



Studying youth street groups in Algeria: theoretical and conceptual insights

Étudier les groupes de jeunes de rue en Algérie: aperçus théoriques et conceptuels

دراسة مجموعات الشوارع الشبابية في الجزائر: رؤى نظرية ومفاهيمية

Dr. Mustapha Oumarene

University Djillali Bounaama of Khemis-Miliana

Professeur Kamel Boucharef

Research associate, CREAD, Algiers

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ملخص

الهدف من هذا العمل هو استعراض التوجهات النظرية الرئيسية وكذلك المفاهيم وخلفياتها الفكرية لظاهرة مجموعات، أو ما يسمى أحيانا عصابات الشباب والتي ترتبط أساسا بهياكل المجتمع. سنحاول تسليط الضوء على أهم الإسهامات المعرفية من أجل تحديد وفهم الظروف والآليات الاجتماعية التي تستخدم كأساس لظهورها وتطورها. وأخيراً، سنحاول إبراز حالة الجزائر وسياقها الاجتماعي والإقتصادي والسياسي والثقافي التي تحيط بالشباب وبالتالي بمجموعات أو عصابات الشباب كظاهرة إجتماعية تميز المجتمع المعاصر. والنتيجة المتوقعة من البحث هي المساهمة في تطوير المعرفة وكذلك المقاربة النظرية بهدف القيام بدراسات جديده حول الظاهرة مستقبلاً.

الكلمات الدالة: العصابات؛ مجموعات شباب الشوارع؛ التنشئة الاجتماعية؛ الفضاء؛ الانحراف والعنف.

Abstract

The aim of this work is to review the main definitions and approaches to the phenomenon of youth gangs. Then, the latter are related to the structures of society in order to identify and understand the levers, the social mechanisms and logics that serve as a basis for their emergence and evolution. Lastly, the case of Algeria highlights the contextual constraints of the marginalization of young people on the social, economic, political and cultural context and which presupposes the emergence of the phenomenon of youth street groups. The expected result of the research is that of contributing to the development of the knowledge of the phenomenon through the analysis of the local perspective.

Keywords: Gangs; street youth groups; socialization; space; delinquency and violence.

Résumé

L'objectif de ce travail est d'exposer les conclusions d'une relecture des principales orientations théoriques et conceptuelles relatifs au phénomène des groupes ou gangs de jeunes. Nous tenterons de mettre en évidence les contributions cognitives les plus importantes afin d'identifier et de comprendre les conditions et les mécanismes sociaux qui servent de base à leur émergence et à leur développement. Nous tenterons également d'esquisser cette lecture à travers une mise en perspective de la situation de l'Algérie et son contexte social, économique, politique et culturel qui entourent les jeunes et donc les groupes ou gangs de jeunes en tant que phénomène social qui caractérise la société algérienne contemporaine. L'objectif recherché est de contribuer au développement des connaissances ainsi que de l'approche théorique en vue de mener des études futures sur ce phénomène.

Mots-clés: gangsters; groupes de jeunes de la rue; socialisation; espace; délinquance et violence.

Introduction

The literature review on young people in Algeria indicates an increase in bibliographic references. Despite this progress, there remains a strong need for multidisciplinary research on youth. This article attempts to shed light on a largely unknown aspect, that of street youth groups. This is not a work on young people, but on the groups of young people observed in the streets throughout Algeria. One form of such groups is what is called in Algeria the «*Hittists*». This name, which spread widely in Algeria in the 1980s in the wake of the socio-economic crisis, to design groups of young people, most often unemployed, who spend most of their time regrouping, sitting or standing, against a wall of a building in the city where they live. This work does not focus primarily on *Hittists*, but on all types of youth groups.

In the wake of our research objective, the literature review focuses on the review of the main theoretical and empirical contributions as well as the conceptual tools produced with the aim of relating them to local specificities as a contribution to the understanding of the social logics on which the behaviors of young people and their desire to regroup depend. To this end, we have divided our paper into four sections: the first one concerns the field of identification and definition of what is called youth gangs. The second is related to the relationship between their members and society, in the sense of an investigation of the complex question of socialization. As for the third chapter, it is devoted to the question of territory among youth groups. The description of youth strategies in this context is made in the light of the role that spatial symbolism plays in the search for social identity. Finally, the



fourth and last chapter, questions the central issue of the relations of youth groups to violence, on the assumption of an amalgamation between groups of young people, delinquency, deviance and crime.

1. The gang, a research object

1.1 The problematic of definitions

The bibliographic research was carried based on of the main concept of "gang" in an Anglo-Saxon understanding. In general, gang (*bande*, in French language) is meant to be an informal social organization, most often involving adolescents or young people. Contrary to what one might think, these are not always delinquent or criminal individuals, because there are groups of young people not related to deviance, delinquency or crime, such as groups activating in the community field of art: hip-hop, rap music, street art, informal vendors, etc.

The available literature on Algerian society in relation to gangs is very limited or non-existent. This observation is not unique to Algeria. In France for example, researchers point to the scarcity of such studies, compared to the many studies in North America (Moignard, 2007). One of the explanations put forward is that of representations: there are no gangs in Europe because there is no such a phenomenon that corresponds to the image that Europeans have of these gangs (Klein et al., 2006). When researchers say the absence of gangs in their society, it is in relation to the idea rooted in the collective imagination, that is, the gang as it appears in the American society. While groups of individuals, mainly young people, exist all over the world. Indeed, in Algeria, as in other countries, gangs do not exist in the literature because the term is much related to the North American context. Overall, the delinquent dimension is omnipresent in the works on youth groups, while the term very often means a group of offenders or criminals.

Historically, contrary to what one might think, the first appearance of the gangs would have taken place in Europe or Mexico, not in the United States (Klein et al., 2006) where these groups appeared in the late 18th century in urban areas (Howell, 1998). Some authors attribute their appearance to Mexican immigrants who arrived in the Southwestern United States because of the Mexican revolution. Gangs are thought to have emerged following the integration difficulties of young Mexicans (Moore, 1978, Vigil 1988, cited by Howell 1998). They then spread to major American cities from the early 19th century to the time of the industrial revolution (Finestone 1976, Sante 1991, Spergel 1995, quoted by Howell, 1998).



In France, the existing literature, where the term gang is used, is fed by the events of the Apache gangs that marked French society at the beginning of the 20th century and the Black Jackets (*Blousons noirs*) in the 1960s (Esterle-Hedibel, 2007). After the disappearance of these groups, the interest of the researchers decreased significantly. However, the bibliographical research reveals a renewed interest from the beginning of the 1980s in a very particular context: economic decreasing, increase in unemployment (coinciding with the end of what is called in France the Golden Age of the Thirty Glorious), accentuation of the issue of immigration and foreign-born populations in political debates, etc.

For many years, the issue of insecurity has become an electoral topic where the cause-and-effect relationship is made between immigrant populations and insecurity. Thus, the concept of gang reappeared to designate groups of young people from working-class neighborhoods, most often the children of migrant workers (Esterle-Hedibel, 2007).

Whether Anglo-Saxon or francophone work, the literature review quickly shows that the terms gang, or *bande*, systematically refer to deviance and crime. This link seems to be deeply rooted in the collective consciousness of all societies in the world, including within the academic community, although in most cases the definitions change from one context to another. These social representations do not facilitate the researchers' work, as these concepts carry a strong negative dimension within the community. Currently, in many countries, gangs have become a national security issue. In the United States, for example, researchers are seriously studying the phenomenon and the government does it from different perspectives: gang migration, female gang involvement, gang activity in homicide, drug delinquency in general (Esterle-Hedibel, 2007).

The definition of the gang proved to be an essential step in all the works examined during this work. This shows how much this concept needs to be clarified, especially since the literature includes many conceptions that differ from one author to another and above all from one socio-cultural and political context to another. Other authors, like Mauger (1995), have highlighted the importance of society's perception of gangs: "As a provisional definition, we can consider that a gang is a mode of socialization more or less structured, specific to young people from working-class backgrounds, which is the object, rightly or wrongly, of a presumption of delinquency (Mauger, 1995, p.516).



Also, in order to stand out from the essentially American hegemonic trend, we will say with Mohamed (2008) that the youth gang is a "group of adolescents or young adults, informal entities, with a social purpose that differs from other groups of the same type by a transgressive dynamic and a conflictual relationship with society" (2008, p.17). For our part, we add, however, that in its broad sense and according to the historical, socio-cultural and local political particularities that impact it, the gang is not necessarily in a confrontational relationship with society. That is, unless we include an exhaustive definition of transgression so as not to confine its violent aspect in particular in relation to the individual's physical integrity. "... young people are not all bad ..." was just a reminder of Brunet and Berthelot (2018, p.1).

For this purpose, the gang or group of young people may be born on the basis of common interests, including economic interests, as it can be built on the basis of bonds of friendship. Yet it is up to us to also point out that these groups of young people who take the street as their favorite space are not necessarily "immune" against illegal practices in their activities. Hence, the highly dynamic nature of the gangs in their diversity and which remain anchored in the peculiarities of the context in which they evolve (Mohamed, 2008).

As a result, the review of different definitions leads us to distinguish between groups of individuals with illicit activities and those who do not. The difference is huge, the fact of carrying out illegal activities is not only prohibited by the law, but incites the gang members to opt for different behaviors, in particular the action in underground in terms of relations with the community and the space in which they evolve.

Given the definitions of researchers, based on theoretical and/or empirical studies, it is useful and interesting to highlight the definitions produced by the stakeholders, in reference to the influence they have on dominant representation of the phenomenon: security services, local elected representatives, social workers, etc. Their definition of gangs is very precise, among them: "The gang is a group of young people from the same neighborhood, or even the same building, very hierarchical, with one or two leaders, and who acts in groups. These young people are in solidarity with the actors of the group whatever happens. They are welded and assume all the actions of the members of the group" (Tournebize, 2006).



2. Relationship between gang and society in Algeria

The relationship between gangs and society is an essential dimension of the problem since groupings of individuals act in the public space. In the context of the suburbs in France, Tournebize (2006) shows that young gang members share collective experiences of stigmatization on the part of society because of their behavior, which disturbs the environment. Young people are under the gaze of others who refer them to their differences, in addition to the feeling of discrimination among these same young people because of their foreign origin. Even though the contexts are completely different, there are nevertheless similarities between the context of young people with an immigrant background and young people in Algeria. In both cases, i) the gangs are observed in popular circles; ii) evolving in the public space, the behaviors of young gangs are rejected by society; iii) young people on both sides are stigmatized, the former are doubly stigmatized because of their origin and their deviant behavior, while the latter suffer for their behavior. Society's view of young people and the way young people view society deserve to be analyzed in order to better understand perceptions and social relations. Putting different gang situations into perspective in different countries is essential as it provides a panorama of the international scene.

2.1 Youth gangs within the process of socialization

The youth group is an alternative to the family, where members communicate, share the same goals, the same problems and can have some economic solidarity. In addition to the affective function, that of education is also cited as a factor that can lead the young person to join a group of young delinquents (Michard, 1973). The author explains the change of this function by the influence of modern life, especially in urban and working conditions in modern cities, the work of women, as well as the case of large families and abandonment of the status of head of the family by the father. The school path is not far behind, according to the same study, as said before, there is a close correlation between delinquency and school maladjustment (Mohamed, 2008).

The gang is a source of affection (many authors claim the decline of the role of parents and family); an economic source when members engage in illegal business activities such as narcotics. Generally, young people in these modest environments share the feeling of belonging to a lower class; they experience many economic needs that their families cannot satisfy (Mohamed, 2008). This creates a material frustration for the adolescent or young person.



Knowing that appearances are overvalued among teenagers, gang members access financial resources through delinquency activities (Tournebize, 2006). Added to this is the lack of parental control as well as the lack of sports or cultural facilities that can integrate them into a more framed socialization, and especially far from the street.

Based on an ethnographic study conducted in France, Moignard, (2007) highlights the role that school can play in the formation of youth gangs. The context of this study is marked by a socio-ethnic diversity because of the existence of population of foreign origin. Tournebise (2006), who investigated in popular areas, also highlighted the determining role of schooling in the emergence of youth groups. The results of his empirical work confirm that all gang members are failing academically. Moreover, the most attached members of the gangs are those who are most at school failure. In this context, the gang becomes the place of expression and construction of a culture of opposition that crystallizes the frustrations related to the lack of educational opportunities - thus social - that are offered to the students and the discrimination of which they are considered victims. As a result, the gang becomes an indispensable source of valuation for these adolescents; they sometimes emerge in schools (Moignard, 2007).

However, an empirical survey conducted in Oran in 2012 (western Algeria) challenges certain preconceived ideas and shows that it is no longer the latter who desecrates young people who fail to follow but they are the ones who refuse the scholarship. "... the most worrying is that in the ranks of these 227 out-of-school children (survey conducted in Oran in 2012 involving 851 young people aged 10 to 19) there are 150 adolescents (66%) who decided on their own initiative to break all ties with the school. The problem is that "His difficulties [the child] stem from the fact that institutional norms and values do not always cover those of the external environment ..." (Lakjaa, 2017, p.36).

In post-independence Algerian society, academic success is a well-established social value. In the context of a strong public policy regarding the generalization of access to school: opening of schools at different levels and in all regions of the country, free tuition, creation of universities with free access for all, more scholarships, etc., Algerian families were encouraged to facilitate the schooling of their children. They have raised a lot of hopes in the school success of children. This family logic is also observed among immigrant populations in France (Mohamed, 2012). As a result,



school failure is often experienced as a drama at the family and social level. Dropout is a first exclusion of adolescents and young people. In the face of unemployment that has prevailed in the country for decades, the street is generally the new way of socialization and activity for those excluded from the education system.

On the side of adolescents and young people, they are likely to develop a resentment towards the school, therefore of the government, even towards the society following their exclusion from the school benches. In this context, the objective of gang membership can be interpreted, as researchers Brunet and Berthelot (2018) put it, as a compensatory inclusion space. On the other hand, young people who continue their schooling and succeed, reach a certain social status, especially if they obtain a university degree and a job. While their peers whose schooling has been interrupted (sometimes not because of their lack of motivation and work but because of socio-economic conditions) they do not live this valuation, especially if they are unemployed (Brunet and Berthelot, 2018). This opens the way to deviant behavior and sometimes delinquency, especially in the context of a gang.

2.2 Socialization by the street

In terms of the methodological approach, the analysis of the composition of youth groups following the socialization process is very relevant. Grouping together is for adolescents and young people an integral part of their social life, but also of their personal evolution. Having relations from an early age, primarily at home and school, peers develop friendships, neighborhoods and fellowships. Obviously, we can read more deeply about these links because, for example, their families are most often from the same socio-economic category since they live in the same neighborhood. Young people thus live a common socialization within their social milieu, which partly explains the spirit of solidarity that characterizes groups of young people once constituted. It is therefore essential to focus on the living conditions shared by young people at the individual and family levels.

In the case of disadvantaged areas in France, Tourneise (2006) points out that "...in social housing neighborhoods, where housing is sometimes too small for children to play, where parents do not always have the opportunity to keep an eye on, where the family atmosphere is sometimes unbearable, the street is the place of socialization par excellence" (p.9). The author notes the failure of classical socialization ways. The role of the street in the process of socialization is a



fully valid issue in the Algerian context, which has known for decades what is called in the country "the housing crisis". This crisis is the result, on the one hand, of the country's strong population growth since the early 1970s until the 1990s, and the inability of the government to meet the growing needs of the population on the other hand. Therefore, there is an objective reason for teenagers and young people to spend a lot of their time in the street.

In Algeria, a large proportion of children continue to live with their parents until old age. For girls, the social norm is that they remain in the family home until marriage, regardless of their employment status and level of education. While the boys leave the family home at the time of the marriage as well, but when they cannot afford to have their home, their parents continue to house them and this increases the small housing. The relationship between housing conditions and the fact that adolescents and young people are forced to spend a significant amount of time in the street and therefore the risks of integrating a gang becomes a plausible hypothesis in the case of Algerian society.

On the verge of systematization, the daily life of young people in the working-class categories is marked by unemployment, school dropout and by the lack of socio-cultural and sports infrastructures. This situation, observed in both developing and developed countries, induces a lot of free time for adolescents and young people. This free time is seen as a factor that can be correlated to deviant behaviors and thus to gang membership. Thus, it has been observed in France that a majority of offenses are committed during these periods for young people (Mucchielli, 2008). Teenagers and young people form friendly relationships at school or in the neighborhood. These relationships are a basis for a possible formation of a street youth group and even for illicit or violent activities. Indeed, friendly relations are fundamental in the analysis, they precede the constitution of gangs.

The analysis shows, on the other hand, the shift in social thought, under the effect of sociologists, of the youth gang, as a danger to society, to a situation where young people are considered as a category in difficulty that requires support. The meaning of the object then moves from a dangerous youth to a youth in danger (Hille, 2018). This change is visible especially among political actors as well as within the governments in the countries, which know this type of problematic.



3. Gangs and their territories

3.1 The neighborhood, a space of social identification

There is a consensus among sociologists that youth gangs or street gangs are territorially marked, in that the place of residence of youth (neighborhood) is an essential segment of their identification (Delmas, 2001). It is in the neighborhood as a space and territory that the young man builds relationships with his peers, his relations of friendship and solidarity and it is also in the neighborhood that he marks his benchmarks on all levels for he can evolve into "security", not to be perceived as "the foreigner" too. That said, there is nothing to exclude youngsters from joining gangs beyond the geographic boundaries of their neighborhood too. For all these reasons, the territory in the urban space and the neighborhood in its sociological definition and space of belonging, represent the point of proximity and meeting of the young people who live there. The space called *El-Houma* (neighborhood), as Semmoud (2012) pointed out, represents the real and symbolic space at the same time, which allows all forms of sociability. As a result, it becomes the first space that houses or "shelters" youth gangs. Thus, in its relation to the youth grouping phenomenon, the territory is an essential dimension in the problematic of gangs.

All the studies that we have been able to consult (Kokoreff, 1993; Chobeaux, 1994; Rarrbo, 1997; Delmas, 2001; Semmoud, 2012; Mohamed, 2012) include this variable (neighborhood) into the analysis of the phenomenon. The territory is one of the components of the group's identity, the place of residence and activity and a place of sociability par excellence. To use Tournebize's metaphorical description (2006), it is the identity cement of the youth group, as it becomes the extension of the private space. It should be remembered here that these are popular areas, where communities live modest, and sometimes poor. In these neighborhoods, where there is often a lack of recreational facilities, teenagers and pre-teens have spaces of freedom both geographically and temporally. Group delinquency, including gang formation (casual or stable) is part of these spaces left in social life. They live their forms of particular sociability, which represent for some of them the main learning of group life (Esterle-Hedibel, 2007).

Groups of young people are constituted in a territory that the gangs appropriate to the well-defined limits. This territory may be the neighborhood or part of the neighborhood. In this space, similarities are created between individuals based on the following dimensions, (Enric and



Sergi, 1999). The territorial dimension, the behavioral dimension (social practice), the social dimension (structures and type), the sociological dimension (values, beliefs and culture), the psychosocial dimension (characteristics, lifestyle) and the temporal dimension (feeling of a common history).

Some authors put forward the concept of "spatial identity". The latter is explained by the sense of belonging that gang members experience collectively and individually, and consequently a social appropriation of space or territory occurs. The symbolism of space, socially constructed, establishes a stability factor for the need for individual and collective identity and a factor of group cohesion. Thus, we will hear expressions such as: "This one is among us", "This one is ours" (Enric and Sergi, 1999, p.15).

3.2 The use of space by gangs

The spatial symbolism of a territory is constructed through an interaction between space and social practices. For example, a space known to sellers of gold or another economic activity becomes a structuring element of the space itself, even if it is of informal origin. This is what Lefebvre calls "the social construction of space" (1970, p.20).

In the French society marked by a multifaceted problem in connection with immigration, the territory gives itself a special place for the gangs as a refuge: "There, registered in a network of sociability, enjoying the recognition of peers and sometimes social status, young people have a place. Outside the territory, they expose themselves to society, to the system of norms and values against which the gang was formed. The territory is at the same time the ultimate refuge against the devaluation and the desocialization, and place of confinement, the only horizon possible for the young people (Tournebize, 2006).

In other words, the *raison d'être* of the youth group is "being together", which explains the grouping of young people in places they try to appropriate and where their number and their apparent confidence trigger reflexes of fear among the inhabitants (sometimes traders) and reactions reflecting this fear (Tournebize, 2006). The place of "gathering" of young people at the neighborhood level, like those of suburbs in France, or those of the *Hittists* is chosen for its functionality, it can be chosen to be able to "see the world" and "do not disturb" or an isolated corner where "we can be between us" (Chobeaux, 1994). In this case, membership in the same territory generates



behaviors of appropriation and solidarity on the part of the members of the gang. This territory is also a base of retreat for young people who exercise delinquent activities; it is also the ground where these acts are committed. This is why the gangs try to appropriate the territory and preserve it (Tournebize, 2006).

4. Youth gangs and violence

4.1 Youth and violence in Algeria

Violence in all its forms is a phenomenon of society whose explanation returns, in the first place, to the disciplinary and theoretical posture in force. Indeed, according to psychological approaches, man has a predisposition to violence, while in anthropology; violence in the form of war is a characteristic of the human race. According to the sociological approach, the socio-economic factors are at the origin of the violence such as the density of the population, the conflicts of generation, the industrialization, the religions, the privations... According to the systemic approach, this is due to the gap between the standard of living and the hoarding of wealth by a group (Abboud, 2016).

In Algeria, after a decade of terrorism that has killed at least 100,000 people as a result of a political crisis, the country is experiencing a resurgence of urban violence in two main forms: youth violence between rival gangs and protest violence directed towards the authorities in order to demand better living conditions. The first is now part of life in cities and towns, especially in the neighborhoods. This is most often the case of social housing allocated by the state to households with modest incomes. Through this policy is created the link between high urban density and derisory amenities and comforts. In these neighborhoods, drugs are a widespread scourge among young people and from that emerge violent conflicts of territory, leadership, etc.

As for protest violence, it occurs when people do not feel listened to by the authorities in relation to a need of daily life: housing, drinking water, health services, etc. Situations of repeated frustration trigger protests, often violent mainly by young people. The use of violent means of protest reflects the loss of trust between them and authorities at the local level (Sari, 2004). As we must also specify that the uncomfortable situation of young people vis-à-vis the main conditions of social inclusion, reveals their degree of social marginalization in the sense that the social structure as a whole does not grant them the essential conditions so to enjoy a status and a role, as



practices, allowing them to have the position of citizen that is theirs. What made Mebtoul (2018) say: "Whatever the social field apprehended in my field research; I was in the presence of a citizenship not found". (2018. p.15).

If he cannot build his future peacefully, to do the "*Tawil*" (optimal material conditions of social inclusion, especially through marriage), the young person is led to react violently by means of riots and revolts, or standing against anything that could represent or symbolize the authority governing the social structure as a whole or the institutional order.

The juvenile reactions to the established order are also manifested by the fateful decision to leave the place, for heavens supposedly more lenient and understanding of the specific situation of what is designated by the term young and which consequently push them to "...opting resolutely for the risky departure towards Europe, running away from a social and political system that does not open up any field of possibility for them to become active part of society ... " (Ibid, p.21). As they can look for some kind of substitute group in which they identify individually with its members, because sharing the same concerns, the same objectives and in which there is a listening and a voice: the group or the gang.

The age of youth corresponds to the preparation of the adult age, which also means the preparation for a social situation necessary for the beginning of the period of empowerment. This, in turn, demonstrates the supremacy of employment in a decisive phase of the young person's whole life. In this regard, in Algeria, the unemployment rate was of 11.4% in 2019, when it reached 26.9% for the category of young people between the ages of 16 and 24 after reaching the threshold of 30% in 2015 for the first time (ONS, 2019; CNES, 2016). It is clear that it is the age group of young people that suffers the most from the lack of job opportunities, in the sense that youth unemployment is more than twice the unemployment rate including all categories of the population having the working age.

Obviously, the situation of unemployment or vacancy generally, influences a great deal about the management of free time by young people in the sense that the absence of the centrality of the time allocated to the work function, prevents the latter from playing the role of regulator and organizer of social time and therefore tends to transform the daily life of the youngsters in a burden difficult to bear and whose idleness is visible in the public spaces. Cities and the countryside are full of idlers all day long and during the year (Sari 2004; Toumi. 2009).



All that remains to them is the search for alternative forms of organization and "occupation" that can play the role of vector through which they have the chance to avoid the nightmare of marginalization and exclusion, by trying to accommodate society, or more precisely at the margins of society, linking their common destiny in a healthy setting offered by the group. In this sense, Feixa & Sanchez Garcia (2019) mentioned that "it is because of these social constraints that membership in a youth street group is a particular way to escape marginalization in North Africa" (Feixa & Sanchez Garcia, 2019. pp. 68-69).

In fact, the deep feeling of frustration of youth can also be seen as the logical result of the functioning of society in the sense that the lack of perspective which concerns a large part of the youth as social category presents a kind of inequality to the extent that if society is characterized by an economic crisis that tends to continue, in an economy based on oil revenue, it is the young people who are most affected by these major economic dysfunctions (Toumi, 2009. p.137). In other words, the large and complex dysfunctions at the level of institutional arrangements and coherence are so flagrant that it is difficult to ignore the impacts. Indeed, in their social trajectories, young people adhere to the philosophy of institutional logics by integrating them as the essential sediment of their social success. For this, they consent to acquire learning socialization that are included in a relatively long process of social inclusion. However, the exacerbating lack of employment opportunities result in a painful situation of disenchantment that quickly dispels expectations, aspirations and dreams of young people.

Moreover, the reality of the experience of the majority of young people in Algeria tends, in many ways, to substantially reduce the effects of youth policy on the daily lives of these young people. A state of affairs that, although it does not inhibit the positive consequences of a hypothetical youth policy in Algeria, it tends in any case to highlight the inadequacies (Labdelaoui, 2009) to respond effectively to young people's requests.

4.2 Gangs and crime

The distinction between a gang and a group of youngsters is closely linked to their respective normative dynamics (Mohammed, 2007). We note in the literature a recurrent approach among researchers that consists in distinguishing between two types of groups. Like Mohamed (2007) for the case of France, or Hagedorn (2005) in the United States, Tournebize distinguishes the street youth group from criminal groups. In the first case, the street youth group (SYG) is above all a place of conviviality where



delinquency is not the primary motivation of the group. In the second, groups are formed to carry out delinquent activities. From one group to another, the type of organization and the acts committed are not the same. Individuals involved in organized crime are older than youth who participate in gangs (2006). In this respect, Delmas (2001) identifies two types of groups: a) Ordinary, unorganized SYGs that come together to manage the constraints of everyday life together; b) the groups involved in violent acts are the gangs.

Let us add that the distinction between gangs and other groups of young people by their deviant behavior is a reflection of the situations observed. Mohamed (2007) highlights several elements in the gang definition task. He first recalls that the term is associated with the deviance, crime and drug trafficking worldwide propagated by North American film and music production. He goes on to point out that, the consensus on the variable "deviance-delinquency" has shifted theoretical divides to the place and meaning of transgressions in gangs. Thus, the phenomenon of SYG can in no way be systematically assimilated to crime, deviant behavior and delinquency of young people insofar as the constitution of youth groups is described and identified in accordance with the modes of concrete reaction to the dialectics of marginalization/inclusion and socialization.

Conclusion

The challenge of social inclusion of young people tends to divide institutional and academic researchers into the definition of youth groups. Thus, the groups in their relation to society appear in a transgressive attitude in the sense that they tend to shake up the organization system of society to present an alternative "order" when the classical structures of socialization, particularly the family and school but also employment are failing. For this, youth gangs are routinely equated with delinquency and deviance or even crime. In this sense, understanding the mechanisms of desocialization and marginalization is important in order to find and describe alternative forms of sociability, or even inclusion. Not only by exploring the relationship between those groups and their society, but also by reviewing their internal daily life, practices, relations and values.

In another respect, the investigation of the processes governing the emergence and composition of street youth groups shows that this is a phenomenon that particularly concerns the poor and popular sectors of urban areas of society. In this sense, the forms of solidarity and mutual aid



that characterize youth groups express the relationship between their position vis-à-vis the rules of the society and forms of reaction to these rules. A major part of authors is presenting street youth groups as a result of the urban poor areas. Hence, it is appropriate to question the processes by which groups of young people can be assimilated to informal entities revealing the socio-economic and cultural reproduction of the living conditions of the areas to which their members belong, henceforth the need to operate through the reconstruction of family history.

In fact, the main conclusion of this paper is the need to completely change the theoretical background on youth street groups. They should not be seen inevitably as individuals practicing deviance and crime, because they are playing, frequently, a role of social and economic integration for its members. This side, widely hidden, should become a new basis when approaching street youth groups.

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