010). In this line, Quijano introduces the idea of the "colonial matrix of power"⁹ (Mignolo, 2010) to recognize all these dominant and intertwined domination frameworks. Therefore, "the decolonial shift is a project of epistemic detachment in the sphere of the social (also in the academic sphere, by the way, which is a dimension of the social), while post-colonial criticism and critical theory are projects of transformation that operated basically in the European and American academy. From the academy to the academy" (Mignolo, 2010, p. 15).

To understand from where knowledge is produced and to observe the existing colonialities of knowledge, it is necessary to understand knowledge as a "[situated](#)" question (Haraway, 1988) and marked by frames of domination according to class, sexual, gender, spiritual, linguistic, geographical, and racial hierarchies of the "modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system" (Grosfoguel, 2011). The important thing is to diagnose the geo-political and body-political location of the subject that speaks in order to try to promote knowledge that emerges from the Eurocentric and postcolonial anchors (Grosfoguel, 2011; Mignolo, 2010; Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992). Following Grosfoguel (2011), he "conceptualizes the coloniality of power as an entanglement or, to use U.S. Third World Feminist concept, intersectionality (...) of multiple and heterogeneous global hierarchies ('heterarchies') of sexual, political, epistemic, economic, spiritual, linguistic and racial forms of domination and exploitation where the racial/ethnic hierarchy of the European/non-European divide transversally re-configures

⁹ "The colonial matrix of power is ultimately a network of beliefs upon which to act and rationalize the action, either advantage is taken or consequences are suffered" (Mignolo, 2010, p. 12).

all of the other global power structures” (p. 6). In this line, de Sousa Santos (2002) has defined how the “western metonymic reason” determines the “knowledge of the South” as an anecdotal knowledge that validates only the Eurocentric scientific reason. This is a “coloniality of knowledge” that would eliminate the possibility of conceiving other ways of understanding and explaining the different social situations and that, at the end, would maintain the forms of domination also in the sphere of reason. Considering this epistemological perspective, the aim of the research is to transform our findings from a “Western metonymic reasoning” to a border metaphoric reasoning as a way to decolonize the knowledge about gangs.

As it will be seen later in the conceptual framework and methodology, this project will follow in the steps of the decolonial theory to diagnose “the matrix of power domination” and to search for non-Eurocentric situated knowledge in each of the regions studied. In the situation and analysis of youth street groups it is necessary to understand, through these epistemological frameworks: Where do they speak from? What place do they occupy in the social space? Who speaks for them? Who creates knowledge about them? And, among other things, what is it all for? Only from this perspective can we understand the domination frameworks that fall on them, how the matrix of domination affects them and how we situate ourselves within the production of knowledge in this field.

This kind of conceptual perspective is appropriate for Southern Europe. As Wolf (1982) demonstrated long ago, the very construction of the West, the expansion of capitalism and “modernity”, needs the creation of a subject without history, stopped in time and in need of “help”. That is, the construction of this “Other without history” allowed the cultural justification of Western superiority to develop global capitalism (first internally in Europe and then in all the colonies). Therefore, the majority of world populations (also minority groups of the West) began to occupy a role of subjugation. This subjugation was produced through material and physical exploitation, but also through the marginalization of these other cosmologies and worldviews. The construction of a “total Eurocentric truth” with which to subjugate the entire population on an evolutionary scale meant that different cultures were relegated to a framework of necessary evolution (Quijano, 2002). Consequently, in recent decades, there has been a resurgence of “southern epistemologies” (de Sousa Santos, 2011) that have highlighted the need to think about the “global coloniality” of the apparently postcolonial period (Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel, 2007). This resurgence of non-central sciences has also been inserted into Europe's own conception of itself. Thus, the global crisis that occurred in the last decade, the reduction of the State in the face of economic powers and the socialization of precariousness have made it necessary to rethink the foundations of Western critical theory (Casas-Cortés, 2019). In this line, de Sousa Santos (2017), in order to overcome this neoliberal colonization of European thought and promote liberation struggles within the North itself, proposes that it is necessary to increase relations between these subaltern populations of the North and the works/experiences from the South. This would allow a deeper understanding of the impacts of modernity, liberal democracy and the expansion of the free market. As he explains:

The global financial crisis of 2007-2008 revealed with all cruelty the aggressiveness of capitalism in its logic of appropriation/violence (in Marxist terms, primitive accumulation), both in the center and in the periphery of the world system (although with quantitatively and qualitatively very different effects), exposing the fiction on which the supposed universality of the concepts associated with liberal democracy is based: citizenship, civil society, rights, social contract. The displacement of the abyssal line in order to expand colonial-type sociabilities in the global North itself, that is, in the center of global capitalism, implies a certain third globalization of the center of the world-system. (de Sousa Santos, 2017, p. 19).

In this sense, these interpretative frameworks that propose a *de-Northification* of the West, serve us both to analyse European or North American societies and to find a theoretical framework that relates the different areas (Americas, Europe and North Africa). Following Santos' proposal, this project will provide a necessary interrelation between knowledge and experiences from different TRANSGANG geographies.

2.4. Advanced marginality in the TRANSGANG regions

Transcultural and post-colonial orientation is a perspective that emerges in subaltern studies that is helpful for analysing the implementation of modernity in TRANSGANG regions: [Southern Europe](#), [North Africa](#) and the [Americas](#). These regions have been selected according to the aim to compare youth street groups from two transnational communities (Latinos and Arabs), both in their homelands and in their new European neighbourhoods. As it is well-known, gangs gained visibility in New York and Chicago in the first third of the 20th century and that model of gangs (and their correlating imaginary) has extended throughout the United States. In the 50s and 60s the American gang model arrived to other parts of the world through cinema and television. In the last decades of this century, specific gangs such as [Mara Salvatrucha](#), [Ñetas](#) or [Latin Kings](#) (whose official name is [ALKQN](#)) arrived to Central and South America mainly through deportations, creating hybrid subcultures. These gangs have been in Southern Europe since the beginning of the 21th century due to transnational migratory flows. They have mixed with youth subcultures in this region, adding new traditions and changing some practices and discourses. On the other hand, the case of North Africa will permit us to contrast the youth street group research findings from Maghrib within a context of emerging youth street groups that mix local and global subcultural traditions. It is important to understand and de-construct discourses, representations and meanings of “the modern” across diverse cultural and historical backgrounds. In this direction, the theoretical perspective developed by Anibal Quijano is a suggestive orientation for understanding the construction of discourses on youth street organizations.

Following this theoretical perspective, it seems necessary to understand the TRANSGANG regions as historical structural formations with their own heterogeneity from a regional perspective in order to understand the production process of the “gang” as a public enemy. Quijano (1989, p. 122) defines this framework as ‘[historical-structural heterogeneity](#)’: “a model of power with discontinuous relations and conflicts among its components”. This concept could be useful for focusing on the characteristic mode of consensus formation in a specific society around a social category that “gang” might

represent. Moreover, it appears as a structure that helps to construct a discursive process of hegemonization, understood as a combination of specific structural and contrasting patterns with very different origins and natures. Thus, a “historical structural heterogeneity” refers to “all social existence, or 'society' or 'culture' or 'civilization' as a configuration of elements that come from very different histories and geographies, or 'space/time' and relate to each other, even in a conflicting way, but forming an active structure” in a particular context (Quijano, 1989, p. 132). Now we have explained the theoretical and contextual framework, it is necessary to locate the research and briefly describe the specific context of each study area.

In **the Americas**, the hegemony of the (North) American Street Gang (Klein, 1995) is an expression of the hegemony of the (North) American Economy and Culture. It is no coincidence that the origin of both models has a prototype in the Chicago of the first half of the 20th century. The combination of economic growth, transnational migration, (sub)urbanization, and social and ethnic segregation has produced, among other “offspring”, gangs. The model of the street-corner, ethnic, male dominated and “deviant” gang was related to the second generation of transnational migrants and to the descendants of slaves (European, Latino and Black gangs and gangsters). It was also related to the “[transition zones](#)” in the classic urban ecological model (Park, Burgess, & McKenzie, 1967) and to the creation of the hyperghetto (Wacquant, 2013). The original Chicago model was complemented, after WW II, by the Los Angeles model, which introduced media, drug consumption and the police in the re-creation of the gang culture. The criminalization of gangs (related to the process of [policefare](#) and prisonfare mentioned above) created specific modes of gang rationalization (gang talk (Hallsworth & Young, 2008)) but also a new social field controlled by specialists (policemen, social workers, criminologists). The latest effects of this model were the deportation and “zero tolerance” policies that emerged in Los Angeles and New York at the end of the 20th century. It was not by chance that the mayor of New York, Rudolf Giuliani, was the intellectual father of these policies. The chief of the Police Units of both cities, Bill Bratton, exported them later to Latin America and to the entire World (Brotherton, 2015; Wolf, 2017).

In Latin America, the (North) American Gang model was imposed on several local gang models related to street life and traditional age-group sociability. The neo-colonial American influence was associated with an alliance with old *criollo* elites, and was based on the exclusion of indigenous and mixed populations. The three main factors were Americanization, i.e. the imitation of the American-Way-of-Life as it was presented through American movies, especially Gang movies; Deportation, i.e. the forced transmigration of criminal gang members with Latin American origins, including young people born in or who grew up in the US; and Criminal Economy, i.e. the traffic of narcotics from South to North and the traffic of weapons from North to South. In most of Latin American urban areas local gangs mixed with transnational gangs, creating hybrid versions. On one side are subcultural solutions like the hip-hop nations of Ecuador and the [chavos banda](#) in Mexico, and on the other side, the criminal solutions like Colombian [combos](#) and especially the Central American [maras](#). In between these two extremes are a

variety of street youth groups that combine urban arts with gang economies (Cruz, 2008; Feixa, 1998; Perea, 2007; Valenzuela Arce, 1988). (North) America not only exported gang culture, it also exported gang policies, through the politics of suppression, repression and incarceration, whose hard expression was *Mano dura* and *Supermano dura* (Wolf, 2017). The four TRANSGANG case studies include different geographical contexts (North America, Central America, South America and the Caribbean), politic-economic regimes (Capitalism, Socialism) and gang cultures (*gangs*, *pandillas*, *clicas*, *combos*, *maras*). The cases of the US, Colombia, San Salvador and Cuba are related not only to global imaginaries but also to transnational migrant and music flows. One of the outcomes of this process was the physical and moral “juvenilecide” (Valenzuela, 2015), that affected gang members in the form of extrajudicial executions and *falsos positivos* (Nateras, 2015; Muñoz, 2015).

In the second decade of the 21st Century, **North African** societies are no longer entirely pre-modern, modern or post-modern (Agrama, 2012; Ambrust, 2000; Gole, 2006; Haenni, 2009; Peterson, 2011; Sánchez-Montijano & Sánchez García, 2019; Scheele, 2007; Singerman & Amar, 2009). Therefore, both the modernization process and the latest neoliberal tendencies are a product of different colonial powers, including the Ottoman Empire. These powers brought a new social contract, which was different from the traditional and pre-modern one that had existed previously in Maghreb. North African countries were modernized rapidly and forcefully under the different colonial powers: industrialization, urbanization and the creation of centralized state hierarchies helped to build a new social structure, which often entailed quite different consequences for family, gender roles and work. Bush and Ayeb (2012) understand current *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 (2007), these processes of advanced marginalization are an unavoidable part of the capitalist system and have condemned different social groups to structural marginalization. In this sense, we can talk of multiple exclusion in the region related to the positions of privilege, wealth and power that the capitalist system in the region upholds, to which age, class and gender conditions are added. 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 & Ayeb, 2012, p. 8). Consequently, one of the major trends in North African social structures seems to consolidate differences based on economic criteria, occupations and authority, similar to those established in Western societies.

These power forces, mixed with native socio-cultural institutions, have produced “youths” (and gangs) as a kind of population with specific characteristics in the region. For instance, youth agency is rooted in sociocultural structures that young people interpret temporarily, which is crucial for understanding youth street groups in Arab societies, in a complex manner in which the secular/religious dichotomy is only one possible orientation among others, including hybrid practices, representations, perceptions and meanings (Asad, 2003). However, in public spheres where there are no democratic

opportunities, informal youth street groups can play a political role of action and contestation, as occurred during the revolts of 2011, especially in Egypt and Tunisia, involving youth groups such as football hooligans, for example (Sánchez García, Ballesté & Feixa, 2018). As a result, the construction of street sociability by North African young people would be 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 (including diversity constructed by youths themselves) in which the category of ‘youth’ becomes a different layer of this production. This situation justifies the application of decolonial perspectives to ensure and integrate all these different layers in our theoretical framework and obtain a “situated knowledge” of the Arab youth street groups.

Certainly, social age stands out as a unifying element in the marginalization processes, but cultural, political, economic and lifestyle reasons that obstruct or facilitate access to marriage and the chance of forming a family are also important elements. Thus, to the age condition, others are added such as gender, ethnicity, the way of understanding religious practice, political perspective, social class and sexual orientation (Abaza, 2009; Assaad & Roudi Fahimi, 2007; Bayat, 2012; Bennani-Chraïbi & Farag, 2007). As a result, transition to adult life in this region has become such an uncertain process that a growing number of young people must improvise their livelihoods and the way they express their opinions and manage their personal relations, and all of this outside the domains of institutional structures (Salehi-Isfahani & Dhillon, 2008). In Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria (TRANSGANG countries), the individualization as a consequence of the modernization process coexists with social groups (mainly family) in which individual interests are subordinated to group interests and there is less scope for independent decision-making for young populations (Agrama, 2012; Assaad, 2003; Bayat & Denis, 2000; Floris, 2012). This situation is compounded by economic and social constrictions in the case of lower class youth. From their own perspective, they find themselves trapped in a world in which they are urged to become adults as soon as possible through marriage in a situation of economic and social crises. This facilitates entering an informal economy and/or illegal activities.

On the other hand, in **Southern Europe**, in the 21st century the idea of youth has come into conflict with the idea of gang. Both are concepts used in a political way that generate adopting meanings often imposed from the powers (political, social, economic and also scientific (Feixa, 1998; Martín Criado, 1998; Queirolo Palmas, 2017). It is necessary to understand how these two ideas have become technologies of power that allow us to build a kind of binomial between ‘normal people’ and those ‘people in need of adult guidance’ (in the case of gangs, read ‘adult’ as institutional). Even more, if we look at the consequences of both the crisis and the implantation of the neoliberal model in our societies, we will be able to understand the increasing marginalization processes that certain social sectors (especially young people, migrants, women, working classes, etc.) experience.

In these times of permanent crisis (Strecker, Ballesté, & Feixa, 2018), normalization processes (Foucault, 1995) allow us to observe a certain governability through the assumption of the crisis as a horizon to adapt to and the expansion of flexibility, precariousness and instability as ways of life (Butler, 2011; Lorey, 2016; Wacquant, 2008). These normalization processes tend to affect (as ‘social’ correctors) those ‘dangerous populations’ more directly; that is, young people or migrants, for example, fall more clearly into the governance techniques that make it possible to continue with the model even when it seems to collapse. In Europe, as in other contexts, the debate on the crisis and precariousness has been replaced or transferred by the one on insecurity (García & Ávila, 2015; Lorey, 2016). As insecure subjects, “the neoliberal government proceeds mainly through social insecurity, through the regulation of the minimum social protection that corresponds at the same time to an increasing uncertainty. In the course of the demolition and reorganization of the Welfare State (...) has been established, thanks also to the proclamation of a supposed absence of alternatives, a form of government based on a maximum of insecurity” and with it, the possibilities of resistance become ways of claiming such security against threats, either external or internal (Lorey, 2016, p. 18). This is the maximum exponent of social fragmentation and the expansion of stigmatization of those subjects who, although all of them are from the subaltern classes, expand said marginality towards those who are a bit worse off than them. It allows insecurity to be seen as a powerful tool for maintaining the calm, individualization and social fragmentation in these peripheral spaces.

According to Santos, these forms of subalternity that are experienced in the North itself fall mainly on the subjects who are ‘unwanted’ or ‘in need of redirection’ (de Sousa Santos, 2017). Normalization or punishment processes (when “biopolitical” normalization does not work) (Foucault, 1990) tend to develop more deeply in those agents who, because of their distance from the centre of the social and political space, occupy marginal spaces. At the same time, the European case is paradigmatic for understanding the materialization of the border space that we talked about. Spain, France and Italy, as main regions of the study, are post-migration spaces in which gangs occupy an interstitial place through the location and definition that the institutions and media have given them. These definitions of gangs are often renegotiated, organized or strategically used by street youth groups themselves (Queirolo Palmas, 2017).

Figure 2. The TRANSGANG Framework

Source: Own creation

3. Toward a new Gang Definition

Anyone who has studied gangs over a period of time will admit that the more one studies them, the more complex they are. At best, we can come to understand a bit about certain features of gangs at given points of time. Gangs are dynamic, flexible and ever-changing.

(Sanders, 1994, p. XI)

(Trans)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 seek out universal characteristics of gangs in different cultural contexts. In this section, we discuss how these definitions privilege a static view of gang membership that neglects the localized meanings, historical antecedents and cultural contexts of gangs.

Accordingly, this chapter presents the TRANSGANG review of the different Gang definitions in the first section. The second section discusses a key point marked by several authors in the conceptualization of gangs: the question of labelling. The third section establishes the TRANSGANG theoretical perspective. The fourth section discusses the intersectional theories and how to apply them to our research, including age, gender, race, class and beyond, understood as fundamental intersectional categories. Finally, the last section proposes a (re)definition of what is a Gang. All these sections are based on emic and etic perspectives that consider conceptualizations of the term by academics, police, social workers and the subjects themselves. Our aim is to obtain a definition of what is a gang that includes an operative transnational perspective (Latinos and Arabs) to establish TRANSGANG perspectives. In this sense, it is necessary that this perspective encompasses the three regions and their specific contexts as a way of dealing with transnational youth street organizations.

3.1. Defining “Gang”: A Review

Following Thrasher’s classical definition, a gang is “an interstitial group originally formed spontaneously, and then integrated through conflict” (Thrasher, 1927/2013, p. 57). In addition, these forms of sociability, according to Thrasher, are characterized by a behaviour guided by face-to-face encounters, fights, urban spatial movement as a unit, conflicts with other agents and the planning of their actions. Thus, “the result of this collective behavior is the development of a tradition, unreflective internal structure, esprit-de-corps, solidarity, morale, group awareness, and attachment to a local territory” (ibid.). This means that 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 for the formation of gangs, the police and political approaches in the United States have reinforced their criminal dimensions. 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 backgrounds and was not used for other youth groups. Therefore, 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.

From an ‘emic’ point of view, in the three regions in which our study will be carried out, the use of the term is far from homogeneous. In Europe (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 gang 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 *gamberros* (López Ruicerezo, 1970). In Italy the so called ‘baby gang’ is an Anglicism used also to describe bullying, or groups of young people related to the Mafia and Camorra in the South. When *maras* appeared in Milan, newspapers started to write about gangs and *pandillas* to distinguish them from local youth street groups. Thus, “*mara*” and “*pandilla*” replaced in media representations other local terms such as *vitelloni* related to ‘indolent’ young people coming from the rural areas or *ragazzi di vita* from Pasolini’s novel describing a group of lumpen young people in the 50s in Rome (Pasolini, 1955). In France, the term ‘bandes’ 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 Latin America there are a lot of local terms to name youth street groups: *gansas*, *clicas* and *vatos* on the border between Mexico and the United States, *chavos banda* in Mexico, *maras* in Central America, *combos* in Colombia, *coros* in the Caribbean, *pibes choros* in Argentina, etc. 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. In Standard Arabic the general term used to refer to “criminal youth groups” is *ishāba* while the term *shila* is used to designate a youth street group. However, there are other related terms coming from the national and local contexts and expressed in colloquial Arabic, such as *hittistes* (Algeria), *tcharmils* (Morocco) and *baltagiyya* (Egypt), which designate different criminalized street groups from paramilitaries to organized drug clans. On the other hand, each youth group can use different categories to define itself. In Barcelona, the Latin Kings define themselves as a ‘*nation*’ or ‘*organization*’, while the Ñetas define themselves as an ‘*association*’. In San 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. 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.

From an ethic point of view, from the Chicago school, the criminological tradition has tended to use the term gang as a synonym of the youth street group more or less linked to

criminal activities. Generally, we find three kinds of definition problems. Firstly, how we define ‘youth gang’ will determine the number and composition of what it is that we are talking about regarding the conceptualization of the term. We find two kinds of definitions: 1) wide definitions that gather more young people into the gangs’ conceptual net; and 2) narrow definitions that are more exclusive conceptualizations that include fewer young people in gangs. In fact, this last definition focuses on the illegal activities of the group and criminalizes becoming a member of a gang. This definition is embedded in the Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, which has three main meanings: “a group of persons working to unlawful or antisocial ends; a band of antisocial adolescents; and a group of persons having informal and usually close social relations” (‘Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary’, 1997). The second question is about the naming process associated with youth gang research that helps to shape how issues and social problems are framed. The wide perspective is known as the *gang talk* perspective. This approach states that if we focus on gangs as a social problem, we do not pay attention to fundamental issues like racism, poverty and social inequality. This meaning of “gang” is based on subcultural scholar traditions, but it fails to capture the fluidity and contradiction inherent in gang identification. This prevents gangs from developing into either pro-social organizations or more organized criminal entities, and creates an artificial sense of similarity between diverse cultural contexts. In the process, gang research has become disengaged with the broader current of sociological theory, which thus narrows the representation and analysis of diverse street-based groups. This perspective is represented by academic researchers who apply Klein’s definition, developed in the seventies in Los Angeles:

A gang is a group of young people that can be identified by: a) being perceived as an aggregation different from the others in the neighborhood, b) recognizing themselves as a defined group, c) being involved in various criminal episodes that generate a constant negative reaction of the neighbors and/or of the services in charge of the application of the law. (Klein, 1971, p. 13)

This conceptualization establishes an unhealthy image of gangs, and demands that they be treated by agents of control before they damage society. This unhealthy image entails and enables all kinds of correction, prevention and suppression discourses and practices. Alternatively, the gang can be understood as an analysis frame about group status and relationships with other social subjects. Here the focus is on collective behaviour and group engagements, and the personal experience is ignored. A good example is Miller’s definition: “A self-formed association of peers, united by mutual interests, with identifiable leadership and internal organization, who act collectively or as individuals to achieve specific purposes, including the conduct of illegal activity and control of a particular territory, facility, or enterprise” (Miller, 1992, p. 21). In this direction, *Eurogang*, a network of North American and European researchers, inspired among others by Klein himself, define the gang concept as “a street gang (or problematic youth group) is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of their group identity” (Esbensen & Maxson, 2012, p. 5). Similarly, in Spain, Vázquez and Serrano follow this orientation and define a gang as “a group of young people permanently united by mutual interests with the following characteristics: a name and a symbol that make the gang recognizable, an identifiable leader, a geographical

territory under their control, a place of regular meeting and involvement in criminal activities” (Vázquez González & Serrano Tarraga, 2007, p. 41-42). These broad definitions focus the core criteria on durability, street-orientation, youth, identity and, most importantly, illegal activity. According to this definition, there are identifiable gangs or ‘troublesome youth groups’ in a range of European cities, which have similar characteristics to their US counterparts. It has been proven that participation in illegal activities becomes again the main and prototypical characteristic of these groups. This characteristic increases the difficulty of applying this definition to the project’s research subjects (young Latino and Arab street groups) as the limit between criminal and non-criminal acts is fluid and fuzzy, and the definition itself makes up part of the youth groups’ “[social labelling](#)” process.

Finally, a critical perspective emphasizes the subalterns’ creative and agency capacities. Their cultural productions and forms of sociability as resistance practices, contradictory and ambiguous, against a set of discrimination processes by culture, class, race and ethnicity are their main variables. In this sense, Queirolo Palmas (2014) define gangs as “urban youth groups that take shape in the interstices of a post-migration society, with their cultural practices and sometimes cooperative interactions that are sometimes conflicting, and which are designated by the thinking of the institutions and the media as gangs, a signifier associated with violence, crime and social danger” (p. 23). In this perspective, we include the Latin American tradition of gang studies understanding gangs as social formations that attempt to build a cultural citizenship from the margins. Thus, Reguillo (1995) points out the community character of these youth experiences that find in the neighbourhood a territorial dimension of inscription and the importance of its symbolic production. Perea (2007) demonstrates how young people produce respect and generate a time and space that is parallel to the codes that govern the society of citizens from which these young people are disconnected. Finally, in Mexico, Valenzuela (2007) outlines the present of the *maras* within the framework of a cultural and transfrontier resistance that goes back to migration and to the historical link between Central America and the United States. Accordingly, a definition that attempts to collect all of these attributes is:

groups formed in large part by young people and adults from marginalized classes, whose objective is to provide their members with an identity of resistance, an opportunity for empowerment both individually and collectively, of a possible ‘voice’ capable of challenging the dominant culture, of a refuge with respect to the tensions and sufferings of daily life in the ghetto and, finally, of a spiritual enclave in which practices and rituals considered sacred can be developed. (Brotherton & Barrios, 2004, p. 23)

These perspectives connect with the studies of the School of Birmingham on youth cultures, which emphasize resistance through rituals, gestures and symbolic forms (Hall & Jefferson, 1976/2006), and with the contributions of Monod (1968/2002), who understands gang inscriptions as tools of production of differentiating signs and cultural worlds that mix social class, age and marginal cultures. They also connect with the

criminological critical perspectives in the TRANSGANG theoretical framework (see section 3.3).¹⁰

3.2. Youth, Gang and Violence: State, Power and Social Control

In this section we discuss the situation of gangs in relation to the State and the different policies concerning gangs in a general conceptual manner. This theoretical framework responds to the question about how to explore the relationships between gangs and institutions and who and why different youth street groups are labelled as criminal organizations as part of the policies that began in the 60s in Chicago (Rocha, 2018). It is therefore necessary to deal with the idea of “hegemony” to understand the relations between State, policies and youth street groups and move from a monolithically established ideological formation, as Gramsci (1935/1971) remarks, to an understanding of hegemony as a problematic and disputed political process of domination and struggle included in the [gang field](#).¹¹

Hegemony is an essential element in power relations in modern societies, where consent operates in a more significant way than force. This means socially well-off agents accept State violence against groups labelled as violent and some gang members as a way of dealing with them. Adhesion to the interests of the dominant groups is embodied by the instruments that shape the common sense through the intervening features, understood as naturalized forms directed and instrumentalized by the interests of the dominant groups. However, hegemony is fragile, forever answered by alternative ideologies, and for this reason it needs constant reaffirmation and renewal that changes the label of public enemy given to youth groups according to State objectives, and then labels them as ‘gang’. The imposition of a hegemonic discourse is an ideological domination rather than an ideological fight. Thus, consent is a general term that can comprise an ample range of possible situations in the fight for hegemony: from passive approval or lack of political opposition kindled and organized in order to submerge self-resistance, to different forms of dissidence, including youth street groups. Resistance to hegemonic domination helps us understand the struggle of gang members to change their everyday lives and the means they use to talk, confront, accommodate or resist, which, in turn, are modelled by the domination process itself. Thus, hegemony constructs “a common material and meaningful framework living through, talking about, and acting upon social orders characterized by domination” (Roseberry, 1994).

As we have already discussed, the growth of the penal State is a direct consequence of the increase in poverty caused by the degradation of the Welfare State as a hegemonic

¹⁰ This approach is not only theoretical, it is also based on our own research experiences with local gangs in Spain (Feixa, 1988), Mexico City (Feixa, 1998, 2006) and especially with transnational gangs in Barcelona (Feixa et al., 2006, 2008, 2010) and in other parts of Southern Europe (Feixa et al. 2011; Feixa & Guerra, 2017; Feixa & Romaní, 2014; Queirolo Palmas, 2016), Latin America (Feixa, 2015; Núñez & Oliver, 2018) and North Africa (Feixa & Sánchez, 2017; Sánchez García, 2016; Sánchez García & Feixa, 2016).

¹¹ In Gramsci’s (1935/1971) words, “hegemony is the spontaneous consent that the popular populations give to the ways to the social life which is imposed for the dominant groups” (p. 12).

political paradigm. Workfare has joined prisonfare to manage inequalities and poverty in coordination (Wacquant, 2011), these inequalities are caused, in turn, by reducing the weight of the left hand of the State. Thus, the criminalization of poverty is a punitive containment of urban marginality through the deployment of a police and criminal network, together with a "standardized" health network (Wacquant, 2011, Garland, 2005). Nonetheless, as gang members are using the label for their own strategic plans, for example to gain respect in the neighbourhood, it adds another important question about social control due to the fact that gangs are also a form of social control in areas where the State is not present or only present in a repressive way. We therefore need to deal with the question of which new groups are inserted and constructed as public enemies.

Following the path drawn, these modifications of the neoliberal State together with the appearance of precariousness as a vital condition generate a climate of increased violence. These difficulties involved in achieving a certain stability provoke the appearance of at least three types of violence: violence from above (oppression), violence from below (resistance) and horizontal violence (stigmatization). The idea of a continuum of violence makes it possible to establish these three kinds of violence as a circular and dialectical framework avoiding the top-down oriented perspective based on the oppression-resistance-stigmatization scheme. One of these, imaginably the most important, takes place in the appearance of the *prisonfare* as a form of government of insecurity (Wacquant, 2011). The changes produced to expand neoliberalism that do not leave an option to resistance generates the appearance of an oppressive violence that departs from the powers and is structured through the State. This violence manifests itself from top to bottom (Brenner, 1999; Harvey, 2005)¹², through labour flexibilization, the loss of purchasing power of both the middle and working classes, economic deregulation and the erosion of the Welfare State, the global mobilization of companies, and, among many others, the assumption of precariousness as a controlling form of life and government¹³.

Nevertheless, an important part of this repressive policy is lawfare as a labelling procedure. This process has its presence in the legislative codes that are essential for implementing the *prisonfare* through regularization of *lawfare*, and is of particular relevance in the case of the three TRANSGANG regions (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006)¹⁴.

¹² Direct violence also appears through the expansion of neoliberal ideas through wars, military dictatorships and totalitarian regimes (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Fontana, 2011). Recently, the concept of necropolitics (Mbembe, 2003) or "juvenilecide" ["youthcide"] (Valenzuela, 2015) as a form of government helps us understand the materializations of such violence on populations that "do not matter" in this 21st century.

¹³ Strictly speaking, two regions of the project, North Africa and Latin America, do not have a real Welfare State, so the *prisonfare* is the policy habitually used in the case of marginalized areas. In any case, they are not losing any benefit. In the case of Southern Europe, migrants who do not have legal rights are also in a situation of advanced marginality.

¹⁴ Lawfare is defined as "the *abuse* of Western laws and judicial systems to achieve strategic military or political end". From this perspective, lawfare consists in "the negative manipulation of international and national human rights laws to accomplish purposes other than, or contrary to, those for which they were originally enacted" (*The Lawfare Project: What is Lawfare?* 24: 2013). As Goldstein, project director, remarks in a 2010 speech: "now, the question is not "who is the target", but "what is the intention" behind the legal action: is it to pursue justice, to apply the law in the interests of freedom and democracy, or is the intent to undermine the system of laws being manipulated?" (<https://www.lawfareblog.com/about-lawfare-brief-history-term-and-site>).

For example, in Central America the term ‘*mara*’ did not originally have a pejorative meaning, but the policies of ‘*mano dura*’ contributed to modifying the original meaning. In Spain, in the criminal code in effect since 1995 there is a crime called ‘illicit association’, applied to terrorism and corruption cases, which was extended for Latino groups (with some sentences against Latin Kings, Ñetas, [Bloods](#), [Trinitarios](#), [Black Panthers](#) and [DDP](#)), although the evidentiary procedure for proving the hierarchical and stable structure of the group was complex. In the 2010 reform of the criminal code, in a context marked by a growing punitive climate, the figures of ‘criminal organization’ and ‘criminal group’ were incorporated into the code and extended to some leftist and rightist political groups. The objective of this spurious use of law is to simplify the proof of the criminal nature of such groups, differentiating three types, with different penalties depending on the type, from being a leader or a member and the seriousness of the crime. According to this code, the characteristics of these three types are as follows:¹⁵

- a) [Criminal Organization](#): “A group formed by more than two persons with a stable character or for an indefinite period of time, in a concerted and coordinated manner, assigning different tasks or functions in order to commit a crime”.
- b) [Criminal Group](#): “Union of more than two persons who, without meeting any or some of the characteristics of the criminal organization defined in the previous article, has the purpose or object of the concerted commission of crimes”.
- c) [Illicit Association](#): “Those whose purpose is to commit a crime or, after being constituted, promote its commission, as well as those whose purpose is to commit or promote the commission of faults in an organized, coordinated and reiterated manner”. Also, “those who, even if their purpose is lawful, use violent means or alter or control the personality for its attainment”.

In 2019, in Spain, the situation has changed, as the number of young people belonging to gangs in prison has grown exponentially, although it is not clear if this is due to a criminal evolution of the gangs or rather to the criminalization policies applied by the state after the reform of the criminal code in 2010, reinforced by the Circular 2/2011 of the General Attorney’s Office, where the ‘Latino gangs’ are specifically mentioned, highlighting “their extremely violent criminal activity, [which] is carried out in groups of 10 to 15 or more individuals, when it deals with crimes against life or physical integrity, and fights or tumultuous disputes between rival gangs; or in small groups of 3 to 5 members in cases of robbery with violence or threats” (quoted in Queirolo Palmas, 2017, p.129; see also Kazyrytski, 2017).

All these procedures (*lawfare* and *prisonfare*) elicit a second type of violence that appears as a response to these oppressive frameworks. This violence from below has usually been related to the emergence of social movements or, previously, organized struggles that respond to the onslaughts of both capitalism and imperialism (Tilly, 2007), as well as with a “[quiet encroachment](#)” of the urban peripheral populations to resist the State

¹⁵ Art. 570 and 510, Ley Orgánica 5/2010, de 22 de junio, por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica 10/1995, de 23 de noviembre, del Código Penal. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2010-9953>. In practice, since the application of this new criminal code such figures have systematically been applied to Latino gangs, in a much greater proportion than to other groups that commit crimes. (Feixa, 2016)

policies (Bayat, 2014). These responses to structural violence are related to and associated with youth street gangs as way of resilience in some cases. On the other hand, in those countries or regions where there is no open public sphere or freedom of expression, the retaliations can be given in two lines (Bayat, 2014; Tilly, 2007). Firstly, in the appearance of violent outburst and riots (Graeber, 2009); and secondly, in the appearance of less spectacular daily political struggles (Bayat, 2014; Scott, 1987). In this aspect, according to the acceptance of hegemonic processes, these answers range from active consensus to dissidence passing through passive acceptance, negotiation and resistance. This second form of resistance, also analysed from the Birmingham School (Hall & Jefferson, 1976), allows us to understand in some way the processes of response to the oppressions that may often be exercised by groups of young people in the streets.

Finally, it is necessary to analyse the violence that slips out to the sides. This violence appears most clearly in marginalized neighbourhoods, peripheral spaces and borderline areas. With the flexibilization of labour, the loss of social support from Welfare, of spaces of common recognition such as trade unions and growing individualization, a new violence appears that is expressed from the peripheral groups towards other peripheral groups that normally find themselves in an equal or worse situation (Solís, 2017; Auyero et al., 2015; Wacquant, 2008a). This is clearly shown in the relations of migration-receiving societies. Normally, these new arrivals settle in the same neighbourhoods as the traditional working class and the stigmas that have historically fallen to this class now fall on the migrants. In other words, the working class, as a strategy for getting rid of stigma and repositioning itself in society, reproduces marginal roles towards those who are a little worse off than themselves (Bourdieu, 1979; Goffman, 1963/1986). At this point, it is necessary to highlight here, as a fourth point of violence that normally also affect these peripheral spaces, the appearance of mafias and corruption as vivid images that represent neoliberalism. In other words, the spaces left by the free market for the global transit of illegal goods that are normally found in the periphery spaces of subsistence (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006). In conclusion, in our field, violence, rather than a given fact, becomes a system of communication as well as a specific language.

3.3. Beyond criminality: TRANSGANG theoretical perspectives

Generally, the study of youth gangs has emphasized their most controversial and dangerous aspects according to the models of violent representation of youth street groups from public policies and the media. Among these authors and their followers, attention has always focused on crime and violence even among those larger gangs with a greater geographic range, paying less attention to migration (rural-urban, transnational) and [gang economies](#); that is, how the members of the groups and the local communities obtain a variety of benefits due to their presence in the territory. Our theoretical perspective aims to reverse this approach. Beyond criminology, if we analyse the existence of these groups, in the first place we find a that these adolescents and young adults have a feeling of union and group belonging in a structure of sociability that resembles a second family. The use of the word '[hermanito](#)' (brother) by Latino groups shows the dimension of fraternity in

an organization, whose main objective is not to commit crimes, but to offer solidarity by sharing their difficult daily life in terms of protection, identity construction and feelings of affection (Brotherton & Barrios, 2004; Feixa et al., 2006, 2008). A decade later, this situation is still ‘in process’ in the Latin diaspora and the same (in) definition affects the Arabic and Muslim diasporic youth worlds (Camozzi et al., 2014; Feixa & Romaní, 2014; Queirolo Palmas, 2016).

As it is evidenced in academic literature, gangs are diverse in ethnic composition, criminal (or not) activities, age of members, propensity towards violence and stable organization. Gangs experience changes due to direct factors and indirect factors, such as demographic shifts, economic conditions or the influence of the media, and their reactions vary according to community understanding, representation and policies; effective responses are diverse too: prevention, intervention and suppression or enforcement. In summary, this project analyses the background of personal and social narratives, subjectivities and identities of young people in Latin America and North Africa, especially those who have arrived in Spain and southern Europe in recent decades.

The novelty and progress in the state of the art is based on a unique mixture of methodologies coming from subcultural and post-subcultural youth studies combined with a decolonial perspective that applies intersectional frame analyses. The first tradition is rooted in subcultural studies elaborated at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham. In the second half of the 1970s and the early 1980s this university produced a series of influential works on youth and popular culture in the British context that opened up this new field of research. Starting from Marxist and Gramscian perspectives, the term “subcultures” was introduced to take into account several forms of cultural expression of young people, and young working-class people in particular (punks, mods, rockers...). The working-class youth subcultures were interpreted in relation to their specific class and generational/age position, and also in terms of their relationship both to their parents’ culture and to the dominant, middle class culture. Moreover, interestingly for our objectives, they were read as forms of resistance by the hegemonic cultures, as they shared a condition of economic marginality that made consumption and achievement of the dominant social goals particularly difficult for them. However, due to the rapid changes in socialization processes and in social and cultural transmission between generations, young people belonging to the subaltern classes seemed to elaborate different solutions to the goals and contradictions associated with their structural position when compared to their parents’, and youth street groups are one of these.

One of the most insightful elements of the Birmingham school’s approach is its aim to take youth subcultures seriously and on their own terms, without dismissing them as ephemeral expressions of non-conformism youth or as forms of “juvenile deviance” like most of the previous studies on youth cultural practices and behaviours. As noted by Griffin: “The youth subculture project treated (...) working class youth cultural practices as imbued with meaning and political significance, as worthy to be studied in their own terms, and as potentially creative rather than inherently destructive or of minimal cultural value” (Griffin, 2011, p. 4). This kind of orientation marked a strong distance between

the Birmingham framework and the previous attempts to make sense of young people as cultural agents. It provided later youth research with crucial keys for understanding contemporary youth cultural practices such as street sociability. These keys increasingly rely on the symbolic level, and are articulated more around expressive behaviour and less around direct and explicit political commitment. Moreover, from the methodological point of view the CCCS approach entailed a special focus on the empirical grounding of any account of cultural production of youth: research within the CCCS framework pursued a comprehensive understanding of youth cultural worlds and production, drawing on ethnographic methods and on semiotic analytical tools. This perspective is essential for understanding the mediation processes at the heart of gangs.

However, we consider there are several gaps in subcultural studies that need to be covered to refine this perspective. First, the attention paid to gender, sexual, ethnic and geographical differences among young people will be studied through an intersectional analysis developed later (Yuval-Davis, 2006). On the other hand, in our post-subcultural perspective we consider that youth subcultures are not clearly delimited entities, but rather entities with blurred limits and crossbreed cultural references. Consequently, we apply a more fluid conception of youth cultural practices, which have been increasingly understood in terms of dynamic and individualized processes of negotiations and identity expressions, rather than the expression of stable collective identities. This has to do with a subtler shift in the transition to late modernity, which is not directly related to the material conditions and lived experiences of young people, but rather to the condition of knowledge production and the change of paradigms in social sciences that post-colonial and decolonial perspectives embody. A new conception of “culture” is introduced, as a fluid system of meanings rather than as an “island”, a fixed object, a reified conglomeration of habits, values and material objects associated with a definite social group. It “recast culture as a dynamic and participatory process through which social actors play an active role in shaping their everyday socio-cultural environment” (Bennett, 2011, p. 28). As a consequence, the ethnographic process embodies an essential interest in the cultural processes involved and reflected in the everyday lives of youth street groups. Because the analysis of youth street groups’ cultural practices is no longer confined to spectacular styles, it rather tends to encompass the everyday life experiences and cultural practices of members or ex-members of youth groups. Consequently, the consideration of the limitations of the Birmingham conceptual framework and the new tendencies in conceiving youth cultural practices constitute the core elements of our “post-subcultural” approach (Bennett, 1999; Bennett & Kahn-Harris, 2004; Hodkinson & Diecke, 2007).

According to our aim to go beyond the gaps in the Birmingham school’s concepts, we consider [identity](#) as key variable in the object of research. Therefore, we refer to identifications rather than understand identity as a finished thing, as something in continuous construction and strategically negotiated. In recent descriptions of the identity creation processes among youth groups in the West, the treatment of the body (its construction, its treatment, its restructuring, deconstruction), the influence of an alleged global culture centred on the creation of transnational communities, and the influence of

music, specifically pop, rock, rap and local hybrid scenes, have emerged as major axes for young populations. These cultural elements are setting the primary reference markers for identity negotiation that some authors reflect upon in relation to global youth. Their importance to youth cultures and youth street groups is determined essentially by influencing choices, they invent new ways of understanding the body and diversifying transnational relations, and the possibility of participating in solidarity groups related to similar cultural practices.

Nevertheless, young people construct their identity as local groups with specific backgrounds differentiated from Western traditions. It is in these contexts where the mixed forms of youth culture appear. Pieterse (1994) describes such [hybridization](#) as the “creolization” of global culture, and young people are at the forefront of their creative output. However, these expressions are not only a kind of mixture, they also produce new forms that we could designate as prefigurative. The potential of the “mestizo symbols” created by youth street group practices and discourses, appears in the juxtaposition of local forms with the forms and discourses of popular culture, driven globally. Thus, hybridization processes have two sides: a process of cultural interactions between the local and the global; and, more significantly, a process of cultural transactions that reflects how global cultures (our five matrixes, see below) are appropriated locally and how non-western cultures impact upon the west, our second and third matrices (Hazen & Rodgers, 2014; Nilan & Feixa, 2006). The process facilitates the emergence of two senses of subjectivity that individuals use as narrative elements to produce their identity: on the one hand, local frames of reference, on the other, identity elements constructed from materials of the global popular culture, then negotiating in context the adequacy of a framework or another depending on the aims. The diversity of global elements provides numerous points and rejection of local cultures. The definition in either direction is given in the form and content of both traditions, local and global, highlighting certain forms over others with significant creative power. Among youth street groups, this process usually occurs during the group activity (Willis, 1990), prompting the emergence of new forms and allowing the local as opposed to State. In addition, the construction of a youth ideal entity is intimately connected with various perceptions of space and time according to social, economic, political and cultural specificities of local contexts; this is their specific ‘historical-structural heterogeneity’. Space and time thus appear as relevant in shaping youth local/global identities, featuring the so-called youth chronotype, where young individuals and groups can meet and interact with each other and with other actors, playing performative roles that express collective memories (generational, social, cultural), narrating to Themselves and to Others their own identities and otherness (Feixa & Strecker, 2015).

The intensity of social relations is shaped by the space in which each young person conducts his or her daily life. This includes intimate areas of affective and discretionary practice, as well as open and coercive spaces, where activities take place regularly and in a hierarchical fashion. Yet sometimes the intimate space of the family can become a place of control, and public places of entertainment can become private places. The second axis is time, organized in the temporal dimensions of daily, weekly, calendar, biographical,

generational and historical time. The time dimension also structures various binary oppositions. Productive time (academic or occupational functioning) is opposed to festive time, collective time to individual time, or quiet time (such as music in their room) versus noise time (at a concert or dance club). There is also a contrast between repetitive time (exercise, school and work rhythms, patterns of consumption) and time for rupture (the party, transgression, travel, free-running) and so on. The organization of the day, the weekend routines, planning travel, crucial moments in the life cycle, generational events, are not left to chance but are culturally elaborated by formalized rituals, reflecting the symbolic memory work of narrating a biography.

From our perspective the identarian processes emerge in an interface where, in addition to the hegemonic host culture and the traditional culture of their parents, several other subcultural traditions come together (Brotherton & Barrios, 2004; Feixa & López, 2014; Klein & Maxson, 2006; Matza, 1961; Venkatesh, 2009). We can define five basic axes according to our subject, which are used as identification sources of cultural devices:

1. The first axis begins with the **North American street gang tradition**. This was closely linked to the process of urbanization in the United States, and to the process of “magical recovery” of the original ethnic identity by the second and third generation of young people with a migratory background. This trope of recovery was translated into the model of the territorial gang, well organized and basically composed by men: the classic object of urban ethnography (Klein, 1995; Thrasher, 1927/2013; Whyte, 1943).
2. The second axis is exemplified by the scale difference between **Latin American gang traditions**: *pandillas* and *naciones*. A gang is a social street group organized in neighbourhoods with precise geographic boundaries. Nations represents a higher level of gang organization, with hundreds of members. Although they may have some criminal connections, sociability is the main function of both groups. They create a distinctive lifestyle that resolves conflict through music and dance challenges. *Maras* are an extreme version of this matrix, related to Central America in the post-war period (Feixa, 1998; Perea, 2007; Ramos, Victor, Seidl-de-Moura, & Daly, 2013; Reguillo, 2001).
3. The third axis is represented by **Arab youth subcultural traditions**, including street vendors, football fans, rappers, hittistes and baltagiyya. In countries like Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Egypt, they emerge in a process of hybridization with their own cultural traditions of North Africa, marked by the importance of the family (Bayat, 2012; Camozzi et al., 2014; Nilan, 2016; Sánchez García, 2010).
4. By its side, the fourth axis is represented by the **European subcultural traditions** that young immigrants find when they arrive: young immigrants are mediated by global networks to pass from local gangs to global tribes (Esbensen & Maxson, 2012; Klein, Kerner, Maxson, & Weitekamp, 2001; Leccardi, 2016; Queirolo, 2016; van Gemert, Peterson, & Inger-Lise, 2008).
5. Finally, the last axis is the virtual global tradition represented by youth identity models that circulate through the Internet. In the last decade there has been an

evolution of gangs towards more complex forms of socialization (Fraser & Hagedorn, 2018; Hagedorn, 2007; Vigil, 2002). According to this, it is important to understand the role of **virtual environments** in the processes of radicalization of youth both in Southern Europe and in North Africa. These ‘global gangs’ are no longer strictly territorial, nor have they got a compact structure. They are nomadic identity groups that mix elements of their respective countries of origin, of their host countries and of many other transnational styles that circulate through the Internet and social networks. These mestizo identities correspond to the youth cultures of the global era (Nilan & Feixa, 2006; Raffaelli et al., 2013; Rao et al., 2013). As Manuel Castells (1997) argued more than twenty years ago, the network society is a “flow space”, exemplified by online connectivity, increasing the ‘possibilities’ of creating transnational networks by enhancing contemporary social practices of youth, including the constitution of gangs. These increasing possibilities, mainly for the favoured classes, create a new type of exclusion among the popular classes: technological exclusion. In addition, gangs have specific cultural practices and creative products that require recognition for collective empowerment.

In our framework, post-subcultural studies and decolonial perspectives meet **critical criminology** focusing on challenging traditional understandings and uncovering false beliefs about crime and criminal justice. This perspective examines the gang field within the social structure of class and status inequalities and considers law and punishment of crime as connected to a system of social inequality and as the means of producing and perpetuating this inequality. As a result, crime is seen as a product of oppression of subaltern groups within society, such as women and ethnic minorities. According to Brotherton (2015) to research gangs as subaltern groups it is necessary to have a critical anti-colonial ethnography, as youth members have “little option but to resist this relationship of domination” (Brotherton, 2015, p. 80). This kind of ethnographic practice allows us to provide multiple forms of data, a dialogical relationship between researcher and the researched, and to produce knowledge that potentially contributes to social reform. The final objective is not to know “what it is” but “what it could be”. This perspective emphasizes the creative and agency capacity of the gang members, their cultural productions and their forms of sociability as resistance practices, of course contradictory and ambiguous, against a set of discrimination processes in relation to culture, class, race and ethnicity. On the one hand, these groupings are seen as places of production and social transformation, on the other hand the reproduction dynamics are also evident, that is, the homologies between their functioning logics and their symbolisms (masculinity, strength, authority, hierarchy) and the global functioning of society.

Our final theoretical perspective comes from **post-colonial studies and decolonial epistemologies** (see chapter 2). This perspective allowed us to think about the border as both a symbolic and a physical space. A space that allows the decolonization of knowledge and includes gang-members’ perspectives to join stakeholders’ and academic studies to produce a border thinking in gangs. This perspective enables us to understand

the knowledge produced in the project as border knowledge. In line with this argument, the idea of “border thinking” (Mignolo, 2012) can allow us to locate ourselves as researchers and also locate study agents. It is necessary to understand border thinking as a branch that comes directly from the decolonial vision born in the Third World. For this, the expansion of border thinking occurs through migrations as central spaces.

If the point of origin of thought/sensibility and border making is the Third World, and if its dispersion routes were made through those who migrated from the Third to the First World, then being and doing inhabiting the borders created the conditions to link the border epistemology with the immigrant consciousness and, consequently, to dissociate it from territorial and imperial epistemology based on theological (Renaissance) and egological knowledge policies (Illustration) (Mignolo, 2013, p. 11).

In short, as we will see later, **border thinking** is a tool that allows us to discard Western conceptions and seek to accumulate other visions of the world that have been previously dismissed as invalid or backward. Border thinking arises in those populations that neither want to accept the humiliation of being relegated to an inferior position nor assimilate the imposed model. It is in these border spaces that other possible ways of seeing arise, which do not only seek to get rid of what is imposed, but to empower other ways of thinking, being and living (Mignolo, 2013; 2010). With all this, in the TRANSGANG project we must understand the subjects and groups studied as agents (with their own agency) that negotiate their situation in migrant societies and that, in that displacement (physical or social), adapt varied cosmovisions that are situated in what we will call the border.

3.4. Age and Gender dimensions in TRANSGANG

Age and **gender** are key concepts in the research because it is essential to establish a theoretical-methodological perspective to analyse and understand gang members and ex-members, and stakeholder’s emplacement in the field. In this respect, **intersectionality** will be briefly described as an essential theoretical methodological perspective to be considered in the research into joint post-subcultural, critical criminology and decolonial studies. This should allow us to situate youth within more crossed oppressions and to situate age as a heterogeneous concept. Understanding the position of the young people from street groups in the social space involves adopting a perspective that enables research to be placed in a context of complex oppressions. In order to do this, the TRANSGANG project understands the place occupied by young people from street groups from an intersectional perspective. Our aim is to observe the reality of young people considering the ‘oppressions’ that act on them and that allow us to find complex frameworks of explanation to analyse their reality beyond specific reasons. The idea of intersectionality also helps us in this project to understand that there are many ways of being young. Therefore, we will speak of ‘youth(s)’ instead of ‘youth’ in singular (Duarte Quapper, 2000, 2012; Vommaro, 2014). In the same way, there are several ways of being a gang member.

The beginnings of the intersectional perspective can be traced back to the struggles of black women in the United States against the situation they experienced of gender, class

and race oppression. This idea was not popularized until the end of the 20th century through the theoretical revision made from feminism (Crenshaw, 1991)¹⁶. This aspect highlights the need to observe the exclusion frameworks in a complex and non-singular way, that is, to overcome the biased view that was imposed on the domination frameworks from a vision centred exclusively on social class. Crenshaw (1991) emphasizes that it is essential to understand how in every complex problem, various categories of difference are involved (race, ethnicity, gender, age, etc.) and these must be not only recognized and highlighted, but also analysed in order to understand the interactions between them and be able to materialize explanatory and analysis paradigms (Hancock, 2007). As Adlbi Sibai (2016, p. 47) points out, “an individual in general, anywhere in the world, is defined in different ways by sex, gender, age, race, ethnicity, culture, economic class, situations of war, crisis, diseases, etc.” In the context of our project, analysing the reality of young people who are part of youth street organizations without considering these different cross oppressions would lead us to a biased homogenization process that would not help us to understand reality in a complex way (Yuval-Davis, 2006). If, for example, we focus on the issues related to social class and we leave out other essential axes, such as gender or age, among others, we will be ignoring the differences that occur within the youth street organizations themselves and we will end up making them invisible.

Although intersectional studies were born in, and have been driven by, feminism, they attend to different categories (race, social class, etc.), as we have already mentioned. But the category of ‘age’ usually ends up occupying a secondary space compared to the rest. In this project the age category is assumed at the same level as the other categories. Already Mannheim (1928/1993) remarked that class situation and age have something in common, due to the specific position that individuals affected by them occupy in the sociohistorical field. This common characteristic consists in limiting individuals to a specific playing field within the possible event and suggesting to them a specific modality of experience and thought, a specific modality of embedding in the historical process. In this sense, we must pay attention to the statement made by Viveros (2016) to understand the role that age should play in this study where oppression should not be understood as if it were a gradual scale from more to less dominated, but rather to the same level: “the most “disadvantageous” position in a classist, racist and sexist society is not necessarily that of a poor black woman, compared to the situation of young men from their same social group, more exposed to certain forms of arbitrariness, such as those associated with police controls” (Viveros, 2016, p. 10).

We should also reflect that in this project we will work in very different contexts that will determine the different matrices of domination established from the historical-structural heterogeneity of each region (Quijano, 1989). That is, researchers will consider several categories of difference and have to be able to observe which of these intersections are more determining in each context or situation. To finish, intersectionality has ended up

¹⁶ About this, we consider some interesting works started to problematize the intersectional perspective, underlying some weaknesses as theoretical indeterminacy, emphasis was placed on individual dimensions and therefore there is the risk of not considering the political level. See McCall (2005) or Winker and Degele (2011).

becoming a crucial and also controversial concept to examine the different dimensions of social life that, of course, are distorted by the use of a single axis of analysis (Adlbi Sibai, 2016, p. 47). In our project, as it has already been explained in this section, intersectionality will be a necessary analysis method, a basic point that we assume within the study to locate both researcher and researched.

3.5. TRANSGANG: a renewed definition and terminology

Based on the evidences established from ethnographic research in diasporic situations, as in the case of the Latin Kings in Barcelona, in our contribution to the volume of Eurogang (van Gemert et al., 2008), we proposed the concept of 'Gangs-In-Process'. This concept refers to groups like Ñetas and Latin Kings

there are group-like networks and behaviors 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, p. 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 part of the group's identity.

Taking these considerations as a starting point, the TRANSGANG theoretical perspective will use 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 will not discard any group, but rather will prioritize those that are located at intermediate points and have hybrid features. We are 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 society-network and considering the gang not as a single model but as a 'continuum'. At one extreme we would find, always ideally, the **classic gangs** based on illegal activities and not only formed by young people -like the *bacrim* in Colombia, the *maras* in El Salvador, the *tchamril* in Morocco and the *quinquis* in Spain. At the other extreme, we find **youth subcultures** based on leisure and economic activities -like the *yatos locos* in the Mexican-American border; the *heavies* in Europe and the *rappers* in north Africa. And in the middle, there are a variety of **hybrid groups**

that combine both strategies -like the *naciones* in Latin America, the *hittistes* in north Africa and the *bandas latinas* in Spain. Therefore, we propose adding the following nuances (in bold) 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 type of behaviour: face-to-face **(and online)** encounters, fights **(and fun)**, movement through space as if it 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)**.

From this new adapted definition, there are different indicators that allow an informal street youth 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 unit 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 and the theoretical operationalization make 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, 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.

To develop transnational links, it is necessary to move beyond a top-down approach to define and learn from grounded comparisons that are situated within a broader structural context. Rather than starting with deductive reasoning, for example, Wacquant's (2008a, p. 9) 'comparative sociology of urban marginality' between Chicago and Paris seeks to inductively compare geographically disparate sites. For this author, first-hand observation is "an indispensable tool, first to pierce the screen of discourses whirling around these territories of urban perdition [...] and secondly to capture the lived relations and meanings that are constitutive of the everyday reality of the marginal city-dweller" (ibid.). This form of comparative ethnography, however, is exceptionally rare. Long-term engagement with diverse urban milieu requires a bilingual cultural sensitivity and scholarly commitment that is as demanding as it is time-consuming. Burawoy's (1998, 2009) collaborative ethnographic projects offer an alternative that is rooted in efforts to

understand the global ‘forces, connections and imaginations’ in which increasingly interconnected, yet disparate, social realities can be grasped through in-depth observation¹⁷.

Figure 3. The TRANSGANG Continuum

Source: Own creation

¹⁷ The methodological perspective is discussed in depth in chapter 6.

4. Conflict, Mediation and (Trans)Gangs

In many respects, it would not be unfair to suggest that there is always a high level of interest in young people when they are perceived to be a problem because their behaviour causes concern to those with power and influence (the recent urban disorders in the UK are a good example), when their actions are seen as posing a risk to themselves (through their use of alcohol or drug, for example) or when there are concerns about social integration and economic efficiency (manifest in terms of high levels of long-term unemployment or mismatches in the supply and demands for labour).

(White, 2016, p. 5)

This fourth chapter discusses one of the novelties of the TRANSGANG project, which is to present transnational gangs as agents of mediation. The chapter is divided into four sections: firstly, we define the concept of conflict because in order to understand what mediation is it is essential to understand what conflict is; in the second section, we define mediation; and, thirdly and fourthly, we discuss intercultural mediation and co-mediation, connecting with the project's global and local contexts and its general framework. Finally, the fifth section proposes a route through mediation processes in TRANSGANG regions. As TRANSGANG researchers are not social workers or mediators but rather ethnographers, the main aim of this section is to provide a starting point for the researchers involved in the fieldwork to evaluate mediation processes, considering the local cultural frameworks that establish traditional ways of mediating in each region.

4.1. Conflict

Talking about **mediation** means referring constantly to [conflict](#). Although the first implication that comes to mind when we hear the word conflict is negative, even violent, actually the meaning is not necessarily negative, and without conflict societies would be stuck in the past. Without revolutions, both violent and pacific, rights would not be gained. Without conflict, understood now as a feeling of discomfort in society, political parties in governments would never change. All the way down to everyday realities, teenagers will typically use a disruption of family rules to negotiate more freedom. Conflict allows social change, progress and troubleshooting. "Conflict seen from an approximation of the transformative perspective (Folger & Bush, 1996) must not presume a problem, but an opportunity for personal growth and social transformation" (Dorado-Barbé, Hernández-Martín, & Lorente-Moreno, 2015, p. 445). Rubin, Pruitt and Kim (1994) defined conflict as a "perceived divergence of interest, or a belief that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously" (p. 5). A more extended definition can be extracted from the *Miló Project* materials: "conflicts are situations in which two

or more people, groups, etc., are in dispute or disagreement because their positions, interests, needs, and values are not compatible or are perceived as incompatible.”¹⁸

This broad definition of conflict can be applied to situations affecting individuals, groups and even institutions, and also implies a broader field of action for mediation, as well as the actors that can carry out a mediation process, who, as we will see below, are not always professionals. Among the parties involved in a conflict we can find: individuals vs individuals, group vs individual, group vs group, individual / group vs institutions and even institutions vs institutions (Giménez, 1997). Lewicki, Litterer, Minton, & Saunders (1994) classified conflict based on three levels: interpersonal, intra-group and inter-group. Mediation will be carried out in a different way in each of the cases, and, of course, as Lederach (1996) states, both context and cultural adaptation are key for the mediation process to be successful. Independently of the context, Moore (2014) identifies five main causes of conflict: relationships, information, interests, values and structural conflicts.

It is also important to point out that mediation does not address conflict resolution as much as it addresses conflict management. Sometimes the conflict does not have a clear solution, one that fits all the parties, sometimes conflict will continue even after the mediation process has come to an end, but the parties can learn how to manage the conflict situation. Lederach (1996) says that “after 15 years working as a **mediator**, I have never seen a 100% solution” (p. 6). He calls a mediation process successful if the parties feel 80% satisfied with both the process and solution. Another interesting point is the personal level. Lederach (1996) admits that in almost 70% of the cases personal relationships that have been damaged because of a conflict can’t be restored, even if the parties have reached an agreement regarding the conflict. This situation is usually found in gangs in conflict, as it will be seen in the section devoted to gangs and mediation.

4.2. Mediation

The classic definition of **mediation** says it is an alternative system of conflict resolution. Ortega (1995) discusses the concept and states that mediation is an “intervention mechanism of third parties that seeks to contribute that the parties directly involved can reach an agreement mutually satisfying regarding basic incompatibilities” (p. 33). Mediation is a broad concept that covers a wide range of fields. For the sake of clarity and concordance with the objectives of this paper and the TRANSGANG project, we will focus here on mediation in the context of social intervention. In this sense, “mediation can also be contemplated as a *defined and structured process* of social intervention, for which unquestionably specific formation is necessary; but, on the other hand, it can be considered as a *model of conflict approach* that incorporates important methodological and theoretical units in social intervention” (Dorado, 2014, p 9). In this context, the branches of mediation that our research field covers are **Community Mediation** and Intercultural Mediation: “We talk about community mediation because, somehow, what

¹⁸ Recovered from Miló Project:

http://www.conductitlan.org.mx/13_psicologiasocial/Materiales/E_conflicto.pdf

is pursued is to reconstruct the relationship bonds of the community, displacing the perceptions of ‘social danger’” (Cegri, Navarro, & Aramburu, 2006). In order for Mediation to be effective, there are some conditions that must be considered at all times (Chereji & Pop, 2014):

- Participation in the mediation process is voluntary for all parties involved, and there is always the possibility of leaving the process at any time.
- It is [impartial](#). Mediators must remain neutral, disregarding their personal preferences and conceptions, keeping their equidistance. This implies [validating](#) the parties (that is not the same as validating positions, which in some extreme cases cannot be validated), and [helping](#) them without showing preferences.
- Parties must, ideally, [trust](#) mediators.
- Parties collaborate in order to find a compromise in which all win something.

Although this last condition (win-win) may seem obvious, it is key in achieving success in a mediation process. It necessarily implies that all the parties give something in; if this is not the case, if one of the parties feels they have given more than they have received, they will leave the process thinking they have “lost” it. The party that considers the process has been favourable for its interest will leave the process with the wrong idea of what mediation is, and may try to use it for its own benefit in the future. In order to avoid negative outcomes, Giménez (1997) also adds that in any human relationship there should be, ideally, some elements that are necessary in a mediation process, as they are linked to the voluntary principle of the parties: 1) [acknowledgement](#) between the parties; 2) communication implying full understanding of the other party's message (this becomes especially important in Intercultural Mediation); 3) [cohabitation](#) with respect to different individuals; and 4) [conflict regulation](#) in order to prevent or manage conflict situations that may arise.

While the mediation process is flexible and therefore adaptable to context, there are three classical models of mediation that place the focus on different aspects of the process. “Systems and models can never replicate reality, because they systematize the real world in abstract form. However, they are useful in ordering our thinking about a particular topic and highlighting how theories and values influence mediator behaviour” (Alexander, 2008, p. 2).

1. The **Harvard Interest-based Model**, as its name indicates, brings the interests of the parties to the forefront of the mediation process, and emphasizes the differences between Positions (of the parties in conflict), Interests (personal objectives) and Needs (non-negotiable elements). The key to focusing on the interests instead of on the positions is to be able to tell problems and persons apart, leaving individual positions behind in pursuit of an arrangement (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 2011).
2. The **Transformative Model**, on the other hand, places the focus on transforming the relationships between the parties, with the emphasis on improving these

relationships in order to facilitate mediation, and even to apply [restorative justice](#) instead of [punitive justice](#), if appropriate (Folger & Bush, 1996).

3. Finally, the **Narrative Model**, aims to improve communication among the parties so they can work together to construct an alternative narrative. The mediator needs, in this case, to hold several separate meetings with the parties as well as the meetings with all the parties involved together, and questions become key to destabilizing the original narrative and to encouraging reflection (Cobb, 1994).

Connecting conflict and the mediation process, according to Lederach (1996), there are three sides in any conflict, which he represents as the three sides of a triangle: Person, Problem and Process (how the problem has been addressed). The mediator needs to consider the three sides at the same time, always from an outside position. Lederach (1996) also states that in the mediation process, between the beginning, what he calls the *Entrance*, and the end, *Agreement*, there is a circular scheme that implies that the parties *tell* the mediator about the problem, the mediator *orients him/herself*, and the parties can *fix* the problem with the mediator's support.

Figure 4. The TRANSGANG Mediation Circle¹⁹

Source: Adapted from Lederach (1996, p. 5)

As it has been explained above, mediation may be necessary in a great variety of scenarios, from a close, personal level to an international one. There are, on the other hand, conflicts that cannot be mediated, such as those that are the consequence of major crimes, violent acts or abuse. For example, “Likewise, some conflicts based on values or topics related to people’s identities (gender, race, religion, etc.) cannot be satisfactorily mediated, as their underlying causes are too deeply rooted in society” (Salcedo & Jennings, 2016, p. 28). Giménez (1997) gives an overview of the situations in which mediation may be necessary, offering three interrelated classifications: 1) Parties involved: individual-individual, individual-group, individual-institution, group-group,

¹⁹ This scheme is pictured as circular because usually mediation requires repetition of its phases before an agreement can be reached

group-institution and institution-institution; 2) Kind of Relationship: family, labour, school, assistential, penal... concepts such as hierarchy, equality, competence or conflictive need to be taken into account too; and 3) Context: in multicultural societies both global and immediate contexts are important²⁰. Ferrero (1987), on the other hand, points out an important prerequisite for the mediation process to have a real chance of success:

The process of a third-party intermediation must appear before the parties in conflict have had the opportunity to take permanent steps from which they cannot return, altering the situation in detriment of one of the parties, or before the position of one of the parts is made so strong as to stop having a real interest in being involved in a negotiation, with or without the help of a mediator. (Ferrero, 1987, p. 39)

Again, this means that before the process can take place, the mediator must assess the situation and the departure point of the parties involved. For this, once s/he has been contacted, the first step is to hold separate meetings with the parties involved to assess their needs, interests and feelings. Confidentiality is very important throughout the process: mediators cannot share what parties tell them privately, it would damage both the process and the trust in the mediator. The time a mediation process takes may vary depending on the complexity of the conflict and the parties' willingness, among other issues, but there are always six phases that have to be covered²¹:

- **Phase 1:** The first meeting with all the parties of the mediation process, devoted to introductions (if necessary) and explanation of the basic rules of the process (word turn, respect among the parties, no offenses...).
- **Phase 2:** This is what mediators call “airing” (giving the parties the opportunity to say whatever they want to say about the conflict and to express how they feel).
- **Phase 3:** Is devoted to parties talking about their feelings, while the mediator's role is to legitimate the parties and to offer positive restatement.
- **Phase 4:** Is called “the dream”. Parties talk about how they feel, while the mediator asks questions and, if necessary, cross-examines parties to help them reach the bottom of the conflict.
- **Phase 5:** Ideas. It has already been said that the parties are key in the success of the process. Here parties must offer their ideas and find solutions, while mediators must pay close attention to retrieving the ideas that parties come up with.
- **Phase 6:** Agreements. Mediators must specify all the details of the agreements reached, otherwise there is always the possibility that the parties contravene the agreement alleging differences in understanding it. Ideally the agreements are

²⁰ At this point, it is necessary to think about the Eurocentrism of the mediation process perspective that considers the process as individual, while in North Africa we cannot forget that conflicts are considered as collective, as the entire community is engaged in managing the process. Moreover, the concept of cosmopolitanism should be adapted to the specific cultural context. In Central America and North Africa especially, which has a more homogeneous ethnic composition, cosmopolitanism can be understood as the result of different national cultures gathering in the cities.

²¹ This scheme of the phases has been extracted from the materials prepared for a mediation seminar in which the TRANSGANG project collaborated. Credits to Katia Núñez and Fadhila Mammam.

written down and signed by the parties, but this is not always possible. (Moore, Jayasundere & Thirunavukarasu, 2011)

The figure of the mediator is that of a professional worker trained specifically in mediation techniques, although there is also the less known, but relevant, figure of the natural mediator, informal mediator and traditional mediator. This kind of mediation is performed by people who don't have specific training in mediation, but who have natural abilities and symbolic capital to mediate in a conflict and, usually, a social position respected by their community. We found some examples of these figures during the short interviews carried out at the TRANSGANG kick-off meeting in October 2018, where researchers were asked how conflict was managed by youth street groups in their cities of residence. Researchers from North Africa, particularly Kamel Bouchef²², concurred that in their societies it was common to turn to a village elder or a religious leader for advice and mediation, as they are considered to be among the most reputable members of the community, but never to the authorities. These practices, however, are not exclusive to North African communities: "The rural population in India is more divided on the lines of Caste System where under the Caste Groups interfere into the conflicts of the members of that caste and attempt to resolve the conflicts." (Bharatha Chakravarthy, 2015, p. 5) The choice of the mediator is questionable from the western conception of mediation because "invariably parties attempt to bring in their relatives or elderly persons from the neighbourhood unmindful of the bias and conflict of interest that the person may have" (Ibid., p. 8). In coherence with our theoretical framework and our intention to avoid Eurocentrism as much as possible, the TRANSGANG project will not downplay these kinds of mediation processes, but will acknowledge all of them at the same level.

4.3. Intercultural Mediation

Following the wide definition of mediation, it's necessary to focus on the branch of mediation that this project is especially interested in: Intercultural Mediation,²³ or social mediation in multi-ethnic or multicultural contexts, understood as "an intervention modality of third parties, in and about social situations of significant multiculturalism, oriented towards achieving recognition of the Other and the approaching of the parties, communication and mutual understanding, learning and development of coexistence, regulation of conflicts and the institutional adaptation, between social or institutional actors ethno-culturally differentiated" (Giménez Romero, 1997, p. 142).

20th century societies are, to a greater or lesser degree, multicultural societies: either as a consequence of migration movements or thanks to communication technologies. Cross-cultural experiences may vary depending on the part of the world we set our field of research in. Sometimes we will find a city or country which receives close-migration, that is, migrant people from countries they share a language and some cultural and/or religious

²² Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cqrNuXmRM-s>

²³ Cegrí, Navarro and Aramburu (2006) set the operative lines of intercultural community mediation "on the one hand, to visualise and recognise diversity (geographical, cultural, social and of environment perceptions) and, on the other hand, to bring out common interests, sights and concerns". (Ibid., p. 236)

items with, as well as geographical closeness, as is the case of Ecuador receiving migration from Venezuela or Colombia. On other occasions, the geographical factor is missing, but we still find the other two, which is the case of Spain receiving migration from Latin America; even though an ocean separates the departure and arrival points, the culture shock is somehow lesser due to the similarities in both the language and culture. But Spain also receives migration from North Africa, Pakistan and China, places with which it shares less cultural items. These factors make a great difference in the way migration is perceived by both migrants and autochthones. If we take the case of France, for instance, we find that it receives a great deal of migration from North Africa, with which they share the French language, at least as a second language in most cases; however, cultural items are very different, and the geographical distance is large, which increases the culture shock, as occurs in Italy and Spain.

While mediation, as defined above, is a tool for addressing conflict, intercultural mediation can be applied to a great variety of situations. Many of these situations will have nothing to do with conflict between parties, but rather be derived from migration, response and culture shock. Intercultural mediation is necessary in situations concerning language, the administration, public services and community life; none of which involve a conflict, but rather just lack of knowledge or understanding between migrant and receiving parties. Of course, there are “regular conflicts” to which the multicultural factor must be added and considered in order to address the situation properly (Giménez Romero & Mammar, 2004).

As we will see later with the examples of gangs as agents of mediation, it is important not to underestimate the ability members of the migrant community may have to act as mediators in benefit not only of their community, but of society as a whole. Too often in the past, local and national administrations have forgotten this, and the role of mediator has been filled by an expert in the field who belonged only to the receiving community. Although it is of course necessary that mediators have formal training and precise abilities, somehow it has been by-passed that members of the migrant community may also achieve said training which, together with the abilities of what we call their “hidden curriculum”, may enrich the experience of mediation in benefit of the community. An example of good practice in this topic is SEMSI (Social Intercultural Mediation Service) in the city of Madrid. In this service of Intercultural Mediation the mediators worked in pairs. Integrated between 1997 and 2001 by 29 mediators from 16 different nationalities, the service offered social and intercultural mediation intervention in the city of Madrid, promoted by the Social Services area of Madrid’s City Council and the Autonomous University of Madrid, “whose general objective was to favor social integration of the foreign migrant population resident in Madrid city through the philosophy and methodology of mediation” (Giménez Romero & Mammar, 2004, p. 63). The fact that the mediators had diverse nationalities didn’t mean, however, that the cases were assigned to match mediator-party origin, as situational and idiosyncratic factors were considered to be as relevant as cultural ones.

4.4. Co-Mediation

Co-Mediation is a technique that requires two (or more) persons acting as mediators, instead of just one. There can be several reasons why it is advisable to have two mediators in a process, but the key to success for a team of mediators is that they need to be perfectly synchronized in all aspects of the mediation. Love & Stulberg (1996) stated that “where co-mediators operate in synch with one another, have the same vision of the mediation process and its goals, and have a plan that maximizes the strengths of the mediation team, their combined talents increase their capacity to respond to the myriad of challenges they will face” (p. 179).

Having two persons with these characteristics mediating in a process has the obvious advantages of getting a more detailed picture of the conflict, a colleague to exchange impressions with as well as to take over when necessary. In legal mediation the question of different fields of expertise of the team members is an important factor, but when dealing with Intercultural Mediation there are some other factors that advocate for co-mediation, the most important of which could be to overcome culture-shock related obstacles, followed by the possible lack of trust and understanding with ‘autochthonous’ mediators.

Co-Mediation, with all its virtues, can, however, have more negative than positive outcomes if the team performing it doesn’t have the same vision of mediation or lack communication and confidence in one another. In *Practice Guidelines for Co-Mediation: Making Certain That Two Heads Are Better Than One*, Love & Stulberg (1996, p. 181) summarize their guidelines to minimize the risks:

- Choose a partner with a similar vision of mediation’s goal and compatible strategies for executing the job.
- Give leadership roles to co-mediators.
- Strategically use the seating arrangement to maximize opportunities for success.
- Assign specific tasks to each mediator to make the mediation as efficient and productive as possible.
- Use the opening statement to set the right tone for the co-mediation.
- Adopt the principle of non-competition among mediators.
- Remember to consult with the other mediator before making any important decisions.
- Maintain a unified focus so that common understandings are reached.
- Use the diversity of the mediation team to maximum advantage.
- Have a fall-back or fail-safe plan if co-mediation is not working.
- Be flexible.
- Debrief after each co-mediation.
- Support each other.

As we will see in the last section of this chapter, on many occasions youth street organizations, either autochthonous, from migrant origins or mixed, have acted as natural

mediators in their close environments. On many occasions, these organizations have been supported by a third party that has also collaborated in the mediation process, resulting in a co-mediation of two organizations, from which, for practical reasons, usually two spokespersons take the lead in the process.

4.5. Gangs and Mediation: Experiences of Success and Failure

Although we have a considerable body of work on the causes of conflict, its evolution, and how best to manage it, very little work has focused on developing a clear understanding of what constitutes success. Too often, it seems success or failure is assumed, postulated, or defined on a case-by-case basis, and usually in an arbitrary and poorly reasoned manner. (Bercovitch, 2007 p. 289)

At first sight, it may seem simple, even obvious, to tell success and failure apart. Reflecting on this, though, the answer can become entangled. What are we talking about when we refer to experiences of success and failure regarding gangs and mediation? The answer will probably depend on the subject we ask, and the reason for this is that parties in conflict have different interests and aspirations. Taking the situation to the extremes, and just for the sake of clarity, the preferred outcome for authorities involved in conflict with youth street groups in their region of influence would be that the group disappeared, whereas for the group it would be the freedom to exist as a group without being criminalized for it. Of course, there is a whole range of possibilities in between. Jameson (1999) discusses four criteria for a mediation process to be successful, either in the process, in the outcome, or in both: fairness, satisfaction, effectiveness and efficiency. Fairness, although it needs to be measured (neutrality, equitability, consistency...) also needs to be perceived as such by the parties. If an outcome is not perceived as fair by the parties, it cannot be considered successful. If it is perceived as fair, it is possible to say that the parties will be satisfied with it: "Perhaps the clearest concrete indication of a mediation success is the quality of effectiveness. [Effectiveness](#) is a measure of results achieved, change brought about, or behavioral transformation. Conflict management and mediation are processes of change" (Bercovitch, 2007 p. 293). The last criteria, [efficiency](#), sets the focus on the dimension of the process: "the cost of conflict management, resources devoted to it, timeliness and disruptiveness of the undertaking" (ibid.). In the case that interests this project, the complexity of determining success is even higher, because together with the "gang" factor, we also care about the human one. Gang members grow, learn, evolve and become empowered, both as individuals and/or within the group and the community, as will be examined in chapter 5 of this Concept Paper.

The position of gangs and gang members in mediation processes varies not only in each particular situation, society and conflict, but even during processes, as positions may easily vary from party to mediator. The focus groups carried out in Madrid at the end of 2018 in the Mediation Seminar for gang members in which TRANSGANG collaborated, showed the role of natural, intercultural mediator the (trans) gang performs for its newly arrived members: "Since the people living in communities are newcomers, language barriers and out-group prejudices they experience make them feel socially isolated" (Sánchez-Jankowski, 2003, p. 204). The gang, through its senior members, acts as a

bridge to reduce the culture shock for the members that have just recently arrived to the target society. From words and expressions that are different, to social ways, dealing with administrations or looking for a job, in many cases gang members take the role of “link-workers” for the members who need it. The “hidden curriculum” of members of these transnational gangs includes abilities such as natural intercultural mediation, empathy and resilience, as well as first-hand knowledge of the origin culture and the migration experience. With the proper training they can turn into valuable professional mediators, as demonstrated by former members of youth street groups who work as mediators for NGOs, associations, social services and even private companies.

In contexts where there is no or little state control, gangs can be found organizing basic aspects of everyday life, such as different groups selling goods in a market or occupying the public space. On many occasions the distribution doesn't follow power relations or the need to impose one group over the rest, but to an interest in avoiding conflict between groups. What has been called the “second economy”, has its own ways of management: “The second economy was only one component of the second society, which included a second public, a second culture, a second social consciousness and a second sphere of sociopolitical interactions. It was an interrelated sphere of alternative interests, organized along different principles” (Singerman, 1995, p. 242)

On other occasions gangs want to pacify/formalize their relationship with local/national administrations, and they need, in turn, a valid mediator: they have become a party. Regarding experiences of success and failure with gangs and mediation, both the relationships and the results of mediation processes will depend greatly on the sociocultural and political contexts of the settings in which the mediation takes place. Local administrations are key to achieving any kind of agreement, as are the idiosyncratic characteristics of youth street groups, that, even when transnational, cannot be understood in isolation from their local context. Applying here the scheme of the mediation process, we will have something similar to this in any gang vs administration process:

- Parties: Gang vs Administration.
- Mediators: Mediation Team/ Social Services/ Academy/ NGO...
- Interests: Gang wants to be recognized and legalized; Authorities want gang to leave criminal ways²⁴.

There is, in a mediation process like this one, an important lack of balance in power relationships that should not be underestimated, and that is key to how the process turns out: authorities here have the power of granting or not the legalization/recognition of the gang, while the gang's only strength is to offer their intention to leave violent ways. Scandroglio et al. describe this power imbalance:

They have no voice, they have no political weight and they do not have any economic weight either. Because of their greater separation of resources and mechanisms accessible to society as a whole, they have a special difficulty in articulating any type of response before the generation of social stigma or abuses of power. At the same time, they have little capacity to produce negative

²⁴ Not all the youth street groups are trying to be legalized and not all the authorities looking for the abandonment of the violence. For example, in Egypt with the *baltagiyya*, these kinds of street groups can become the gun of the government in certain cases, basically due to their informality and violent practices.

consequences to whom exercises such abuse. (Scandroglio et al. 2011 quoted in Queirolo Palmas, 2017, p. 92)

Whenever a prospective mediation process can be opened between a youth street group and administration/ authorities, the mentioned principles must apply: both parties have to be there voluntarily, trust mediators and be willing to collaborate to find a solution in which all win something. Later on in this section it is stated that it is complicated to try to generalize from one particular mediation experience; therefore, we do not intend to extrapolate results, but rather give an example, using the case of what happened in Spain with the ALKQN (Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation): While in Barcelona, Catalonia, a mediation process could be opened due to the good predisposition of both the group and stakeholders (Authorities, Academy, NGOs...) towards it, in Madrid, Community of Madrid, the youth street group was willing and had the support of different organizations and members of the academy, but the position of the most powerful stakeholder in the equation, the regional government, was in strong opposition. The first principle of Mediation, willingness, was missing. The future of the two groups, at that moment, took different paths: the group in Barcelona took the opportunity to create a legal association, to which many, but not all, of its members affiliated²⁵, while in Madrid, after a macro trial of the leaders, the ALKQN was declared an illicit association.

It is common for youth street groups to relate to each other beyond conflict and competitiveness, both among members and between two groups. Common backgrounds, shared public spaces and similar life experiences and expectations tend to bridge the gap. Where these characteristics appear, it is usual to find that either temporally or in the long term, gangs can reach agreements to work together in the pursuit of social benefits for their communities. This was proven, for example, during the earthquake in Mexico in 2017: youth street groups were among the first to collaborate in rescuing and helping victims. In November 2005 the Seminar “Latin youngsters: public space and urban culture” took place in Barcelona, with the novelty that members of some of the gangs active in the city at the time were invited to the event, and some attended. During the Seminar two leaders of these gangs appeared in public to condemn violence and to express their wishes of becoming legal organizations, a common pursuit for which both gangs were willing to collaborate beyond their differences and previous conflicts (Feixa & Canelles, 2007). When a gang tries to “enter” the system, however, there are several inconveniences that not all members are ready to take on, from the loss of secrecy or invisibility, to distrust in authorities and administrations. With the realization that legalization won’t mean a panacea for their everyday problems, some members can become more reticent about it. Young people in gangs, like young people in general, have future expectations, either positive or negative. When social conditions do not present them with attractive or at least viable ways of socio-economic progress,

(...) a gang emerges when the youths in these areas, primarily those from the first and second generation, become frustrated and disillusioned upon realizing they are not likely to find jobs that

²⁵ For a full account of this process see Feixa & Canelles (2006), Feixa et al. (2008, 2011).

can allow them to rise above the socioeconomic level attained by their parents. (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, p. 204)

This leads some youths to form gangs to generate income they believe will provide them with a better life than their parents. (Sánchez-Jankowski, 2003, p. 205)

Another important factor is the opinion and public manifestations of different social agents, from politicians to police authorities, with the mass media as a necessary collaborator. While some may praise the change of course of gangs, others will show distrust, stating they were criminal organizations and pointing out the dangers of legalizing them. “The issue with gang mediation is that it confers on two parties [a] standing that they should not have,” said Professor David Kennedy, director of the US National Network for Safe Communities (Peachey, 2014), advocating for a firm hand policy as the only possible treatment for this phenomenon. However, “[criminalization](#) of gangs not only does not erase them, but turns them into something endemic and reinforces real gangs, those criminal groups (often lead by adults with dark connections to power)” (Feixa & Canelles 2007, p. 24). Although gangs count on the support of the academy and local organizations, their capacity of engaging in dialogue with the authorities can be reduced to a minimum and limited basically to law enforcement agents:

The case of police forces deserves special consideration in this sense. Given the fact that they are the ones with more information and contact with particular persons, they become just another actor in the relationship dynamics between groups and people (...) it is interesting to contrast the range of possibilities opened by the existence of links with youngsters and with the organizations, both to achieve a better knowledge than the one offered by the media and to explore new ways of relations based on mediation, cooperation or social networks participation. (Feixa, Porzio, & Recio, 2006b, p. 20)

If the first principle of mediation, voluntariness, is missing in one of the parties, dialogue becomes complicated, even impossible. This, together with some members of the gang deciding not to join the legal association, can give an idea of how complicated a process like this is *per se*, and how necessary that the efforts for achieving integration and reducing criminality are made by all parties involved, and mediated by a capable and willing team. All the previous will also condition and affect the stability of the outcomes, even when the mediation process has been considered successful, and the outcome positive. At the beginning of this section we stated that a mediation process involving gangs and stakeholders will depend on multiple factors, not all of which remain stable over time or are similar in different places; therefore, constant readjustments will probably be necessary. Using an outcome, either positive or negative, as a precedent in the management of other conflicts, even if the circumstances may seem similar, is not a guarantee of a similar outcome, and can even be detrimental. This can also be applied in cases where a mediation process is set as a “pilot” process to be applied later in what may seem similar circumstances. “The desire to set a precedent is therefore linked to a broad range of impacts, and it will require a different conflict management strategy that conflicts where this is not a desired outcome.” (Jameson, 1999, p. 279) That is, if a Mediation process is started because of a specific conflict that needs intervention, the management would have little to do with the management of a mediation process that is started in order to set a precedent for future conflict.

The action of both left and right hands of the state, as Bourdieu²⁶ called them, is exemplified above. How local, regional or state authorities may decide to use either one depends on several factors, but not necessarily on the consequences that that decision will have on the final receivers of the policies or their long-term convenience: “I think that the left hand of the state has the sense that the right hand no longer knows, or, worse, no longer really wants to know what the left hand does. In any case, it does not want to pay for it.” (p. 4) An important departure point of our local research when dealing with administrations needs to be the knowledge of what local policies are being enforced regarding youth street groups, how the situation has been managed up to the present and what, if any, are their short-term expectations. If there is something that can be extracted from previous experiences is that academics, even if it is not their task, end up mediating in one way or another with the groups that are object to their study, even if there is no other reason for it than to offer a counterpart for the information and collaboration in their fieldwork.

“Conflict is key, and crime a possibility, an event, a contingency that, nonetheless, does not saturate the way of life and the ordinary organization of the group” (Queirolo Palmas, 2017, p. 66). Gangs fighting each other and taking conflicts to the streets is one of the ideas in the collective imagination that first comes to mind when gangs are named. The process of how that conflict is managed, however, is less known. Depending on the kind of conflict, the extent of its reach and the willingness of the parties, it is possible to reach more or less lasting agreements between the parties implied, usually with the help of a mediator or a mediation team. The Metropolitan Police in the city of London started using a mediation team composed by an ex-gang member and a social worker to mediate between gangs in conflict after two women were killed in the course of a dispute: “Mediation is used when enforcement is ineffective and the consequences of the feud are likely to be seen in spiralling tit-for-tat crimes based on business disputes, petty rivalries or issues over respect.” (Peachey, 2014). The team of mediators is now composed “of some 30 mediators – including entrepreneurs, former gang members and youth workers – picked and trained for the task” (ibid.). They work in a range of situations that go from low risk conflict to high risk, from mediating in a dispute over the use of public space to conflict related to drug dealing or death threats, but they also work together with gang members, associations and administrations to improve their lives:

The specialists tell the individuals who they are, why they are there and what the consequences of continuing a violent course of behaviour will mean. They provide support, mentoring and often solutions to social problems such as housing, education, access to jobs etc., by securing support from other partner agencies already working with or potentially able to support the individuals concerned. (Phelps, 2014, p. 8)

Although the measure has its detractors, who allege that giving gangs the possibility to manage conflict this way is somehow granting them recognition, it has been working for more than 10 years, and the death rate in gang conflict has decreased “from 29 in 2008 to 12 last year” (ibid.) Queirolo Palmas (2017) refers to this kind of intervention as “(...)

²⁶ This information has been extracted from an online interview:
<http://www.variant.org.uk/32texts/bourdieu32.html>

forced mediation (preparation of the condition of environments so the groups can develop some *gang diplomacy*)” (p. 137). However, voluntariness of the parties is a precept that can get complex when referring to groups with a long history of conflict and hostility, and the mediation team operating in London reports several cases in which they were unable to persuade members to cooperate (Peachey, 2014). As mentioned in the section devoted to conflict, Lederach (1996) stated that in 70% of the cases of conflict in which personal relationships had been damaged it was not possible to restore those relationships, and some of the reasons for this can also be found when the parties are gangs. One of the participants in the focus groups carried on in Madrid in the Mediation Seminar explained that in the conflict between gangs, truces were possible and even desirable, but he didn’t see it as realistic to talk about a complete solution because there were too many resentments about past situations. Here, as in many other situations, the line between gang and individual conflict becomes vague, as the group is present in almost all spheres of the members’ lives. Even though new members, even leaders, are willing to opt for new ways of relating with other gangs, on occasions senior members who have experienced former conflicts are more reticent to do so. It is on these occasions, when groups have to manage their own internal conflicts, when researchers, mediators and other agents are kept in the dark, as these conflicts aren’t shared even with close allies.

The figure of natural mediator appears here, although it is possible that not even s/he knows that what is being performed is a mediation process, but when internal conflicts are solved without the need of drastic solutions, we can infer that the opposed factions have been able to reach an agreement. Although in a “regular” “gang-free” situation Western societies are prone to see the justice system as a tool to turn to in case of conflict, gang members find turning to justice worsens the situation. Queirolo Palmas points out that “judicial-criminal treatment can also contribute to the production of conflicts and the fragmentation of groups” (Queirolo Palmas, 2017, p. 146), as members talking to authorities can be accused of treason, even if they are not betraying secrecy or giving out any personal information on other members of the group. As in any other kind of association, from parent associations in schools to political parties, in a youth street organization there are as many opinions as members, and, as in the examples mentioned above, not all of them have the same strength within the group. Also, as mentioned earlier in relation to North African groups, a respected member of the group or community usually has the role of a socially established mediator. Thus, however difficult it may be to comply with the principles of Western mediation outlined at the beginning of this section and with the criteria for a successful outcome, this leadership helps prevent major conflicts most of the time. This is why it is not unusual for the authorities, when the “left hand” of the state acts, to try to establish relationships with the leaders to gain access to the gang and to avoid larger consequences. In fact, experience tells us that when these groups are left without leadership due to persecution or imprisonment, far from disappearing or maintaining a low profile, the chaos caused by the most rebellious members can be amplified due to the lack of internal control.

According to the TRANSGANG theoretical perspective, several theoreticians 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. In Maghrib, some researchers have begun recognizing the significance of identifying pre-existing resources for dealing with conflict as well as culturally competent prescriptions for mediation processes (Irani & Funk, 1998; Majeed, 2004; Al-Ramahi, 2008). Mediators might consciously integrate some of the principles and symbolic practices inherent in Arab-Islamic reconciliation methodologies. Rituals such as *sulh* (settlement) and *musalaha* (reconciliation) exemplify key Arab-Islamic cultural values and meditation practices (Al Ramahi, 2008). Although the institutions of the state do not always penetrate deeply into society, "private" mediation is managed through informal networks in which local political and/or religious leaders determine the outcome of feuds between gangs or conflicts between individuals. For most people, however, conflict control and reduction are handled either by state-controlled courts or by traditional means. The path to resolution thus goes through local religious figures (*shayk*) or political leaders (*zaim*), not through social workers. In this sense, communal religious and ethnic identities remain strong forces in social life, as do patron-client relationships and patterns of patriarchal authority.

Anthropologists like Geertz, Geertz, & Rosen (1979) Antoun (2003) and Gilsenan (2005) who have assessed mediation processes and village politics in countries such as Morocco, Jordan and Lebanon, have emphasized the continuing role of traditional approaches to conflict management and resolution in Arab-Islamic culture. The findings of these studies reveal significant contrasts between established Western approaches to mediation and comparable Arab-Islamic approaches. Among them, we should highlight: 1) the primacy of communally oriented approaches; 2) the preferred "third party" in the Arab-Islamic approach is an unbiased insider with ongoing connections to the major disputants as well as a strong sense of the common good and standing within the community (e.g., age, experience, status, leadership); 3) the legitimation is guaranteed by communal leaders and village elders (*jaha*), who facilitate a process of acknowledgment, apology, compensation, forgiveness, and reconciliation; 4) the Arab-Islamic process depends on explicit references to religious ideals, sacred texts, stories, and moral exemplars, as well as to local history and custom; 5) the goals of the Arab-Islamic process manifest concern for preserving and cultivating the established "wisdom" of the community; 6) the aim of empowering families and the community to participate in matters of common concern for Arab-Islamic mediation perspectives; and 7) the Arab-Islamic process prioritizes relational issues, such as restoring harmony and solidarity and restoring the dignity and prestige of individuals and groups (Irani, 1999).

We can conclude that mediation as a resource for conflict management is an interesting tool with possibilities for improving the relationships between the gang and its immediate context, with other gangs, with authorities and even within the gang, approachable from many perspectives and possible to implement in any of the study contexts of the TRANSGANG project due to its intersectionality and implementation possibilities.

5. (Trans)Gang Spaces: Social, Cultural and Historical Dimensions

(Social) space is a (social) product. (...) The more so in view of the further claim that the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action. That in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power; yet that, as such, it escapes in part from those who would make use of it.

(Lefebvre, 1991, 26)

In this fifth chapter, we define how spaces are understood in the project. It is necessary to go beyond the physical space (which is also defined) to understand other spatial dimensions, such as social space, cultural space, political space, gang space, etc. The key point to relate the spaces (both physical and not) is the idea of **border spaces**. Finally, we make a brief historical tour of the development of the gangs in each of the regions, highlighting the local specificities. We end with a discussion on border thinking, which emerges from the meeting of local traditions, global modernities and youth cultures in Europe.

Practices of young people in public spaces propose a reformulation of the popular city, recovering the social role of the street as a traditional sociability system. This cultural tradition should not be understood as non-reflexive, primordial culture, but more dynamically, as the ensemble of practices and arguments that secure the social bond and provide cohesiveness to human communities of varying scale. In this sense, tradition is not the opposite of modernity intended as the manifestation of human autonomy and creativity. Thus, it is important to understand these cultural traditions and knowledges, not as “[subjugated knowledges](#)” in Foucault’s (2012) words – that is, a whole series of knowledges that have been disqualified as non-conceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges – but as knowledges that allow young people to live according to the context and to know-how to manage conflicts, economics, politics and social relations, and which are equally significant for formal and informal entrepreneurs.

5.1. The TRANSGANG Spaces: beyond the physical

We start from the understanding of **space** as something not only material, but as a politicized social space where life and everyday actions take place (Foucault, 1978; Lefebvre, 1974). For this, it is necessary not to delimit the space simply to the physical or material, but to speak of different spaces that coexist within this notion (political, social, cultural, etc.) to configure a “gang” field understood as a setting in which agents and their social positions are located. The position of each particular agent in the field is a result of interaction between the specific rules of the field, the agent's habitus and the agent's social, economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1985, 1990).

In this sense, the neighbourhood is not only considered a context of socialization and social integration, but also as an actor, linked with higher urban and administrative frameworks (Harvey, 2007). It has an important role in the configuration of the structure

of opportunities for residents, the local Welfare system, their expectations, their individual and collective perceptions and behaviours within and outside the neighbourhood (Goering, 2003; Kennett & Forrest, 2006; Musterd, Murie, & Kesteloot, 2006; Sampson, 2012) and the development of social policies as well as measures to fight urban marginality and social exclusion (Forrest & Kearns, 2001; Bridge, 2006; Canohila, 2017; Urban, 2009). Spatial polarization exacerbates the ethnic and racial tensions that take place in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Silver, 2012; Ellen, Steil, & De la Roca, 2016). These areas suffer serious problems in terms of housing, unemployment, provision of resources and concentrations of families in situations of economic and labour precariousness, to the point that their residents are strongly stigmatized both internally and externally.

These dynamics devalue the status of the neighbourhood and its inhabitants, fostering the flight of the middle class and favouring the arrival of more disadvantaged groups. Some decades ago, authors from the Chicago School, such as Park, Burgess and McKenzie (1967), named these zones “transition areas” and they defined these processes as an invasion-succession dynamic. Transition areas are characterized by the deprivation and abandonment processes that impact on individual and collective identities and deteriorate collective spaces and social relations. From the neomarxist perspective, Harvey (2007) explained that internal and external stigma translates into serious limitations, such as mental barriers (Harvey, 2007) in access to employment, education, social relations and so on. In transition areas there are constant disputes over the meaning and uses of those spaces that involve different agents, such as State institutions, citizens, media, etc. As Butler explains, the mere presence of crowds of people in the street, in the physical space, already supposes a resignification of that place and the assumption of a political positioning that struggles within that fight/dispute (Butler, 2011). Thus, we must understand the physical space as a space in conflict and permanent dispute, especially in urban, non-territorialized scenarios such as central parts of the metropolis, malls or informal markets. Consequently, in the neighbourhoods, in the streets or on the corners there are constant clashes over the meaning and uses of these “[disputed spaces](#)” (Duhau & Giglia, 2004).

Beyond the physical space, we could interpret that there is also a political dimension. This political dimension allows the disputed spaces to be materialized between those who hold power (normally accumulated around the State or the ‘market’) and the rest of the people (Bourdieu, 1990). The [political space](#) and the physical space are closely related. Thus, if we understand this space as a ‘place’ divided by positions of more or less centrality, we will see who accumulates political power and who, as they are further from the centre, remains in subalternity (Solís & Ballesté, 2018; Ballesté, 2018). This centrality or not of the political field can also be seen in the occupation of the physical space, not only in the appearance of the subaltern subjects in the central positions, but also with the reaction that the dominators of the political field display when facing these occupations. Those who are relegated to marginality in the political space are also usually cloistered to peripheral spaces in the physical one (ibid.). When these peripheral groups emerge on spaces that ‘do not belong to them’ (according to the powers), normally the political field

goes into ‘action’ and deploys a set of measures to get them out of there (appearance of the police, judicial harassment, stigmatization, etc.).

The youth street groups studied here live similar processes. They normally occupy physical [peripheral spaces](#) (neighbourhoods, squares, corners, cafés, informal markets...) and are marginalized from both political and physical spaces. In a similar sense, the occupations of the physical space, the reactions that these occupations elicit on the part of the powers, and the struggles of subaltern groups to redefine this situation, also generate a specific location in the social space. Here we understand the social space following Bourdieu and Wacquant. For Bourdieu:

Thus, the social world can be represented as a space (with several dimensions) constructed on the basis of principles of differentiation or distribution constituted by the set of properties active within the social universe in question, i.e., capable of conferring strength, power within that universe, on their holder. Agents and groups of agents are thus defined by their relative positions within that space. Each of them is assigned to a position or a precise class of neighboring positions (i.e., a particular region in this space) and one cannot really -even if one can in thought- occupy two opposite regions of the space. Inasmuch as the properties selected to construct this space are active properties, one can also describe it as a field of forces, i.e., as a set of objective power relations that impose themselves on all who enter the field and that are irreducible to the intentions of the individual agents or even to the direct interactions among the agents. (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 724)

In this sense, [social space](#) would be a field of fields or a space of spaces. It would be the container where the other fields are introduced and where the direct interrelations between what we understand as the social, the citizen, the society and their different positions take place. Some different positions are not shown exclusively through social class (or other intersectional differences) but would also be determined by the accumulated capital (social, symbolic, economic, political, etc.), which would place them in a greater or lesser centrality of the principles of decision and power (Bourdieu, 1985; Wacquant, 2014, 2017).

In summary, beyond the physical space that is tangible and can be experienced, we can construct the image of a political and social space, equally measurable with central or distant positions, which allows us to locate agents within fields positioned in those spaces. That is, each individual or group occupies a specific position in the political and social spaces, which makes it possible to build the image that each of the other agents of the space have (State, market, media, academia, citizens, etc.). It is necessary, therefore, to build a gang space beyond the physical that will help us understand what place they occupy in the social and political spaces. We can understand the spaces of youth street groups as dynamic places within the three named fields/spaces (physical, political and social). As Queirolo Palmas (2017) explains, from school, going through other normative stages of society, young migrants, children of migrants or young people who belong to these groups, are very soon condemned to the street. Therefore, it is institutions that push them towards the street or public space. Even so, once there, the fields that act there intervene in this public space and relegate them to a position of atomization or marginalization. This marginalization in the place to which they have been directed causes social, political and symbolic conflicts for the re-adaptation of spaces of socialization or life.

This dispute over public space raises consequential effects both in the social space and in the political space (Delgado, 2014). Away from the centres, both through criminalization processes (for example, persecution or police harassment) and relegated to a subalternity in the social space (stigmatized by the powers, institutions and media), it is in the neighbourhoods where these groups find a space of meaning, struggle and identity. In short, what is in dispute is the re-appropriation of these places that, far from the intervention of the State or the economic powers, can be re-appropriated and re-signified by the group itself. A (re)appropriation that is not reduced to the physical or material, but rather integrates its roots in the historical tradition, social (its space occupied in the neighbourhood) and in the political (the search for reversing the power relations present between dominant and dominated). For all this, it is necessary to conceptualize these theoretical ideas about spaces in order to obtain valuable information about the project, which will enable us to define them properly and to understand how these groups move in each area.

Figure 5. The TRANSGANG Field: Composition and Agents

Source: Own Creation

5.2. Border Spaces

As we said before, thinking from the border is related to the decolonial theoretical perspectives. Thus,

decoloniality and border thinking/sensitivity/making are therefore strictly interconnected (...); the third-world origin of decoloniality connects with the immigrant consciousness of today in Western Europe and the United States. The immigrant consciousness (...) is located in the routes of dispersion of decolonial and border thinking (Mignolo, 2015, p. 176).

Inhabiting the border is from where we can think from an [interstitial space](#) between the subalternity produced by modernization processes, colonization, the marginality caused by migration and the very need to give a voice to and consider as detached subjects those who do not accept the options or conditions that the power offers or imposes on them (Mignolo, 2015). With this tool we find an epistemological starting point that can gather the regions, cities and groups studied throughout the project under the same umbrella.

In some way, these **border spaces** have never been exclusive to the Third World. With recent transnational migrations, decolonial thinking is expanding outside their spaces of origin (Santos, 2017). This leads to this border space also being introduced into the cities of Europe and the United States (Mignolo, 2003, 2015). These border spaces, like physical places, are also located on the urban margins (neighbourhoods, corners, squares, cafés, etc.) so that, from that periphery space, subjects can think of themselves as subjects between two worlds.

We can consider the physical space of youth street groups as a border space, since it is situated in the middle of the meaning line that gives that space the power and that young people themselves re-signify as spaces of emancipation or response. At the same time, this border space is not limited exclusively to the physical. There is a social, political and cultural inhabitation on the border that takes on a combination of different positions in the social structure, in the political space and also in the processes of cultural hegemony and counter-hegemony (Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel, 2007; Mignolo, 2013). As Mignolo rightly points out, the border space is not exclusively a matter of visible borders (state nations) but, more importantly, it is a political and social positioning within the modern/colonial world that seeks to break, consciously or unconsciously, with the epistemic and ontological forms decreed as unique (Mignolo, 2015). It is, then, in short, that “we, anthropos (‘the others’), who inhabit and think on the borders with decolonial consciousness, act in processes of detachment, of re-existence, and in order to let go we need to be epistemologically disobedient” (Mignolo, 2015, p. 180).

As it has been seen throughout the CP, the TRANSGANG theoretical perspective is constructed over various academic traditions. Of these, we use three specific traditions to create the epistemological framework on border space: subcultural studies, critical criminology and decolonial thinking. All this translates into a focus on analysing the symbols, the group and the interpretation of belonging to it; the migrations and the urban and social modification processes that they provoke; and the global, cultural, economic and political processes that also manifest themselves on a day-to-day basis.

Based on previous works, we can determine that youth street groups occupy three border areas (three spaces in dispute). In the [physical space](#) they are usually located in peripheral regions of the centrality (neighbourhoods, own premises, corners, cafés, parks, etc.). The **peripheral space**, beyond being granted by the State and the economic powers to subalternized social groups (including migrants, the working class and marginalized

ethnic groups) also serves as a space for re-appropriation and redefinition of its functions. It is through this understanding of the physical space as a **disputed space** that we can understand the role that it has for the groups studied here.

Following, in the social space defined above, youth street groups occupy a slippery space that moves between the stigmatization they suffer and the respect they seek. This bifurcation in the consequences of their social occupation allows us to observe one of the border areas. A binomial between stigma and respect that is fed back and that, as such, the more stigma or marginalization they receive (either from the media, from political discourses or from the State and its 'agents'), the more respect becomes an effective response weapon for their subsistence as a group (Bourgois, 2010; Solís Solís, 2017). Finally, these occupations of the physical and social spaces entail a political positioning; an acquisition of a role in the political field that also moves them between the marginalization to which they are led and the search for spaces of resistance (not always recognized) to face the processes of "loss of voice, ability to speak and of constructing stigmatizing identities about them".

To understand these differentiated positions and the consequences of these positions in the different fields, it is necessary to equip ourselves with the TRANSGANG perspective, so that we can situate spatiality (in a broad sense) in the project itself. A spatiality that not only focuses on the physical, but also allows us to understand all the places that these groups occupy in the different determined spaces.

5.3. Gang Spaces in TRANSGANG Regions

From this theoretical perspective, it is necessary to take into consideration the contextual aspects of the phenomena to operationalize our conceptualization of space. This means considering religion, social class, age, ethnicity and gender in all the regions with their own particularities. We need to understand the specificities of each region and city in order to observe in detail the contextual and structural processes that allow us to understand the spaces of the youth street groups. For this, it is necessary to recover the concept of 'historical-structural heterogeneity' (Quijano, 1989) to understand the frameworks of dependency that have been opened between the centres (metropolis or post-metropolis) and peripheries (the South, the neighbourhoods, the slums, etc.) in the last decades. Related to dependency, this conception of domination favours going beyond the State as a regulatory framework and understanding the domination of being, of knowing and of power as a necessary framework.

The analysis of space in all its dimensions is essential for understanding the frameworks of domination but also the frameworks of resistance, emancipation or re-negotiation of the position occupied by youth street groups in each region. In the physical space, several generations of young people can therefore be read as a sequential process of territorialization of urban spaces, which expresses the struggle for autonomy in everyday life. When young people tell their life stories, space is usually organized as a series of concentric circles that are based on the subject and its surroundings. This includes

physical space (housing, domestic space, neighbourhood, local and supranational space) and social space (family, kinship network, networks of neighbours and friends, networks of institutional relations). This concentric spatial dimension creates a number of polarities: private space versus public space, civil space versus state space, and institutional space versus recreational space. Each concentric level has certain conventions and rules. For example, each level comprises specific codes of conduct acceptable only in such spaces. Body contact and gossip is normal in private spaces but unacceptable in public spaces; and body performances are normal in public spaces but inappropriate in private spaces. This is precisely one of the problems with online social networks: there is no clear border between public, semi-public and private space, a clear rule (netiquette) for appropriate behaviour in each of the virtual worlds.

In **the Americas**, it is necessary to pay special attention to the violence and deaths of young people recently conceptualized as juvenicide (Valenzuela, 2015). Violence is exercised from different 'spaces', such as family, State, police, drug dealers, paramilitaries, etc. This cross-bifurcation of violence therefore has a real impact on the conception of the gang as a space for reception, use and expulsion of violence. At the same time, it is not exclusively a matter of direct physical violence, but rather that youthfulness can be manipulated through the social, political, economic, symbolic, etc. This is what we call [moral juvenicide](#) (Feixa et al., 2015). In this construction of street groups, actors positioned in different social and political spaces come into play. That is, these groups are central spaces from which to stigmatize certain social groups, incriminate them or give them the status of "non-beings" (Nateras, 2015). If we pay attention, and as discussed in the previous section, we can understand the spatial compositions that interact in this region from the impact that colonization, modernity and decolonial processes have had. At the same time, the entire region is traversed by the phenomenon of migration (either emigration or immigration, internal or external), which leads to the construction of these border areas that place these young people in complex contexts, such as those of Medellin, San Salvador, Santiago de Cuba or Chicago.

The case of Medellin is particularly emblematic. In the 90s it was the city with the highest homicide rates in the world, due to the increase in narcotrafficking and to the involvement of youth street groups (*combos*) in this (Perea, 2007; Salazar, 1997). The imaginary of this period has become a global label thanks to the figure of Pablo Escobar and the *Sicario*, represented in the movies and later television series, particularly *Rodrigo D No future* and *Narcos*. This imaginary has hidden the complex social histories of the local neighbourhoods ([comunas](#)). In the first decade of the new century, the urban reforms of the new municipality and some internal processes transformed the gang culture of the city, with a spectacular decrease in homicides, several experiences of gang truces and cultural creativity (like [Casa Colacho](#) and the grafitours in sites like [Comuna 13](#)). However, people displaced from rural areas after the demobilization of guerrillas, including teenagers and orphans, led to new problems, but also a very active pro-peace movement, in which young people were particularly active (Márquez, 2019; Perea Restrepo, 2015; Piñeros Pinto, 2017).

The other three case studies represent very different border spaces. Central American cities replaced Medellín in having the highest homicide rates. In San Salvador, the *maras* (Mara Salvatrucha and [Barrio 18](#)) became a kind of public enemy, rooted in transnational migration and deportations from the US. The control of several marginal spaces, the creation of artificial border spaces but also the attempts of truces and negotiations with the state, with the active roles of NGOs in the streets and in prisons and with solid initiatives like the Violins Orchestra with girls from different gangs (Chávez, 2018) allowed certain “left-hand” policies to appear. In Santiago de Cuba homicide rates are very low. Although the state denies the presence of *pandillas*, there are many street groups related to music landscapes, like [reaggueton](#) and [hip-hop](#), but also with some afro-descent religions (Caraballo-Cobas & Real-Infante, 2018; Lavielle, 2014). In Chicago, the spectacular transnational migration of the 20th century has ceased, but the geographical divisions of the city into ethnic and gang boundaries is still alive, and the violence is epidemic. The city is the homeland of the Latin Kings & Queens (Brotherton & Barrios, 2004): this youth street organization is still there, but prisons and streets (the Latino barrio) are both border spaces. In southside Chicago some experiences of truce and mediation among black and Latino gangs have been implemented, in particular Cease Fire (Chaskin, 2010; Finley, 2018; Spergel, 2017).²⁷

In the case of **North African societies**²⁸, the location of young people on the margins of the dominant social, economic and political fields, has allowed them to deploy an agency that works from the everyday to wade through, bypass or avoid the institutional structures of societies distinguished by their adult-centrism, which leave them on the margins and are led by the so-called “judges of normality” (Ghannam, 2013). This agency is rooted in the new technologies and traditional historical knowledge that connect young people with global cultures without losing their local colour. Young people tend to be drawn to an array of cultural and artistic activities: theatre, popular music, dance, photography and graffiti, which facilitates the creation of new sociabilities to escape their marginalization (Feixa & Sánchez García, 2017). In this way, young people’s actions are recognized as a creative process based on meaningful symbolic and material practices (Willis, 1990) that may, in many cases, be classified in more than one way, but which in all cases may be understood as resilience and resistance strategies. It is because of these social constraints that becoming a member of a youth street group constitutes a special way of escaping marginalization for young people in North Africa. Reciprocity, class solidarity and communitarianism are the fundamental mechanisms of youth street groups based on residence in the region. Thus, the peer group is one of the main determinants of their identity and class affiliations. The dynamism of the networks constructed in this way allows young people to be included into informal economic frameworks. Consequently, it is essential to understand the traditionally articulated local forms of resource management, economic entrepreneurship and political participation. In this regard, the

²⁷ <https://ceasefirechicago.org>.

²⁸ We are aware that Arab societies have a mosaic of organizations and social structuring processes that are historic.

neighbourhood as a social unit has endured in the popular traditional neighbourhoods of North Africa, along with many of the rules and regulations which make the local neighbourhood operate as an extension of the family. The twentieth-century context of rapid social transformation brought about new economic, social, and cultural developments for the popular classes to contend with the old social practices grounded in space, which were reworked (Abu-Lughod, 1971; El Messini, 1974; Singerman, 1995). However, popular and slum areas have been an important centre of social innovation and political dissent that challenges the youth street groups' exclusion from the social world (Bayat & Denis, 2000; Haenni, 2005; Koning, 2009; Sánchez García & Hakim, 2014).

Historically, in North Africa we can find the *fatwana* model of youth urban street groups. The term *fatwana* was reserved for those groups formed by members of the elite classes, differentiating them from political groups. The *ayyarun*, groups formed by members of the lower classes, were criminalized. This form of social organization appears with different names according to socio-cultural diversities in MENA countries: *fityan*, *ayyar*, *awbash*, *sharir*, *rind*, *aji* or *ghazi*, among others. Thus, young people are labelled as potentially dangerous as denoted by these terms. The *futuwat*, leader of the group, represents the juvenile ideal produced by the dominant groups, and the latter the "deviant" of the classical Arab societies. As structural elements of the urban society of North Africa, these groups came into contact with the Sufi brotherhoods, to become young people in collaboration with Sufi leaders, those responsible for the protection of the neighbourhood against foreigners. This was evident in the city of Cairo of the twentieth century, where it was customary for each neighbourhood to be identified with one or several groups of young people and the *futuwat*, as leaders of the *fatwana*, who excelled in the use of clubs, knives, swords and weapons. The neighbourhoods of old Cairo were identified by and with the *futuwat* and, correspondingly, the *futuwat* with their neighbourhoods (Sánchez García, 2010), where they influenced and protected. The *futuwat* is a local leader who organizes services for the neighbourhood, where his reputation is always positive. They safeguard women's mobility and honour, they do charity for the poor, they protect at circumcision parties and at wedding processions (*zaffa*), which are occasions when rival groups seek conflict. It is undeniable, then, that there is a certain continuity from the medieval historical *fatwana* to their contemporary forms among the youth groups of Cairo suburbs. During the last third of the last century, the arrival of rural migrants to the city and internal displacements have contributed to the *fatwana* losing their historical predominance. In informal neighbourhoods, the population bases solidarity in the place of origin. Consequently, unless you get a good economic base and a good network of relationships, *futuwa* leadership is limited. In some current peripheral urban areas, the streets and alleys are territorialized by the *shilas*, new grouping forms that have replaced the old *fatwana*. Despite this, during the last decades of the last century, the *futuwa* model, with its ethics and values for the protection of neighbours from fights, extortions and conflicts, returned, but now in the hands of Islamist associations, who have replaced the solidarity of the street with religious solidarity, updating and institutionalizing the prototype of the *futuwa*, adapting it to the youth groups of these urban settlements. In the streets of the neighbourhoods, their links with Sufism and Islamist associations help to

dignify them, and to invest them with a certain authority, reinforcing the model of expected virtues of young people, as opposed to the individual modernizing model that is reflected in the representations of juvenile masculinity from the dominant classes (Ghannam, 2013; Sánchez García, 2010).

Youth street groups could be seen as both a double generational gap and a way to benefit from their marginalized and “deviant” social position. In the case of young people in North Africa, the findings of the SAHWA project show that young people are ignorant of their cultural traditions. This causes a generational gap in the way of understanding the current social environment between them and their parents, as well as a political gap with the formal world of politics, economics and religion due to young people’s perceptions of these being far from their current youth cultures. In any case, TRANSGANG will not forget the cultural specificities of the peer groups involved in the research, nor the importance of face-to-face relations in North Africa. Rachid Touthtou, who presented the Morocco case study, pointed out the significance of urban protest as a reaction against a dictatorial state (attending to social demands), the uses of repressive violence against youth street groups and the appropriation by the State of youth street cultures as in the *tcharmil* case in Casablanca.

In **Southern Europe**, it is necessary to start from the changes that have occurred in terms of how to talk about or deal with youth street groups (Feixa et al., 2006a, 2008; Queirolo Palmas, 2017). Thus, in recent years media and political attention have decreased, which, spatially, relegates them to a greater marginality in all recognized spaces. It is, therefore, a political strategy that attacks young migrants directly, labelling them as ‘criminals or terrorists’ and that serves to expand this idea of social panic and the need to increase security. In the three TRANSGANG countries (Spain, Italy and France) there are differentiated processes in terms of the treatment given to these young people. While in the first two the phenomenon is more recent, in France these groups have already accumulated years of marginalization and criminalization action from the State. For this, the idea of thinking about these groups from decolonial or border points of view makes it possible to find joint frameworks of explanation. In this sense, the idea of **advanced marginality** of Wacquant (2014) is useful for understanding the actions of all the agents involved in the phenomenon (State, media, civil society, youth groups, police, etc.).

To understand these differentiated processes, it is necessary to look back at the contextual evolution of each country, as well as the migratory processes and the construction of nationalities, to understand the position to which these gangs have been relegated. In a seemingly post-colonial process, it is necessary to observe the change in the violence experienced by the metropolis in order to see those who are targeted by the State and the economic powers. At the same time, none of this can be understood without contextualizing the situation through the specific phenomena that cross the region: the crisis of 2008, the moral and social panic against terrorism, the loss of power of the Welfare State and the arrival of refugees, among others. In this sense, we cannot understand the spatial situation occupied by youth street groups (social, political and physical) without understanding the State’s response processes to these contextual events. Certain questions appear that must be answered by the project: Why is the label of gang

reversible? Why does the label of gang appear in a specific location and time to mark a specific class of people? How does the crisis, understood as a way of governability and marginalization processes, affect the gang talk perspective? How does the State produce and reproduce the phenomenon of the gangs?

In the case of Spain, the gang phenomenon emerged in the 60s in relation to internal migration processes and the creation of urban peripheries (Feixa & Porzio, 2004; López Riocerezo, 1970). In the 80s in relation to the transition into democracy, most gangs evolved into so called *tribus urbanas*, related to nightlife and artistic creativity, but also into small criminal gangs involved in drug dealing, like the phenomenon of *quinkis* (Cuesta & Cuesta, 2009). At the beginning of the 21st century, a new type of gang became visible, the transnational gang, which soon became known as *bandas latinas*. These gangs emerged due to the increase in migration from Latin America, particularly from Ecuador and Colombia, by means of family reunification of the teenagers of [Generation 1,5](#) (Feixa, 2008; Feixa et al. 2006a). After the 2008 crisis, immigration from South America stopped, gangs from central America and the Caribbean became more visible, and the living conditions of all these teenagers got worse. In all the cases, at first the gangs were formed by boys from the same country of origin (for instance, Ecuador in the case of Latin Kings & Queens and Ñetas, Dominican Republic in the case of Trinitarios and DDP, and Central America in the case of Mara Salvatrucha). However, soon young people from all Latin American countries merged with young people from other migrant origins and also with young Spanish people, both male and female, with whom they shared schools and neighbourhoods. In this period, boys from North Africa (including the so called *menas*) created their own street groups, which after the terrorist attacks of Paris (2014) and Barcelona (2017) became the recurring suspects of the media. In Barcelona and Madrid, the migrants concentrated in poor or peripheral neighbourhoods, but they did not create ghettos and no territories were controlled by gangs. Some battles and murders were published, but they were far from Latin American migrant contexts. In this sense, central areas of neighbourhoods and cities became protagonists of conflict because they had been appropriated and transformed into disputed spaces or, following our theoretical framework, “border spaces”, where both physical and symbolic struggles arise among all the agents implicated in the gang field.

In Italy the situation was similar: migration was concentrated in the industrial cities of the north, particularly in Milan, and the phenomenon of youth street groups developed in the mid 2000s. The arrival of refugees and migrants from North Africa, and the rise to power of xenophobic political parties, have worsened the situation (Cherubini & Leccardi, 2018; Queirolo Palmas, 2018). Consequently, in Milan, efforts towards recognition and legalization cannot be detected because street groups have been pushed away from public spaces, transforming them into more flexible, fluid, fragmented organizations. Thus, more than placed in a particular neighbourhood, street groups meet in parks and squares, that is, disputed spaces. However, neighbourhoods are a fundamental marker for the constructions of their identities dealing with local and global subcultures. In France, as mentioned above, transnational gangs have their roots in the 60s related to the immigration of the former African colonies, particularly Algeria, Tunis

and Morocco (the TRANSGANG countries). On the other side, the urban planning of the *banlieues* (slums) produced the classical model of marginality (Wacquant, 2013). In 2005 the so called “*revolte des banlieues*” made this phenomenon visible, but also showed the attempts of mediation led by local agents. The case of Marseille, with big poor Maghrebi neighbourhoods, is in this sense emblematic (Mohamed & Mucchielli, 2016).

Figure 6. The TRANSGANG Regions and Cities

Source: Own creation

6. Researching (Trans)Gangs: Methodological Notes

...iterative-inductive research (that evolves in design through the study): drawing on a family of methods; involving direct and sustained contact with human agents, within the context of their daily lives (and cultures); watching what happens; listening to what is said; asking questions; and producing a richly written account that respects the irreducibility of human experience; that acknowledges the role of theory, as well as the researcher's own role; and that views humans as part object/part subject.

(O'Reilly, 2005, p. 2).

Traditionally, ethnography has been the main source for obtaining qualitative comprehension of “other” worlds as they are experienced by their members. Our research team will share the gangs’ worlds across three continents to obtain the *verstehen*. At the same time, the ethnographic methodologies will allow us to compare youth street organizations and sociability of two transnational communities (Latinos and Arabs) both in their countries of origin and in their diasporic situations. This way of doing ethnography is based on the need to provide the researcher with data from multiple sources and formats, to establish a dialogical relationship between researcher and researched and to produce knowledge that can potentially contribute to social reform, self-empowerment and social justice (Brotherton, 2015, p. 78-104). In this chapter, the main aim is to establish the methodological premises of the research as a whole, facilitating the way to contextualize local contexts properly. In addition, some method questions are explained to make the research planning understandable.

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, & Keil, 2012, p. 26-27). This methodological approach requires ethnography of the daily activities of these groups and how they construct their group identity rooted at the same time in the physical and virtual space. Among the physical spaces we can highlight the market, religious spaces, cafés and bars, and civil associations as significant places where alliances are made and cultural traditions are shaped. That is, places where knowledge is built, shared and disseminated, understood not as 'submissive knowledge' but as knowledge that allows young people to live according to the context and manage their economies, their politics, their social relations and, obviously, their conflicts. It is, therefore, about collecting, describing and analysing what young members of gangs know. This makes up a particular knowledge, a knowledge that is local and differential. This knowledge has sometimes been called “tacit knowledge”, as truths derived from personal experiences are standards of behaviour and judgments built by a cultural regime and, consequently, products of historical and cultural specificities. In addition, this local and cultural knowledge is expressed through a language often rich in metaphors and forms of "common cultures" and "grounded aesthetics" (Willis, 2000) that can only be learned by the relationship with others: this is doing ethnography.

6.1 Extended Case Studies

The critical anti-colonial ethnography proposed by Brotherton (2015) will serve as an epistemological guide of "good practices" for the case studies that will be carried out in [Barcelona](#), [Medellín](#) and [Casablanca](#). These are in-depth studies that will be contrasted with other cases in which other types of policies have been established: [Madrid](#), [Marseille](#) and [Milan](#) in southern Europe; [Oran](#), [Tunisia](#) and [Algiers](#) in North Africa; [Chicago](#), [Santiago de Cuba](#) and [San Salvador](#) in the Americas.

To develop transnational connections it is necessary to go beyond a top-down approach, and move towards definition and learning from solid comparisons located within a broader structural context. Rather than start with deductive reasoning, for example, the "comparative sociology of urban marginality" of Wacquant (2008a), between Chicago and Paris, seeks to inductively compare geographically distant locations. For him, the first-hand observation is

an indispensable tool, first to pierce the screen of the discourses that revolve around these territories of urban perdition [...] and, secondly, to capture the lived relationships and the meanings that constitute the daily reality of the marginal city dweller. (Wacquant, 2008a, p.9)

This form of comparative ethnography, however, is exceptionally rare. Long-term involvement in diverse social environments requires a bilingual cultural sensitivity and an academic commitment that is as demanding as it is prolonged. The collaborative ethnographic projects of Burawoy (1998, 2009) offer an alternative that is based on the efforts to understand the global "forces, connections and imaginations" in which, through deep observation,²⁹ social realities can be perceived that are increasingly interconnected, although disparate. Such an approach can be found in Burawoy's (1998, 2009) [Extended Case Method](#) (hereinafter, ECM), which is based on several "extensions". These include

(1) "... the extension of the observer to the community under study [when t] the observer joins the informants in the rhythm of their life, in their space and time..."; (2) "the extension of observations over time [as t] here is not a way to predetermine how long the observer is in the field ... [though] it has to be long enough to discern the social processes that give integrity to the site ..."; [and] (3) "the extension of the microprocesses to the macroprocesses, looking at the way in which the latter form are formed by the first ..." (Burawoy, 2009, p. 17).

The extensions observe the way in which the macro processes affect and are integrated in the local world, considering what has been called 'Grand Schemes', understood as those ways of organizing the world that affects everyday life (Schielke, 2015). These schemes are external and superior to everyday experience, they are a guide for life and are characterized by ambiguity and polysemy. These guides have two relational dimensions: with daily concerns and experiences and with other great schemes. In short, these are guides that promise to provide meaning and direction to individual and everyday experiences. For example, the Islamic renaissance and neoliberal capitalism that have emerged together and have influenced each other since the 1970s, implying a sensibility of life: capitalism with an emphasis on profit and consumption, and Islamic revival as a

²⁹ The methodological perspective is discussed in depth in Chapter 6.

focus on the moral reward. However, the promises of both are transitory: the capitalist promise is literally consumed in its fulfilment, and the notion of religious reward leaves individuals constantly insecure about achieving the ultimate goal (Sánchez García, 2018). Finally, as a fourth extension, we cannot ignore that researchers must always be aware of their history and their current position: the need for [reflexivity](#) to combat the negative effects is one of the basic attributes of a researcher, by turning these attributes into a resource to follow, they can help in thinking about the data collected in the field. This project considers these extensions but changes a large part of the responsibility involved in the first two, since researcher and researched share the responsibility in the construction of knowledge, while the third and fourth extensions become the exclusive responsibility of the researcher.

An ECM approach includes a commitment to multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995) and mobile ethnography (Büscher, Urry & Witchger, 2010; Coleman & von Hellermann, 2013; Falzon, 2009). 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, as well as 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. Another ECM requirement is that researchers should always be aware of their history, as well as their current inclinations. Burawoy argues that being thoughtful can help combat the negative effects of what are, in essence, the basic attributes of a researcher, while making these attributes a resource to take advantage of, and to help in thinking about the data collected in the field. In this research, the goal will be to work in accordance with these general principles, as described by Burawoy.

6.1. (Trans)gang Ethnography and “Truth”

Ethnography is necessarily an open and dialogic mode of social investigation, and thus resists easy codification (O'Reilly, 2005). Therefore, at its most basic, we can understand ethnography to imply the sustained involvement in the lives of those researched. By living with, or through repeated visits to those we are researching, ethnography provides the main means through which we, as researchers, can get close to young people and their ways of living, so as to know in detail and depth how they experience and understand their lives. Talking, listening and observing young people in the places where they live, work and play, is the main aim of the ethnographic TRANSGANG perspective. The different tasks related to ethnographic fieldwork (focus groups, narrative interviews and life stories, and participant observation) will provide rich and meticulous data on the patterns, problems and complexities of individual and collective perspectives of youth street group members. At the same time, we hope to understand their experiences of mediation with other social institutions and with other similar groups, and the meanings and understandings that contribute to this. How this sustained involvement in the lives of

others is achieved will depend on the conditions encountered in each case study. Nevertheless, there are some basic requirements that must be adhered to.

In our methodology, qualitative fieldwork points towards multi-sited team work. In classical settings of multi-sited ethnography, the ethnographer travels from some localizations and countries to others. In TRANSGANG, different local researchers will conduct fieldwork in different countries, and this original data will also be used by other TRANSGANG members who have not personally carried out that specific fieldwork. In multi-sited ethnography the researcher may follow for example the people, the metaphor, the plot or story, the life or biography, the conflict OR ‘the Thing’ (Marcus, 1995, p. 105-111). In TRANSGANG the focus is on the different spaces and times as well as cultures of youth street groups. In [multi-sited ethnography](#) it is important to connect to issues within digital ethnography, on the one hand, and embodiment, on the other. It is also important to study how the virtual and physical spaces interlink with each other similarly and differently in America, North Africa and Southern Europe.

Ethnographers will work with many different kinds of national and transnational groups; therefore, a team work method called a polyphonic ethos may be useful as it supports a kaleidoscopic view towards the questions of youth in comparative settings. In literature polyphony refers to a narrative feature that includes a diversity of points of view and voices. This term has been widely developed and discussed by Mikhail Bakhtin, who sees dialogism as fundamental to human relationships. Each voice has its own perspective and its own validity, but what’s more, every person is influenced by others in an inescapably intertwined way, and no voice can be said to be isolated. In Bakhtin’s words (1981):

... authentic human life is the open-ended dialogue. Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 293).

Dialogism is also important when the narrative interview method is applied. Here the researchers encourage informants to describe their life story in the context of studied themes. The dialogue takes place between the researcher and the informant but also in the form of the informant’s inner dialogue (where different emotions, different parts of the stories, different experiences are intertwined in many ways). Especially when the narrative interview touches difficult and emotionally heavy life-histories, the narrative may become fragile and inconsistent with breaks, blocks and pauses. In the narrative interview method, the focus is on how the informants construct and analyse their life-course, not forgetting the four types of power effects that Burawoy outlines, but carefully reflecting those.

In TRANSGANG the dialogue takes place at least between a) local researchers and informants; b) local researchers in each country; c) local researchers and other TRANSGANG members; and d) between team members and other academics, policy makers etc. Co-analysis with local fieldworkers is suggested as a way to circumvent some

of the power hierarchies, and balance out the potential air of epistemological arrogance often embedded in anthropological research.

Regarding knowledge, as it is noted by Schutz, “the buildings used by the social scientist are, therefore, so to speak, constructs of the second degree, namely constructs of the constructs made by the actors in society itself, actors whose behaviour the researcher observes and tries to explain according to the procedural rules of his science” (Schutz, 1974, p. 37-38). This remark poses the question of what we can do with our data collection. If any ethnographic research result is an interpretation, it is a translation, so our goal is to produce a hermeneutic approximation to young realities in the TRANSGANG regions considering the internal diversities. This means constructing a phenomenology of youth perceptions and self-perceptions, representations and self-presentations, and youth agencies. This implies that all general theoretical social science frameworks are in a sense a way of life in themselves, whose concepts have to be mastered, as a way of practical activity, generating specific types of descriptions. This is double hermeneutics. It supposes a degree of considerable complexity, since its connection is not merely unique; there is a continuous 'slippage' of concepts constructed in sociology, which individuals appropriate, to analyse whose conduct was originally described, and therefore they tend to become integral features of this behaviour. This epistemological perspective facilitates the understanding of human behaviour from the reference frame that acts.

This knowledge is rooted in [phenomenologism](#) and *verstehen* (understanding), hermeneutic/understanding, and can be located at a number of different levels. First, the intuitive level, understanding intuitively is the inherent capacity to associate personal meanings to a social context. Secondly, knowledge through experience. Finally, the knowledge through personal, empathic or sympathetic identification. Consequently, it is necessary to distinguish between tacit and explicit knowledge. To clarify: Tacit knowledge is personal and subjective knowledge based on direct experience with a social or non-social environment; explicit knowledge is public knowledge, or verbally coded information that is transmitted through symbolic mediation. A distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge must be added between existing contingently acquired knowledge and knowledge gained through rules. As a result, Max Weber's *verstehen* is the application of tacit knowledge to all significant and intentional actions. In this sense, it is a subset of empathy with special features. However, following Weber, we can distinguish between understanding or comprehending the meaning of an action (*Aktuelles verstehen*); understanding the reason or purpose of an action (*Erklärendes verstehen*); and identifying the specific meaning of a particular action (*Deutendes verstehen*) (Schutz, 1974).

Consequently, for the ethnographic researcher it is necessary to apply the so-called [participant observation](#) as a general strategy in their research. This technique is one type of data collection method. Its aim is to gain a close and intimate familiarity with a given group of individuals and their practices through intensive involvement with people in their cultural environment. This qualitative method has its roots in traditional ethnographic research, whose objective is to help researchers learn the perspectives held

by studied populations. Qualitative researchers accomplish this through observation alone or by both observing and participating, to varying degrees, in the studied community's daily activities.

The method is distinctive because the researcher approaches participants in their own environment, rather than having the participants come to the researcher. Hammersley & Atkinson (1993) distinguish seven main stages of participant observation: (1) initial contact; (2) shock; (3) discovering the obvious; (4) the break; (5) focusing; (6) exhaustion, the second break, and frantic activity; (7) leaving. The researcher engaged in participant observation tries to learn what life is like for the members of the group while remaining, inevitably, an "outsider." While in these community settings, researchers make careful, objective notes about what they see, recording all accounts and observations as field notes in a field notebook. Informal conversation and interaction with members of the study population are also important components of the method and are recorded in the field notes in as much detail as possible. Information and messages communicated through mass media such as radio or television may also be pertinent and thus desirable to document³⁰.

A central question for any research study relates to the degree of confidence in the "truth" that the findings of a particular inquiry have for the subjects with which, and the context within which, the inquiry was carried out. Within the prevailing research paradigm, truth value is described in terms of internal validity, that is, the isomorphic relationship between the data of an inquiry and the phenomena those data represent. However, more pertinent is the compatibility of the constructed realities that exist in the minds of the inquiry's respondents with those that are attributed to them. This relationship is termed credibility and needs to be established with the individuals and groups who have supplied data for the inquiry. It is assessed by determining whether the description developed through inquiry in a particular setting "rings true" for those persons who are members of that setting. Because these persons represent different constructed realities, a credible outcome is one that adequately represents both the areas in which these realities converge and the points on which they diverge. A credible inquiry generally has the effect on its readers of a mosaic image, often imprecise in terms of defining boundaries and specific relationships but very rich in providing depth of meaning and richness of understanding.

Two strategies are suggested here to facilitate transferability. Firstly, [thick description](#) (Geertz, 1973) because transferability in a naturalistic study depends on similarities between sending and receiving contexts, the researcher collects sufficiently detailed descriptions of data in context and reports them with sufficient detail and precision to allow judgments about transferability. Effective thick description brings the reader vicariously into the context being described. And secondly, purposive sampling because the foundation of transferability is an adequate description of the sending context, the search for data must be guided by processes that will provide rich detail about them. In contrast to the random sampling that is usually carried out in traditional studies to gain a representative picture through aggregated qualities, naturalistic research seeks to

³⁰ For more details see: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/466/996>

maximize the range of specific information that can be obtained from and about that context. This requires a sampling procedure that is governed by emerging insights about what is relevant to the study and purposively seeks both the typical and the divergent data that these insights suggest.

6.2. Meta-Ethnography as a comparative analysis method

In this section we discuss the three stages of the research and the data analysis method based on [meta-ethnography](#) analysis. After translating the TRANSGANG conceptual approach rooted in our conceptual perspective on youth street groups, each ethnographic fieldwork researcher will construct their case study based on narrative interviews, focus groups, observant participation and life stories. This will lead to an interpretation of the everyday life of youth groups. It is important to pay particular attention to the ways of comparing data in these different contexts.

The research is planned in three main phases. The first and initial phase (Year 1) is a systematic review of the historical literature on youth gangs. The second stage, understood as the central phase (Years 2-4), involves a multi-sited and multilevel ethnography that explores how gangs act as agents of mediation between local communities and the State. The ethnography will also identify barriers and obstacles that impede mediation attempts. To this end, the ethnographic study will compare youth street organizations from both transnational communities (Latinos and Arabs) in their homelands and in their new European neighbourhoods. The multi-sited ethnography will use the same methods and collect a similar kind of qualitative data. It will start with 6-month in-depth case studies in Barcelona, Medellin and Casablanca, during the first two years. These case studies will include six focus groups with stakeholders, gang members and other young people; four life stories of gang members (two men, two women); six narrative interviews with three stakeholders and three members; and finally, participant observations focused on mediation processes. In Catalonia, this will be a re-study of the gang situation, since a previous study was carried out in 2005-08, and new insights will be gained from the fieldwork among Young Arab migrants. In Medellin and Casablanca, the fieldwork will be carried out with the help of local researchers. Then, during the third year, comparative case studies will be conducted in Madrid, Marseille and Milan in Europe; in Chicago, Santiago de Cuba and San Salvador in the Americas; and in Oran, Tunis and Algiers in Africa. These case studies will be composed of three focus groups with stakeholders, gang members and young people; 2 life stories with gang members (one man, one woman); six narrative interviews with three stakeholders and three members; and finally, participant observations focused on conflict and mediation. Both the contrast and core cases will be implemented by local researchers. These contrasting case studies will last six months, and they will be carried out by team members and local researchers. The methodology will be the same, but focusing on youth gang policies, experiences and mediation processes. In addition, in each core case, city workshops will be carried out during the fieldwork with active participation of gang members or ex-

members, with the objective of producing episodes of a documentary-fiction series centred on 'good practices' of gang membership.

Finally, in the last stage, with this ethnographic material, during the third and final phase (Year 5), the Principal Investigator will produce a meta-ethnography (Britten et al., 2002). He will use both the systematic review and the ethnographic data to develop a renewed model for analysing transnational youth gangs in the global era. This part of the project is theoretical, but its purpose is applied: to determine more effective ways of intervening that challenge the hegemony of the criminal gang model that appears as dominant in the neoliberal era.

Accordingly, the analyses of the collected qualitative data will be conducted through Meta-Ethnographic analyses. Qualitative data sets will be analysed in local languages by local researchers. Meta-ethnography is a method for synthesising qualitative empirical data that is interpretive rather than aggregative in approach; it works through the principle of the 'reciprocal translation' of the meanings of one case into the meanings of another (Noblit & Hare, 1988). When we use the term 'synthesis' in the specific TRANSGANG context, we are referring to the process of synthesizing data from local researchers in order 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 should adopt 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 contextually 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 second interpretation will be conducted 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 will interpret this interpretation of the local analyses with the support of local researchers.

Figure 7. The TRANSGANG Methodological Approach

Source: Own creation

According to the project's objectives, the aim of TRANSGANG is to gain a comparative perspective based on one stage of primary analyses and two stages of secondary analyses of the data collected with the methodological approach. Thus, three main levels of analysis are proposed, from which we will be able to combine the results in a single transnational picture of youth street groups. This perspective is developed in the TRANSGANG methodological approach, based on an interactive research process, which is structured in three main phases according to the research management summary and meta-ethnography approach. Consequently it is necessary to implement a synthesis approach for data analysis at the transnational level based on our objectives.

In the data analysis we will use **clustering** to implement all levels of interpretation. Clustering means finding common themes in the local case studies. The clusters, drawn from TRANSGANG's topics and main research questions, make it possible to compare the datasets related to the everyday life of youth street groups. In other words, the clusters are the measuring sticks to make the diverse case studies comparable. Based on these questions, the TRANSGANG UPF team has produced 4 clusters with different themes/topics, in which the cases (composed by focus groups, narrative interviews, life stories and participant observation notes) from the 12 cities can be embedded³¹. According to our theoretical perspective, TRANSGANG has adopted four thematic dimensions:

- a) **Gang relations:** This dimension makes it possible to analyse the institutional and virtual relations of youth street groups with other individuals, groups, neighbourhoods and social institutions (school, family, police, prison...). We will

³¹ The use of these four different dimensions in the research is forced but it is necessary for heuristic reasons. In social reality, all of these variables appear imbricated and juxtaposed.

explore this cluster through the following topics: members (socio-economic profiles, ethnic, age and gender); economies; delinquency; leisure time; surveillance; rituals; engagement; disengagement leadership; political position and leisure.

- b) **Gang identifications**: This dimension identifies collective current trends of gangs and youth street groups. As we said in previous sections, we understand identity as the young people's background of personal and social narratives, subjectivities and identities. Our focus is on individual, and personal identity is understood as: Chosen: "I am who I say I am". Bestowed: "I am who others say I am". Simultaneous: "I am more than one identity at the same time". Strategic: "I am who I am depending on the circumstances". Virtual: "I am who I am shaped by global telecommunications". These identities emerge at an interface where, in addition to the hegemonic host culture and the traditional parent culture, various other subcultural traditions meet. As a consequence, the gang as an identity group is not a single model but a "continuum". This dimension will be analysed through topics such as members (socio-economic profiles, ethnic, age and gender), spaces/territories, expressive symbols, aesthetics (dress, body uses...), leadership, rules, organization, media presence and leisure).
- c) **Gang practices**: This dimension identifies, describes and analyses different cultural practices of youth street groups in relation to the articulation of different social intersectional conditions (gender, age, class and ethnicity). We will examine this across the following topics: members (socio-economic profiles, ethnic, age and gender), economies, delinquency, leisure time, surveillance, rituals, engagement, disengagement leadership, political position and leisure.
- d) **Gang subjectivities**: This dimension identifies, describes and analyses different cultural practices of youth street groups in relation to the articulation of different social intersectional conditions (gender, age, class and ethnicity). It will be researched through topics such as: members (socio-economic profiles, ethnic, age and gender), intergenerational, community (school, neighbourhood...), other gangs, NGOs, the State, transnational, family and other youth groups.

It is significant that the crosscutting dimensions of the project (gender, class, age and ethnicity) and the criteria used to select informants (stakeholders, members, ex-members and other youth) can be taken into consideration in every cluster during the data collection stage. Moreover, in the cluster dimension of the project, we consider some crosscutting dimensions that are operationalized using a dichotomy to deal with the ambiguous and blurred aspects of these dimensions, which in some cases are contradictory. The pairs are:

- Knowledge versus no knowledge;
- Inside versus outside;
- Online versus offline;
- Empowerment versus disempowerment;
- Visual versus digital culture;
- Self-presentation versus representation;
- Violence versus peace;

- Conflict versus mediation;
- Social media versus traditional media;
- Cooperation versus competition;
- Coercion versus dialogue;
- Individual versus collective.

In conclusion, the comparison will focus essentially on analysing the structures and processes that are evident in the (inter) relationships of youth gangs among themselves and with their environment. The clusters, drawn from the topics and main research questions of TRANSGANG, give us the chance to compare the datasets from each case with different topics and issues related to the everyday life of street groups. In other words, the clusters are the measuring sticks for making the diverse case studies comparable. At the end of the day, the product of this procedure will be a Cross-Case-Analysis. The researchers will check the last interpretation to ensure that every member of the TRANSGANG ethnographic team agrees with this last interpretation on a transnational level.

6.3. Some Notes on selecting informants

TRANSGANG will identify and recruit research participants based on their experience in mediation and conflict resolution inside the gangs and youth street groups, between different gangs and between the gangs and the outside world (the State, the neighbourhoods, the NGOs, etc.). This includes gang members (leaders, members, ex-members), non-members (young people belonging to the social environment of the gangs) and stakeholders (adults and professionals involved in gang conflict resolution processes). Following our theoretical perspectives and objectives, the model of Criminal Gangs will not be considered to define the type of youth street groups that we will research. As general inclusion/exclusion criteria, all social agents involved in conflict resolution and mediation processes (formally and informally) will be considered as potential research subjects. On the contrary, gangs, youth groups or adult institutions (police, jail...) that still use and have not given up the use of violence in their interpersonal relationships will be excluded. The use of violence, and/or the participation in street conflicts in the past could be a criterion for inclusion if participants have learned to overcome these experiences; however, we consider it possible that some members are involved in violent and illegal activities. Moreover, the following categories of people involved in the project will represent different roles according to the way they participate in it:

1. **Core Participants:** Individuals that will participate in research and dissemination activities.
2. **Stakeholders:** Institutions (representatives), social workers, policy makers, academics, teachers and lecturers, police officers, journalists, members of NGOs working with gangs, members of youth associations and prison employees. They will be informed of the researcher's presence in their work places and their consent will be requested.

3. **Participants:** Individuals involved in participant observation but who will not take part in interviews, focus groups or documentary activities. Mainly young people and other gang members sharing urban and social spaces with gangs both virtual and physically. In this sense, as it is usual in ethnographic fieldwork, the participants must be informed of and consent to the researcher's presence and his/her objectives in the field.

Generally, the age of core participants and participants cannot be ensured before a prospective research study, but the principal age cohort of core participants will be between 14 and 29 years of age according to their significance and representation in the field. Stakeholders will generally be adults between 30 and 60 years old. With respect to the gender dimension, we aim to engage the same number of young men and women; however, the focus of the research, conflict mediation between youth gangs, will consider the participation of young women in youth street groups. In this regard, young women in North Africa do not have the same presence as young men in these kinds of groups due to cultural gender considerations in the area, so this fact must be taken into account when gender parity is considered among the participants in the area.

In the [recruitment process](#) in all fieldwork locations the same protocol will be followed according to the project's general objectives. Participants will be contacted through the PI's informal networks and through the local researchers' networks. Special procedures will be implemented according to each project's social context (see examples below). According to the three participant categories defined above, the recruitment process has been established in five stages:

1. In every case, the recruitment will start with the engagement of the researcher in a youth cultural centre, education institution or association (see examples in the next section) and a youth street group in a selected neighbourhood according to the socio-economic profile defined in the project with the permission of the authorities. Initially, the researchers will participate as observers in the formal and informal youth association activities, in order to identify the individuals for core research participants.
2. After a period of observation, the researcher will select some individuals as core participants according to the requirements defined in the project.
3. The researcher together with the Scientific Advisory Board and the Ethical Advisory Board will decide about the participation of the selected individuals according to the scientific and ethical standards of the project.
4. These participants will be informed of the aims, objectives and activities of the project and sign a consent form.
5. These selected participants will start the "snowball method". The researcher will follow them and recruit more young people for the research categories, core participants and regular participants. Considering the difficulty in contacting informants directly, the snowball method is essential for recruiting participants and core participants. The research subjects will not be contacted randomly, but rather via chain referrals. Therefore, subjects recruited initially will generate additional subjects, obtaining in each fieldwork environment a group of 150

young members. The snowball methodology will facilitate the engagement of a large number of gang members, young people of the area and stakeholders.

On the other side, the authorities' consent will be requested to carry out some fieldwork activities, but in no way will it substitute the research participants' consent, without which no interview or activities related to the project will be carried out. In this way, the first step will always be to obtain the participant's consent and, subsequently, to request from the competent authorities the permission to carry out this activity in their centre. This protocol ensures that participants are chosen by the researchers and not by authorities.

In all stages of the recruitment process the researcher should ensure the safety of core participants, participants and stakeholders, and not compromise pre-agreed levels of confidentiality and anonymity. The general idea is to remove, as far as possible, the opportunities for others to deduce identities from the compiled data in all the research stages in relation to the constraints of the law (country study, local law and international law) on how data on private individuals is to be held, managed and, if required by law, disclosed to the appropriate authorities. In all research stages, researchers will consider the need to eliminate all the indications that could facilitate the identification of places, institutions and individuals.

6.4. Ethics, reflexivity and placement

Members of youth street groups are and will be the main protagonists during the research project. The communication strategy will be to focus on them from the design to the presentation of results. This perspective corresponds to the general concern among ethnographers that research should not use informants as just sources of information, but rather, from an ethical perspective, the research should serve the interests of those who agree to participate in it. In this way, the research process is transformed into an empowering social action by young gang members through their involvement in the entire research process from the very beginning until the presentation of results. In general, it is understood that empowerment refers to the process by which an individual who is marginalized in a particular environment or context acquires the necessary confidence, knowledge, skills and strategies to overcome this marginalization.

TRANSGANG incorporates and implements throughout the entire research process the ethical guidelines of social sciences, humanities and research with human beings, recognized in the guidelines, codes and ethical standards promoted by EU legislation. In addition, the procedures implemented recognize the different ethical codes of the International Association of Sociology and the American Anthropological Association and the procedures recommended in both documents.

The subject of the research is extremely sensitive so it is essential to follow rigorous ethical processes to adequately safeguard the interests of all research participants regardless of their contribution before, during and after any activity carried out within the framework of the research project. Thus, the usual informed consent documents (whether they are stakeholders or members of gangs, children, adults or young people) have been

created in appropriate language forms for the different participants and in their native languages (Spanish and Arabic). In this way, we ensure that all the participants understand perfectly the commitment they acquire by signing these documents and guarantee the confidentiality of their participation.

Incorporating ethical concerns coming from Youth and Gender studies, TRANSGANG researchers will also include in their practice, during the whole research process and also after its completion, the following ethical approaches:

- the importance of participants' competence and knowledge and their fundamental contribution to the research as experts will be valued;
- their privacy and their integrity will be protected;
- all information and data concerning research participants will be safely stored;
- pseudonyms and other strategies will be used to protect participants' personal identities and keep them undisclosed;
- participants' freedom to take part (or not) in the research will be effectively guaranteed as well as their right to abandon the research at any moment, without needing to give explanations;
- researchers will be transparent about research objectives and methods and the use of the collected data;
- researchers will be open to answering questions and doubts about the research process before, during and after the completion of the fieldwork.

In addition, all researchers must commit to following the procedures designed exclusively for the project by signing the ethical protocol during all research phases. To guarantee this ethical commitment, TRANSGANG has established an Ethical Advisory Board and a Risk Management plan as a framework for ensuring that situations of risk and uncertainty for both researchers and participants are solved. The Risk Management plan is integrated into the overall project management processes and the Ethical Advisory Board is present at all stages of the project to guarantee the established ethical procedures.

TRANSGANG will also incorporate **reflexivity** in its research approach, considering it an essential feature for anthropological and social research, widely established and accepted in the Academia since the 1990s (Madge, 1993; McDowell, 1992; Pile, 1991). According to England's (England, 1994, p. 82) definition, "Reflexivity is a self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher".

TRANSGANG researchers will be committed to situating the knowledge they produce, to declaring the conditions of its production and their own position in relation to the fieldwork context and the participants. TRANSGANG team members, through self-analysis, will critically examine their role in the research process and in the production of knowledge. They will position themselves in the social field they are studying. This is a deconstruction of the dimensions (gender, age, ethnicity, class, nationality, culture, religion etc.) that affect their presence in the fieldwork and the related power relations, but also their vision and their relation with participants.

Reflexivity and placement will be two key elements for the TRANSGANG team in order to build an anthropological knowledge that critically distances itself from a colonial perspective, that is constructed in a participatory way and that seeks a horizontal relation with people involved in the research, considered as co-creators of the scientific knowledge.

From this perspective, researchers will also be asked to place themselves in relation to the wider social and political implications of the phenomena studied: the TRANSGANG team is committed to an ethical approach that deconstructs hegemonic visions of youth street groups. Therefore, TRANSGANG researchers, critically distancing themselves from the dominant criminal perspective, will position themselves in the field as non-neutral and active agents in the social and political arena. They will be asked to explore their own contradictions and power relations in order to achieve a more critical understanding of the phenomena and to elaborate more effective ways of intervention that challenge dominant neoliberal models.

The TRANSGANG ethical framework is synthesized in Figure 8 (see below). On the one side, the [Bermuda triangle](#), based on negative feed-backs from social and media representations (Stereotypes), the right hand of the State (Police) and the left hand of the State (Exclusion). On the other side, the [Magical Triangle](#) based on positive synergies between Academia (Research), the State (Policy) and Youth Work (Mediation). In the Bermuda Triangle (Criminal) Gangs are invisible, stigmatized, in prison or victims of [juvenile](#); in the Magic Triangle, (Transnational) Gangs become visible as agents of Mediation (see Feixa, Cabasés, & Pardell, 2015; Feixa & Oliart, 2012). Of course, the two triangles are ideal types, because in reality we always find hybrid solutions.

Figure 8. The TRANSGANG Magical Triangle

Source: Own creation

7. Conclusion: Between Resilience, Resistance and Empowerment

The usual policy of boy's work agencies has been to redirect the activities of existing gangs into wholesome channels by some sort of supervision. While this method is difficult and not always successful, its usefulness has been conclusively demonstrated by many Chicago agencies...

(Thrasher, 1927/2013, p. 508).

In this final chapter we outline some expected research results, both as a scientific dimension (new knowledge) and a applied dimension (proposals and recommendations for public policy and third sector organizations). We will base our argument on the three major themes of the project hitherto explained (a challenge to stigmatization perspectives, mediation and empowerment), therein incorporating the various transversal dimensions (gender, age, and transnationality).

The link of gang research with social intervention has been a continuity principle from the beginning of the empirical investigations. Not by chance the fourth and last part of Thrasher's book *The Gang* (1927/2013) is dedicated to "The Gang Problem", including an entire chapter entitled "Attacking the problem", in which he describes experiences of transforming the gang by agencies like the Young Men's Christian Association, the Boy Scouts of America, the settlements, the parks, the playgrounds, the Boy's Brotherhood Republic and Chicago's Boys Clubs. Even if the author recognized that "the politicians and saloon-keepers have also learned the trick of taking over these gangs and making clubs out of them, but their motives had usually been rather more for their own aggrandizement than for the good of the boys" (Thrasher, 1927/2013, p. 510), he also pointed out the treatment of gang members as individuals. He dedicated the rest of his life to using education as a powerful tool to help street kids (Merico, 2018; Rodgers, 2018). The reformist approach of the Chicago School has been criticized by labelling theories and by critical criminology, but also by those approaches that aim only to "suppress gangs". Our previous research experiences among gangs have been based on the principle of mutual respect, involved research and consensual intervention (Feixa et al., 2006; Queirolo Palmas, 2016). In the present research we will try to maintain a balance between **resistance** and **resilience**, starting from the principle that the goal is not to end gangs but to transform them from the inside and give an opportunity to their members.

Firstly, traditionally, a youth gang has been typically understood as a small delinquent group of young men based in a locality. The focus has been on crime and violence. Where there has been acknowledgement of larger-sized gangs with a greater geographical range, the emphasis has still been primarily on violence and crime. Less attention has been paid to migration (rural-urban, transnational) and to the economies of gangs; that is, how members and local communities gain a variety of benefits. Youth gangs should be distinguished from organized crime or transnational criminal organizations, including terrorist cells. Manuel Castells (1996) argued over twenty years ago that the network society is a 'space of flows', exemplified by online connectivity. The 'affordances' (potentials, opportunities) of the Internet are crucial to the contemporary social practices of youth, including the constitution of gangs. Moreover, gangs have specific cultural practices and creative outputs. These, too, require recognition. In short, we need new ways of talking about transnational youth gangs in the global era and this project sets out to fill this gap. Instead of focusing on cases of failure and social exclusion (i.e., in war and conflict), it aims to study successful cases of youth gangs and social inclusion (i.e.,

in peace and mediation). In order to do this, it will focus on experiences of intervention by youth gangs of two transnational communities (Latinos and Arabs) in three core cities and nine contrasting cities within three geographical and cultural regions (Southern Europe, North Africa and the Americas); however, the project will also consider other international experiences.

Secondly, the aim of this project is to deal with inclusive and positive aspects of gang membership and to positivize their marginalized position within the social structure. Some research focuses on proactive experiences in gang behaviour and policies (Leinfelt & Rostami, 2011; Venkatesh, 2009), but very few studies systematically compare such aspects in order to find variants and invariants in the evolution or in the reversal of the criminal gang model, use a transnational comparative methodology or focus on a group rarely included in gang studies (Young Arabs) along with another over-studied group (Young Latinos). Both groups face big challenges regarding new generations in their homelands and in their diasporic new lands. Their collective forms of behaviour ('*bandas latinas*', '*rappers*', '*hittistes*', '*tchamril*', '*baltagiyya*', '*hooligans*', etc.) have been seen as barriers to their social inclusion.

In order to explore their sociability, the TRANSGANG project will use two concepts: resilience and resistance. **Resilience** we understand as an affective, cognitive, relational and behavioural process that combines effective skills as a response to a situation of risk or adversity. This construction process consists in a balance between risk factors and protective factors at various levels, such as personal, family, community and contextual (Melillo & Suárez, 2001; Salgado, 2005). **Resistance** we understand as a (sub)cultural movement that opposes the dominant or hegemonic culture. These movements question and directly or indirectly confront the established social order, which generates in them dissatisfaction, discomfort, frustration, indignation or resistance. We understand that this resistance can be translated into the capacity to empower and transform their own lives and reality in a tangible and concrete way, building new social relationships and new ways of life (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Kaplan, 1999). Some forms of resistance are channelled and materialized through the body, everyday objects, clothing, music, dance, parties, words, and aesthetic values, among others. Our perspective aims to recognize youth street groups as forms of youth culture for resisting hegemonic discourses and practices and as social resilience institutions for dealing with and fighting stigmatization.

Consequently, as we said, young gang members are and will be the main protagonists during the research project and the communication strategy will be focused on them from the design to the presentation of the results. This perspective responds to the general concern among ethnographers that research should not use informants as just sources of information; but rather, from an ethical perspective, the research should serve the interests of those who agree to participate in it. In this way, the research process is transformed into empowering social action for young group members through their involvement in the entire research process from the very beginning until the presentation of results. In this sense, our ambition is to empower youth street group members as agents of mediation. From our point of view, [empowerment](#) refers to the process by which an individual or collective who is marginalized in a particular environment or context

acquires the necessary confidence, knowledge, skills and strategies to overcome this marginalization. From this premise a general question arises: is empowerment a reality for those who participate in research, or is it just an outcome of the researcher's imagination?

Thirdly, one of the main discussions during the TRANSGANG Kick-off Meeting was related to the role of the project in the hypothetical process of empowering youth street groups. Hence, it seems necessary to make some remarks on the concept of empowerment. In its most general sense, it refers to the ability of people to gain understanding and control over personal, social, economic and political forces in order to act to improve their life situations (Israel et al., 1994). It is the process by which individuals and communities are enabled to take power and act effectively in gaining greater control, efficacy, and social justice in changing their lives and their environment (Fawcett et al., 1994; Israel et al., 1994; Rappaport, 1981, 1985; Solomon, 1976). Central to empowerment processes are actions that both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context that governs the use of these assets.

Czuba (1999) suggests that three components of empowerment definition are basic to any understanding of the concept: it is multi-dimensional, social, and processual. Empowerment is multi-dimensional because it occurs within sociological, psychological, economic, and other dimensions. Empowerment also occurs at various levels, such as individual, group, and community. Empowerment is a social process, since it occurs in relationship to others, and it is a process along the continuum. Other aspects of empowerment may vary according to the geographical context and to the characteristics of young people, but these three remain constant. Nevertheless, these three general dimensions cannot conceal the specific social, economic, political and gender conditions for youth street group empowerment in the TRANSGANG regions.

Fourthly, it is essential to consider a **gender** perspective as a transversal perspective. There has been very little study on gangs from a gender perspective in the past and never from a comparative transnational perspective. Gender is indeed one of the key crosscutting dimensions that inform both data collection and data analysis in our research project. The aim is to develop a gender-attentive analysis of the youth street groups. This perspective can be articulated through three more detailed analytical objectives. First, we aim at integrating a gender approach in the analysis of the structural factors. Concentrating on the different gender regimes (and thus on gender relations between men and women that generate and perpetuate gender inequalities) we will focus on the socio-economic and cultural factors that shape the participation in youth street groups of young women compared to young men. Second, we want to understand the subjective reflections of the structural change on the construction of group identity, on the reflexive activity, and on the coping and negotiating strategies carried out by girls and boys in order to make sense of their membership. The third objective is to identify the different pathways for fostering equality between women and men that there may be in youth street groups.

When we undertake this kind of analysis, we should avoid projecting narratives of automatic progression and emancipation. Changes in gender structures and ideologies are not always progressive; they do not always entail an improvement in the living conditions of men and women, and they do not always go in the direction of greater equality. On the contrary, the dynamics of social change in this field often encompass conflicting tendencies. For instance, we can see, on one hand, the opening of new possibilities of action for young women (and men) in youth street groups. However, on the other hand, we can see the formation of negative models, the outbreak of gender violence, or processes of cultural backlash and the attack against women's rights in the heart of youth street groups. Many studies describe how gender inequalities can be exacerbated under certain conditions, such as structural adjustments and neoliberal policies, war, in the aftermaths of revolutions and rapid political transition, the gaining of power by conservative or fundamentalist forces, structural violence scenarios, etcetera. Part of our research tasks will consist in dealing with these conflicting tendencies in youth street groups, looking at their consequences in the lives of members and ex-members, and trying to sustain the positive process of transformation. In this sense, this project aims to cover this lack by exploring the place women occupy in traditionally masculinized spaces such as gangs – which have experienced substantial changes in recent decades. In addition, studies on resilience point to the significant and differentiating value of gender. Evidence has shown the presence of resilience in favour of women (Gallesi & Matalinares, 2012; Muñoz-Silva, 2012; Peña Flores, 2009), which is explained by the interaction, the management of social skills, the best management of their behaviours, sympathy and ability to give others their empathy, their creativity, the ability to collaborate, their autonomy and trust in relationships with others.

Finally, we recall that the TRANSGANG project is conceived as participatory and collaborative research, in which young people are not mere objects and informants but also subjects of the process of knowledge construction (and subsequently can be agents to share that knowledge). This means that young people who participate as informants in the process of data collection can become active agents in the process of disseminating project results. To do this, in addition to reports and academic publications, the project includes three special features whose primary purpose is the dissemination of research results: the [Gangpedia](#), The [White Book](#) and the [Documentary Film](#). If we keep that community alive after the completion of the project, we will have succeeded, because we believe that the lack of mediating spaces and intergenerational communication is one of the fundamental problems of global societies.

* * *

The overall TRANSGANG Concept Map is synthesized in Figure 9. It is a conceptual map with the principal objective of showing the main concepts on which the TRANSGANG project is constructed, which have been explained extensively in the CP, as well as showing the interconnections and interactions between them. This figure

integrates and interrelates three key dimensions of the project. Right to left: the purposes of the research – public policies, mediation and empowerment (What For); next, TRANSGANG Ethnographies, the methodological framework that provides the tools for the research (How); and, finally, we find the three concentric rings, which make up the object of study of the project: Transgangs, Gang Space and Global Context (What, Who, Why & Where)

Figure 9. The TRANSGANG Conceptual Map

Source: Own creation

8. References

This section incorporates all the references quoted in the CP, ordered by topics and regions. The works are quoted according to the year of publication. When this is not the original year of publication or it is a translation, we quote both the original publication and the quoted publication. For instance (Thrasher, 1927/2002).

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9. Glossary

This section gives definitions of the main theoretical (etic) and native (emic) concepts of the TRANSGANG project. The terms are hyperlinks from the CP. When they are in languages other than English they are in italics. This is the basis of the future Gangpedia.

Acknowledgement: This refers to the knowledge and mutual agreement between the parties in a mediation process, meaning the recognition of the other as a valid agent for negotiation.

Advanced marginality: Idea developed by the French sociologist Loïc Wacquant. It is an adaptation of the concept of urban marginality by analysing the peripheral neighbourhoods of Europe and the United States. It gives an idea of the social, political, cultural and economic processes taking place at the end of the 20th century, which are related to the processes of exclusion experienced in "advanced societies".

Agency: We talk about agents instead of informants, subjects or other forms of reference to the individuality studied in order to understand them as active persons in the construction of their own subjectivity, of their situation in the world and, ultimately, as persons with agency over their own condition (youth, members of street groups, etc.).

Algiers: City of 3,415,811 inhabitants (with a metropolitan area of more than 4 million) located on the Mediterranean north African coast. It is the capital and largest city of Algeria, and has the main port of northwest Africa. A total of 59% of the population is of Arab origin, 38% of Berber origin and 3% were born abroad. Its streets are the stage of *Hittistes* activities.

ALKQN: Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation: Official name of the Latin Kings & Queens.

Americas (The): American continent, including North America, Latin America and the Caribbean. The plural form is used in English to differentiate it from America in singular, which is identified with the United States.

Arabs: Semitic people indigenous of Arabia united mainly by language (Arabic). This includes people from the Arabian Peninsula, encompassing the inhabitants from south-western Asia (to Iraq) to North Africa (to Morocco). This area contains a population of over 300 million and a territory of more than 14 million square kilometres. In this text we use the term with a geographical meaning to address the cultural and linguistic diversity in the region rather than in a cultural or linguistic sense.

Association: A youth street group formalized into a legally or tacitly recognized entity.

Ayyarun: Groups of young people of the lower classes that in medieval times protected the neighbourhoods from other religious or ethnic communities, especially in times of weak government and civil conflicts. During more stable government times, their legal activities decreased, and this name referred to the groups of young people who terrified the privileged classes.

Bacrim: Name received by criminal organizations in Colombia (from BAnda CRIMinal).

Baltagiyya: 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 from the 1990s, when the Egyptian police decided to control them and turn them into a paramilitary corp.

Banda: Gang in Spanish. It can mean both a criminal group or a musical group. By extension, any youth street group. See Gang.

Bandas Latinas: Denomination invented by the Spanish media in 2003 to refer to youth street groups, formed mostly by young people of Latin American origin who had arrived in Spain at the beginning of 2000, setting off social alarm bells. They include Latin Kings & Queens, Netas, MS, Trinitarios, DDP, Black Panthers, and Vatos Locos, among others.

Barcelona: City of 1,602,386 inhabitants located on the Mediterranean coast of the Iberian Peninsula. It is the capital of Catalonia, the main urban centre of a metropolitan region with 4,774,561 inhabitants. It is the 11th European city and the 51st in the world in population. As of 2017, 17.8% of its inhabitants are of foreign nationality, including 1.25% from Africa and 6.65% from the Americas, not counting those people who have been nationalized. The majority of Latin Gangs are in the city, as well as youth street groups of

Maghrebi origin. In 2005 the Barcelona City Council promoted the legalization of two Latin youth groups, which led to the registration of the Cultural Organization of Kings and Queens of Catalonia (2006) and the Musical, Sports and Recreational Association Netas (2007) in the register of legal entities.

Barrio 18: A Central American gang, rival of the MS. Its name comes from the 18th Street of Los Angeles, where it was born.

Barrio: Space subdivision of a city or urban space often translated as neighbourhood. In this work, the neighbourhood surpasses the physical framework in order to situate it as a place of reference that generates spaces of belonging, proximity and the construction of specific social relationships. At the same time, the political, economic and cultural relationship dynamics that take place in the neighbourhood means that it is usually the reference space for the youth street groups studied here.

Bermuda triangle: Triangle located in the Caribbean, famous for its climatic turbulence and the disappearance of ships. By extension, a metaphor of the invisibilization of young gang members and the policies of gang suppression.

Black Panthers: Political movement of vindication of African-Americans, it began in California in the 60s. Currently this name also refers to a transnational youth gang, composed mainly of young people of Caribbean origin who are mainly black or mulatto. One of its factions is now considered an Illicit Association in Spain.

Bloods: A youth street group that emerged in California in the 70s within the African-American community. Rivals of the Crips. In Spain there are some cliques that bring together young people of Caribbean and sub-Saharan origin. One of its factions is now considered an Illicit Association.

Border spaces: From the decolonial perspective, this concept was formulated mainly by Walter Mignolo from the idea of border thinking. In this work, we understand border space as the place occupied by youth street groups as agents that move between countries (transnational and migratory), that live between public institutional recognition and criminalization processes (spaces), and which can become spaces of socialization that overcome, substitute or transfer social, political and cultural organisms existing in societies (mediation).

Border thinking: Concept that emerged from the decolonial perspective, mainly developed by Walter Mignolo, and born from the recent migratory processes. Migratory processes that generate frameworks of thought saddled between the local and the global, between the First and the Third Worlds, weaving new epistemologies that guide the structures of thought and action of those agents who, through their vital processes, stand on the border between the assumption of the imperial epistemology and the maintenance of the decolonial perspective.

Casa Colacho: Cultural centre located in Comuna 13 of Medellín, which promotes work with young people using memory and art.

Casablanca: City of the west of Morocco and capital of the Casablanca-Settat region. It is the main city of the Maghreb region and the economic capital of the country as one of the largest financial centres of the continent. Its population is 4,370,000 inhabitants and more than 8 million in the entire metropolitan area. In its peripheral areas there are neighbourhoods such as Sidi Moumen in the northeast of the city, in the Sidi Bernoussi district. With more than one million inhabitants, the terrorists of the Casablanca attacks of 2003 and 2007 came from some of its marginal neighbourhoods, mainly from Karian Thoma. This stigma has been exploited in recent years by youth groups to form the tcharmiles.

Chavos banda: Youth style characteristic of certain urban-popular settings of Mexico. In a generic sense, it integrates young rock & roll lovers. In a more restricted sense, it describes those who are grouped in territorial bands.

Chicago: The third city in number of inhabitants of the United States (2,722,389). Located in the state of Illinois, its metropolitan area reaches a population of 9,786,021. Scenario of the first classic studies on gangs, the most important Latin and African American gangs emerged on its streets. According to the 2013 reports, "the majority of Chicago's violent crimes come from gangs that try to maintain control of drug-selling territories." Violent crime rates vary significantly according to city areas, with low rates in more economically developed areas, but much higher crime rates in other areas.

Clicas: Name received by youth gangs on the Mexican-American border.

Co-mediation: Mediation technique that requires a minimum of two people (or groups) as mediator agents in the process.

Cohabitation: Recognition of the parties in a mediation process and the willingness to begin the process maintaining respect.

Colla: Youth street group or gang in Catalan.

Combos: Youth street groups in Colombia.

Community Mediation: One of the main branches of the research covered by the TRANSGANG project. Process that seeks to rebuild community bonds and eliminate the stigmas or marginalization that make it impossible.

Comuna 13: Medellín neighbourhood famous for gang violence in the 80s and 90s, the repression of the army and the paramilitaries, but also famous for urban reform, including a Grafitour.

Comunas: Medellín neighbourhoods.

Conflict regulation: Inner mediation process that allows regulation of the problems or conflicts that appear within it.

Conflict: Conflicts are situations in which two or more people, groups, etc., are in dispute or disagreement because their positions, interests, needs and values are not compatible or are perceived as incompatible. From our perspective, conflict allows social change, progress and problem solving.

Coros: Name received by youth street gangs in the Dominican Republic.

Criminal Group: According to the current Criminal Code in Spain, "union of more than two persons who, without meeting any or some of the characteristics of the criminal organization defined in the previous article, have the purpose or object of perpetrating crimes" (Article 570)

Criminal Organization: According to the current Criminal Code in Spain, "a group consisting of more than two people with a stable character or for an indefinite period of time, in which, in a concerted and coordinated manner, various tasks or functions are distributed for the purpose of committing a crime" (Article 570).

Criminalization: Action of criminalizing. In this text, explicit reference to the criminalization that certain social agents receive (especially members of youth groups) through the institutions, the media or other groups.

DDP: Dominican Don't Play, youth street group of Dominican origin. Rival of the Trinitarios. Present in Madrid, Barcelona and other Spanish cities.

Decolonization: Literally, process of suppression of the colony condition of a territory. In social sciences, an epistemological current that comes from subaltern and postcolonial studies, which explores the capacity for constructing anti-hegemonic and counter neo-imperial discourses of those subjects that occupy the global "South".

Disputed spaces: For Duhau and Giglia, a contested space is the place where the social agents present seek to redefine it, give it its own meaning or dispute it with other agents (other youth groups, the State or others).

Documentary film: One of the objectives of the TRANSGANG project is to produce a documentary that collects and analyses the workshops and the field work carried out in each city. Gang members or ex-members will actively participate in it and we will seek to portray the "good practices" of participation in these groups.

Effectiveness: Understood as one of the most positive samples of a mediation process, effectiveness is given by the benefits obtained from the results of the process and the changes and transformations it has produced.

Efficiency: In mediation processes, efficiency refers to the overall assessment of the process. That is, its cost, the resources or efforts dedicated and the results based on these.

Emic: Along with Etic, a concept introduced by Kenneth Pike but popularized in anthropology by Marvin Harris. Concerning the search to describe and understand the meanings that agents or groups give to their actions, rituals, traditions or other cultural events.

Empowerment: Relative to the processes of acquisition of power in a social group, in a specific context or in a relationship. Through postcolonial and decolonial studies, empowerment is understood as a form of appearance; of acquiring the capacity to be someone, to be somewhere and to speak in front of social, economic or political situations that relegate agents to a situation of subalternity and invisibility. There are

also certain criticisms of the concept, mainly due to its connection with the adaptation of subjects to neoliberal productive models, for example.

Etic: Concerning what can be observed and described without having in-depth knowledge and without seeking to understand the meanings of the social actions studied.

Eurogang: Research Network on youth gangs, promoted by American criminologists at the beginning of 2000, with the aim of studying the implantation of the phenomenon in Europe.

Extended Case Method: Ethnographic method that seeks, through the study of specific cases, to create certain general principles that make it possible to relate them all. Originally from the English anthropologist Max Gluckman, in this work we follow Michael Burawoy in his reformulation.

Falsos positivos: Young people from popular extraction, victims of extrajudicial executions in Colombia, falsely accused of belonging to the *guerrillas*.

Fatwana: Male association started in the 13th-14th centuries very similar to the European orders of chivalry. From the urban expansion of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they have been transformed into informal associations formed by individuals of youth social age. They played a leading role in protecting the neighbourhoods against members of other youth groups from other parts of the city until well into the twentieth century, until at the end of the 70s they were accused of illegal activities from the print media.

Futuwat: The leader of the group. Among his skills bravery, generosity, eloquence and gallantry stand out.

Gamberros: Designation in the Spain of the 60s to the various subcultures of the moment (mainly teddy boys, mods and rockers), stigmatizing their musical tastes and practices.

Gang economies: Regarding the internal economy of the gang and, specifically, the financing processes carried out in a given territory in order to maintain their activities.

Gang field: Following the field definitions drawn from Bourdieu, the gang field aims to encompass those agents that are part of it (State, academia, media, the gang themselves, among others), to understand how this field works, what position each of the agents occupies (although positions are variable) and see what dynamics are generated.

Gang practices: One of the four thematic dimensions the project adopts to obtain data on youth street groups. It specifically aims to identify, describe and analyse the cultural practices of these groups to articulate a combined analysis with the intersectional oppressions of young people.

Gang Talk: Forms of expression and rationalization typical of youth street groups. Idea introduced by Hallsworth and Young.

Gang-in-process: Term used to refer to group-type behaviours in an incipient phase, even if the media tend to identify them with criminal and lasting organizations similar to the gang pattern of North America.

Gang: Informal youth group, typical of urban-popular areas, characterized by its connection to a local territory, a situational leadership, and by the moral solidarity existing among its members.

Gangas: Gangs in Spanglish.

Gangpedia: Another objective of the TRANSGANG project is to complete an online space in which the main concepts related, used or linked to the world of youth street groups appear and are defined.

Gangs identifications: The identities (see Identity) built around and within the gangs.

Gangs relations: The relationships established between the members of the gangs and, mainly, other social, political or economic agents, being able to construct a framework of specific relationships for each youth street group.

Gender: Understood as one of the oppressive variables (together with social class, age, origin, etc.). In TRANSGANG it is essential to understand what place gender occupies within the gangs, but most of all, how it influences the political and social position occupied by each agent.

Generation 1,5: Name for young people of foreign origin who migrated during their adolescence, usually through family reunification processes.

Grafitours: Alternative cultural route in a delimited geographical space, carried out by inhabitants of such space. In some communes of Medellín it is an experience that has had great success, especially in the Commune 13.

Heavies: Youth subculture composed of young people who like *heavy metal rock*. In some Latin American countries they are also known as *metaleros*.

Helping: Concerning the help that is intended to be given to the parties in the mediation processes.

Hermanito-a: Member of the Latin Kings & Queens and other youth street groups who has passed the initiation process or has acquired full membership.

Hip-Hop: Youth style that originated in the United States in the 60s, fruit of the interaction between Black and Hispanic young people in the lower-class neighbourhoods of New York. It combines the passion for focal activities such as breakdance, skate, graffiti, rap music, etc.

Historical-structural heterogeneity: Term coined by the Peruvian intellectual Aníbal Quijano to refer to the power model with discontinuous relationships and conflicts between its components that form a historical unit.

Hittistes: In Algeria, literally "those leaning against the wall", used to designate young people who spend the day on the street looking for means of subsistence in Algeria. They move in groups and stand at strategic thoroughfares, so they know everything that is happening in the district, and take advantage of it.

Hybridization: Process by which a culture or subculture contextually meets another to end up generating new cultural forms.

Identity: The concept of identity appeared in the anthropological lexicon in the 60s and 70s, in the work associated with the "Manchester School" and influenced by American sociological traditions such as symbolic interactionism and social constructivism. As a category of analysis, anthropologists have tried to identify the different "grammars" through which this construction takes place. They initially focus on three: Orientalism, through which quality is mutually essentialized; segmentation, through which processes of fusion and group communication arise in relation to strategy and context; and praise, through which "otherness" is co-opted as a form of equality. It is a comparative dimension that allows identifying current collective tendencies of gangs and youth street groups.

Illicit Association: According to the current Criminal Code in Spain: "Those whose purpose is to commit a crime or, after being constituted, promote their commission, as well as those whose purpose is to commit or promote the commission of faults in an organized, coordinated and repeated manner". Also, "those who, even if their purpose is lawful, use violent means or alter or control the personality for its attainment". (Article 515).

Impartial: Mediation must be impartial (the mediator must not take part), so that it can develop successfully and be beneficial in its objectives.

Intercultural Mediation: Mediation produced in multicultural and multi-ethnic contexts.

Intersectionality: Theoretical current that analyses the social oppressions that cross each agent and group through the combination of different oppressive variables such as social class, age, religion, gender or ethnicity, among others. It comes from radical feminism.

Interstitial space: Space in the middle of two spaces. In this work, agents who are subordinated by the process of modernization, the marginality caused by their own migration and the need to have a voice and think as subjects that are detached from the two spaces described above. See Border Think and Border Space to complement.

Ishaba: In standard Arabic, this term designates youth groups that commit criminal acts or are accused of committing them.

Jaha: Assembly of legitimized leaders and elders to facilitate a process of recognition, apology, compensation, forgiveness and reconciliation. They are culturally empowered mediator figures in North Africa.

Juvenicide: Physical or moral disappearance of young people, including gang members, carried out by the State or by para-police forces.

Latin Kings: See ALKQN.

Latinos: Generic name received by migrants of Latin American origin in Europe.

Lawfare: Term that refers to the abuse of laws and judicial systems to achieve a strategic political or military purpose. From this perspective, the law consists in "the negative manipulation of international human rights laws in order to achieve purposes different from or contrary to those for which they were originally promulgated." In our case, it is applicable to laws to criminalize being a member of a youth group.

Madrid: City of 3,223,334 inhabitants. Capital of Spain with a metropolitan area of more than 6 million people, located in a central area of the country. Unlike in Barcelona, a hard-line policy towards Latino gangs was implemented from 2005, especially in lower-class districts of the city.

Magical triangle: Positive synergies established between public policies, social work and research. It can be applied to youth as well as gangs.

Mano dura: Policy of repression without contemplation of youth gangs, also known as zero tolerance. It was rationalized by the mayor of New York, Rudolf Giuliani, who applied it to repress the Latin Kings. It was then exported to Central America to fight the maras.

Mara Salvatrucha (MS): Youth group that emerged in California in the 80s and 90s among young people of Central American origin, later implanted in Central America as a consequence of deportation policies. From 2000 on, it became the epitome of youth gangs considered as criminal organizations.

Maras: From *marabunta*. At first in Central America the term referred to any youth group that used public space. From the year 2000, it referred to a type of youth group with a strong organized crime component. The most famous is the MS.

Marginalization: Process of social exclusion that relegates certain agents or groups to occupy peripheral spaces, sometimes physical, but above all political, economic and cultural.

Marseille: Second largest city in France. The main city of the historic province of Provence, today is the prefecture of the department of Bouches-du-Rhône and the region of Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur. It is located on the southern coast of France, near the mouth of the Rhone River. The city covers an area of 241 km² and had a population of 852,516 in 2012. Its metropolitan area, which spans more than 3,173 km² (1,225 square miles) is the third largest in France, after Paris and Lyon, with a population of 1,831,500 in 2010. Place of settlement of Maghrebi migrants, in their *banlieurs* (slums) we can find youth groups, in addition to Olympique's groups of violent hooligans. Despite being one of the most important economic centres in France, the unemployment rate in Marseille is still higher than the national average. In some parts of Marseille, youth unemployment reaches 40% in the most marginal neighbourhoods.

Matrix of domination: The matrix of domination or matrix of oppression is a sociological paradigm presented by Creenshaw that explains the problems of oppression related to race, class and gender that, although recognized as different social classifications, are all interconnected. Other forms of classification, such as sexual orientation, religion or age, also apply to this theory.

Medellín: Second largest city in Colombia and capital of the department of Antioquia. It is located in the Aburrá Valley, a central region of the Andes mountain range in South America. According to the National Administrative Department of Statistics, the city has an estimated population of 2.5 million since 2017. With a surrounding area that includes nine other cities, the metropolitan area of Medellín is the second largest urban agglomeration in Colombia in terms of population and economy, with more than 3.7 million people.

Mediation: Conflict management system. Mediation usually falls on an agent or agencies that are not directly linked or involved in the conflict. Mediation processes can be carried out by the State, by the police, by other social agents, by non-governmental organizations, etc.

Mediator: In mediation, one or more agents take the role of channelers and guarantors of said process. In this case, those responsible for this function will be mediators.

Menas: Acronym that defines the migratory phenomenon, more or less recent, of unaccompanied foreign minors into Spain. This label is discriminatory.

Meta-ethnography: System of analysis of data obtained through local ethnographies. It is a method for synthesizing empirical data that works through the principle of "reciprocal translation" of meanings from one study case to the rest. In TRANSGANG, this method will be used to develop a systematic model for analysing data from different regions and cities in relation to youth gangs.

Methodology: We understand methodology as a way of organizing research that allows us to treat and/or solve social problems understood as scientific problems. It allows us to integrate knowledge from diverse scientific disciplines to deal with the researched issue.

Migration (human): Movement of people with the intention of establishing themselves, either permanently or temporarily, in a new place. It has become a global phenomenon in the last decades. Beyond economic reasons, those who leave their home due either to a natural disaster or violent conflicts are considered forced migrants, and they acquire refugee status.

Milan: With a population of 1,351,362 inhabitants, it has the largest metropolitan area in Italy. Capital of the Lombardy region, it is located in one of the most prosperous regions and is the economic and industrial capital of the country.

Modern world-system: Social and economic theory developed by Wallerstein and his post-Marxist criticism. In short, the theory focuses on understanding global relationships through the distribution of spaces of greater or lesser centrality. With this, "Western" would be the centrality, while the rest of the countries would occupy dependency positions (economic, political, social, cultural, etc.) and, therefore, peripheral positions.

Moral Juvenicide: See Juvenicide.

Multi-sited ethnography: Ethnographic technique referring to carrying out different, parallel research studies in cities or regions. In TRANSGANG, the Barcelona team will be in charge of coordinating and carrying out this multi-situated ethnography.

Musalaha: Arabic term meaning reconciliation, also used for the process of reaching an agreement between two parties in conflict. Therefore, it is understood as a process in which the parties involved in a conflict initiate a relationship leading to communication with recognition, and lays the foundations for a tacit, spontaneous and voluntary pact of friendship.

Nation: Youth street group of transnational nature. The ALKQN defines itself as a nation.

Neoliberalism: Economic model that appeared through the ideas that emanated from the School of Chicago (through Hayek) and implanted, for the first time, in the Chilean dictatorship of Pinochet. The model was "popularized" through the presidential victories of Thatcher and Reagan, and is currently the main economic system in most of the world. Its main features include: privatization of public services, economic deregulation, lowering taxes, cutbacks (or dismantling) of the social arm of the State, among others.

Ñetas: Youth street group that emerged in the prisons of Puerto Rico in the 70s to help young prisoners. Afterwards it spread to the Caribbean and Latin community of New York and other North American cities through processes of deportation and transmigration to Ecuador and finally to Europe from 2000.

North Africa: Geographic region that covers the northern part of the African continent. There is not a singularly accepted scope for the region, and sometimes it is defined as extending from the Atlantic coasts of Morocco in the west, to the Suez Canal in Egypt and the Red Sea in the east. If it is limited to the countries of the northwest, such as Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, then we speak of the Maghreb, as the region calls the Arabic-speaking peoples ("West", the western part of the Arab world). The most commonly accepted definition includes Algeria, Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, the 6 countries that make up the northern part of the African continent. The countries of North Africa share a common ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity unique in this region due to the process of Arabization and Islamization that has defined the cultural landscape of North Africa.

Oppression: From the action of oppression, TRANSGANG refers to the position of subalternity occupied by certain social agents (mainly members of youth street groups here) that relegates them to a peripheral position in the political, social and physical spaces (see Political Space, Social Space and Space), and that, in addition, conditions them in different and differentiated ways through certain structural variables such as gender, social class, religion, age, origin, etc. (See Intersectionality).

Orán: City located on the northwest coast of Algeria, considered the second most important city in the country due to its commercial, industrial and cultural relevance. The metropolitan area has a population of approximately 1,500,000. The hybrid musical genre Raï ("opinion" in Arabic) flourished in the city. This musical genre, both because it is performed by females and due to its hedonistic lyrics about love and alcohol became object of repression by the government and the Islamists.

Pandilla: Denomination of gangs in Spanish. In some countries like Spain it does not have a pejorative meaning, and designates any group of friends. In other countries, such as Cuba or Ecuador, it designates a criminal group.

Participant observation: Participant observation is a type of data collection method typically used in qualitative research and ethnography. Its objective is to achieve close and intimate familiarity with a specific group of individuals and their practices through intensive involvement with people in their cultural environment, generally over an extended period of time.

Peripheral space: Physically non-central (or central but excluded, marginal or degraded) spaces in the city. In the social or political sphere, space that moves away from the centres of power and decision and that normally has a scarce power of influence in each field.

Phenomenologism: From Husserl's contributions from philosophy and Schütz's from sociology, phenomenology rejects the concept of objective research. Its objective is to analyse human behaviour in everyday life to provide a better understanding of social life.

Physical space: Physical distribution of space in a territory. Here, usually understood as the urban space occupied by each group or social agent and, at the same time, those types of "material" spaces where they relate, are located or move (e.g. street, neighbourhood, square, mosque, etc.). Although it refers to a purely material or palpable space, it remains a politicized space, in dispute or in constant re-appropriation and negotiation by different social agents (among them, youth street groups, the State, citizens, etc.)

Pibes Choros: Young thieves in Argentina. By extension young people of lower-class urban origin who are sometimes grouped in gangs.

Policefare: Related to the concept of Prisonfare (see Prisonfare), understood as public agents (State, police, public workers, etc.) embracing specific positions in the face of a "social conflict" with a given group (youth street groups in our case), maintaining a policy of increased repression, persecution and, basically, police harassment.

Political space: Following Bourdieu's conception of spaces and fields, political space is understood as the "field" where specific agents interact with a common basis of agreement but that due to differentiated positions within the field (for Bourdieu profane and politic professionals) have opposite interests. The oppressed or subaltern groups will seek to reverse the "laws" that move the field, while those who accumulate the power will seek to maintain their situation. As a space, we can measure the distances occupied by each group or agent of greater or lesser proximity to a central or peripheral point (greater or lesser capacity for decision). Normally, the agents or groups that participate in the political space would be: the media, the institutional politicians, the State and its different organisms, the citizenship and, among others, the different social groups (here, the youth street groups).

Precariousness: Situation of vulnerability as a consequence of the application of policies of neoliberal cuts that place the affected in a state of physical and psychological insecurity, which can lead to advanced marginality.

Prisonfare: Wacquant, in his work on the increase in urban poverty and the State's role in neoliberal contexts, uses the concept Prisonfare – along with Workfare (see Workfare) – to analyse and explain the role played by the State as "arranger" of the inequalities and the increase in poverty that the neoliberal model imposes on certain agents or groups. Following Bourdieu, we would be talking about a direct consequence of the increase or expansion of the "right hand" of the State.

Punitive justice: Type of justice focused on punishment and penalization. In the case of gangs, this treatment is linked to the "hard hand" criminal policies.

Quiet Encroachment: Term coined by Asef Bayat to describe the daily actions of thousands of people to oppose situations of inequality promoted especially in authoritarian environments.

Quinquis: In Spain, hybrid subculture formed by *gypsies (rom)* and *payos* (non-gypsy Spanish people). In the 80s it became synonymous of delinquent gangs that emerged in the urban peripheries, linked to petty crime and drug dealing. They became famous for a series of films starring gang members themselves, such as *Perros Callejeros*.

Ragazzi di vita: Name given to street kids in the Italy of the 60s.

Rappers: Youth subculture composed of young people who like rap music. They are part of the broader hip-hop culture, which includes break-dance, graffiti and other cultural practices.

Recruitment process: Ethnographic process of getting into the field, detecting agents involved in research and "opening" of relational doors between researcher and researched agents.

Reflexivity: Process that accompanies the researcher in the analysis of data and that should serve to coordinate what s/he as agent understands and sees in the field, what the studied agent understands and sees, and, finally, what allows the production of valid scientific knowledge from the combination of the two previous.

Reggaetón: Urban musical expression, of Latin American origins, that appeared for the first time in Puerto Rico and Panama as an adaptation of Reggae. With varied influences from hip hop, dancehall, salsa and electronic music, it is one of the most popular genres among young Spanish speakers and has generated different controversies due to the highly sexual and sexist content of some of its lyrics.

Resilience: In dialogue with the concept of resistance, TRANSGANG refers to the search for re-adaptation of the gangs; an adaptation that, through mediation processes, allows its members to have certain opportunities (such as leaving marginality or subalternity) in the face of situations of risk.

Resistance: We understand resistance as a (sub) cultural movement of opposition to the dominant culture and of confrontation with the established order that, with different ends, can have the consequence of empowerment and the capacity to transform marginal realities.

Restorative justice: Type of justice that prioritizes the recognition and restoration of the damage caused over the imposition of punishment. In the case of gangs, this treatment is linked to policies focused on rehabilitation, complementary to mediation.

SAHWA: Awakening in Standard Arabic- Acronym for the European research project on young people in five Mediterranean Arab countries after the Arab Spring.

San Salvador: Capital of the Republic of El Salvador. With a population of 567,698 inhabitants, and a metropolitan area of more than two million, it is the second largest urban agglomeration in Central America.

Santiago de Cuba: Located in the eastern part of the island of Cuba, it has a population of 444,851 and is the second most important city in the country after Havana.

Shayk: Religious leader who, in the lower-class neighbourhoods of North Africa, can acquire the role of conflict mediator due to his prestige and legitimacy in the community.

Shila: In North Africa, a gang of young people united by their place of residence, mainly the street or neighbourhood in which they are located.

Sicario: Killer for hire. In 90's Colombia such a figure was identified with minors from gangs.

Situated (Knowledge): Methodology of analysis and production of scientific knowledge that aims to differentiate or specify from where the study approach is produced. In TRANSGANG, the purpose is to use this epistemic tool to produce knowledge located in each of the regions or cities, trying to break with the Eurocentric vision. In order to do this, following Haraway, it is necessary to answer the following questions: from where, how, what place they occupy, who speaks for them or with what purpose each street youth group speaks, and, above all, what position the project researchers occupy.

Social labelling: Referring to the labelling of certain social groups or specific agents, often related to issues such as stigma, marginalization or subalternity.

Social space: Following Bourdieu, social space is understood as the spatial construction of the world based on principles of differentiation or distribution of agents in relation to the power accumulated through the greater or lesser possession of specific capitals. Thus, the different agents that make up a society occupy different spaces within the social "framework", sometimes with conflicting oppositions, which makes us think of the social space as a place of struggles and strengths.

Southern Europe: Region of Europe that mainly contains the countries on the Mediterranean Sea. Although with economic, political and social differences, there is certain "cultural" similarity between the countries that make up the region. It is mainly Portugal, Spain, South of France, Italy and Greece. However, sometimes countries such as, for example, Ireland have come to be considered South of Europe (not in a physical sense, but rather economic or social).

Space: In TRANSGANG it is important to consider space as a dimension that surpasses the physical (the "material"). Thus, we must understand other forms of spatiality (see Social Space, Political Space, Gang Spaces, etc.) that, beyond complicating social reality, allow a greater understanding of the position occupied by each agent or group in each field, space or specific place. With this, a useful epistemic tool is available for defining the relative positions and the relations of force or power that each agent occupies in a society.

State: We use the word with a capital letter to distinguish the form of political organization that appeared during the 19th century from other forms of pre-modern political organizations designated with the name without a capital letter.

Stigmatization: Although the idea of stigma related to the social sciences is deepened by Goffman, here we understand stigmatization as those processes that, related to subalternity or marginalization, generate a specific degrading image of certain social agents. These stigmatization processes can be created or carried out by the State, by institutional politicians, by the media, by citizens, by other peer groups, etc.

Subalternity: The idea of subalternity is linked to the appearance of the current of subaltern studies. In short, it refers to an epistemic and theoretical positioning by which certain social agents occupy spaces of

subjugation, marginalization or dependence, as opposed to others. Normally, this refers to issues of oppression such as gender, social class, provenance, among others.

Subculture: Cultural minority that occupies a subaltern position in relation to a hegemonic culture or a parental culture. Youth cultures are subcultures in both senses.

Subjectivities: From the point of view of the sociology of subjectivity refers to the field of action and representation of subjects always conditioned to historical, political, cultural, etc. circumstances. Moreover, it refers to the discourses about the reality of individuals.

Subjugated Knowledges: Following Foucault, this is knowledge that, due to oppression or epistemic colonialism, has been relegated to a position of concealment, non-validity or subalternity. It would be, in the face of modern capitalist Western knowledge, those other knowledges, normally located in "non-central" regions, which have historically been dismissed as invalid, incorrect or less important. In addition, we can also include all those popular wisdoms and street learning underappreciated by official curriculums.

Sulh: In classical Arabic it refers to an agreement on a property dispute. In customary law, it means a solution to an enmity. In general terms, it reflects a sense of conflict resolution through a mediation process: the two parties select individuals respected and legitimated by the community to mediate the conflict, declaring a truce (*hudna*); the goal is to arrive at an agreement that maintains the honour and status of both parties; when it is obtained a public ritual is performed for its sealing. Particularly important is the fact that the practice reinforces links between groups and not only between individuals, avoiding a cycle of revenge. In this sense, it is still common in areas where government justice systems have little force or legitimacy.

Supermano dura: Anti-gang policies applied in El Salvador in the 2000s that meant a hardening of the Firm Hand.

Tcharmils: 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, it quickly spread to Fes, Meknes, Agadir, Rabat, Marrakech and is appearing in other Moroccan cities.

The White Book: One of the TRANSGANG objectives is to elaborate a book of good practices, including processes of mediation or interrelation between gangs (or gangs with other social and political agents) that have been beneficial, positive or correctly developed. It is hoped, with this, to develop a model to follow for carrying out processes of mediation or communication with youth street groups.

Thick description: This term was used by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz in his essay "Dense Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture" (1973) to describe an ethnographic method by which thick description explains not only behaviour, but also its context, in such a way that behaviour becomes significant for someone outside of it.

TRANSGANG: Name of the project that investigates youth gangs in the global era.

Transition zones: Idea that appears throughout classic ecological urbanism that refers to the zone between the factory and the workers' homes. In short, it is an area of changing flows and intermediate urban spaces.

Transnational connections: Connections that occur in a larger area than nation-states. In TRANSGANG, mainly between North and South America, between the North and South of the Mediterranean area (between North Africa and Southern Europe) and between Southern Europe and the Americas.

Transnational: Specific forms of mobility, exchange and construction of identities that arise from the movement of people and knowledge and which generate new cultural, ideological, capital, etc. dimensions, mainly through the media, technologies, etc.

Transnationalism (Major): Greater or from above transnationalism that, in this case, refers to the transfer of practices, knowledge, imaginaries and institutional responses to youth street groups.

Transnationalism (Minor): Lower or from below transnationalism that, in this case, refers to the transfer of practices, knowledge, imaginaries and responses that the youth groups themselves have through migration, subcultural traditions or life strategies.

Tribus Urbanas: An urban tribe is a group of people, especially young people, who dress similarly or equally, have common habits and places of assembly and behave according to the ideologies of a subculture, which originates and develops mainly in urban ecosystems.

Trinitarios: Trinitarios or 3ni, is a multinational youth organization based in New York, composed mainly of Dominicans, or Americans of Dominican origin. The name Trinitarios comes from the main Dominican

revolutionaries of the Dominican War of Independence: Duarte (Juan Pablo Duarte), Sánchez (Francisco del Rosario Sánchez) and Mella (Matías Ramón Mella). The Trinitarios originated in 1989 in the prison of Rikers Island, a penal centre in New York where the Dominican prisoners united to protect themselves from the attacks of other inmates. Its colours are red, blue, white (the colours of the flag of the Dominican Republic) and (most significantly) lime green.

Trust: In a mediation process, all people involved must show confidence in the integrity and the capacity of each other for the negotiation. In particular, the parties must trust the mediator, and perceive them as an honest person.

Tunisia: The Republic of Tunisia is a state in the Maghreb region, with 165,000 square kilometres. It borders Algeria to the west and southwest, Libya to the southeast and the Mediterranean Sea to the north and east. The population of Tunisia was 11,435 million in 2017. Place where the so-called Arab Spring began in 2010, its 1,300 kilometres of coastline include the African conjunction of the western and eastern parts of the Mediterranean basin and, through the Sicilian strait and the Canal de Sardinia, it has the second and third closest points in continental Europe to Europe after Gibraltar, making the country the place of departure for illegal migration.

Validating: In mediation processes, act by which the parties are recognized in the process knowing that the mediators must remain neutral, without taking into account their preferences and personal conceptions, maintaining their equidistance to validate the parties.

Vatos Locos: Literally: drugster. It is also a youth gang that emerged in Mexico and the United States in the 60s and 70s as a result of certain American films, with an imaginary linked to graffiti and urban art. As of 2000 some Latin bands in southern Europe adopted the denomination, without a recognized presence of Mexicans in them.

Vatos: Young man in Mexican slang.

Verstehen: 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).

Vitelloni: Hairy in Italian. Name for young people grouped in gangs.

Workfare: Government policies by which unemployed people have to do community work or learn new skills to receive the benefits of the welfare state. According to Bourdieu, it is the left hand of the State.

Youth Street Groups: Generic term to designate any youth street group.

Zaffa: In the Arab culture, it is a musical nuptial procession that presents the bride to the neighbourhood in which the women participate dancing and the men throwing flames of fire in their path. Traditionally, they were protected by the youth groups of the neighbourhood.

Zaim: Political leader who acquires the role of mediator in neighbourhood disputes mainly in urban areas in North Africa.

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