

TRANSGANG

Transnational Gangs as Agents of Mediation: Experiences of Conflict Resolution in Street Youth Organizations in Southern Europe, North Africa and the Americas

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TRANSGANG. Transnational Gangs as Agents of Mediation: Experiences of Conflict Resolution in Street Youth Organizations in Southern Europe, North Africa and the Americas

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Abstract

TRANSGANG aims to develop a renewed model for the analysis of transnational youth gangs in the global age, in dialogue with two classics of urban ethnography, published nearly a century ago: *The Gang*, by F.M. Thrasher (1926) and *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, by W. I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki (1918-1920). To do this, the project will start by a systematic review of the historical literature on youth gangs, which will try to overcome the North-American-centrism, dominant in contemporary criminology. The central phase of the research will focus on a multisited and multilevel ethnography that will explore experiences in which gangs have acted as agents of mediation, as well as the barriers that have blocked these attempts. The project will compare street youth organizations from two transnational communities -Latinos and Arabs-, both in their homelands and in their new European neighbourhoods. Starting with three case studies of “good practices” in Barcelona, Medellin and Casablanca, which will be studied in depth, contrasts with other cases in which other policies have been implemented will be established: Madrid, Marseille and Milan in southern Europe; Algiers, Oran and Tunis in North Africa; Chicago, Santiago de Cuba and San Salvador in the Americas. Using an experimental approach based on the “extended case method”, it will have as its theme the making of a film that collects the experience of members or former members of gangs who have participated in mediation experiences. The ultimate goal is to develop a renewed transnational, inter-generational, intergeneric and transmedia approach to Twenty-First-century gangs, very different from the local, coeval, male and face-to-face model used for understanding gangs in the Twentieth century. Although the focus of the project is theoretical, its purpose is applied: to deduce more effective ways of intervention to prevent the hegemony of the criminal gang model that appears as dominant in the neoliberal era.

General Introduction of the *TRANSGANG Working Papers*

This document is the first issue of a series of digital publications being developed from the results of the TRANSGANG project.¹ The project is funded by the European Research Council and will be carried out from 2018 to 2022. The purpose of the project is to investigate transnational youth gangs, based on the mediation processes in which they participate, in three geographical regions: Southern Europe, North Africa and Latin America.

The series is titled *TRANSGANG Working Papers* (TWP) in tribute to the famous *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) of the University of Birmingham, which resulted in publications as relevant as *Resistance through Rituals* (Hall et al., 1976/1983). As in this case, our intention is that some of the *Working Papers* -work-in-progress- will be published in book format. This first publication consists of the *Project Proposal*, that was originally submitted to the call for Advanced Grants 2016. 231 projects were awarded funding as a result of this call. Of the 11 Spanish projects that were successful, only the TRANSGANG project was in the field of social sciences. It is also worth mentioning that TRANSGANG is the first ERC project on gangs, however the following year, in 2017, a similar project with whom TRANSGANG now collaborates was approved.²

Subsequent issues within this series will include the *Concept Paper* (the complete theoretical and methodological basis of the project and result of the first year of research); *Legal Considerations* (the legal and ethical framework of the project); *Background Papers* (a description of the socio-economic context and existing literature in each country and region); *Ethnographic Papers* (partial research results by cities and regions); *Transversal Dimensions* (analysis of transversal aspects of the research such as gender, media representations or virtual ethnography); *Special Features* (the result of the documentary film, the Gangpedia and the *White Book on Gang Policies*); and lastly the *Final Report* (report presenting comparative results of the project). All these publications will be published in English, although where possible additionally in Spanish (in some cases also in French and Arabic). They will comply with the *Open Access* regulations that HORIZON 2020 projects must follow, and will have of DOI and ISBN registration numbers.

With the exception of this first issue, whose author is the Principal Investigator, the rest of the publications will be collective. Authorship will correspond to the members of the TRANSGANG team who contributed to the development of the paper. The lead author

¹ The TRANSGANG Project obtained an Advanced Grant from the European Research Council (ERC-AdG) in the 2017 call. The IP is Carles Feixa Pàmols, Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona). The complete data of the project is: *Transnational Gangs as Agents of Mediation. Experiences of Conflict Resolution in Street youth organizations in Southern Europe, North Africa and the Americas* (TRANSGANG). European Union: HORIZON-2020, European Research Council - Advanced Grant [H2020-ERC-AdG-742705].

² We refer to the *GANGS project: Gangs, Gangsters, Ganglands: Towards a Global Comparative Ethnography*, whose Principal Investigator is Dennis Rodgers (Graduate Institute Geneva). Both projects -TRANSGANG and GANGS- will collaborate with the intention of producing advances in comparative band research.

will be named first, followed by the other authors and the PI in last position when he is not the lead author.

We believe that this series of publications will be of interest not only for researchers on gangs, migration and youth, but also for policy makers, members of civil society and youth organizations. Feed-backs and comments are welcome and can be sent to transgang@upf.edu.

Let the reading be fruitful!

Barcelona, July 2019

1. Introduction

According to Thrasher's classical definition, a gang is "an interstitial group which was originally formed spontaneously and was integrated later through conflict. It is characterised by the following type of behaviour: meeting face-to-face, battles, movement through space as if it was a unity, conflicts and planning. The result of this collective behaviour is the development of a tradition, a non-reflexive internal structure, esprit-de-corps, moral solidarity, group awareness and a link to a locality" (1963 [1926], p. 46). This means that a gang is an informal and local group of peers, in conflict with other groups of peers, and sometimes with adult institutions. Even if in this definition delinquency is not central for the constitution of gangs, the police and policy approach to the problem in the US has reinforced its criminal dimensions until the present. When delinquency was not considered, other words were used (like peer-groups, street-groups, subcultures, countercultures, lifestyles, etc). The word 'gang' used to be applied to Youth Street groups with a migrant or ethnic minority background and not to other youth groups.

In the last 15 years the Eurogang research network, of which the candidate is a member, agreed, after a lot of discussion, on the following definition of gang: "Any durable, street-oriented youth group, whose involvement in illegal activities is part of their group identity" (Esbensen & Maxson, 2012, p. 5). Even if the candidate agrees on this definition, it is not easy to apply it to our subjects of research –Latino and Arab Youth Street groups- because the border between criminal and non-criminal acts are fluid, and the 'social labelling' process is part of the gang constitution. We proposed consequently the term "gangs-in-process" to define the case of the Latin Kings in Barcelona (Feixa et al., 2008). That is, there are group-like networks and behaviours at an incipient phase, even if media tend to identify them with the criminal and durable organizations similar to the North American gang pattern. In this case, there are street-oriented youth groups, with names, symbols and long-time traditions, composed by youngsters of deprived social backgrounds. Some of their members have connections with illegal activities, even if those activities are not part of the core group identity. There is an ambiguity in the ordinary use of the Spanish word 'banda' (gang) by media and experts: it includes delinquent boys, informal street groups, music and fashion lifestyles, local formal networks, and transnational migrant organizations.

For all these reasons, in this project we will try to update Thrasher's classical definition, incorporating the context of the network society, and considering gang not as a unique model but as a 'continuum'. On one side of the continuum, the classical gangs based on illegal activities; on the other side, the non-criminal gangs and subcultures based on leisure and economic activities; in the middle, a variety of hybrid youth street groups that mix both strategies. Thus, we propose to add some nuances (in bold) to the definition:

A transnational gang is an interstitial group originally formed spontaneously and integrated later through conflict. It is characterised by the following type of behaviour: meeting face-to-face (and on- line), battles (and amusement), movement through space as if it was a unity (and search of intimate spaces), conflicts (and alliances) and planning. The result of this collective behaviour is the development of a tradition, a non-reflexive

internal structure (and rules for regulating the exchanges with other gangs and institutions), esprit-de-corps, moral solidarity, group awareness and a link to localities (in their homeland, in their new land or in cyberspace).

The existence of a gang implies the presence of five criteria: a) a name; b) an external label; c) an internal awareness; d) ordinary activities; e) continuity in time for more than a year. Gang membership may include deviant and non-deviant behaviour, people from different generations (teenagers, youths and young adults), gender (males and females), ethnic, social and territorial backgrounds. Their unity is based on rituals and symbols in common, that constitute the basis for an imagined community.

The study of youth gangs has usually favoured their most controversial and harmful aspects. This focus corresponds to the priority given to violent gang representation models by public policy and media. TRANSGANG project aims to reverse this approach. Instead of focusing on failure cases 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). It will focus on experiences of intervention by youth gangs of two transnational communities (Latinos and Arabs) in three cities within three geographical and cultural regions -Southern Europe, North Africa and the Americas- but will also take into account other international experiences.

2. Relevance and Novelty

The TRANSGANG project will develop a renewed model for the analysis of transnational youth gangs in the global era, in dialogue with two classics of urban ethnography, published nearly a century ago: *The Gang*, by F.M. Thrasher (1926) and *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, by W. I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki (1918-1920). 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 organisations, 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. This project sets out to fill the gap.

The novelty of the project is two-sided. Firstly, it focuses on inclusive and positive aspects of gang membership and the positivation of their marginalized position within the social structure. Some research focuses on proactive experiences in gang behaviour and policies

(Leinfelt & Rostam, 2011, Vencatesh, 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. Secondly, it uses a transnational comparative methodology, focused 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’, ‘charmil’, ‘baltagiyya’, ‘hooligans’, etc - have been seen as barriers to their social inclusion. Last but not least, Latino and Arab young people in Europe and in their homelands suffer today the stigma of being tagged with allegations of drug trafficking and radicalization processes.

3. Objectives

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

- a) **To review the historical literature on youth gangs in order to elaborate a theoretical synthesis.** Since F. M. Thrasher’s (1926) seminal monograph, gang theories have been focused on the (North) American gang pattern, mainly territorial, masculine, based on ethnicity, clandestine and highly influenced by the criminal justice system. This pattern has scarcely taken into consideration contributions from non Anglo-Saxon countries and the advances made in the post 60s. The new synthesis, formulated as a reader, will try to fill these gaps.
- b) **To develop a renewed model for the analysis of transnational youth gangs in the global age.** Since W. I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki (1918-1920) *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, comparative migration processes evolved incorporating transnational approaches (Faist et al., 2013). Our aim is to incorporate this perspective in gang studies, analysing in which way the neoliberal era, flexible capitalism and hybrid cultures affect the nature and function of gangs.
- c) **To apply an experimental model for comparing gangs in two transnational groups: Latinos and Arabs.** Gang studies usually focus on a variety of gangs in one single city/ region, on a single gang in a transnational arena, or on transnational gangs related to an ethnic or meta-ethnic background. While Latino gangs have been over-studied (looking into all the lifestyles of Latino youngsters through a ‘gang’ ‘leisure’ lens), similar street-groups from Arab backgrounds are under- studied (looking into all the lifestyles of Arab youngsters through a ‘religious’, ‘survival’ lens). Our aim is to compare transnational street youth groups in order to understand the collective forms of behaviour that emerge from both cultural backgrounds.
- d) **To explore experiences in which gangs have acted as agents of mediation, as well as barriers that block these attempts.** Most of the research on gangs focuses on their deviant /criminal aspects. Sometimes they try to justify zero-tolerance policies and filtered police approaches. When violence reduction,

political participation or cultural creativity are experienced, these are analysed as conjunctural, epiphenomic or not related to gangs. Our aim is to start from our own experience of working with gangs in Barcelona incorporating other cases in which gang sections, NGOs, local authorities and police services have explored alternative discourses and practices.

- e) **To deduce more effective ways of intervention to prevent the hegemony of the criminal gang pattern that still appears so dominant in the neoliberal era.** According to mass media and dominant theoretical paradigms, the current hegemonic gang pattern is based on violent behaviour in the ‘criminal’ pattern of the Latino gangs, as well as in the ‘radical’ pattern of the Arab street groups. On the one hand, only the negative effects of gang membership are taken into consideration. On the other hand, the cities, regions or countries where there are no criminal gangs are under-studied. Our aim is to cooperate with gang leaders, ex-gang members, police officers, youth workers and other stakeholders, in order to analyse which are the more effective ways of prevention and intervention, including the self-management of the peer groups of their social situation.

4. Progress beyond the current state-of-the-art

This project will try to analyse the background of the personal and social narratives, subjectivities and identities of young people from Latin America and North Africa, especially those that have arrived in Spain and southern Europe in the last decades. Those identities emerge at an interface where, in addition to the hegemonic host culture and the traditional parent culture, various other subcultural traditions meet (Matza, 1961; Brotherton & Barrios, 2004; Klein & Maxson, 2006; Venkatesh, 2009, Feixa & López, 2014). We can outline five basic matrices.

1. The first matrix begins with the **North American street gang tradition**. This was tightly tied to the process of urbanization in the United States, and to the process of ‘magic recovery’ of the original ethnic identity by second and third generations of young people with migrant background. This trope of recovery was translated into the model of territorial gang, well organized and basically composed of males – the classic object of urban ethnography (Thrasher, 1926; Whyte, 1943; Klein, 1995).
2. The second matrix is exemplified by the difference in scale between **Latin-American gang traditions: pandillas and naciones**. A pandilla is a social street group organized around neighbourhoods with precise geographical boundaries. Naciones represent a higher level of gang organization, with many hundreds of members. Even if they might have some criminal connections, the main function of both groups is sociability. They create a distinctive lifestyle that solves conflict through music and dance defiance. One extreme version of this matrix, related to

- Central America in the post-war period, is the ‘maras’ (Feixa, 1998; Perea, 2007; Reguillo, 2001; Ramos et al., 2013).
3. The third matrix is represented by **Arab Mediterranean youth subcultural traditions**, including street vendors, football supporters, rappers, hittistes, charmils and baltagiyya. In countries like Tunis, Algeria, Morocco and Egypt, this emerges in a hybridization process with its own North African cultural traditions, marked by the significance of the family (Bayat, 2012; Nilan, 2016; Sánchez García, 2011; Camozzi et al., 2016).
 4. The fourth matrix is represented by the **European subcultural traditions** that young migrants meet when they arrive: immigrant youth are mediated by global networks to pass through local gangs to global tribes (Klein et al., 2001; Leccardi, 2016; Queirolo, 2016; Van Gemert et al., 2008; Esbensen & Maxson, 2012).
 5. As the fifth and last matrix we have 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 socialisation (Vigil, 2002; Hagedorn, 2007; Fraser & Hagedorn, 2016). In relation to this, it is important to understand the role of the virtual environments in the processes of radicalization of youth both in Southern Europe and North Africa.

Those “global gangs” are not strictly territorial any more, nor do they have a compact structure. They are nomadic identity clusters that mix elements from their respective countries of origin, from their host countries and from many other transnational styles that circulate through the internet and social media. Those hybrid identities correspond to the youth cultures of the global age (Nilan & Feixa, 2006; Raffaelli et al., 2013; Rao et al., 2013). Sociologists Ulrich and Elisabeth Beck used the term “global generation” to refer to young people today – the first generation born and raised in the risk society—arguing that “social scientists have to learn to be open to the transnational ties, homelands, identities which are increasingly becoming normal in the rising generation.” (2008, p. 58). Young people’s inclusion and exclusion processes can be considered as analytical “mirrors” that reflect changes in “social relations” in times of crises. This can be seen through three perspectives: a) in an intergenerational fashion (transitional and non-transitional changes to adulthood as a consequence of the extension of youth); b) in an intercultural fashion (changes in the reception of immigrants resulting from labour deregulation); and c) in a public policy fashion (changes in the public agenda resulting from the appearance of new citizenship representations in the risk society). The context of the present economic crisis causes important breakdowns in many dimensions that affect our object of study: gangs.

5. Methodological Approach

The research methodology adopted must not only acknowledge the complexity of the social world but also provide us with the tools necessary to adapt to it and to research it in a rigorous manner. Such an approach can be found in Burawoy’s (1998, 2009)

Extended Case Method (hereafter, ECM), which is based on several “extensions”. These include (1) “... the extension of the observer into the community being studied [as t]he observer joins the informants in the rhythm of their life, in their space and their time ...”; (2) “the extension of observations over time [as t]here is no way to predetermine how long the observer is in the field ... [although] it has to be long enough to discern the social processes which give integrity to the site ...” [and] (3) “the extension from micro processes to macro processes, looking at the way the latter shape and indeed are shaped by the former...” (Burawoy, 2009: 17)

This project takes on board these extensions but it shifts a great deal of the responsibility involved in the first two, from the researcher to the researched, while maintaining the third extension as the sole responsibility of the researcher. An ECM approach includes an engagement with multi-site ethnography (Marcus, 1995) and mobile ethnography (Büscher, Urry & Witchger, 2010; Coleman & von Hellermann, 2013; Falzon, 2009). That is, research is carried out in multiple geographical and virtual arenas as actors are followed through the multitude of sites in which they carry out activities. The mediators of these activities are also a focal point: material artefacts such as documentation, more abstract structures such as rules and regulations, and acceptable and legitimized behaviours and practices. Above all it is worthwhile maintaining an archive of youth artefacts from research participants’ everyday life: fanzines, writings, photos, videos, blogs, and other communication materials. Another requirement of ECM is that researchers must always be cognizant of their history, as well as their present inclinations. Burawoy argues that being reflexive can help to combat the negative effects of what are, in essence, the basic attributes of a researcher, while turning these attributes into a resource to draw on, and to help thinking about data collected in the field. In this research, the aim will be to work according to these general principles, as outlined by Burawoy.

If this approach moves the analysis from the nation-state upward to the global level, a second alternative, Manuel Castell’s (1996) network society, moves the analysis to the more micro level of grass roots phenomena and activity. The network society is based on the notion that capitalist nation-states have evolved from production-led economies to demand-led economics, and as a result have become more service than manufacture-oriented. Mediating such changes are ever-more sophisticated information technologies, which have led to the conflation of time and space (Harvey, 1989) and a long list of major transformations in the ways that people process and manage information and live their lives. One change that is relevant in the context of this project is the way that communication has changed in recent decades; in particular, the emerging notion of lives lived on screens (Baym, 2010) in the midst of lessening face-to-face contact with fellow human beings. Another change is the rise of identity politics and the focus on self, which has become increasingly accentuated over the past several decades. The idea of the network society does not eschew the macro level as it does focus on big phenomena like recent advances in communication technologies.

However, it does so with a view to examining their impact on day-to-day, micro-level activity and existence. In the identity construction of these groups, one of the main sources is the neighbourhood. In the case of peer groups in North Africa, group

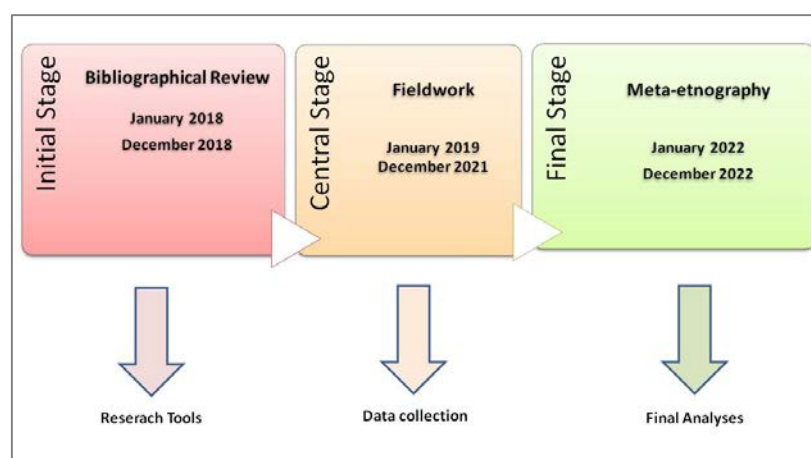
identifications are first based on the place of residence; that is, rooted in local modes of social and territorial organisation. Membership in the community is the key mechanism for the creation of networks resulting from the social centrality of institutions such as the market, the mosque, the coffee shop, religious spaces and informal economic associations. Alliances and allegiances are established in these social spaces combining common interests against a system that excludes young working class people from formal policies designed for “Global Young Arabs” -a kind of young Arab "entrepreneurs" sponsored from global economic and political levels with active local presence (Sánchez García, 2016).

TRANSGANG will contribute to advancing fundamental understanding or solving complex problems while fostering multi-actor engagement in the research and innovation process. The research process is understood as a mode of organizing scientific research ‘aiming at the solution or transition of societal problems, and concurrently of related scientific problems, by differentiating and integrating knowledge from various scientific and societal bodies of knowledge’ (Jahn et al, 2012, pp. 26– 27).

6. Research Plan

There are three phases in the project, each with material outcomes to influence policy:

Figure 1. Phases of the project



Source: Own creation.

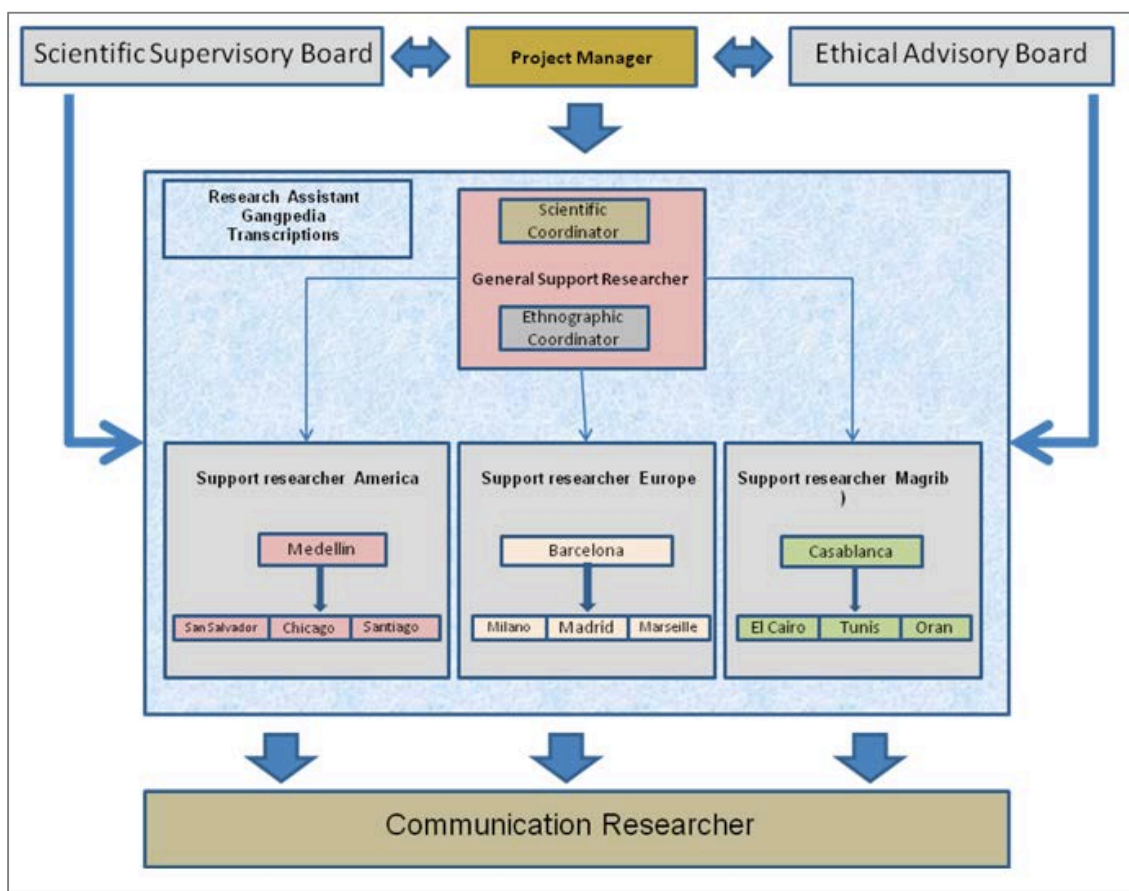
1. The first and initial phase (Year 1) is a systematic review of the historical literature on youth gangs. The outcome will be the publication of an anthology that lays down a challenge to the North-American- Centrist of current gang literature, with its emphasis on masculinity, race, deviance and criminology. In contrast, the anthology will draw on sociological and anthropological studies, emphasising the way that young people in global cities creatively organise themselves to deal with conditions of economic and political marginality. A further focus will be on the internal economies of gangs, looking at their social functions as well as their criminal activities. The contribution of women will be actively acknowledged,

which has been rarely done in the past. In this phase the methodology for the fieldwork, the final selection of the case studies, and the constitution of the research team, will be implemented. It will end with an International Conference with the participation of the Advisory Board and the research team.

2. The central phase (Years 2-4) is a multisite 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 attempts at mediation. To this end, the ethnographic study will compare street youth organizations from both transnational communities -Latinos and Arabs-, in their homelands and in their new European neighbourhoods. The multisite ethnography will use an experimental approach based on the “extended case method”, using the same methods and collecting 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. In the case of Catalonia, it will be a re-study of the gang situation since a 2005-08 study and new insights coming from fieldwork among Young Arab migrants. In the case of Medellin and Casablanca, the fieldwork will be done 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 Cairo in Africa (the criteria for the selection of the case studies is provided later). These contrasting case studies will last six months, and will be carried out by team members and local researchers. The methodology will be the same, but focusing on youth gang policies and experiences. One special feature will be a documentary film produced through workshops to be carried out in all the localities during the fieldwork or ethnographic visits, with the active participation of gang members or ex-members, with the objective of producing episodes of a documentary-fiction series centered on ‘good practices’ of gang membership.

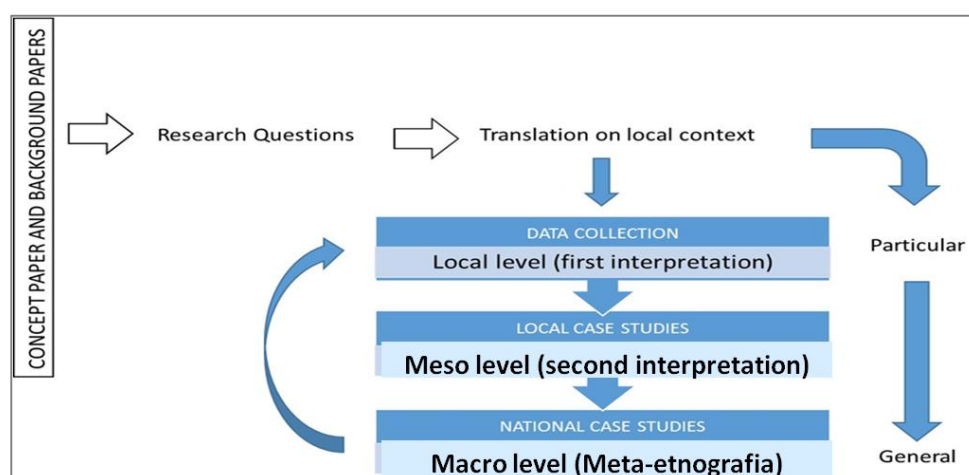
Figure 2. Structure of TRANSGANG project



Source: Own creation.

3. With this ethnographic material, during the third and final phase (Year 5), the principal researcher will produce a meta-ethnography. This is a method for the synthesis of 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. He will use both the systematic review and the ethnographic data to develop a renewed model for the analysis of transnational youth gangs in the global era. This part of the project is theoretical, but its purpose is applied: to deduce more effective ways of intervention that challenge the hegemony of the criminal gang model appearing as dominant in the neoliberal era.

Figure 3. Structure of meta-ethnography



Source: Own creation.

7. Special Features

The outcomes of these case studies will result in three special features, used both, as a way of research and as a way of dissemination:

1. **Documentary film:** The connection between all the cases will be a Documentary film, based on a week's workshop in each of the twelve cities, with the participation of local gang members. This will create a fictional episode based on their own life, resulting in a 12-episode telefilm series, under the direction of a visual anthropology specialist. This product will profit from the experience of the documentaries and life stories produced in previous EU projects: *Buscando respeto* (YOU GANG, 2013) and *Khamsa* (SAHWA, 2016).
2. **Gangpedia:** Documentary and ethnographic data will be translated into a collaborative wiki encyclopaedia focused on gangs and youth subcultures in Arab and Latino communities. This product will profit from the online model experienced in the SAHWA5 project and from the book produced in the CRIC project (Feixa & Oliart, 2016).
3. **White Paper on Gangs:** A short publication for policy makers, including information about good practices in this field, experiences of intervention and resources for citizenship education will be issued.

8. Impact

The multinational research team will brainstorm and work together to produce an innovative, transnational, inter-generational, intergeneric and transmedia approach to understanding Twenty-First-century gangs. This approach will highlight their function of mediation. This promises something very different from the local, coeval, male and face-to-face model of understanding gangs that prevailed in the Twentieth century. The

material outcome will be a working model of contemporary youth gangs which offers varying degrees of analytical complexity relevant to mediation in local and global conditions, with modular components of social, cultural, economic and media modelling. One outcome from the ethnography will be a documentary film that collects the experience of members or former members of gangs who have participated in mediation experiences. This will be a most valuable resource for policy-makers, NGOs and academics. The model will be disseminated to relevant stakeholders and comprehensively outlined and explained in an online report, a co-authored book (in English) and multiple journal publications in English, Spanish, French and Arabic. TRANSGANG will be ground breaking and move matters on in several key ways.

1. **Conceptual advancement beyond the state-of-the-art:** TRANSGANG will offer a much needed, new approach to the notion of gang practices in social, economic, political and cultural contexts. It will develop an in-depth understanding of how young people conceive of, promote and engage in gangs in order to analyse their potential for social change and improved policies. In the course of its execution, TRANSGANG will also so offer an interesting typology of different ways of framing young people in terms of who they are. It will draw on mainstream identity studies, in which individuals are understood in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religious affiliations, and sexuality and so on. Thus there is a consideration of key notions used in society today such as ‘cosmopolitanism’, which will be problematized as ways of understanding who transnational gangs are.
2. **Research methodology beyond state of the art:** TRANSGANG will develop an experimental model for researching transnational gangs. This project, through its commitment to Burawoy’s (1998, 2009) Extended Case Method, will provide a more in-depth, experience- and it will do so by bringing together several key elements to produce a unique combination. TRANSGANG will contribute to advancing fundamental understandings and solving complex problems, while fostering multi-actor engagement in the research and innovation processes. This meta-analyse will allow TRANSGANG to provide a reading of the everyday lives of young people in every geographical dimension.
3. **Youth policy beyond state-of-the-art:** On the EC ‘Youth’ webpage,⁶ there is the claim that ‘[t]he European Commission promotes dialogue between youth and policy makers in order to increase active citizenship, foster social integration, and ensure the inclusion young people in EU policy development’. In the EU Commission’s EU Youth report 2012 (European Commission, 2012: 247), there is statement about how ‘[y]oung people’s participation in voluntary activities represents a great contribution to the promotion of social and economic cohesion’. Further to this, the report adds that ‘by engaging in projects tackling topical social problems, young volunteers become key agents of social reform and develop a sense of belonging and ownership towards their community’. By examining up-close positive gang experiences, this project will provide information which policy makers have not hitherto been privy to.

4. **Youth as main protagonist during research project and communication strategy:** There is a general concern among ethnographers that their research should not take advantage of informants or simply use them as sources of data; rather, from an ethical perspective, all research should serve the interests of those who agree to participate in it in some way or form. Empowerment is generally understood to refer to the process whereby an individual who is marginalized in a particular setting or context gains the necessary confidence, knowledge skills, and strategies to overcome this marginalization. However, there remains the issue of whether or not empowerment, understood in this way, is a reality for those who participate in research, or if it is a phenomenon in the imagination of researchers. In our dissemination and communication strategy it is essential that we connect with young people. In this sense, a good number of deliverables are intimately related young people's forms of communication.

9. Ethical Approach

TRANSGANG incorporates and implements throughout the whole 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.

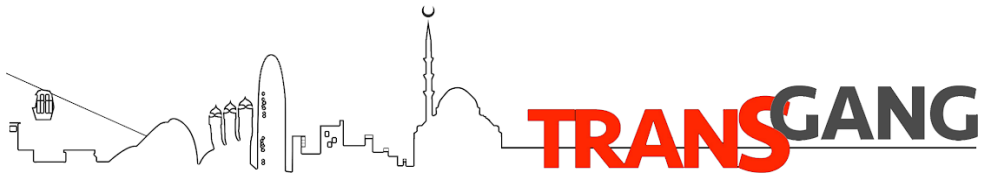
The subject of the research is extremely sensitive so it is essential to follow rigorous ethical processes to adequately safeguard the interests of all research participants regardless of their contribution before, during and after any activity carried out within the framework of the research project. 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 native languages (Spanish and Arabic). In this way, we ensure the perfect understanding of all the participants of the commitment they acquire by signing these documents and guarantee the confidentiality of their participation.

In addition, all researchers must commit to follow the procedures designed exclusively for the project by signing the ethical protocol during all phases of the investigation. To guarantee this ethical commitment, TRANSGANG has established an Ethical Advisory Board and a Risk Management plan as a framework to ensure 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.

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