Youth Cultures and Identities:
The Surfaces of the Underground

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Abstract

The chapter aims to analyze "the surface of the underground", that is, the cultural images that construct and deconstruct youth identities through language, music, aesthetics, cultural productions and focal identities, as a creative reflection of social conditions of generation, class, gender, ethnicity and territory. It is divided into four sections. In the first one it will be carried out a look towards the past, analyzing the historical antecedents of the studies on youth cultures in Latin America. In the second section we carry out a look towards different youth cultural actors: “tribes” in Spain in the 80s, “gangs” in Mexico in the 90s, “scenes” in Spain in the mid 90s, “cybercultures” around 2000, and “movements” after 2011 uprisings. In the third section it will be analyzed a transnational youth subculture that can be seen as a synthesis of the previous types. In the fourth and last section we introduce some theoretical reflections about youth cultures today as a way of conclusion.

Keywords


Bio

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The study of youth cultures and identities is one of the most recent fields of youth studies in the Ibero-American sphere, but it has probably become hegemonic, since it carries a large number of current investigations, especially of the new generations of youth researchers. Although it has antecedents throughout the twentieth century in various essays on adolescent identity crises, from psychological or speculative perspectives, and in some empirical studies on fashion, music and cultural consumption, the field of studies on youth cultures was not constituted until the 90s of the 20th century, from several ethnographic studies on the phenomenon of youth gangs. In the first decade of the 21st century, the field consolidates itself, broadening the focus towards other types of youth subcultures and scenes, and hatching in the second decade of the new century around the study of youth cybercultures, addressing new phenomena such as social networks, youtubers and influencers. The itinerary describes an evolution from the study of marginal and minority microcultures, although significant for their impact on the social image of youth, to the study of central and majority macrocultures, although often invisible for adult-centered discourses.

The chapter aims to analyze "the surface of the underground", that is, the cultural images that construct and deconstruct youth identities through language, music, aesthetics, cultural productions and focal identities, as a creative reflection of social conditions of generation, class, gender, ethnicity and territory. It is divided into four sections. In the first one it will be carried out a look towards the past, analyzing the historical antecedents of the studies on youth cultures in Latin America. In the second section we carry out a look towards different youth cultural actors: “tribes” in Spain in the 80s, “gangs” in Mexico in the 90s, “scenes” in Spain in the mid 90s, “cybercultures” around 2000, and “movements” after 2011 uprisings. In the third section it will be
analyzed a transnational youth subculture that can be seen as a synthesis of the previous types. In the fourth and last section we introduce some theoretical reflections about youth cultures today as a way of conclusion.

**Youth cultural studies in Spain and Latin America?**

It is possible that young people attempt to constitute some kind of adolescent sub-culture as if it was a final identity, when it is by definition something transitory. (Faletto 1986)

As in the Anglo-Saxon world but with some decades of delay, the study of youth cultures in the Ibero-American sphere arises in three different scenarios: working-class youth and the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency; middle-class youth and leisure consumption; and countercultural youth minorities. The first scenario has origins in criminology and in biological psychology, although in the last decades it converges in the phenomenon of "gangs". The second scenario arises linked to functionalist studies on modernization and consumption patterns, focusing above all on music consumption and in recent years on digital consumption. The third scenario is initially connected to the post-1968 middle-class student movement, although after the 1980s it ties in with the DIY (Do It Yourself) cultures that emerged from the punk movement and in the new century with “alterglobalization” social movements.¹

It is interesting to point out that at the beginning Latin American cultural studies developed independently from the Birmingham school.² In fact, the theoretical “maîtres à penser” were some well-known Latin American cultural thinkers, not focused on youth but interested on countercultures and subcultures. This is the case of Néstor García Canclini (2006) and Carlos Monsiváis in Mexico, Jesús Martín-Barbero (2017) in Colombia and Beatriz Sarlo (1994) in Argentina. In fact, the first generation of youth cultural researchers developed interpretative frameworks on youth very similar to those coming from Birmingham, but with some particularities: the concept of class had a deeper economic sense and the concept of resistance had a deeper political sense (Valenzuela 1988, Reguillo 1991, Urteaga 1998). Since the end of the 20th century, several readings collected investigations on youth cultures with a transnational approach.

² In 1991, when I arrived to Mexico in 1991, youth researchers had not yet read Resistance through rituals (in part because they were no translations, but also because they had other theoretical referents). The first Birmingham work being translated was Hebdige’s Subculture (1979/2004) and Hall and Jefferson’s seminal book was not translated until 2010 in Argentina and in 2014 in Spain, even if the introduction was included in a reader on youth theories (Pérez Islas, Valdés and Suárez 2008).
Ethnography has a crucial role in this model: anthropology is the discipline of choice and results are presented in one way or another as a co-authored outcome of the relationship between researchers and actors. Behind this trend a decentred, plural, intergenerational process is considered as the vehicle for the dialogic production of knowledge and interpretation of meaning in different problematic situations, cultural and political movements and subcultures. Both quantitative and qualitative processes of data collection are incorporated, and young actors are involved in the research process. Youth subjectivities take a prominent place in this type of research, looking at the tensions between globalisation and local realities and the emergence of alternative ways of living. This includes the innovative forms of engagement of young people in larger social movements, or the forms in which the urban youth foster direct action and transformation in the realm of culture and aesthetics promoting new values and social relations (Margulis 1997, Feixa 1998a, Marín and Muñoz 2002, Borelli and Filho 2008, Urteaga 2011).

One particular emerging subject is the situation of youths in transition or the situation and cultural activities and cultural production of young men and women living between different worlds and making sense of their place in society, creating different worlds for themselves in other countries or in the new areas they go to inhabit. These are the cases of indigenous youths (Pérez Ruiz 2008), the different generations of young immigrants or displaced populations, from rural to rural areas in processes of transnational migration, or the more traditional migration from rural to urban areas within their own countries or to neighbouring ones. Sometimes, these intercultural exchanges have been viewed through the deforming glasses of urban street groups, shaped in the North American “gang” model, in the Central American “maras” model, in the South American “pandillas” model or even in the diasporic model of “transnational gangs” moved to Europe following the last trend of transnational migration (Valenzuela, Nateras and Reguillo 2007, Feixa and Oliart 2016).
Researching youth cultures

In this section I will present five types of youth cultures, representative of different moments and scenarios: the time of “tribes” and the emergence of a youth subcultures related to leisure lifestyles during the 1980s; the time of “gangs” and the reappearance of underground street groups related to the punk movement in the 1990s; the time of “scenes” and the emergence of clubcultures related to nightlife in the mid 90s; the time of “cybercultures” and the emergence of virtual identities related to the growth of internet around the year 2000; and finally, the time of “movements” and the repoliticization of youth cultures after 2011 global uprisings. These five types have been selected not only because they reflect the evolution of young people during these years, but also because they synthesize the evolution of youth research. After introducing the historical and theoretical context of each type, I will illustrate it with some ethnographic vignettes.

The Time of Tribes

Well, the youngsters of the 80s were born in the 60s... and there was a great, an incredible demographic growth... So these youngsters will find there are a lot of people for one job only. People are a bit hung up; they try to get through, not to be left in the lurch. This is why many urban tribes hang around... Not having a job, they can’t adapt to society and they create a group to have some sort of society to belong to, don’t they? (Quim)

The first type corresponds to youth cultures with a distinctive name and identity, emerged in Great Britain or the United States during the 1960s and 1970s, which spread later in Spain and Latin America. They correspond to what theorists of the Birmingham school call “subcultures”, with a class identity and specific aesthetic and musical forms, but with a diffusion that transcends their geographical or social origin. In Spain they appeared after the end of the dictatorship, and in the 1980s they were baptized by the media with the nickname of "urban tribes". Paradoxically, the term is attributed today to the French sociologist Michel Maffesoli, whose book The Time of the Tribes (1988/1990), has been used to interpret the type of “postmodern” sociability that unites them, despite not making direct reference to this kind of youth subcultures. In the Ibero-American sphere, the main works in this perspective were published between 1994 and 2004, some influenced by the Birmingham school and others applying Maffesoli’s theses (Feixa 1988, Reguillo 1994, Costa, Pérez and Tropea 1996, Feixa, 1998a, Pais and Blas 2004)
Lleida, February 1985. I start to gather life stories of young people from Lleida (Catalonia, Spain). It was the International Year of Youth, and a new social subject had burst in the stage with a meaningful label: “urban tribes”. Media soon devoted great attention to the phenomenon: moral panic campaigns (like the one following the death of a mod boy killed by a rocker in Madrid) combined with the appropriation of trade (like advertising shops where every tribe could buy their outfit). In the beginning, urban tribes did not seem a relevant object of study to me. As an ideological construction, the real and the imaginary mixed up without a break, and the phenomenon was far from involving a majority. If “marginal” youth expressions could only be understood in the wider context of the varied generation identities, then youth culture had to be studied as a whole (including not just “apocalyptic” sectors, but also those who were “integrated”). Nevertheless, as I carried on with my field work, urban tribes caught my interest again. On the one hand, actors used different labels to define themselves and other young people in interviews. Some responded to existing ethnic and class identities like the pijos (the snobby): middle class young people, usually students, obsessed by trends and consumption, versus the golfos (layabouts): suburb immigrants, usually unemployed. Other labels referred to more universal models: reminiscent of the past (hippies), revivals (mods) and new sub-cultural creations (punk, post-modern). Models had started up in another time and place (United Kingdom in the 60s and 70s) and were not transferred by way of imitation; they adapted to new functions and needs, and mixed up with indigenous influences (Gipsy culture, Catalan nationalism). In some cases, curious processes of symbolic inversion took place. For example, the mods are not the rockers labour rival any more, they involve mainly middle class young people generically attracted by the culture of the sixties; and the skinhead style, originally proletarian and rebel, has ended up attracting middle class adolescents, some extreme right wing and racist. Although few youngsters did globally commit themselves to them, the prevailing image is that “there are many urban tribes hanging around”, and that they are a metaphor of the crisis, the symbolic recreation of the political disenchantment that followed the end of Franco’s regime, of the lack of employment and of the poor expectations left for the young people.

Besides, my participating observation allowed me to confirm the importance of leisure spaces in the structure of these groups. Before 1975, with Franco’s death, when young people had their own space within the urban territories, where “other laws, other
"values" prevailed: in the old quarters of town the *zona de vinos* (wine area) emerged. In the beginning it was the indigenous *jipis* (hippies), late compared with the rest of Europe, the ones to go to old bars where prices were cheap and where they could listen to music, dress informally and smoke hashish in group without being disturbed. As the audience started to be more numerous, other bars opened and thousands of youngsters gathered at week-ends. The animation was spectacular, especially in the summer, when fruit workers, often stranger *jipis*, arrived. The wine area comes out as the genuine space for youth, a neutral space where very different styles coexist, like a sacred place for the different tribes. But overcrowding reaches a point where some sectors want to make a difference and create their own meeting places out of the area. The first to leave are the *progres*, mainly left wing students with countercultural influences that move to bars downtown, where they can hear jazz, progressive rock, and *nova cançó* (Catalan singer-songwriters). At the same time, new premises open up uptown -in the so-called “Dollar Street”- where prices are higher and looks are more commercial: bars, discos, disco-bars, terraces, attract the vast sector of *pijos* (upper class young people that wear brand clothes and listen to techno music). Besides, a new breed of places appears under the label of *posmodernos* (post-modern). These are big premises (old warehouses) renovated with a “though” architecture where people drink and show off, they have “spectacular” looks ( punks, rockers) and listen hard rock and vanguard music. Finally, the wine area undergoes a process of specialization: some bars close as a consequence of heroin dealing and police prosecution, others call for different sorts of customers (hardcores, heavies, rockabillys, *acratas* -anarchists-, feminists, etc). The emergence of urban tribes is a process that takes place as specialised areas appear in the urban arena for the youth leisure. These groups don’t usually have a territorial basis, or a gang type of organisation: they’re rather personal, vague styles. Although some of the members live in peripheral labour neighbourhoods, the meeting place is in the urban centre and particularly in premises of “la movida” (the craic). Every young person can identify with a particular style with more or less intensity, they can belong to various ones successively, they can adopt some of their external signs, but in practice, tribes only play the role of “mental maps” to find one’s way in daily interaction with other young people. They don’t usually wear their “disguises” in the place of work or study; they are kept for the week-end, when they gather at the wine area at dusk, then the “via crucis” starts at midnight, along all the postmodern bars.
The Time of Gangs

The environment totally transforms ideas, people. It is not the same getting depressed here [at Neza] as getting depressed in the [Federal] District. To see the asphalt where thousands of cars go up and down, people travelling here and there. This movement makes you think of other things. You can’t see a graffiti there like you can here, punk graffiti "quién sabe qué banda" or "la banda de los locos"... I always have related to puros chavos banda, because I can’t really live with different people. I would be impossible! Nearly everyone had their own gang. (Diana)

The second type of youth culture is the oldest and most persistent: it corresponds to the classic model of street-corner gangs, studied by the Chicago school since the beginning of the 20th century under the theoretical parameters of urban ecology, as a form of street aggregation of marginal young people, usually territorial, male and face to face. As a social reality, it has a wide presence in Spain and Latin America in the second half of the 20th century, linked to migration and urbanization processes, as shown by films by renowned filmmakers, such as Los Olvidados by Luis Buñel (1950) and Los Golfos de Carlos Saura (1959). As a scientific object, the references are two ethnographies of the Chicago school: The Gang by Frederic Thrasher (1927/2020) and the Street-Corner Society, by William F. Whyte (1943/1971). In the Ibero-American sphere, they emerged as a new social subject and also as an object of study since the end of the 1980s, after the emergence of the "chavos banda" in Mexico (Gomezjara et al. (1987, Valenzuela 1988, Salazar 1990, Reguillo 1991, Feixa 1998b).

México City, September 1990. I arrived to Mexico City with the aim to carry out a field research work about Mexican youth. I expected to find big masses of young people in demographic terms, but I did not expect to find anything resembling urban tribes. Hence my big surprise when I heard about the chavos banda (youth gangs). According to my informers, they were young people from urban-popular environments, often unemployed or employed in the black economy. There seemed to be thousands of them within the boundaries of Federal District. Soon, I saw pintas (graffiti) on some walls, and I started to read news and reports that presented them as delinquent and drug addicts. The banda (gang) seemed to have come out of nowhere. It was the “expression of a crisis” (as I later on read on a wall at Neza, a poor neighbourhood in the periphery of Mexico City). But it had notorious precedents in the history of Mexican youth. The banda “grandparents” were the pachucos a youth style born in Los Angeles in the 40s among Hispanic Mexican young people, which later spread to other cities in the Northern frontier and the centre of the country. The banda “parents” are the called chavos de onda, a youth movement born at the end of the 60s that in Mexico included
the jipitecas; politically concerned students –who suffered the slaughter of 68-; and young rocanroleros from working class origin who lived in the Avandaro Festival in 1973 their particular Woodstock, and who later on, after the repression suffered by the Mexican rock-and-roll took refuge in the called hoyos fonquis (clandestine places to hear live music). This evolution in the style is reflected in the characteristic “jargon” of chavos banda -the caló- that combines elements from different origins: pachuco language, language of la onda, indigenous languages, marginal jargons that and expressions invented by chavos become.

My first direct contact with chavos banda was in el Chopo, the sanctuary where they gather every saturday. Every week thousands of boys and girls with an extravagant look turn out religiously from every corner of the city, to the popular suburb behind the railway station, not far from the regrettably well known plaza de las Tres Culturas (where many students were massacred in 1968). A soulless street, surrounded by factories and electricity pylons that make up a suburban scenery, swarms with noisy, but well organised people. Leaning on a wall in the street leading to the place, old jipitecas offer their handicrafts. Inside the market, you can tell the punk group for their clothing and their number. In the central row the metaleros sell T-shirts, gadgets, and heavy metal music tapes. In the rest of posts other bandas -rockers, nuevaoleros, progres, sicodélicos- offer all sorts of fanzines, records, posters, pirate tapes, pendants, tattoos, bracelets, dresses, chains, etc. There is a familiar atmosphere: many know and greet each other, in a weekly complicity that contrasts with the big city’s anonymity. As chavos say, the banda is like a “second family” and a “school for life”. But this doesn’t mean that these youngsters come from broken homes or are nearly illiterate. Most of the chavos I met had no specially conflictive relationships with their parents, and have attended educational institutions as many years as their contemporaries. It is neither true that they are non productive (most of them work in the informal economy), or that their main occupation is crime. In fact, neighbours are used to seeing chavos and chavas meeting in the street. They sometimes collaborate in organising fiestas and decorating the streets. They even feel protected in front of the tiras (the police). After all, the banda is part of the neighbourhood’s daily landscape. Moreover, they are taken into consideration by popular organisations, government corporations, media and the market.
The Time of Scenes

The (rave) festival gathered about one thousand techno-addicts who celebrated an alleged imminent end of the world (...) The attendants put up their tents around a set of dozens of marquees where they could dance the techno music played at full blast by different ‘disc-jockeys’ during the day. Participants, called through internet, have the opportunity to consume alcohol drinks (La Vanguardia, 8-7-99).

The third type of youth culture that I have selected corresponds to what in the Anglo-Saxon world was called “club cultures” or “postsubcultures”: they are groups without identity or class borders as clear or permanent as the previous ones, linked to “particular and situated scenes”, normally located in leisure spaces or in ritual performances. The most representative was the raver scene, which emerged in the early 1990s linked to electronic music and synthetic drug use, although it can also include some expressions of hip-hop and graffiti. At the theoretical level, the paradigm is post-cultural studies, which attempt to go beyond the Chicago and Birmingham schools, applying Bourdieu’s theories of distinction and subcultural capital (Thornton 1996, Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003). In the Ibero-American sphere, it is translated into a variety of studies on night cultures, urban art, squatting and hybrid identities (Abramo 1994, Margulis 1994, Gamella and Álvarez 1999, Reguillo 1998, Nateras 2002, Feixa, Costa and Pallarés 2002)

Catalonia, Aragon and Valencia, August 1999: the police cleared without ceremony an unauthorised rave party, in an abandoned military area in Costa Brava (a tourist area in the north of Catalonia). The party had gathered in a few days more than one thousand French, Catalan and other European youngsters, called through internet, and described by the media as a strange mixture of “okupas”, “cibernéticos”, “grunge” and “makineros”. Dance music in Spain had its first moment toward 1988 with the rise of acid house nearly at the same time as it did in Great Britain. One of their bases were Ibiza discos (the influence of the so-called “balearic beat” has been an object of discussion), but the movement rooted in Valencia at the beginning of the 90s. Some of the discos in the city outskirts (Spook, Factory, Barraca) stirred up the traditional youth stage by introducing a music which would later be called makina or bacalao (codfish) (in the DJ jargon, to have fresh codfish meant to play new records). Young Spanish and tourists started turning up in Valencia, appealed by week-end long parties. The media called the phenomenon “la ruta del bakalao”, and due to various car crashes in 1993, some news relative to extasis consumption and violent fights, was the target of a savage satanization campaign.
The phenomenon progressively spread to other areas, specially the Mediterranean, and created mixtures and new experiments in leisure spaces (macrodiscos, Clubs, afterhours, etc.) as it did in music and cultures around it. The establishment in Barcelona of a festival devoted to electronic music (Sonar) was an important moment in what media described as the conversion of a trend into a vanguard cultural movement. This would mean the progressive separation between two poles in the movement: a popular-massive one, known as “makina”, and a vanguard-elitist, known as “techno”. This polarization shows certain social class distinctions (working class youngsters versus middle class students), leisure space distinctions (big macrodiscos versus restricted clubs) and ideological stereotype distinctions (integrated-consumists versus alternative-creators). Another aspect worth taking into account is the rise of raves, more or less spontaneous parties, often hidden and without a fixed placing, which take place in abandoned premises, in the city outskirts or outdoors. Pursued in England by the police, campaigns of moral panic are reproduced in Spain: after the success of afterhours some administrations decided to advance discos closing times, so they got young people to move to neighbour autonomous communities were illegal afterhours open and close at different places.

The diffusion of makina culture has to be linked to the evolution of leisure spaces for young people, particularly the macrodiscos. “Maquina” music had been steadily replacing disco music, and the Hispanic version of “techno” which had been introduced in discos in Valencia and had the commercial name of “bakalao”, was also predominant. At the peak of the “máquina” there is an approach to the latest international techno musics, the most famous DJs visit the place, one of the fathers of Detroit (Jeff Mills) French Djs (Laurent Garnier) or the Canadian John Acquaviva. Along with the new musics, other products of the club cultures arrived also: flyers (psychodelic looking fluorescent tags); creation videos; futurist clothes; web and paper magazine; merchandising (key holders, caps, T-shirts; CDs edited by the best DJs), etc. From its rural origin, it has turned to be a cosmopolitan environment, as well as a contact point and necessary referent for young people. A creative lab of cultural experimentation, where new culture tendencies and youth hipermarket merge, spread and fission. In Latin America electronic music scene has mixed with local music and underground festivals, as the phenomenon of “nortec” music in the Mexican-American border express (Valenzuela 2004). There has also been some talk about "cibernetic" "digital" or
"futurist" culture for the fact of being the first youth style to manage the forms and techniques of the digital age (Reynolds 1997, Reguillo 1998).

The Time of Cybercultures

- And how did you do to have more signatures, which is the same as the rating, but in a fotolog?
  Cumbio: I did good things, such as the appointment at the Abasto [shopping center]. I wanted to demonstrate that we are not kids who spend all day in front of the computer, but that we use the computer as a means of meeting people. What it has is that it is totally a mass media.

(Mu. El periódico de la vaca, November 2008).

The fourth type of youth culture arises with the emergence of the internet and the appearance of virtual communities, with strong youth protagonism. It is not just about using cyberspace as a meeting and interaction place, but also about technologically recreating youth identities, based on the fusion of electronic devices, relationships and emotions. From a theoretical point of view, the references are Castells' studies (1996) on the information age and Tapscott's (1998) essays on the Net generation, among many others. In the Ibero-American sphere, several works on cybercultures, video games and cyber cafes stand out. The most characteristic example are the floggers, which emerged in Argentina in the first half of the 21st century. In recent years, several studies have appeared on youtubers, influencers and instagramers (Balardini 2000, Feixa 2000, 2014, Urresti 2008, Acosta and Muñoz 2012, Feixa et al. (2012, Martín-Barbero 2017).

Buenos Aires, November 2008. I travel to Argentine and my colleagues tell me about a new urban tribe that is raging: the floggers. They are teenagers of the digital age, passionate about the Photo-log (or flog), the popular internet service for publishing and sharing photos. In recent months, floggers have gone from meeting in the virtual space to doing it in the face-to-face space: more specifically, in some shopping centers in Buenos Aires. According to my colleagues, they usually come from affluent sectors, they are characterized by making intensive use of technology: they always go with their cell phones, which they use in multimedia form, mainly as a phone and camera, but also for sending SMS, listening mp3music and surfing the internet. Unlike other technological practices, floggers have developed all the characteristic elements of youth cultures: a certain oral, textual and in this case visual language; a particular aesthetic (straight hair for girls and boys with bangs, tight pants, sweaters with psychedelic colors, androgynous appearance, use of designer clothes, etc); the predilection for
certain musical rhythms (the different variants of electronic music, which dance with their cell phone in their ear); some cultural productions (articulated around the consumption of new technologies); and above all a focal activity: take pictures with the digital camera and immediately hang them on the photo-log. They dedicate a lot of time to this practice: they can post 7 or 8 photos per day, but they must constantly update them: the game consists of having the highest number of visits that act as a kind of audience marker (rating).

My colleagues tell me that blogs and flogs have been popular for a few years in the countries of the southern cone (Chile, Argentina) and some other Andean countries (such as Peru). It became, to a certain extent, a symbol of urban upper-middle-class youth (this is related to the passion for manga and Japanese culture: there are blogs focused on Pokemon; in Peru there is a service similar to the fotolog: the Hi-5). At first it was just a virtual habit: teenagers were on the websites that host flogs, hung their photos shamelessly, with fictitious names - avatars - and real faces, entered comments, participated in chats and made friends. But in December 2007, a 17-year-old lesbian girl, with a Cumbio avatar, quite popular in the flog, came up with the idea of calling her "virtual friends" (the network of firms that link to her website) in an emblematic place in the city of Buenos Aires: Abastos. It is the old central market, converted into a popular shopping center. The call was very successful: 300 young people came, who discovered that face-to-face is compatible with nickname to nickname: they began to call themselves floggers, baptizing a new urban tribe. From that moment, Cumbio became its leader and trendsetter. Nike “discovered” her and hired her as a “trendsetter”, photographer-diver of emerging trends in youth culture. From that moment, some leaders like Cumbio began to cross the media, giving interviews in the press and on television talk shows. Visits to his website skyrocketed (from one million signatures to almost 25 million), and his style of dress and tastes quickly spread. In addition to Nike, the Argentine newspaper with the largest circulation – Clarin- paid her to relocate her website on the newspaper's website, and several fashion and perfume brands made her its advertising icon.

The massive spread of the subculture, however, came later: in mid-2008 there was a fight of unknown origin without much consequence. And the usual process of moral panic ensued: the group is labeled "dangerous" based on the contrast with the supposed enemies - floggers against pibes cumbiacheros [cumbia kids]. While the former are
perceived as young middle-class students, who inhabit apartment buildings in the urban center, wear branded clothing and latest trend, and like advanced music and new technologies, the latter would be working-class youths, who inhabit the popular villages, wear traditional clothing and like popular music. When I ask my colleagues about the traits of the subculture, I receive these responses: "It's Andy Warhol gone through the basuco gum" (for a very popular pink gum); “It is as if they had taken something that was already on the market and had given it a new meaning” (because of the brand clothing they wear); "The generation that saw Chiquitita then flogged" (for an argentinian television series very popular among children and teens); "Today in Argentina everyone is a flogger"; “They live connected. They must be taking photos all day, answering messages: 'Here I am getting up,' 'I love you, Cumbio’”; "The flogs is a fanzine aesthetic in the internet age: it is not a very careful aesthetic like blogs, it is more improvised”; "The flogs is the place where parents find out what their children are doing" (this last sentence is food for thought).

So what are floggers? Apparently, they are not a subculture but a youth cultural practice shared by several subcultures: that of falling surrendered before the “mirror effect” of the digital camera, portraying scenes from everyday life and hanging them from a free space in the photo-log, that service Online invented to share graphic and photographic material. It is something very similar to the classic personal diary, the intimate space where the adolescent exposed his experiences and his discovering of the world, his loves and heartbreak, his existential doubts. With the difference that instead of texts what predominates here are the images - although they are illustrated with comments and placed in a way that produces a discursive effect - and above all that instead of being kept under lock and key in a private, secret place (the room itself) are exposed in the most public place possible: internet. In reality, for adolescents the audience is similar: the newspaper was taught to friends without shame but was hidden from parents. With the flog they do the same, since they innocently hope that their parents do not find out that they have a blog or a fotolog so that they do not discover their foolishness; It is true that his parents are not stupid and are used to diving online to find out something about their children - as an Argentine politician confessed to me, who discovered that his daughter had lost her virginity thanks to her blog. In reality, more than the difference between the private or public audience, the fundamental thing is the subsequent process: the reactions provoked by the photos, reflected in the
comments that the visitors write down on the web and in the list of friends and contacts that are they are adding to the flog. What is significant in this case is that Cumbio became flesh and went down to the public square and there she connected with other adolescents like her and especially with the media that immediately labeled her and related the tribe with other tribes, in the usual process of classification (attraction / repulsion). But also in a precedent of the cybernetic and transmedia tribes that have followed each other since then.

**The Times of Movements**

The camp was configured like a small city. From the beginning streets were established where people could walk. Different areas were marked by colored tape, including spaces for walking, sleeping, eating, and leisure. Diverse commissions were created to organize the camp. In the corner of love you could chat about metaphorical matters and meditate; there were places where you could get a massage after a tiring day at the camp; and there was even a children's library with a small nursery. Everyone was living for the movement, for their belief that it would all work out. It has been said many times that we are the Erasmus generation: we had contacts with other cultures, our training enabled us to assume more complex roles and architectures. But we were not just a youth movement—the people from the area and the homeless also helped. They undertook logistical tasks, they made tables and chairs for us, and put up canvases when it rained. It was a very heterogeneous movement, you could find anyone: students, precarious workers, regular workers. There were many people from many places. It was like a small world inside a world, but fantastic. So spontaneous, and yet so well organized. (Vanessa, 30 years-old, student, Madrid)

The fifth and last type of youth culture considered is linked to the networked social movements that appear after the 2011 global protests, in a context of mobilizations against austerity policies, which have young people as one of their greatest victims, and re-emerge late in the decade linked to two specific movements: the neofeminist movement (#NiUnaMenos and #MeToo) and the neo-environmentalist "#FridaysForFuture). In some way, such movements represent a re-politicization of youth culture and a rescue of the countercultural tradition of the 1960s. Theoretical references are studies on new and new social movements, as well as studies on cyber-activism and subjectivation processes, Highlighting in this sense the fundamental contribution of Reguillo in his book *Insurrected Landscapes* (2017) and the concept of "politics of youth culture" proposed by Aguilera (2016a). In the Ibero-American sphere, multiple studies appear on indignados, geração à rasca, pingüinos, Mane, # YoSoy132, and lately on feminism and the climate movement. (Feixa and Nofre 2013, Valenzuela 2015, Aguilera 20016, Galindo 2016, Sánchez, Ballesté and Feixa 2018, Larrondo and Ponce 2019)
Barcelona and Madrid, May 15, 2011. Just before the local elections in Spain, during which the effects of the financial crisis were debated for the first time, diverse platforms such as “Democracia Real Ya” (Real Democracy Now) and “Jóvenes sin futuro” (Young people with no future) organized a demonstration in Madrid that was much larger than expected thanks to the Twitter viral effect. At the end of the march, a group of about a hundred people decided to occupy the Puerta del Sol, the emblematic center of the Spanish capital, where they spent the night in an improvised camp. The violent eviction attempt by the police the following night had the contrary effect to what had been intended: the hundred campers became a few thousand, and popular support skyrocketed. The movement was called the Los Indignados (The Indignants), a reference to the book of the same name by the French human rights activist Stéphane Hessel.

The day after the occupation of Puerta del Sol in Madrid, a group of young people in Barcelona did the same in Plaça de Catalunya. The mobilization was connected to memories of local resistance, both more recent and historical (Anarchist Barcelona was known at the beginning of the 20th Century as the Rose of Fire). In the past two decades, the Catalan capital has been host to a vigorous anti-globalization movement, entrenched squatter or “okupa” struggles, and anti-Bologna student mobilizations, university-based protests against the European Higher Education Area. The atmosphere was relaxed and festive. Most of the campers could not be classified as “antisistema” (anti-systemic) or “perroflautas” (flute carrying young dropouts with dogs), adjectives used among certain police sectors and the extreme rightwing press. Rather, they are largely young people from the middle classes allied with actors from other sectors, including retirees. The camps originated on the Net, and from the Net they moved to the square, and from there, they returned to the Net (#acampadasol, #acampadabcn…). The 15M Movement once again places Spain on the world revolutionary map. Although the triggers are local (Spain, together with Greece and Portugal is one of the European countries worst hit by the crisis, with youth unemployment rates in January 2012 of 49,9%, 51.1%, and 35,1% respectively), the antecedents and the effects are global. Thanks to the Net, the 15M globalization is lived in real time: without the examples of Tahrir or Syntagma noone would have thought of occupying Puerta del Sol, Plaça de Catalunya, or any of the many other squares that were occupied during the third week of May 2011; and without the relay to Wall Street, the 15M Movement would have faded
away. The Puerta del Sol camp does not exist anymore, but the activism has been transferred to the neighbourhoods: it has been decentralized.

**The Time of (Trans)gangs**

In this third section of the article, I will focus on a single youth subculture that can be read as a synthesis of the ethnographic types described above. On the one side, it is related to the primary “gang” type: the street-corner society as the first expression of face-to-face territorial youth group. On the other side, it incorporates the characteristics of the other types: the stigmatization of “tribes”, the commodification of “clubcultures”, the digitalisation of “cybercultures”, and the transnationalization of “movements”. Is also express the complexities of the “Latino Atlantic” (Queirolo Palmas 2016), and the interexchanges between Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula in de field of youth cultures, one of the focus of the present book.

*Barcelona, Madrid, Genova, New York, Guayaquil, 2005-2008.* The Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation (ALQKN) were initially formed in the 1940s, in Chicago, by Latin immigrants, to defend themselves against xenophobic attacks (Brotherton and Barrios 2003). Their revival, in the 2000s, in Spain, marks a ‘third birth’ of the Nation, especially related to the migratory policies that allow family reunions (following the first phase in the United States, and the second, in Equator, in the 1990s). The members of these groups are mainly Latin Americans, in particular Ecuadorians, but with a significant percentage of locals, or even members coming from non-Latin countries such as Morocco, Russia or Equatorial Guinea. The majority of them are males, but there are a significant number of females (Feixa et al. (2008). These groups seem to remain stable over time, and relating to the Eurogang definition we cannot say that the involvement in illegal activities is part of their group identity (Klein et al. (2001). The fact that some of them are involved in illegal activities is not connected to their membership, but to the street policy and economy to which these adolescents and young adults are mostly subordinated. ALQKN is a complex structure. The Nación (Nation) is the largest structure: it gathers all the tribes across the world while also identifying the organization at the local level. The tribe is the structure within the organization corresponding to a country, although there can be more than one tribe in the same country. Finally, chapters are the tribes’ smaller-scale cells, which generally have
influence over a smaller area, such as a district, a park or an underground station. The Nation could be viewed as a group of people, as a gang, as an organization or as a family (Feixa et al. (2006, 2008, Feixa and Guerra 2018, Feixa and Andrade 2020)

**The Nation as the People**

Interviewer: What is a nation to you?

King M.: A group of people who are governed by a single government, race, constitution, laws.

Interviewer: But this is a bit of a special kind of nation.

King M.: Well it is almost the same: we live here as a nation where we have a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, a counsellor, a war chief, teachers, our policies, rules, we have a supreme court, judges […] Within our organization, we live as a nation within another nation, which is Spain.

According to the discourse of the Latin Kings and Queens, the Nation can be understood at three levels: at the abstract as a sacred universe that manifests its will and wisdom; at the global as a global entity, an international organization that gives unity to the different ways of being Latin Kings in different sociocultural contexts; and at the local as the people who constitute a great family, each and every one of whom are brothers and sisters, and the way in which this takes place in everyday life. If we analyse the practices, people forming the Nation may be differently placed in relation to these levels, and have different experiences in each. The relationship between members at the ‘global level’ is specifically unequal: while we can see its importance for the members and their sense of belonging, and granted there is some internationalization in the Nation's nature, the limits of these processes are very clear as the experience of most members of this network to its global existence. While their identities as Latino are of great importance in their definition of individuality (in contrast with the global culture that affects, albeit differently, almost everyone with transcontinental connections through the new media), this happens in much the same way as with many other young people who are also migrants. However, connections exist between the leaders of the organization, which can be both of mutual recognition and, at times, of conflict, linked precisely to the Latin Kings expansion process in very different contexts. Whenever a leader pays a visit, that is when ordinary members of the Nation gain a more direct experience of its transnational dimension.

**The Nation as a Gang**

Interviewer: What is the difference between gang and nation?
King P.: A gang is where everyone does what they want, while as a nation we are all united, all striving for the same reasons: if we suffer we all suffer if we laugh, we all laugh.

King T.: The gang is almost a man, the leader. If he says, ‘go and steal’, they will all steal. That’s why we have our own bible, our own laws. We must abide by our laws, we are a nation of organized people.

The political or cultural discourse of the Nation as a community has often been replaced and preceded by its understanding as a street group with criminal connotations (the gang) or identified with informal sociability (the peer group). The definitions that the Kings and Queens have built to explain the Nation start with denying what they are not: it is a discourse delivered from a subordinate and oppressed position, compared to that of the media, which has identified them as a gang or a criminal group. This deeply prejudiced social imaginary is the one that we found when we began our research in Barcelona in early 2005 and the one that the individuals of the group must face and discuss at the beginning of each interview or press conference. However, beyond this negative view of the host society, the views of the peer group are rooted at the local level in the form of collective experience. At the local level, the persistence of the Nation's ideological discourse is experienced in daily life, especially as a group of friends gathered around the chapter. Boys and girls from the same neighbourhood are recruited through shared activities, previous networks of friends, in parks and sports grounds acknowledged as Latino and eventually find membership of the Nation. One belongs to the Nation through affiliation, coexistence and by building networks of mutual help and understanding that provide them with a meaningful identity discourse in their relationships with peers.

**The Nation as an Organization**

To introduce our culture to it, right? Because we see that the culture here is different from our culture, then we must try and say: hey! Bring the two cultures closer and embrace the culture here a little, you know? Forget a little of our ideals in our country, forget a little of our culture and adapt to what's here – you know? And adapt to the laws that are here, and the big differences between the countries, between Latin America and this country. (King F.)

In the specific case of Barcelona, the positive definition of the Nation has also gone through the legal establishment of the Cultural Organization of Latin Kings and Queens of Catalonia, which clearly differentiate it from a gang and represents the most symbolic and substantial change: their approach to various public institutions and services provided by Catalan society. We could say that becoming an association – not an easy negotiating process with public institutions – was an element of the Catalan Latin Kings’ socialization, and as such, perhaps it had a more operational value than that of
full acceptance – not in the sense of setting a politically correct screen to hide obscure activities, but rather to acknowledge the limitations underlying the translation and adaptation of the whole scope of their phenomenon into the host country’s institutionally recognized models. Obviously, beyond what we have just outlined, the Latin Kings and Queens have other elements that define their Nation as an organized group – fighting against Latino social exclusion, racism and xenophobia – while aiming to contribute towards the progress of all its members so that they can have a prosperous future. In Jóvenes Latinos en Barcelona (Feixa et al. (2006), we propose ‘organization’ as an umbrella term to encompasses various forms of youth street group belonging (from gang rule, to the Nation and the partnership). Some authors have criticized us for assuming a level of organization within the groups that did not correspond with the realities that they found in their investigations (e.g. in Madrid), where Latin gangs appear as disjointed and marginalized groups with little structure, corresponding to interpretations that are closer to social psychology and public policy – they see gangs as a way of compensating for low self-esteem (Aparicio and Tornos 2009). Due to their assumption that the real gang members are not those ones who participated in the organization, these authors are sceptical about the Catalan experience. Since they have not contacted organized groups or leaders, they find it inconceivable that such realities could exist beyond speech or myth: besides, the existence of a legally recognized entity does not necessarily replace other older and more profound organizations: the Nation as a form of (symbolic) kinship and as a field of (effective) power.

The Nation as a Family

I like the way people now realize that we are not the typical people that the press have always portrayed - they realize that we are open to society and relate to everyone […] we are working people who want to be friends with everyone […] we are not racist like many people are here in Spain […] we want to live a quiet life without harming anyone […] we are with the Nation and we are with the family, which is one of the things that we want […] many say that if we are in the Nation it is because we are in conflict with our family, our family does not understand […] and this is a big lie, because I love my family and my family loves me. But I like the Nation and I have time for all this […] for my family, for the Nation, for work. I even have time to get my driving license. I have time for everything, and I am not losing it because of the Nation – on the contrary, it has always given me […] has made me find the best friends in life. (King B.)

As we have said before, the group definition attempts to present a contrary view to the hegemonic one, and therefore, must begin with the denial and then provide positive elements such as the family or brotherhood. The family, as they define it, would be associated with a network of solidarity and mutual aid, and in this sense, the Nation,
understood as a family, is primarily an organization that provides support and security, the main functions that characterize its raison d’être. In this respect, the functions performed by the Nation among young migrant workers would be like certain lifestyles that have characterized many European working-class districts in the twentieth century, such as neighbourhood networks and different types of partnerships that were articulated as forms of organization of a certain social class. It would be important to make one point about the relationship between the cultural imagination of the Nation and the rest of society. The presence of the Latin Kings in Catalonia in cultural terms has been one of the key aspects of its inception into mainstream acceptance: the use of musical language of hip hop and rap allows these young people to bring to the forefront of media awareness of emigration and experiences related to it. Simultaneously, this has led to a mythology of Latino culture, with many songs referring to the identity of the Kings and Queens and telling stories that end up becoming almost a legend to the younger consumer. We know that ‘Latino culture and race’ are central in shaping the Nation, but when they speak of ‘our culture’ they refer to very heterogeneous elements from different backgrounds within the broad scope of ‘Latino’.

Final Remarks

Youth tribes, gangs, scenes, cybercultures, movements and (trans)gangs could be seen as an expression of the economic, social, political, cultural and technological challenges of the entire society: as a metaphor for social change (Hall et al. 1979, Feixa 1993). In other words: these are the (visible) surfaces of underground (invisible) trends. These six ethnographic models are also prototypes of theoretical paradigms that have been used to analyse and interpret youth cultures during the last forty years: maffesolían “neotribalism”; gramscian “resistance through rituals”; “clubcultural” distinction by Bourdieu; “networking society” by Castells; “new new social movements”; and “transnational” approaches.

In 2000 Mexican anthropologist and communication theorist Rossana Reguillo published Emergence of youth cultures, an essay in which she tried to rethink theoretically the concept of youth cultures, based on their previous studies about gangs and neotribes, but placing them in the general scene of Latin American cultural studies (see Feixa and Figueras 2018). In 2012 she published a revised version, with a
significant change in the title –youth cultures are no longer “emerging”– and with a new foreword and a new chapter. This was shortly after squares, in many parts of the world, were filled with Arab springs and Indignados' protests, and while the movement in which Reguillo was active, #YoSoy132, emerged in Mexico like a self-fulfilling prophecy about the strategic capacity of youth cultures to communicate the political forms of disenchantment. Reguillo puts forward a theoretical-ethnographical journey organized in five stages: considering how to think about youth, mapping identity, interpreting biopolitics, conducting an ethnography of emerging cultures, and rethinking youth citizenships. Reguillo proposes an analysis of the biopolitical dimensions integrated within the body, the materiality into which youth identities and practices are anchored and upon which power is exerted. Young people seek meaning beyond institutional expressions that in their view don't make any sense, so new forms of organization, political participation, and communication arise from their disenchantment. While this disenchantment manifests itself as indignation, rage or sadness, Reguillo claims that, once we add a political dimension to it, it becomes agency, or “active disenchantment.” From this point of view, young people are “discursive subjects and social agents, with the capacity to take hold of (and to mobilize) social and symbolic objects and material objects” (2012, 30).

Two decades after the first edition of Reguillo's book, and near one decade after the second, the scenario of youth cultures in Ibero-America has been profoundly altered. First, what were until recently considered marginal or minority youth expressions have been placed at the center of the stage. Secondly, the digitalization process has crossed social and geographic borders, becoming a "generational brand", as Reguillo (2017) herself analyzes in her latest book. Third, the creative and not only imitative dimension of the cultural productions of young people have been amply revealed in several studies (Urteaga 2011, Pais 2020). Fourth, youth culture has ceased to be only juvenile, colonizing other age segments, such as childhood and adulthood. Fifth and last, the field of cultural studies has become hegemonic, as a privileged laboratory for youth research.

Perhaps the time has come to rethink the very concept of youth cultures, incorporating the contributions of studies on tribes, gangs, scenes, cybercultures and movements, but integrating them into a broader theoretical framework that takes into account transgenerational, transgender, transclassists, transmedia, transnationals and even transhumans processes, who are involved today in shaping youth identities on a
planetary scale. The most characteristic example is the process of “digitalization” or “virtualization” of youth cultures, which, starting from the last cited “trans” vector -the transhuman connection between person and machine- implies an overcoming -although not an elimination- of age, gender, class and ethnicity boundaries, resorting to the transmedia language that allows young people to transit between palimpsest and hypertext (Martín-Barbero 2017).

In the Ibero-American sphere, the pioneers in the first decade of the 21st century were the Argentine floggers -considered as one of the first digital urban tribes, connected from the photolog- and the Chilean otakus -connected through manga (Feixa 2011, Riquelme 2018). In the second decade of the century, the youtuber, influencer and instagreamer phenomenon stands out (Aran, Fedele and Tarragó 2018, Padilla and Oliver 2019). It is a global and globalized process that prefigures a new modality of youth cultures in which young people from many parts of the world express their position in a technological universe where individuality, image, and self-communication prevail (that is, selfie culture). But at the same time it is a process that fuels glocal and even local phenomena, through which adolescents from their own city or country, transform their passion into modus vivendi and become trend markers -trendsetters- that serve as models -or countermodel- for the new generations.

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