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Title

**Youth criminality and urban social conflict in the city of Rosario, Argentina.
Analysis and proposals for conflict transformation**

(22.125 words)

A thesis submitted by

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Abstract

This thesis aims to describe and analyse youth criminality in the city of Rosario, Argentina, and to examine proposals for constructive transformation. Youth criminality is understood as an expression of a wider urban social conflict between those that are “included” and those that are “excluded”, embedded in a situation of structural and cultural violence. The main characteristic of the conflict is that there has been a notorious increase in the number of crimes against property and a decrease in the age of offenders since the late 1990s. Youth urban crime is inextricably linked to social, political and economic exclusion and marginalisation of youth. State responses have been ambiguous and clear differences can be observed between the provincial and the municipal discourses and policies. The provincial police and the penal system have been used as tools of social control. This response is based on the repression of social conflict. It deals mostly with direct violence, has been proven ineffective, and has increased tensions and social fragmentation. On the other hand, the Municipal government, through its youth and social inclusion policies and together with youth organisations, attempts to work on the root causes of the conflict, through tackling the multiple forms of social marginalisation that particularly affect youth. Local youth public policy is explored as a facilitator of participation for youth that creates opportunities for peaceful conflict transformation.

Key words

Urban social conflict - youth – criminality - violence – youth public policy – conflict transformation – peacebuilding

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Introduction

*“No hay progreso en la ciudadanía sin conflicto social y cultural con efectos políticos”
“There is no progress in citizenship without social and cultural conflicts with political effects”*

(Jordi Borja, Catalan urban planner and sociologist)

During the 1990s when citizens of the city of Rosario, Argentina were asked what the main problems that affected their lives were, they replied that employment was their first concern, followed by security and education. In more recent years, however, security ranked as the most pressing concern. Incidents of violent stealing have risen and thus feelings of insecurity have grown dramatically. The number of youth who engage in violence or are victims of it (e.g. delinquency, fights between gangs) has risen since the 90s due to a lack of social cohesion, break down of family structures, high unemployment rates and the deterioration of educational system, among others (Ciafardini, 2006). Some of the responses to this situation and feelings of insecurity include: the creation of “private” neighbourhoods outside the city, where groups of wealthier families build their houses surrounded by a wall or fence and safe-guarded by private security forces; the increase of private security companies and services; and avoidance of certain disadvantaged areas, slums or poor neighbourhoods of the city¹ by police forces, citizens and public transportation. These reactions have deepened social fragmentation and conflict in the city; presently, there is an underlying polarisation between those who are “in” the city and abide by its “civilised” norms of conduct, and those who are “out”, criminals who defy law and order. The dominant discourse of politicians and media refers to control and re-integration of those “youth in conflict with the law” and the need to reinforce the existing security apparatus. Insecurity is understood and treated as an issue of criminality and juvenile delinquency, not as a wider social conflict.

As a concerned citizen of this city, I began my inquiry with the overriding question: What is the urban social conflict in Rosario beyond the dominant discourse? This question led to more, including: what are the causes of this conflict? How do different actors define and understand the conflict? What are their proposed solutions? How can local governments facilitate transformation of urban violent social conflict and specifically what has already been labeled as “youth violence”? How can policy be a conflict transformer? How can youth serve as positive actors in transformation of the conflict? These questions show that there is a need to research these phenomena and what good practices currently exist to respond to this type of problems. There is a need for research on youth public policies from a new paradigm of participatory democracy which considers youths as actors and resources, and not only as passive beneficiaries. Given the limited scope of this thesis, I will concentrate on the following aims:

- To describe and to analyse the problem of youth criminality as an expression of urban social conflict and a response to structural violence in the city of Rosario.
- To explore the responses of the state to this problem; in particular, to consider the existing youth policy of the local government and the Provincial state, and also the contributions of non-governmental youth organizations.
- To propose recommendations for improvement of current interventions.

¹ In Argentina slums are colloquially called “villas miseria”

This thesis goes beyond the deliberate predominant discourse that names the conflict as a “youth violence” phenomenon. In this discourse, young people are depicted as the problem; they are seen in a negative light, as criminals or as victims of unfair structures rather than as social resources. Within this discourse, their engagement in violence is due to their deviation and anomie. In Argentina, repression is the main strategy of social control used by the police (CELS, 2005). This thesis indicates that this response has been inadequate and has not improved the situation. The discourse hides the root causes of the conflicts, consequently hindering the search for effective solutions to the situation.

This thesis argues that the observed direct violence, armed robbery, and violence during robbery, is a response to the presence of extreme structural and cultural violence. Therefore, no public policy based *only* on stopping direct violence will be successful. An effective answer to this problem must attempt to transform structural and cultural violence. Although an inter-generational conflict exists, this conflict is not the only (or primary) one. The conflict is not only between “youth” and “adults” but rather between the “included” and the “excluded” of society.

This thesis contributes to the fields of conflict analysis and peace studies by considering the views and perspectives of various actors in the conflict and their potential to be actors for peace. This thesis applies a conflict transformation framework to a current policy issue in the city of Rosario, Argentina, and offers constructive proposals for the transformation of the conflict. Its relevance for the study of peace and conflict lies in its analysis of an urban level social conflict, which is an intra-society conflict at the meso-level (Galtung, 2004). The analysis of this type of conflict fills a gap, as conflict transformation and peacebuilding analyses are often contextualized in inter-state and intra-state scenarios. Although the analysis is specific to one particular medium size city (ca. 1 million people) in South America, it is relevant for cities worldwide, in which similar trends appear, from the *favelas* of Rio, to the suburbs of New York, and the *banlieus* of Paris. The fact that social inclusion issues are relevant for most large cities worldwide shows that local level conflicts between included and excluded represent a global issue of concern. Furthermore, this thesis contributes to the analysis of public policies in the field of youth and violence prevention.

The first chapter presents a conceptual framework and methodological approach of the analysis. Concepts and tools are described and its applicability to urban social conflict is explored. The second chapter aims at understanding the problem and begins with the presentation of facts about the global and continental context followed by a description of the present situation of the city, with examples from the South West District of the city. The main focus of this chapter is the analysis of the conflict and the types of violence observed because of it, consisting of the description of the historical and socio-political context, identification of the actors, description of their attitudes, behaviors and understandings of the conflict. The third chapter explores the existing local youth policy as a local capacity for peace to be enhanced. Finally, recommendations and ideas for public local policy will be proposed for further exploration.

1. Chapter 1: Conceptual and methodological approach

“Peacebuilding requires us to work at constructing an infrastructure to support a process of desired change, and change is permanent.”

(John Paul Lederach)

This chapter aims to clarify the basic conceptual approach used in this thesis. This clarification serves as a basis for a comprehensive and accurate analysis of the conflict, necessary to understand the proposed recommendations. This is a fundamental step as analytical concepts influence the definition of the conflict and, thus, affect how public policies are framed and implemented. The concepts used are: 1) “youth”, 2) “conflict” and “violence”; “conflict transformation” and “peacebuilding”; 3) “citizenship” and “democracy” (in the context of the city). These concepts are placed in the context of the urban space or the scale of the local level. This chapter reflects on them and discusses their applicability to the case of the city of Rosario. This chapter also includes a section on the methodological approach used to gather and analyse information.

1.1. Youth

Even though there is a growing interest in youth, and development agencies, governments and civil society organisations state that they work with/for youth, the concept of youth itself has been continually debated and redefined by various social and demographic changes in recent decades. Youth refers to a heterogeneous group encompassing individuals with various ethnicities, religions, races, genders, and classes. “Some favor biological markers, in which youth is the period between puberty and parenthood, while others define youth in terms of cultural markers—a distinct social status with specific roles, rituals, and relationships.” (USAID, 2004). Youth are often defined as having reached the stage in life when they are physically capable of assuming adult roles (i.e., have passed puberty) but would generally not be expected to make decisions or provide support for others. Likewise, definitions also vary for men and women. In terms of age, this is usually between 15 and 24, although some societies frame this differently and it is difficult to draw the limits for reasons which will be further explained in this section².

Historically, youth has been defined through age, as the period in between childhood and adulthood, marked by social rituals and customs. In some societies, this transition was or is very short. Adulthood is associated with marriage and forming a new family as the main indicator of maturity. In modern societies this period has become longer; that is, childhood is left behind but the responsibilities of adulthood have not been assumed. Adulthood is associated with entrance in the labor market and assuming civic and political responsibilities (Tavella *et al.*, 2004). During this period, youth can stay longer in the formal education system and enjoy recreational activities which complement their social and cultural education. It is a time in which they can find their vocations, draw their life projects and plan their futures, but most importantly, acquire technical skills to enter the labor market, This is linked to the idea of progress and industrialization processes which need a more qualified labor force. The concept

² Youth as defined by the United Nations Programme on Youth are young people between the ages of 15 and The Council of Europe considers youth, young people between the ages of 13 and 30.

of youth was constructed as a social representation of a future full of hope (when young people seemed to abide by the rules, feed into the dreams of progress and the established order) and as a social future threat or source of chaos (when youth challenged the established order and social values) (Tavella *et al.*, 2004). This idea of youth constructed during modernity has been challenged, as the idea of progress itself is questioned. Modernity meant progress and the underlying idea that a better future could be planned, so youth planned and invested time in their future as a factor to ensure progress of society.

Presently, this belief in progress is being weakened by the failure of socio-economic paradigms, whether it is communism or neo-liberal capitalism, to bring about development and prosperity, and this, consequently, affects the dominating concept of youth. In both systems, entrance into the labor world is the main channel for participation in a society. Unemployment, sub-employment, exploitation, and child labor have produced disenchantment of the social system to secure this vital connection and human right. This has led to uncertainty and lack of trust in overarching social proposals; this disillusion is a sign of our times³. This crisis of the idea of modernity and progress has an enormous impact on youth and the concept of youth. Youth cannot reach adulthood when they cannot find employment. Often youth find employment much later in their lives or are sub-employed all their lives. Thus, youth becomes a timeless category. Being young becomes an end in itself beyond age. Youth becomes a socio-cultural model that influences all spaces of public and private life as being an adult stops being an attractive goal and becoming old seems to be a curse. Being youthful is “cool” or “in”, and it translates into fashion, entertainment and cultural consumption in general, made possible by plastic surgeries, cosmetics and endless ways of looking and feeling young which only a few can afford. The idea that the future is now and that tomorrow is far away shapes the way young people see life and plan their life strategies. Culture is influenced by the idea that “anything is valid” (“*Todo vale*”) to be happy today.

The context of this cultural and structural crisis is key to understanding why and how young people in Rosario are influenced, and influenced differently according to their position in the socio-economic structures, how they understand their lives and justify their choices. While some youth are, and can be, youth longer⁴, in sectors of the society subject to deeper crisis or upheaval, the concept of youth may radically alter as boys and girls are forced to take on adult responsibilities at a very young age.

The concept of youth has evolved and has different interpretations, thus it is difficult to define who exactly we are referring to as youth. Youth are part of other social groups defined by ethnicity, gender and social class. Yet, it is still useful to explore and understand particular phenomena and trends of this period in human life. The UN World Youth Report 2005 describes main issues affecting youth worldwide. In the following paragraphs, I summarize the situation of youth worldwide; the global perspective is useful as the situation of youth in Rosario follows similar trends.

³ This crisis is associated to postmodernism as a movement which puts into question the ideas upon which modernism is based, that is, progress, rationality and objectivity. Authors like Jean Francois Lyotard, John Paul Saul, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida have been associated with this movement.

⁴ In Rosario, demographic trends of the upper classes are similar to those found in developed countries, such as being able to complete studies, motherhood at 30 years of age. The Council of Europe usually considers youth until 30 years of age.

The report states that youth is “an important period of physical, mental and social maturation, where young people are actively forming identities and determining acceptable roles for themselves within their community and society as a whole. They are increasingly capable of abstract thought and decision-making in new ways. Their sexuality is also emerging, as their bodies continue to change, and they are presented with new physical and emotional feelings, social expectations and challenges” (World Youth Report, 2005). The World Youth Report also describes the situation of young people worldwide: the main problems are linked to poverty, education, employment and health. In spite of the progress achieved in education, global youth unemployment has increased to a record high of 88 million. There is growing pressure on young people to compete in an increasingly globalised labor market. Young people are often exploited and are involved mostly in the informal economy. Global market forces and the processes related to globalization are playing an increasingly important role in determining the prospects for poverty reduction, quality education, and decent work for all young people. For this reason, youth development cannot be considered separately from the wider development picture (Kemper, 2005). Large numbers of young people have not benefited from this process, especially in developing countries. Globalization has had an impact on youth employment opportunities and migration patterns, and has led to profound changes in youth culture and consumerism and in global youth citizenship and activism. The proliferation of ICT within the context of globalization over the past decade has presented both opportunities and challenges for young people.

Globally, young people are reaching adolescence earlier and marrying later. Premarital sexual relations appear to be increasing. Although early pregnancy has declined in many countries, it is still a major concern. HIV/AIDS is the primary cause of mortality among youth, followed by violence and injuries. There has been an unprecedented increase in the use of synthetic drugs worldwide, mostly in recreational settings. The demand for illicit substances among youth in developing countries has risen to levels typically found in industrialized countries. Another issue raised by the World Youth Report 2005 is juvenile delinquency. Delinquency among young people perpetuates negative stereotypes and is often perceived as a threat to society. Some countries respond to this threat by imposing policies of incarceration and active deterrence, while various United Nations instruments promote social rather than judicial approaches to dealing with young offenders.

Over the past decade, there has been growing recognition of the importance of youth participation in decision-making by United Nations (UN) agencies and bodies such as UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). However, only a few governments include youth in their delegations to the UN. Youth public policies are developed only in a few countries. For example, in Europe youth policies have been established and enhanced mostly due to the pioneer work of the Council of Europe Directorate of Youth and Sports. On other continents, they are in a process of development but rarely include a participatory approach. New efforts to include young people in decision-making must take into account the significant changes occurring in the patterns and structures of youth movements. Young people are adaptable and perhaps best able to make use of the new opportunities offered by globalization.

If the situation of youth and their role in society is to be improved, the key words are and will be *inclusion* and *participation* in the processes that are meant to deal with their needs and

issues. The answer to the “problem” of youth has often been exclusion, repression and violence. In the next section, I explore the approach that guides these analyses and through which societies can deal with youth issues in constructive and non-violent ways.

1.2. Peacebuilding and conflict transformation

The purpose of this section is to clarify and state the perspectives and values underlying this analysis and the concepts that constitute, in my opinion, a peacebuilding approach that rejects violence as a means of social change. It is relevant to explain these concepts in order to show why violent approaches have not resolved the conflict. I do not intend to fully explore and explain these concepts which require a literature review. Rather I intend to present them as the tools or lenses through which the diagnosis of the situation has been made and the recommendations for improvement have been drafted.

Societies and individuals often respond to problems and conflicts using violence and force. Several debates exist on whether human beings are inherently violent. In 1986 a group of scientists met in Sevilla, Spain and drafted a joint statement, the “Seville Statement”⁵. The purpose of the statement was to dispel the widespread belief that human beings are inevitably disposed to war as a result of innate, biologically determined aggressive traits. The statement claims that “It is scientifically incorrect to say that we have inherited a tendency to make war from our animal ancestors. Although fighting occurs widely throughout animal species, only a few cases of destructive intra-species fighting between organized groups have ever been reported among naturally living species, and none of these involve the use of tools designed to be weapons (...) It is scientifically incorrect to say that war or any other violent behavior is genetically programmed into our human nature“. This is an important starting point when studying youth who are condemned by media and society as violent and trouble makers. Against some popular beliefs and criminologists, young delinquents are not born “evil” and human beings are not by nature violent and criminals.

This thesis is nurtured and guided by a nonviolent peacebuilding and conflict transformation approach, mostly based on the work of Johan Galtung and his “Transcend” method (Galtung, 2000). There is a wide and growing variety of theoretical approaches in use in the field of peace and conflict studies and terms are often used interchangeably and loosely, leading to inaccuracies and confusions. These theories reflect both differing paradigms and types of interveners (e.g. state, non-state). However, Miall states that there is an emerging distinctive theory of conflict transformation which draws ideas and elements from other approaches like conflict management and conflict resolution (2004). This diversity of approaches is related to the changing nature of contemporary conflicts and reflects the need for new tools of analysis. Miall presents three fundamental characteristics of contemporary conflict: 1) they are asymmetric, marked by inequalities of power and status; 2) they are protracted, defying cyclical or bell-shaped models of conflict phases; and 3) these protracted conflicts warp societies affected both by local struggles and global factors. Miall argues that these characteristics challenge the approaches which focus on two parties and win-win situations.

5 The Seville Statement on Violence was drafted by an international committee of 20 scholars at the 6th International Colloquium on Brain and Aggression held at the University of Seville, Spain, in May 1986, with support from the Spanish Commission for UNESCO. UNESCO adopted the Seville Statement at its 25th General Conference Session in Paris, October 17 to November 16, 1989. The Statement has been formally endorsed by scientific organisations and published in journals around the world. UNESCO is preparing a brochure to be used in teaching young people about the Statement.

To consider only two actors and to focus mostly in “win-win” situations seems insufficient and inadequate for the case of youth in Rosario. The complexity of the situation requires the consideration of multiple actors in a long term and integrative social change perspective. Moreover, the three characteristics of contemporary conflicts mentioned by Miall are present in the urban conflict in the city of Rosario. First, the actors are not clearly defined. The actors are numerous, diverse, are less organized and more elusive to cluster or group under one leader or one voice and highly unequal in terms of power. Second, the conflict is on-going, with periods of more or less intensity. It is not possible to identify one single event which has started, triggered or ended the violence, thus the bell-shape model is limited to describe its dynamics. Thirdly, there are local and global factors which interact in the same space. The social conflict in Rosario will be further analysed in the section 3.3. What is important to clarify at this point is that a conflict transformation approach which focuses on the transformation of relationships, interests and discourses and deals with the root causes of the conflict, is more appropriate and relevant rather than those that focus on an agreement or “quick solution”.

As for peacebuilding, the term has also been loosely used or confused with other terms such as peacemaking and peacekeeping. For example, the UN Peacebuilding Commission established in 2005 considers peacebuilding as actions undertaken in a period of post-conflict recovery. Yet, peacebuilding involves a full range of approaches, processes, and interventions needed for the transformation of violent relationships, structures, attitudes and behaviours. It is understood in this thesis as the creative and simultaneous political and social processes for finding transcendent solutions to the root causes of conflicts and of dialogue and of efforts to change attitudes and behaviour. Peacebuilding is multidimensional and it includes the full range of activities from post-war reconstruction to preventive measures. Peacebuilding encompasses all activities which aim to eliminate or mitigate direct, structural and cultural violence. Peacebuilding and conflict transformation can only be possible if diverse needs, interests and expectations are addressed, and if sincere and future-oriented processes of healing and reconciliation take place. Consequently, the inter-related approaches of conflict transformation and peacebuilding are the most appropriate to guide this conflict analysis because multiple actors are considered, the main focus is dealing with the root causes of the conflict, changing relationships, structures, attitudes and behavior in a long term perspective, and building creativity and local capacities.

Now I turn to the basic concepts upon which this approach is constructed: conflict, violence and peace. Conflict is often used as a synonym for violence and thus it bears negative connotations. It can be defined negatively, as a fight or struggle, as a disagreement between people with different ideas or beliefs or as an incompatibility (or perceived incompatibility) of goals. (Galtung, 2000). Conflict can also be defined positively as an opportunity for actors to express their differences, become aware of others’ perceptions, interests and needs, and thus, be an opportunity for change and growth. Conflict can also be seen as a natural process, part of life and relationships (Galtung, 2000). According to the approach of Galtung, although conflict may lead to violence, it is conceptually totally different. At the core of a conflict, the root, there is always an incompatibility between goals, referred to as contradiction. While conflict means an incompatibility of goals, natural and necessary for human and social development, violence oppresses, destroys and hinders this development. Violence is only one way of dealing with a conflict; it is destructive and rarely transforms the conflict positively.

Galtung (2005) states: "Conflict is a complex human phenomenon and should by no means be confused with violence". Violence is to harm and hurt the body, mind and/or spirit of someone, including Self; by verbal and/or physical means (including body language). Violence leaves behind trauma, those traces, very difficult to remove, often indelible of the violence, on body, mind and spirit. Violence as an expression of contempt and hatred, "lack of respect" to put it mildly, and to be violated is an experience of humiliation. The harm and hurt on the mind and the spirit may leave the most important trauma".

According to the classification of Johan Galtung, three forms of violence could be conceptualized: a) direct violence is the explicit act or behaviour which physically damages a person or object; b) structural violence refers to the violence built into political, social and economic systems which determine unfair distribution of power, resources and opportunities, leading to actors feeling oppressed and unable to meet their needs; and, c) cultural violence is violence entrenched in cultural norms, beliefs and traditions, which makes other types of violence seem legitimate, accepted, normal or natural. These distinctions are important as often only direct violence is analysed and "treated", and other forms of violence are ignored. Galtung highlights the importance and often forgotten impact of structural violence: "Empirical work should now be started to get meaningful estimates of the loss of man-years due to direct and structural violence, respectively. What is lost in the slums of Latin America relative to the battlefields of Europe during one year of World War II?" (Galtung, 1971).

Within this thesis, special emphasis is placed on analyzing how these three inter-related types of violence manifest themselves in the urban space, and become known and referred to as "urban violence". Urban violence (Gizewski and Homer-Dixon, 1995) refers to the destruction of persons and property within an urban context. There are three broad categories of urban violence: a) political violence, both directed to the state and by the state against challengers; b) communal and ethnic violence; and c) criminal and anomic violence. The latter is usually not overtly political and consist of wanton acts of destruction, armed robbery, assault and murder. Gizewski and Homer-Dixon (1995) explain: "Theorists from Emile Durkheim to Chalmers Johnson argue that an erosion of society's moral unity is a key factor to civil violence. To the extent that criminal or anomic violence reflects alienation from society, or a calculation that the potential gains of ignoring society's rules exceed the costs of doing so, it indicates a breakdown in the moral and coercive authority of society as a whole". This criminal and anomic violence is most relevant for analysis of the situation in Rosario. These concepts elucidate how criminal and anomic violence are present and influence the social dynamics in Rosario.

Some elements of a Marxist critical approach to urban studies and development will prove to be useful as well⁶. Critical Marxists base their analyses of urban political and social violence on the conflict between classes. This approach is based on the theory of labour-value and exploitation, the accumulation of capital and classes and social relations of production. Capitalism and urbanisation are inextricably linked, but with no guarantee of social justice. One representative of this current, Enzo Mangione (1981), states in its book "Social Conflict

⁶ It is important to note that this work does not take a socio-economic determinism approach but some elements of Marxism as economic factors and class relations are key to understand a capitalist society.

and the City”, that in some Third World countries and underdeveloped regions, urbanisation is still a massive phenomenon due to the persistent crisis of the countryside because of the mechanisation of agriculture and the processes of industrialisation. The city seems to offer opportunities for employment or at least, survival. As a result, cities, especially their peripheries and degraded areas, are overcrowded by internal and international migrants. Often, the municipal governments cannot respond to this phenomenon with the needed services and urban infrastructure. The lack of housing, services and basic living conditions leads to waves of social conflict and violence in its different forms. This overall trend has also taken place in Rosario all along the 20th century and until the present with different characteristics. Sassen (2003) explains that it seems to be a trend part of the so-called phenomenon of globalisation that economic and social flows tend to concentrate in centers and create relative margins or less advantaged spaces and flows. The increase in criminality and urban violence appear to be a global symptom of the growing inequality, even creating “urban glamorous zones” and “urban war zones” as she mentions them. According to Bauman (2005) the whole system of global domination is based on the institution of urban insecurity, that is, deliberately making people afraid and vulnerable so as to easily dominate them. Finally, one more aspect of Marxist thought to highlight is that conflict is seen as the main drive for change. This is in line with Galtung’s approach to conflict transformation based on the idea of conflict as positive and necessary for social change.

1.3. Citizenship and democracy at the local level as a framework for conflict transformation

Conflict transformation and peacebuilding pre-suppose values of cohesion, human rights, and non-violent political actions. In practice, which political frameworks allow these processes of peaceful structural transformation to take place?

Since long-term processes which deal with the root causes of conflict are necessary, the basic framework should be one of a democratic society in which the concept of citizenship has renewed meaning in terms of political, civil *and* economic and social rights. The discussion about citizenship⁷ and democracy is relevant in this analysis as these concepts are usually used by policy-makers, donor and development organizations as “cures” for a society’s problems. Formal or representative democracies have huge deficits in being social frameworks for conflict transformation.

There is deep crisis of representation when citizens do not feel that their concerns and voices are heard or taken into account; therefore, many actors are in practice excluded. Only those that are more powerful are involved, excluding large amounts of the population. The agendas of political parties often only consider positions and interests of the main actors, overseeing the real and diverse needs of citizens. Another obstacle for formal democracies to become spaces for conflict transformation is that usually, politicians seem to have short-term goals and be more interested in the result of the next elections than in long-term investments. They want the minimum investment with the maximum and quickest results. Often, their speeches are plagued by promises and their actions seek high visibility and build on the fears, desperation

⁷ Citizenship is a status, a social and juridical recognition through which a person has rights and duties for belonging to a community, almost always based on a common territory or culture. Citizenship accepts difference but it does not accept inequality. All citizens are, in theory, equal. The concept of citizenship was first used in the context of the Greek city-states or “polis”. Polis means place of politics. In Latin, “civitas” (city) is a place where civic values are exercised.

and expectations of the majority population. When the promises are not fulfilled, mistrust in politicians and institutions follows.

Violent social conflicts are seen as proof of an insufficient democratic system or as a symptom of the lack of democratic governance, a failure to include all citizens in public life and in securing basic rights. In the context of Latin America, weak institutions are faced with higher demands and with the “burden” of implementing unpopular reforms and structural changes by choice or externally-forced. These changes are devised to help regional economies to fit into the global market economy in a competitive way, sometimes affecting traditional livelihoods and industries. Democracy faces difficulties when trying to realize the values of freedom and equality in practice. Latin American states have made progress in terms of securing political and civil rights; however, they are far from guaranteeing cultural, social and economic rights. The state is faced with two apparently incompatible goals: to secure political, social, economic and cultural rights, and, at the same time, to prioritize one economic model driven by a dominant economic sector which benefits from entering into the new globalised economy. In this struggle, the most powerful actors have so far won the game, and economic freedoms have dominated over the social and economic rights of citizens. The value of equality is central to the concept of citizenship and the most difficult to realize.

If formal democracy has its limits and even is “failure as it is” in the words of Hilary Wainwright (2003), new forms of direct and participatory democracy need to be developed as new sources of bargaining power for the daily needs of people. One of the most well-known experiences of participatory democracy are the “participatory budgeting” experiences⁸ being implemented in number of cities in Brazil and other Latin American and European cities. According to Wainwright, in Porto Alegre, the participatory budget has reinvigorated local democracy, and a real redistribution of wealth has been achieved and the lives of the poor have been improved with the eventual support of the majority of the middle classes.

A public policy which fosters and develops experiences of participatory democracy is an institutionalized process of conflict transformation and peacebuilding. These experiences were developed by local governments and seem to work at the local level. Local democracies offer the citizen more spaces for direct participation and a closer contact with his/her representatives and public officials. This is not new; citizenship was inexorably linked to a city⁹ (Nun, 2000) as they were the origin and centers of political units, a place where citizens and politicians could meet to discuss and decide. Proximity and living together allows and fosters social interaction, a space for cooperation where conflict is an opportunity for change. This interaction requires a minimum of common rules and respect before diversity that, if decided together, prevents violence and creates mechanisms for conflict transformation.

Borja and Castells (1997) relate closely the status of the citizen to the city. It is in the city where we live as civic beings: it is the urban environment that realizes in every minute the sensation of belonging or not belonging to something called political society. This

8 Hilary Wainwright (2003) explains in brief the experience of Porto Alegre's participatory budget: “It is a cycle of neighbourhood meetings people identify their priority needs for new investments (...) and then elect delegates to meetings for wider districts. These delegates apply criteria and rules developed in previous years, which give the priorities different weights. They can elect a budget council, which represents every part of the city. Through an open process of negotiation and reporting back, the overall budget is drawn up and then put to the major and municipal council for final agreement.”

9 Only in the 18th and 19th centuries citizenship became linked to nationality.

understanding of the concept of citizenship linked to the sensation of belonging is useful to study the processes of social inclusion and exclusion. Youth who are excluded and feel “outside” of social and economic flows and interactions try to find a feeling of belonging and acceptance among their peers, sometimes by joining gangs and through illegal activities. In the city of Rosario, and in particular in what concerns the situation of youth, citizenship remains unrealized. Political, social, economic and cultural rights remain only a promise though the realisations of these rights are key for the peaceful transformation of conflicts.

1.4. Methodology and tools of analysis

This research uses qualitative research methods. The research methodology is composed of three main data collection tools:

- Participatory observation: I, as a citizen of the city of Rosario, observed the situation. More specifically, I was as a youth worker in a slum area in the South-West District, Itatí neighborhood during the years 2000-2003 and continued to visit it and meet youth workers in the following years. I also worked as a youth coordinator of Peace Education Programmes of Educating Cities Latin America, based in the International Relations Department of the Municipality of Rosario.
- Interviews with different actors: Interviews were conducted in December 2005 and January 2006 with four young people that live in the South-West neighbourhood, three youth workers, and three representatives of the local government,(Municipal Youth Center). (See further details in Table 1)

An overview of the profiles of the interviewees can be found in Annex 1. Some were interviewed using a structured questionnaire (Group 1) and some only about the activities that they coordinate (Group 2).

- Analysis of materials produced by youth workers and youth in slums: I found useful information in the articles of Magazine “Ángel de Lata” which is a social project that involves several youth organizations and institutions working on social inclusion of youth, strongly inspired and guided by the work of Claudio “Pocho” Lepratti¹⁰. “Pocho” was a deeply committed social and youth worker who lived in the slum in Ludueña area and organized activities for vulnerable youth in the slum, and who started youth groups and network. The project “Ángel de Lata” involves the edition and distribution of a magazine, organisation of workshops and social integration activities. At the same time, selling the magazine is an income generating activity for street children and their families.

¹⁰ He was shot by the police on 18 December 2001 on the roof of the school where he worked. Human rights organisations and witnesses argue that he was shot because his activities mobilised youth and this was inconvenient for the police.

Table 1: Overview of interviewees

Name	Age	Gender	Profile
<i>GROUP 1: Interviewed using structured questionnaire as presented in Section 1.4</i>			
Ezequiel	19	Male	Student of higher education. South-West District
Pablo	16	Male	Student secondary education. South-West District
Damian	16	Male	Student secondary education. South West District
Florencia	17	Female	Student secondary education. South West District
Claudio	39	Male	Teacher – Youth Worker Guemes Scout Group
<i>GROUP 2: Interviewed without structured interview about the activities which they coordinate</i>			
Marcelo	29	Male	Youth Worker Guemes Scout Group
Cesar	30	Male	Youth Worker Itatí Scout Group
Romina	30s	Female	Social Worker for Municipal government
Diego	30s	Male	Coordinator Municipal Youth Center
Silvana	30s	Female	Sub-coordinator Municipal Youth Center

Basic questions for the interviews:

Spanish	English
¿Cuáles son en su opinion los problemas más importantes de este barrio?	In your opinion what are the main problems of this neighbourhood?
¿Podría describir en detalle la situación?	Could you describe in detail the situation?
¿Podría describir los incidentes más comunes?	Could you describe the more common incidents?
¿Cuáles cree que son las causas de este problema?	What do you think are the causes of this problem?
¿Qué necesidades tienen los jóvenes? Los vecinos?	What needs do young people have? What needs do the neighbours have?
¿Qué intereses tienen los distintos actores? ¿Qué posiciones y acciones adoptan?	What interests do the different actors have? What positions and actions do they take?
¿En su opinión, qué debería hacerse al respecto para llegar a una solución?	In your opinion, what should be done about this problem to reach a solution?

The answers to these questions are summarized in Annex 1 and constitute part of the analysis of Chapter 2, section 2.3.3. on cultural violence and the attitudes that influence the behavior of youth and state actors.

The main tools of analysis used are:

- The classification of Galtung of the three types of violence (direct, structural and cultural); and
- The ABC triangle, which analyses attitudes, behaviors and the conflict or contradiction (Galtung, 2000). Attitudes are emotions, such as apathy or hatred, and cognitions include how the parties map the conflict. Behavior is generally the spectrum of acts that range from violence to apathy. The root of the conflict is the contradiction. Galtung states negative attitudes and behavior are like metastases to the root cancer. They may become prime causes in their own right, but the root cause of conflict is the same: parties that have incompatible goals.

2. Chapter 2: Understanding the problem: Urban social conflict and youth in Rosario

"What do you wish for 2007? I don't ask anything. I wish I was able to go to school. I want people to treat me better in the street, with respect."

(Pipi, 14 years old, sells Magazine "Ángel de Lata" in the streets of Rosario)

This chapter aims to describe the situation and to explore the causes of urban social conflict and more specifically those aspects related to the role of and the situation of youth. To reach to a complete understanding, it is important to know the historical and socio political context in which Rosario is inserted, and the processes that have shaped its present social situation. The first two sections summarise key facts and aspects of the history of Argentina and more specifically of Rosario. More emphasis is placed on recent years and the impact of the implementation of neoliberal policies, especially in the last decade of the 20th century.

2.1. Argentina in a globalizing world

Although it is difficult to summarize the complex history of Argentina in a few pages, it is useful to place the analysis of youth criminality and social conflict into a broader historical context since Argentina has often dealt with its political struggles through violence. As Galtung (2005) explains, history lives deep in a collective sub-conscious and decants in its deep culture. It is also useful to indicate how Argentina is situated within phenomena linked to globalization such as liberalization of markets and increase of dynamics of inclusion and exclusion.

Argentina has been an independent state since 1816 and a federal republic since 1880. It is a country with an area of 2.8 million km² and a population of 38.14 million people according to the last Census of 2004. It is calculated that population in 2007 will be close to 40 million. Historically, Argentina has been known for the politicization of its institutions, including its judiciary. This is a consequence of the naked and extended conflict between highly antagonistic political forces – Peronists and anti-Peronists – during the 1950s, 60s and 70s. In 1955, Perón was removed from power by a military coup led by Lonardi and Aramburu. In June 1956, two Peronist generals, Juan José Valle and Raul Tanco, attempted a coup against Aramburu, criticising an important purge in the army, the abrogation of social reforms and persecution against trade-union leaders. They also demanded liberation of all political and labour activists and the return to the constitutional order. The uprising was quickly crushed, and General Valle and other members of the military were executed; twenty other civilians were arrested at their residence and their bodies thrown in the León Suarez dumping ground. Along with the June 1955 Casa Rosada bombing on the Plaza de Mayo, the León Suarez massacre is one of the important events that started a cycle of violence. Pedro Aramburu was kidnapped and executed for this massacre in 1970, by Fernando Abal Medina, Emilio Maza, Mario Firmenich and others, who would later form the Montoneros movement, a revolutionary guerrilla movement inspired by and linked to Peronism.

Frondizi, the candidate of the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR), a traditional party born at the end of the 19th century and of democratic ideals, won the presidential elections of 1958, by obtaining approximately 4,000,000 votes against 2,500,000 for Ricardo Balbín (with 800,000 neutral votes). Frondizi's government ended in 1962 with another military intervention, after a

series of local elections were won by the Peronist candidates. In new elections in 1963, neither Peronists nor Communists were allowed to participate. Arturo Illia of the UCR party won these elections; regional elections over the next few years favoured Peronists. Along with worker unrest, this led to another coup in June 1966, which established General Juan Carlos Onganía as *de facto* president. This led to a series of military-appointed presidents. The last of these, Alejandro Lanusse, was appointed in 1971 and attempted to re-establish democracy amidst an atmosphere of continuing Peronist worker protests. In 1973, Perón returned to power briefly until his death. He was succeeded by his wife until the military coup in 1976.

The military coup of 1976 is the beginning of one of the darkest periods of Argentina's political and economic history. A "dirty" or hidden war started between the military government and various guerrilla revolutionary movements. According to the investigation led by the National Commission on Disappeared Persons (Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas – CONADEP), the number of disappeared between 1976 and 1983 was about 9,000 people. The report of the Commission described that the majority of the victims were less than 35 years old, workers or students, and were captured in their homes during the night. However, human rights organisations like Mothers of Plaza de Mayo estimate that there were 30,000 disappeared. A report of Chilean intelligence estimated the number at 22,000 in 1978. In 2003, the Human Rights Secretary of the Republic of Argentina had 13,000 registered disappeared cases. In 1982, another major event shaped Argentinean history: the Falklands or Malvinas War left scars of violence and frustration which are still present today. The war remains in the collective memory through memorials and stories and the claim over the islands is constantly included in the foreign affairs agenda.

In 1983, a new democratic government was elected. Raúl Alfonsín was elected from the Unión Cívica Radical, against Luder from the Peronist Party. Even though there is certain continuity in the economic policy during the Alfonsín period (1983-1989); it is during the Presidencies of Carlos Menem (1989-2000) that liberal reforms started during the dictatorship were fully implemented. These reforms meant the privatisation of public enterprises such as the telephone company and the national airlines. These changes led to an increase in the rate of unemployment, generating poverty and exclusion.

Over the years, each political force hoped to use the state apparatus to advance its own interests and frustrate those of its enemies, thus resulting in the politicization of many key bureaucratic appointments. This has led on the one hand to a state apparatus which has not been able to match the level of technical competence and professionalism found in other Latin American countries of similar development levels (such as Chile) and, on the other hand, to the politically opportunistic rule of law.

Moreover, since the 1970s, Latin America has been undergoing a process of structural change that has resulted in a number of political, social and economic crises. Privatization, opening of the markets, reform of the state apparatus and deregulation of the labor market has led to an increase in unemployment and poverty rates.

With an average life expectancy of 75 years, a literacy rate of 97%, and a GDP per capita of USD 13,000 (2005 E), Argentina is placed at number 34 in the UNDP Human Development Index (UNDP, 2006). However, averages and national estimations can hide the social and economic inequalities which instigate social conflicts. Argentina can be depicted as a group of

islands of extreme wealth in a sea of marginalization. In 2001, Argentina fell into an economic, political and social crisis. On December 19 and 20th, 2001, millions of citizens protested in the streets calling for the resignation of President De La Rúa. The protests were repressed by the police and 32 deaths occurred. However, the events of December 2001 were merely the last stages of a crisis that had been brewing for several years. Unemployment in urban areas increased from 13.2% in May 1998 to 21.5% in May 2002, declining slightly to 17.5% in October of the same year. The population living below the poverty line increased from 24.3% to 54.3 % (in the suburbs of Buenos Aires), and to 57.5% (in all urban areas) over the same period. The number of people living below the indigence line has more than doubled over the last year to account for 27.5% of the population (INDEC Argentina 2003). Yet these figures do not adequately express the human tragedy behind a deep social crisis.

Multiple forms of violence were and are present; direct, structural and cultural, and their inter-relations have become more conspicuous. In the late 1990s an increase in police violence occurred in Argentina, and presently in its province of Santa Fe, where the city of Rosario is located. Various human rights reports describe specifically how police violence has increased in the region and in particular in Argentina (Ales, 2002; CELS, 2005). Citizens continuously feel insecure and live in fear. Recent polls mention insecurity as the population's main issue of concern. For example, Amnesty International (AI) Argentina's reports highlight cases of torture and mistreatment by police officers and at police stations and prisons in numerous provinces and also at the federal level. To add a few facts to illustrate this situation, 80 deaths resulted from police repression and killings in 1999, as documented by a civic association (Coordinadora contra la Represión Policial e Institucional, 2005). Also, during the mass protests that took place on December 19th and 20th, 2001, 32 people were killed, including 7 in the city of Rosario, and many were injured.

2.2. Rosario: a short social and political contextualisation

Rosario is a city of approximately 1 million inhabitants, situated 300 km North West of the city of Buenos Aires, by the river Paraná, in the province of Santa Fe (See below Figure 1). Its geographical situation and its port have facilitated its economic development.

Figure 1



The city has received massive European immigration since the 1850s and recent waves from neighbouring countries and internal migrations from the Northern provinces within Argentina. After the first Spanish conquerors and settlers (16th to 19th centuries), the first immigrants were British who built the railway system in the period 1850-1890, followed by Italians, Spanish,

Polish, Russians, Ukrainians, and many other European nationalities. The city was multicultural and progressive due to the influence of the political cultures and new ideas brought by the immigrants. Associations, schools, hospitals, banks, trade unions and discussion and social clubs were established by the immigrants.

In the 1940s, support for Juan D. Perón as president by the citizens of Rosario was strong; Rosario was an industrial city and the workers felt that Perón contributed to improving their work conditions and quality of life. Rosario was a prosperous commercial and industrial city, despite the ideological radicalisation of the following decades and the increase of political violence. The economic policy of the last military dictatorship (1976-1983) dramatically affected the industrial sector, especially the small and medium enterprise with the opening of the market to foreign investors and products.

In Rosario, there was a strong support for Alfonsín, made evident by the fact that 400,000 people attended the closure of his campaign which took place in this city. Above all, this massive phenomenon meant a renewed hope in democracy. Since then, Rosario has democratically elected mayors up until the present. In 1989, a period of hyperinflation and economic crisis, together with unemployment and the general worsening of the quality of life, led to violent looting of supermarkets and other shops. This event was broadcasted on television and these lootings became an issue of national debate. In 1995, unemployment in the city of Rosario had peaked at 21.1%.

Unemployment and the economic crisis led to a process in which the middle classes started to become poorer. Many families had to adjust and relocate in poorer and cheaper neighbourhoods or move to a slum. Slums were populated by internal migrants coming mostly from the Northern provinces and the interior of Santa Fe provinces as the country side expelled workers due to the mechanisation of agricultural work and concentration of property in a few hands. Disadvantaged areas existed in the periphery of the city since the beginning of the 20th century but it is during the 1980's that the slum areas were formed with the features that characterise them until the present.

The city of Rosario has various neighbourhoods following the dynamics of a center-periphery model; the center is populated by high and middle income families and surrounded by a first circle or peripheries of working class and low-income families. At the same time, it is surrounded by a second circle of slums locally called "villas miseria". According to data presently available on the webpage a programme to eradicate and re-locate slums of the Municipality and UN-Habitat (UN-Habitat, 2006; Rosario Habitat, 2006), approximately 155,000 people (13% of the population of Rosario) lived on land which was not of their property in 91 irregular settlements, occupying 10% of the city's area (see below Figure 2). However, in a report elaborated by the social movement "Libres del Sur" of 5 December 2006, it is estimated that almost one third of the population of Rosario lives in slums and irregular settlements. This situation was specially aggravated by a storm which left many homeless and led to the establishment of 5 new settlements.¹¹

¹¹ These settlements are located in: 1) intersection of streets Felipe Moré and Presidente Perón in front of Municipal Center Center West District, 2) intersection of streets 27 de Febrero and Valparaíso, 3) intersection of streets 27 de Febrero and Río de Janeiro, 4) intersection of streets Biedma and Grandoli, 5) intersection of streets Barra and Cerrito.

The life conditions in these settlements are extremely poor and the rates of unemployment are dramatically high. Most of these settlements are on fiscal or public land left unused by the national railway system and some on abandoned private property. These settlements have deficient access to public services, running water or electricity.

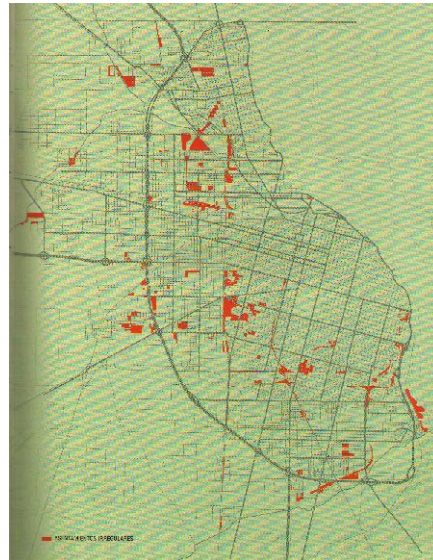


Figure 2: Map of Rosario. Irregular settlements are marked in red.
Source: Municipality of Rosario

2.3. Violence and social conflict in Rosario

This section aims to describe the different forms of violence present in this conflict and show how youth criminality is an expression of a urban social conflict and a response to structural violence. Direct violence is an expression of the structural violence in the form of social fragmentation and socio-economic exclusion. The first part on direct violence will try to point out those acts or behavior which are easily recognizable and which most institutions typically consider and measure as violent. The second section explores the links between direct and structural violence in the lives of young people. The third section explores the relations among direct, structural and cultural violence and how attitudes influence youth and state behavior.

2.3.1. Direct Violence in Rosario

Provincial police data indicates the following: In 2001, 39.654 crimes were registered in the department Rosario, 43.815 in 2002, 41.497 in 2003, 45.294 in 2004 and, 56.970 in 2005 (Santa Fe Government, 2006). In a report of the Argentine Federal Police based on Provincial police data, it is calculated that in 2001 in Rosario, of all crimes, 61% were against property and 24% against persons (Federal Police, 2006). The increase is substantial when taking into consideration that many small thefts are not reported. In most cases crimes, against property are committed with the possession of arms and are unorganised, that is, the level of preparation and work in mafia or criminal networks is limited (Ciafardini, 2006). According to the National Registry of Arms, there are approximately 100.000 to 150.000 arms possessed illegally in Argentina. During 2004, 3.752 casualties related to gunfire were registered in Argentina: 30% are related to attempts of robbery, 70% are intra-personal and family related. The availability of arms is a key factor in the number of casualties.

Being robbed and attacked is a common experience in Rosario. There is no single person that I know who has not been robbed at least once in his/her life. Usually, thieves are young people who are fast and athletic in order to run, bike or escape on a motorcycle. Only a few of these incidents are reported for various reasons including mistrust in the police forces and ineffectiveness of the response that the police and judicial systems give to this problem. For example, when visiting Itatí slum in the South West District, I was robbed of my watch by a child who was less than 15 years old. Even though, I was walking with a woman who lived in the slum I was an “outsider,” a white woman. Minutes after the incident, I met some community leaders and told them about what had happened. They were sad and immediately said that they knew who the perpetrators were.

In an interview published in December 2006 (Ángel de Lata, 2006), “El Ale”, a former street child who lives in a slum, now working on a social project, reported that 20% of those who live in the slum are engaged in stealing or in drug dealing or consumption. For example, he estimates that out of 20 pesos acquired from stealing 10 are used for drug consumption and 10 are given to the head of the family to cover basic needs.

Upper and middle classes often perceive only the type of direct violence of which they are victims. However, poorer sectors suffer the harassment and violence perpetrated by police forces. Journalist and social worker Osvaldo Aguirre considers that police brutality has increased, especially since 1999 when Governor Carlos Reutemann took office. He describes how the police forces behave in a system of impunity. The Judicial system hides proofs, delays trials and protects police officers and particularly, officers of higher ranks (Aguirre, 2006). The priest of Ludueña neighbourhood, Edgardo Montaldo, who has been working in the poorest areas of the city for 38 years, explains that the situation is dramatic. He summarises it in a strong statement: “I am against abortion but also against this system of death: kids commit suicide, they kill among each other or they are killed by the police” (Salinas, 2006).

Although political violence is not as serious as in the past or in other Latin American countries, human rights organisations such as “APDH” (Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos) claim that the 7 persons who were killed by the police in the city of Rosario (3 less than 18 years of age, 4 less than 35), during demonstrations in 18-20 December 2001 were targets of a deliberate attempt by the police to infuse fear among social and political activists. There are many irregularities in the investigation and, to this date, there are no clear results of it. Only one police agent is in prison for the death of Claudio Lepratti. Other cases’ investigations are slow or wedged (Biblioteca Lepratti, 2005).

The police’s role is perceived by youth workers and social activists as repressive and on the side of those who are powerful. Harassment and repression take various forms. The police targets poor young people as criminals or potential criminals. Often they harass them in shanty towns to “keep them in line”. An example of this is unjustified detentions of “suspects”, usually young people of low income and aboriginal ethnic background, pejoratively called “negros villeros”. Social activists are intimidated so as to promote fear and demobilization. For example, human rights organizations claim that the deaths of December 2001 were meant to intimidate and send the message to social activists that social protests must stop and that

police forces could act with impunity. Social demands are de-legitimized in public discourse and media. Protesters are often referred to as “trouble makers”, “irresponsible”, “lazy people who do not want to work”. The justice system is selective and corrupt. It punishes some crimes but allows impunity of corrupt practices at the higher levels of the political spectrum or “white-collar” crimes.

This section described the presence of direct violence, originating both by young delinquents and by the police. The next section will link how direct violence is a response to structural violence, that is, exclusion, marginalization and the denial of human rights.

2.3.2. Structural violence in Rosario

Ciafardini (2006) confirms in his recent study that even though statistics are scarce and inaccurate, there is a considerable increase in crime and that this is intrinsically related to the negative social impact that neo-liberal policies and the new economic global scenario had on Latin American societies. According to this criminologist, several studies of Latin American cities show that those engaged in criminal activity are usually young males who come from the poorest and most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. This is a tendency observed worldwide in processes of urbanisation and industrialisation and confers with gender roles; usually males are expected to obtain jobs and provide economic support to their families and are the “brave” ones. (Clinnard and Abbott, 1973). In relation to the age of offenders, Ciafardini analyses that during the 1990s in the city of Buenos Aires, the average age decreased; this tendency is also observed in other big cities in Argentina, including Rosario. Before 1998, crimes were committed mostly by people of 26 years of age or more. In 1998, the age of offenders starts to decrease prominently and progressively, even to note a high increase of young offenders of 15-18 years of age, phenomenon rare in previous years.

Ciafardini describes in detail that the economic crisis is a determining factor in the increase of violent crime against property. He explains that there is no direct relation between poverty and crime. The relation is complex and various factors are present: it is not poverty in itself that provokes young people to rob, but a combination of the relative poverty and increasing inequality; in other words, becoming poorer and poorer in relation to others that become richer and richer. This is also aggravated by abrupt deterioration of the socio-economic conditions and lack of opportunities and alternatives. The feeling of frustration, anger and sentiment of “I don’t care” is usually common in the sons of those who lost their jobs and grew up hearing about a most prosperous past and now live in extreme poverty and marginalised. Exclusion from employment and educational opportunities, experiences of family crisis and even, family violence, combined with social discrimination and racism, impact young people in devastating ways. They are deprived not only of tools to develop their life strategies but also of hope in the future. This is clearly shown in the Brazilian movie “City of God” in which the equation youth + misery = violence is depicted.

Other factors mentioned in Ciafardini’s study include the increase in youth’s spare time and their increase in the consumption of alcohol and illegal drugs. He notes that more than 13% of young people in Argentina do not study or work, which reflects the alarming social exclusion they suffer. Most young people find great difficulties in entering the job market. Most study or

are sub-employed as a survival strategy as described in the study “Being Young in Rosario” published by the National University of Rosario.

This situation of exclusion of young people is inserted in a context of social and economic crisis. In Rosario, the impact of the implementation of neoliberal economic policies was disastrous for the local economic structure and consequently, for its social cohesion. With the introduction of imported products, local industries were destroyed. The number of enterprises that went bankrupt was so high that the court house did not have enough rooms for files and personnel to deal with all the new unemployed workers who were fired without compensation payments¹² As a result, unemployment in Rosario gradually increased during the 1990s peaking in 1995 and has since slowly decreased in the following years until the present period of recovery (see below Table 2). In 2006, there was an 8.6% sub-employment rate. 44% of all employed are not registered; that is, they are part of the informal sector. These percentages are considerably higher among youth, and reach 40% to 50%.

Table 2. Evolution of rates of poverty and unemployment (INDEC, 2006)			
Period	Poverty*	Indigence*	Unemployment
May 1994	16,1	3,3	10,7
May 1998	24,3	5,3	13,2
May 2000	29,7	7,5	15,4
2º Sem 2006	31,4	11,2	12,8

*Even though the terms mean the same, the INDEC has developed two categories, “poverty” and “indigence”, using indicators such as income, housing and access to services. Basically, an “indigent” person has less income and less access to services than a “poor” person.

Access to education and employment opportunities varies from class to class. In lower income classes, the period of youth tends to be shorter, as young people are pushed to enter the informal economy, take up responsibilities, marry or migrate. In Argentina, the poorest population, with a low level of education and difficulties entering the job market, was estimated at 1.5 million in 1993. Young people from 16 to 29 years old constituted 56.7% of the unemployed people and 40.9% of the sub-employed in terms of less amount of hours and 39.6% of the sub-employed in terms of income. Unemployment of young people almost doubled the total of the active population.

These processes of social fragmentation and exclusion which constitute structural violence become evident in the urban space. Studies of Gizewski and Homer-Dixon (1995) refer to it as urban violence, in its form of criminal and anomic violence. This type of violence usually takes up the form of armed robbery, assault and in some cases, murder, often when the victim resists the attack. The fact that there is correlation between the increase of this type of crime in cities and processes of social exclusion is not casual. These crimes are not due to a deviation or the product of “evil” criminals’ behaviour; rather, it is the proximity of inequality and conspicuous indifference and unfairness of those who are included that creates the

¹² This I witnessed myself as I was the secretary (1998-2003) of an accountant who was in charge of the administration of one of the enterprises in bankruptcy for the provincial court house.

tension. In this social space, this becomes evident by the different availability of services and infrastructure between rich and developed areas and poor or peripheral neighbourhoods: lack of schools, hospitals and recreational areas, deficient transportation services, lack of running water and sewage systems, inadequate housing. It is not only exclusion from social and economic life, but it is also exclusion from the social space. A social distance reinforced and perpetuated by physical distance. It is a social contract which has been broken in terms of moral unity and physical proximity. Those who are left out live in slums, even separated by a fence or road that police often refuse to cross. Individuals do not feel related to society's rules or spaces any more. They are physically out.

In summary, despite the heterogeneity of youth, two large groups of young people appear: those who have access to basic human rights such as educational opportunities, health and spaces of expression and, those who do not. Upper-class, middle class and working class young people have relative access to primary and secondary school education in the city as well as to basic health services. Secondary and technical education accessible to low-income families as public institutions do not charge registration fees and public transportation is subsidized for young people until 18 years of age on week days. This education is valued as a guarantee for future employment. Most middle and upper class young people attend private or semi-private institutions. Access to quality education and other cultural services reinforce social inequalities and cultural differentiation among young people from different social and economic backgrounds. Language, cultural consumption and habits, the ways of dressing and interacting change notably from one group to the other.

Youth are excluded economically, politically and socially, and reflected in the lack of physical space and reclusion in certain neighborhood and slums. More specifically, Ben-Joseph and Southworth (2003) state that children and youth are deprived of the diversity of city life as there are few places that they can access and enjoy safely. Cities are not thought or planned for children and youth; they lack recreational spaces and child and youth friendly participation policies (Driskell, 2002). These trends can also be observed in the city of Rosario, as a dual city, struggling to become a city for all.

Durkheim and Johnson argue that anomic violence appears when individuals consider that it is not worthwhile or rewarding to respect social norms. Young people in Rosario feel that society has left them out and they seek different ways to be included and survive. The relation between structural and direct violence is clear not only in statistics and sociological studies, but also in the life story of "El Ale". He is a young boy who grew up in the streets, robbed to survive and consumed drugs. He had extreme experiences and now he takes part in social project which produces a magazine sold by street children called "El Ángel de Lata" (the angel of tin). He moved to Rosario when he was 9 years old from the northern province of Chaco. He had never been to school. He started wandering in the streets and begging. He was mistreated and felt discriminated. During the cited interview (see above), he explains: "I asked myself why I was poor, when this is a question that other people have to ask, not poor people themselves". He describes how humiliating it was to eat from the garbage and how he experienced incipient sexual harassment by those "who have money". He started to consume drugs at the age of 12: pills, marihuana, cocaine and alcohol.

When analysing the story of Ale, I see how aware he is of the links among social exclusion, a lack of opportunities and alternatives and his behaviour. Ignatieff's understanding of the concept of citizenship linked to the sensation of belonging is useful to the study of processes of social inclusion and exclusion. Youth who are excluded and feel "outside" of social and economic flows and interactions try to find a feeling of belonging and acceptance among their peers, sometimes, joining gangs and illegal activities. In the city of Rosario and in particular, in what concerns the situation of youth, citizenship remains unrealised. Political, social, economic and cultural rights remain a promise and the realisation of these rights is a necessary condition for the peaceful transformation of conflicts.

Ale is also aware of the classes' structure; he is part of, "us" who are poor, and there is "them" who are rich. The Marxist critical approach is helpful as the urban conflict is also a conflict between those who are excluded and exploited and those who profit and manage the natural and economic resources. Capitalism has taken a form in the present time that does not need so many workers to reproduce itself and continue to accumulate wealth. The excluded is the "marginal mass" that can be functional if it turns to consumption or enters the labour market.

In the case of young people living in extreme poverty in the slums of Rosario, their functionality to the system is limited. They are not qualified workers; however, they are consumers (or potential consumers). Since their functionality is limited, in a Marxist interpretation, there is no need to include them in the system. As some criminologist theories propose, they should be eliminated or kept contained in prison. These theories propose only the treatment of direct violence as no link is acknowledged between structural and direct violence by the dominant class and the satellite state.

2.3.3. Cultural Violence in Rosario

In order to reproduce and sustain direct and structural violence, these forms of violence need to seem legitimate, accepted, normal and natural. The process of legitimisation of violence is subtle and hard to observe and deconstruct. Cultural violence is violence entrenched in cultural norms, beliefs and traditions. These beliefs are nurtured by deep culture¹³ (Galtung, 2005) and deliberately disseminated through education, propaganda, art and social practices. These beliefs and norms translate in attitudes. Galtung's definition of attitudes refers to emotions and cognitions, that is, the way actors feel and perceive the reality and how they map the conflict. As direct and structural violence are legitimised by a system of beliefs made evident in attitudes and behaviour, it is important to understand the attitudes of youth and the state in order to be able to deconstruct them and build alternatives.

The values and attitudes of young people and the state will be explored in the following sections. To what extent is violence seen as a legitimate way for solving problems? To what extent is it seen as the *only* way to solve problems? To what extent is violence questioned? The purpose is to find reasons for their choices and behaviour. Understanding the perceptions of the actors and their attitudes is important as if these do not change, solutions to direct violence will be temporary and ineffective in the long term.

¹³ Galtung refers to deep culture as a deeper layer of culture, deeper messages, features or aspects of it taken for granted the collective group subconscious.

2.3.4. Values and attitudes of youth in Rosario

As previously stated, youth is a very heterogeneous group. The analysis of the values and attitudes of youth in Rosario is based on the sociological study "Being Young in Rosario, strategies of life, intervention policies and philosophical search" (2004), the interviewed I conducted with young people and youth workers during 2006 and published interviews of young people involved in the project "Ángel de Lata". The main questions guiding this exploration of attitudes are: How do young people experience, perceive and define the conflict? What are the causes in their opinion? However, In order to address these questions it is useful to understand first the predominant values of young people's lives, how the context shapes them and how they see their own situation. First, some of the findings of the study "Being Young in Rosario" are presented as a basis for viewing the perceptions of young people of their own lives in a context of social conflict.

The first part of the study is a qualitative analysis of actors' subjectivity, their motivations and values by the sociologist Tavella. The study seeks to determine the degree of personal will and the degree of external factors that determine a youth's life strategies and behaviour. The methodology is based on interviews; the units of analysis were young people of 18-25 years of age who lived in different areas of Rosario. Considering the social structure and stratification of Rosario the criteria to select the interviewees was their type of housing and neighbourhood (habitus). Previous sociological studies establish correspondence of socio-economic level, income, level of formal education and housing. Youth were clustered in three groups: Low, medium and high income who corresponded to young people living in slums and disadvantaged areas, periphery neighbourhoods, and the center/private neighbourhoods.

Young people in the three groups stated that family was the main value which organised their lives. Their experiences and projects were deeply shaped by their families above other factors like personal or professional projects. The family protects and connects the individuals in a larger group, including the extended family. The attachment of young people to their family is reinforced by the fact of structural unemployment. In general, young people live with their parents, even when they are employed and when they become parents themselves, as wages are low and unemployment high. This is a strategy to share costs of living. All cases which were studied had as their main life project to form a family and get married at around the age of 30 with an average of two children. Family seems to be a refuge in times of crisis and a way to belong to the group. As Ale states during his interview, half of what he obtained through robbery was for his family and the rest for himself. His family and his mother were the highest value in his view and what finally helped him to be able to change his life.

In relation to education, young people of middle and high income see it as a way to acquire the status of "student". It is within social tradition to study as part of being young: "Youth have to study". For young people of middle and high income, studying is seen as a way of improving the future employability and as pleasant for their personal development. Quite differently for young people from low income families studying is more a struggle than a reality. For example, Romina is still trying to finish her secondary education at the age of 22, as she had a baby. She dreams of becoming a psychologist or English teacher, however, her real possibilities of having access to university are few. The higher the income of the family,

the more professional and educational choices related to vocation, and less to economic needs.

Young people are to some extent aware of the fact that their entrance in the job market is highly influenced by the global and national economic situations. They are aware that there is a general economic crisis. They are also aware of the fact that young people who are not qualified are not valued as a production factor. They know that if they do not have education, they will have less employment opportunities. This generates insecurity in all social classes; however, those who have access to education and are part of social networks better deal with the crisis and find their way. In general, they perceive this exclusion from the labour market as a “social general problem,” not as a personal failure. Those who are educated are aware of the limitations but still see have hope. However, Manuela cannot foresee any future and tries to find temporary solutions to avoid frustration. She also denotes being disempowered when saying, “I am silly, I can’t learn”, taking it as a personal limitation. This is how a situation provoked by structural violence is perceived as fate, as natural or normal and the individual feels guilty for it. This perception is dangerous and is part of cultural violence. It puts the blame on the individual and prevents people from questioning the real causes of their problems.

During the free time, young people in Rosario spend a lot of time with their family, friends and boyfriend/girlfriend. Sociologist Tavella notes that most youth spend time in activities in which they consume: seeing movies, watching television, listening to music, shopping. Only a few participate in sports and other creative activities in which they are pro-active. One feature in common among the three groups of youth is the high percentage of young people who consume alcohol. According to a survey conducted among 559 secondary school students of all social backgrounds in Rosario and published in August 2005, 71% drink alcohol on a regular basis, especially at night, and 60% admitted having been drunk at least once. Most say that they drink “to feel good” and “to forget problems” (La Capital, 2005). Police and official statistics denounce the increase in the use of drugs among young people of all social backgrounds in the city (La Capital, 2006). These patterns of behavior become apparent at night. According to a study of youth behavior at night in the city of Buenos Aires, sociologist, Mario Margulis (2005) states that the city at night is a new territory and it has a liberating illusion. Youth can free themselves of the weight of domination and rules that are imposed on them, school, work and family. At night, they can be themselves, feel accepted and have a sense of belonging when hanging out with their friends in what is colloquially known as “urban tribes”.

Tavella’s study also highlights a lack of interest in religion and other activities that have to do with their reflections on the purpose and meaning of their lives. There is no or little engagement in public life. There is no trust or belief in social solidarity or in belonging to a larger entity.

These perceptions of young people show us some interesting facts. Economic crisis and structural unemployment create a high degree of uncertainty, helplessness and indifference. Friends and family are a refuge, the only people in whom they can trust and on whom they can rely. Uncertainty also determines their choices for short term solutions, as well as the need to enjoy “today” and avoid thinking of the future. This promotes hedonism, that is, pleasure and

consumption during free time for example. These attitudes are present in all young people; however, in those who belong to gangs, they become more conspicuous. The gang is the replacement for family; youths in gangs only care about today and feel that they do not have to loose. In this context, the social crisis invades personal space, and creates in them the feeling that their destinies are determined by the changes in their society, and not as much by their personal determination. It is the “other” who has failed, it is the society who is a failure, so “why should I pay the costs?” they ask themselves. It is interesting to note that “El Ale” acknowledges that “even when there is poverty, mistreatment, a percentage of you that says yes (to drugs and robbery) lies within yourself”.¹⁴ He considers that his life choices were highly determined by his history of exclusion and poverty. At the same time he has the capacity to realise for himself what was good and bad for him, or perhaps his own choices in determining the future.

This section described how young people approach life according to these changing values. It also described how aware they are of structural limitations and how they perceive and react to them through different strategies. Next I explore what youth identify as the main problems in their lives and the ways to solve them.

2.3.5. Perceptions of youth about the conflict

This section will describe how youth perceive, understand and define the conflict. This analysis is mostly based on the answers of young people of middle class who live in South West District, a peripheral area in Rosario¹⁵, as specified in Table 1.

Youth interviewed coincide with mainstream media and public opinion polls to indicate that the lack of security and violence (meaning direct violence) as the main problem in their neighborhood¹⁶. Some of them elaborate and mention policy brutality, gangs, indifference of the citizens and drug addictions which are all related to the issue of violence and vandalism in the streets. They acknowledge that both youth gangs and police behave violently and that this is an undesired way of behaving.

It is interesting to note that young people who were part of gangs like “El Ale” acknowledge the use of violence as a way to survive and live. When they are trapped by violence, they see it as the only instrument to become powerful, to be seen and taken seriously. They justify their actions by saying that their intentions are to steal only from those who are rich. They see that structural violence provokes them and prepares them to behave violently. In this sense, youth in gangs see violence as the only way to behave. They see violence as an effective and legitimate way of solving their problems. Only some manage to put violence into question and acknowledge links between direct and structural violence.

When interviewees were asked about the causes of increase in delinquency, they indicated both lack of devices to stop the direct violence, meaning that there is not enough police, and the presence of structural violence, meaning the lack of education and employment. There is awareness that the root cause of the social conflict is inequality. One of the answers also

¹⁴ In Spanish, “Pero aunque haya pobreza, maltrato, tenés un porcentaje del que dice sí sos vos”.

¹⁵ Similar answers can be expected from any other area of the city.

¹⁶ See Annex 1 which includes transcriptions of the interviews.

places blame on the individuals as criminals and drug addicts. What is important to highlight is that the youth interviewed acknowledge the links between direct and structural violence and that they see that it is not in the nature of young people to be violent. Violence in all its forms is questioned. However, violence used by the police to repress the “rebels” is considered in some moments desirable and necessary by the youth interviewed. The use of force by the state is seen as legitimate although as a limited and short-term answer. All the interviewees point out that youth and state actors are responsible for what happens. Two of them included themselves as responsible as well.

Cultural violence seems more difficult to identify by young people as a problem and it is usually not questioned or considered as “real” violence. Young people consume movies, video-games, derogatory language and jokes in which violence is present. However, there seems to be much higher acceptance of non-physical violence, that is, it is socially acceptable to humiliate and verbally discriminate. Youth who live in the slums are often discriminated because of the place where they live and often because of their skin color and appearance. Although not explicitly, there is a lot of racism, especially against those who have darker skin. The most affected are groups of indigenous or mixed origin, mostly originally from the Northern provinces and neighbouring and other Latin American countries (Bolivia, Peru, and Paraguay).

During our interview “El Ale” describes suffering from discrimination which he acknowledges as a problem. At the same time, I heard that among youth in gangs and youth of similar ethnical background they use racist insults “negro de mierda” and there is tendency to neglect and deny their own identity and try to become “whiter” or look and appear differently. Another alarming fact part of cultural violence is that there seems to be no acknowledgment of gender discrimination. This becomes evident in jokes, songs and popular expressions that contain derogatory words which I observed. It is interesting to note that female youth who were interviewed did not mention this as an issue.

2.3.6. State discourses

On one occasion, “El Ale” was assaulted by an older man. He went to the police station to seek for help, the police did not believe him and even shouted insults at him (“villero de mierda”) and threatened to keep him in jail. This shows how the police discriminates and stereotypes, and how these perceptions legitimise the use of violence to respond to a perceived problem of criminality.

The discourses and actions of the state on the issue of youth criminality are various and complex. Both the provincial state and the municipal state intervene in multiple and contradictory ways, based on theories of social behaviour and criminology. What is clear is that the National, Provincial and Municipal governments have different discourses and approaches to the issue. This is partly due to the conflicting political dynamics and traditions in Rosario and Santa Fe Province. These differences make cooperation and coordination extremely difficult. Often new public policies are not based on research and data which evaluates the impact of past policies. Due to the focused scope of this thesis, discourses and attitudes present in two institutions will be analysed, the provincial police and the Municipal government through its youth and social inclusion public policies as representatives of existing

discourses in all state institutions. The responses of state institutions include both attempts to control violence using force (repression, jail) and policies of social inclusion and participation. Even though the use of violence is seen as undesirable, it is considered sometimes necessary by the police and policy-makers and resources and actions do not correspond to promises and rhetoric. In reality, violence is still used as means of social control and, paradoxically, as a means to stop violence. The increase in the amount of crimes has shown that this response has not been effective to solve the problem.

Several criminology theories can be identified as the basis of the state multiple, and sometimes erratic, response to the issue of youth criminality. Ciafardini (2006) clusters them in four main currents. The first one is represented by Beccaria, and considers that crime should be “naturally” followed by a punishment; criminal problems can be solved by improving laws and increasing the amount of punishment. Beccaria’s thesis is that criminals do not feel threatened enough by a possible punishment when committing a crime. This thesis is still present in public policies and state discourses. For example, the response to the problem of the “maras”, youth criminal gangs in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, has been an increase in the amount of years of jail for gang members and leaders. In the Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina, similar “zero tolerance” policies have been applied. However, the amount of crime and violence has not decreased in any of these cases.

A second criminology theory is the one represented by Bentham and Lombroso. Criminals are socially or biologically ill, therefore, they need to be cured or reformed. If they cannot be cured or reformed, they should be excluded from society. Criminals have a natural or biological disposition for violence. Could the attempts to build walls around slums reflect (un)consciously in practice this theory?

A third current is the one identified as the “sociology of deviation”, to which sociologists like Durkheim and Merton have contributed. The general thesis is that societies need to coexist with a certain amount of crime which is functional for the system. Criminals should be punished and in this way; they provide a service to society by serving as an example. This service helps prevent general social anomie. If the amount of crime increased to a level that the society cannot handle, social reform should be considered.

Finally, the last current is a critical one which appeared in Europe in the 1960s, inspired by Marxism. The root causes of criminality were in the negative effects of the capitalist system. Ciafardini concludes that a critical approach considers that capitalism as a system which produces alienation and social injustice has inherently produces crime¹⁷. There were no concrete proposals to respond to criminality; rather the proposal was to abolish capitalism as a whole based on the idea that a new society with social justice and equality would not “produce” criminals, as capitalism did.

In the following sections, the discourses of the police and the municipal government are analysed, in light of their basis in the presented criminology theories.

¹⁷ In the Spanish original, “el capitalismo tiene un efecto criminógeno”.

2.3.7. Santa Fe Provincial police discourses

The police forces are under the provincial government's jurisdiction. The government of the Province is occupied by the Peronist Party, and presently the Governor is Obeid. Two main approaches towards the problem of youth criminality are observable in police discourses and attitudes. The first is predominantly linked to the need for security and proposes as a solution the increase of police forces in the streets of Rosario. The second acknowledges a link between structural violence and the increase of criminality and the need to respond to citizens' needs.

Efforts are being made to transform policies and practices but authoritarian beliefs and practices remain in use, inherited from a long past of military dictatorships. Within the first approach, the ideology of violence is present and is considered necessary and legitimate whenever it serves to achieve certain ends. The use of force is considered the only possibility to control disorder and the undisciplined masses. According to the provincial police, it is noticeable to see hundreds of adolescents and youth in the streets at night, especially during weekends and at night, with clear signs of alcoholism and use of drugs. There are no specific studies which look into how the police analyses this issue, what they consider as the main causes and ways to solve them. However, observations and general tendencies estimate that the treatment ranges from turning a blind eye to harassment and repression based on the underlying belief that some youth present a deviant behaviour or are weaker, thus, consume drugs and are socially ill. This belief could be linked to Bentham's and Lombroso's theories.

A second approach is also present. In a democratic society, the role of the police is understood by Inspector Chief, Victor Sarnaglia, Director of the School of Cadets of Santa Fe Province, as the "caretaker of the citizen", as described in an interview with the author in May 2002. The police exists to protect and serve citizens and to assure the respect of the law. In the official discourse, the police forces are subject to the democratic elected authorities. In fact, it is clear that this concept is not yet a reality.

The first approach considers that the cause of the violence is the lack of moral conduct of the aggressors, their "wrong" and anti-social behavior which needs to be contained or reformed. There is a clear link to both Lombroso's theories as well as the theory of deviation represented by Durkheim and Merton. The individual does not accept the rules of society and therefore, shows a deviant behavior. Thus, this is not a problem of the society but a problem of the individual. The cause of the conflict is that individuals fail to adapt to society's rules, therefore, the response is to reform, cure or exclude the individuals. To understand this approach one needs to understand how the very same idea of the modern state was born and is justified¹⁸.

¹⁸ Hobbes explained the need of the state, as a way to overcome the "state of nature", which he described as "a situation of conflict, uncertainty and violence in which the survival of each is threatened by the very means each adopts to secure it". This situation was negative in his opinion and he thought that the only way to go beyond it was for each man to give up his right to the use of force to a superior power through a covenant. Nevertheless, since the exercise of each man's natural right is what produces the condition of war, each would be rational, if others will do so too, to give it up, since one desires war (...) Once right has been transferred by a covenant the breaking of that promise is injustice. But it is only where there is a power to ensure that neither side defaults that covenants of mutual trust are possible, and that justice can emerge. Justice then is the keeping of valid covenants, and the possibility of valid covenants begins with a superior power sufficient to enforce their validity. This passage describes how all men agree to respect a sovereign arbiter that will protect everyone's rights to live, that is, ensure by force that there is no more war, so that other activities can take place. This unlimited power was questioned by John Locke who re-emphasizes that any claim to unlimited, i.e. despotic power, is unnatural, the consequence only of an aggressive renunciation of the laws of nature and a denial of "Reason". States should not make use of their power without limits. Locke also considered in his writings the right of resistance. A state holds the monopoly of violence¹⁸ but this monopoly has to be controlled and be used

The state was needed to guarantee order and personal freedoms having the monopoly of the use of force. Nevertheless, when these models are confronted with reality, we witness that citizens feel less secure; they feel that the covenant has been violated by the abuse of power and, therefore, obedience to an unjust system is questioned.

The second discourse is a democratic one; there is a need to promote human rights and social justice to prevent violence. This approach denotes the link between the exclusion provoked by unequal access to political spaces and economic resources and criminality, that is, it is linked to the critical criminology which considers that the capitalist system itself produces crime as it causes inequality. If the cause of the conflict is inequality and exclusion, therefore, the response is to diminish or eliminate inequalities. This has become explicit through moderate social policies of inclusion (employment, health and education and democratic reforms of the curriculum and the Police's functioning. After the wave of democratization during the 1980s, police and military forces started introducing human rights elements in their training. In the case of Santa Fe province, a provincial law of 1987 mandated that all educational institutions of the province should introduce human rights education. Primary and secondary schools as well as tertiary institutions introduced elements of human rights education both in texts and curriculum, mostly limited to studying human rights documents and the Constitution. In the case of police training, a specific one-year course called "Human Rights" was introduced in 1997 for the Study Programme for Cadets¹⁹.

The first module of the course includes the following topics: the historical development of law from a Jewish-Christian perspective, theory of law as limits to absolute power of the state; The Bible; position of man in front of God; 1st, 2nd and 3rd generation of human rights; The Second World War and its atrocities; and the authoritarian juridical discourse; the phenomenon in Argentina. The second module includes: Democratic stages; democratic government of 1983; *different discourses*²⁰ about the violations of human rights during the dictatorship (1976-1983); New phenomena: inequality, poverty, discrimination; the constitution of 1994."²¹ Through reading the programme of the first two modules, one can observe that it is of great significance that new issues have been included, especially social and economic rights. It is also important to note a subtle wording: "different discourses about the violations of human rights". From observations and references, I know that some sectors of political and police authorities still question the reality of the number of the "desaparecidos." They still believe in the legitimacy of the "dirty war" as a way to save the country from falling into chaos, disorder and the threat of Communism during the 1970s and early 80s. In the interior of the police institution, different currents and tendencies co-exist, and are in conflict and compromise at the same time. There are some examples of positive advancements of the democratic approach. One of them is the organization of seminars, a valuable and significant experience are the Education for Democracy and Human Rights Courses organized by the Educating Cities Latin America office based in the Municipality and in cooperation with the provincial police and judiciary in the years 2002 to 2005. However, a lot of work remains to be done.

in a legitimate way. Deciding what is legitimate or not poses difficulties for. Rousseau saw that obedience would only be possible to a law which people prescribe to themselves. An action would be legitimate if it corresponded with the common will. Hegel added that people will prescribe themselves to be obedience to a law that because it is necessary in people's moral natures.

¹⁹ It is worth mentioning that cadets' training programme consists of three years of studies, while agents' training consists of a minimum of 3 months up to one year depending on needs, resources and the part of the province in which schools are located.

²⁰ Italic is inserted by the author.

²¹ Translated by the author from the official course programme.

The most critical question is: How do states which claim that they protect their citizens often violate the rights that they should guarantee? The two mentioned discourses, the democratic and the repressive, influence public policy at the same time and are forced deliberately to coexist, creating an on-going tension. Sociologist Loic Wacquant (2000) explains this phenomenon by describing how the state has traditionally taken up a number of apparently complementary roles, which are in fact, contradictory. The main challenge of the state is to constantly overcome this contradiction. These roles are: to develop national economies, to mitigate the negative effects of the economy, and to maintain public order. To fulfill these roles the state needs a police and a penal system to enforce the law. Nevertheless, the roles of the state have been redefined by neo-liberal ideology²². This ideology maintains that markets do not need regulation, as they are a natural phenomenon and the most effective way to organize human activity. Under this ideology, states had to “liberalize” markets and deregulate the economy. But these neo-liberal recipes had disastrous effects: destruction of national industries, unemployment, increase of poverty, careless privatization of public services which left the most vulnerable without access to water and other basic services. In the case of Argentina, this was aggravated by financial and economic mismanagement and corruption of the state, wrongly advised by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In his book, “Prisons of Poverty”, Loic Wacquant (2000) argues that: “The increase of carceral populations in advanced societies is due to the growing use of the penal system as an instrument for managing social insecurity and containing the social disorders created at the bottom of the class structure by neo-liberal policies of economic deregulation and social-welfare retrenchment. (...) The penalization of poverty is designed to manage the effects of neo-liberal policies at the lower end of the social structure of advanced societies. The harsh police practices and extended prison measures adopted today throughout the continent are indeed part and parcel of a wider transformation of the state, a transformation which is itself called for by the mutation of wage labor and precipitated by the overturning of the inherited balance of power between the classes and groups fighting over control of both employment and the state.”

As described in the previous section, many of those young people in Rosario who were left out of the neo-liberal system and unemployed turned to informal/illegal economy activities or got pushed directly or indirectly into criminal activities such as smuggling and drug dealing. The state reduced its social welfare and was forced to increase its police role to contain and tackle the “disorder” and the amount of illegal activities. Politicians want citizens to believe that the state is reacting to crime and insecurity in a determined way so they promote in their speeches the building of new prisons and the increase in number of cars and agents to patrol the streets. Politicians react to the demands of the people for more security and get elected through use of this dominant discourse. Politicians also use a moralistic discourse: as crime increases, there is a need to come back to moral values of honesty and obedience. There is a strong tendency to think in a reactive way, rather than in terms of looking at and dealing with the root causes of the conflicts. On the other hand, some analysts fall into the trap of relating poverty and crime directly, when the situation is far more complex and poverty is not the direct cause of the increase of crime²³ as it has been explained extensively by the study of Ciafardini (2006).

²² Milton Friedman among others promoted neo-liberalism. <http://www.ideachannel.com/Friedman.htm>

For a more critical analysis, see Pierre Bourdieu Le Monde, Dec. 1998
<http://www.analitica.com/bitblioteca/bourdieu/neoliberalism.asp>

²³ Loic Wacquant adds: “To oppose the penalisation of social precariousness, a threefold battle must be waged. First of all, on the level of *words and discourses*, one must put the brakes on the semantic drifts that lead, on the one hand, to compressing the space of debate (e.g. by limiting the notion of ‘insecurity’ to physical or criminal insecurity, to the exclusion of social and economic

In conclusion, the dual discourse is produced by the fact that one part of the state's policy (the police and penal justice systems) is demanded to counteract or deal with the effects of another part of the state policy (the economic policy) (Wacquant, 2001). This leads to a situation in which the police's role is to repress, contain, control and manage these effects. In this scenario, police forces are trapped between clear demands from the political authorities and a democratic discourse of respect for human rights. This dual and contradictory discourse contributes to lack of trust by young people and citizens in general in their representatives, their police, and the justice system, widening the gaps and increasing social tension and fragmentation.

Chapter three described the various types of violence of which young people are part and affected by and the way the youth and the police perceive the conflict through their discourses and attitudes. Through the story of "El Ale" it has become evident how structural and cultural violence feeds into the recurrence of direct violence, and how violence as a way to solve social conflicts has not been effective and has made the situation worse. In the following chapter, the response to the problem will be further examined; the policies of the Provincial government, the municipal government and the actions of youth organizations will be described as possible ways of dealing with the complex issues of youth criminality and exclusion.

insecurity) and, on the other, to the banalisation of the penal treatment of tensions linked to the deepening of social inequalities (through the use of such vague and incoherent notions as 'urban violence').

3. Chapter 3: Looking for solutions: exploring experiences and proposals for public policy and action

*“Yo prefiero hablar de cosas imposibles, porque de lo posible se sabe demasiado.”
“I prefer to speak about impossible things, because of possible ones we already know too much.”*

(Silvio Rodríguez, Cuban poet, singer and composer)

Various factors affect the dynamics of society and youth exclusion and criminality. At the same time, various institutions intervene in this social reality with different projects and actions. Thus, it is difficult within the scope of this thesis to examine all of the institutions' actions, especially as they are not integrated and they are spread over time and space. Therefore, I consider the ones that I view as more relevant, with direct influence on the conflict and which explicitly deal with youth. In the first place, a short description of what the Police does in the context of the Provincial government policies, followed by some indications of how to improve the present public policy. Secondly, the programmes of the Youth Municipal Center, again, in the overall context of the Municipal government's policy will be briefly described, followed by some suggestions for improvement.

3.1. Santa Fe Provincial policies: A dual response to the problem

The Province of Santa Fe is in charge of the judicial system, including the Provincial Ombudsperson and Human Rights Ministry, the police, education, health and economic policies. Even though various past Governors and the present one, Obeid, express in public speeches the province's commitment to the reintegration of young delinquents and the need for social inclusion and preventive policies, the budget allocated to these actions is limited in comparison to actions to enhance and expand and build new prisons, buy new police cars and improve the repressive system (Santa Fe Government, 2006). The province's programmes put emphasis on building infrastructure, promoting economic development, on sustaining the judicial system, on education by means of building new schools and maintaining the existing ones, and lastly, on social promotion (Del Frade, 2003a). There is a small Youth Area which is part of the Community Promotion Secretariat. Even though the situation of youth in marginalized areas is alarming, there is no youth participation public policy. A new project to work with young people in conflict with the law is being developed, but its implementation has not started yet.

Prisons and police are not prepared to deal with young people and prisons do not help young people to reintegrate into society evidenced by the number of reoffenders. (Del Frade, 2003b). The Supreme Court of the Province sent a report to Governor Obeid on 21 October 2005 stating the alarming situation of prisons and police stations which are overcrowded and where human rights are not respected. According to this report, for example, in police stations of Rosario, there were approximately 1,400 prisoners where there was a capacity for 889. Another alarming fact is that there are 2,600 people, most of them young people, who have been detained but who are not tried in court (Rosario 12, 2005). This report was also a response to incidents in the main provincial prison in the city of Coronda during April 2005 where 13 prisoners were killed, all of them were less than 26 years of age. It is interesting to note that the average age of the most dangerous prisoners is 30 years of age. It is shocking

that the age of offenders has been decreasing even to the extreme that children of 8 to 12 years old have been detained for this type of crimes in possession of arms (Vásquez, 2006).

The magazine “Ángel de Lata” published a report on detention and rehabilitation centers for youth, belonging to the Directorate of Minors in Conflict with the Law. The report indicated that according to calculations of employees of the centers there are about 200 young people of less than 18 years of age in Rosario living temporarily in these centers.²⁴ According to the employees interviewed by the Magazine, in general these young people commit crimes repeatedly. They affirm that the social public policy does not integrate the different phases for the rehabilitation of those children and youth who committed crimes. After they leave these centers, there is no follow-up or social net to support and help these children and young people. They denounce a lack of appropriate programmes which guarantee that young people have the social support and which connects young people to a job for which they were prepared in these centers. Employees of these centers see that their work is only a drop in the ocean and that their only tools are love and patience. Employees interviewed state that youth leave the centers with no prospects for the future and they rob again. Another employee of one of the centers, Gabriela Coronel, says that there is no preventive work and that workshops aim to promote the value of work. However, they are unregistered employees, which constitute a contradiction in itself. According to Gabriela “The state has abandoned its role to guarantee social solidarity”. She suggests that follow-up public policies need to be discussed in depth rather than taking quick and demagogic solutions of more repression. This up-setting perspective became evident in a statement of the Provincial Director of the Directorate of Minors in Conflict with the Law when referring to young delinquents: “They do not want reinsertion, they want punishment” (Ángel de Lata, 2006).

If the state uses violence, it teaches through example that violence is an effective tool. This contradiction is often present in many state institutions: for example, the most common reaction of a teacher or headmaster to an act of indiscipline or “bad” behavior is to ignore, punish or expel the student. The state is doing the same to its citizens; it is ignoring, punishing and pushing them further out of the system. This ideology and behavior is a threat to democracy and should be put into question and replaced by more peaceful alternatives. In the next section, some ideas for improvement are presented.

3.1.1. Recommendations for improvement of the provincial government’s public policy

Despite the fact that there are various areas of improvement, some require immediate solutions and at the same time, structural changes. This section aims to indicate recommendations for improvement, although this list is by no means comprehensive.

²⁴ In Rosario, there are four centers for minors in conflict with the law:

1) IRAR (Instituto de Rehabilitación del Adolescente Rosario or Institute for the Rehabilitation of Adolescents Rosario). It is the most strict center in a building similar to a jail but psychological help is provided. There is also a school and recreational workshops. There are 56 young people between 14 and 18 years of age in four big rooms (20 new spaces were added in 2003 and more are planned). 2) Casa Joven is a farm of medium level security situated outside the city. Young people live and work there. There is also a school of theatre. 3) Casa del Adolescente is a center where young people attend activities from 8 to 14 hours. They are offered breakfast and lunch and they attend workshops to learn practical skills (e.g. electricity, shoe making). There were workshops to learn how to read and write but there is lack of continuity. Social works do follow-up work with their families. 4) CAT (Centro de Alojamiento Transitorio y Liberación Asistida, Center of Temporary Lodging and assisted liberation) is a complement to the Prisons for Minors and Rehabilitation Centers. It was open in 2003. There is an average of 25 children in this center who wait illegally detained a decision of the judge. Police and other professionals are part of the staff.

The security and judicial system should be reformed to include preventive measures and not only respond to a repressive and reactive approach which seems to only worsen the situation of vulnerable youth. A new approach to security must be developed in which the state develops and commits to use non-violent means. More comprehensive approaches should be promoted such as the concept of urban human security based on the fulfillment of basic human needs at the local level.

In relation to this, judges and police should be better trained to work with juvenile delinquents and psychologists, social and youth workers should have a more predominant role in public programmes. Changes should be introduced in different dimensions: in the overall process of training of all those working with young people, both in the content/ curriculum and in the methodologies. The continuation and improvement of courses as the ones mentioned on Democracy and Human Rights should be a high priority.

Young people learn from example, so all state actions should be a model of non-violent behaviour. Especially, police training should improve its human rights education aspects; include conflict literacy and non-violence as well as tools of psychology related to youth culture and young people addicted to drugs. Finally, cooperation between provincial and municipal programmes and civil society organizations should be enhanced. All actors should engage in critically analyzing and de-constructing their discourses to identify and remove those assumptions and elements that lead to violent practices.

3.2. Rosario's local government's policies: Steps towards inclusion and participation

Rosario's municipal government (Municipalidad de Rosario, 2006) has gradually increased its competences since the 1980s and has become known nationally and internationally for its social inclusion and youth policies. The Municipality of Rosario has been led by the Socialist Party since 1990. Its progressive policies, in terms of inclusion, participation, strategic planning and gender, were key in facing the challenges of the economic and social crisis. Rosario has challenged a model of exclusion within the constraints of its limited competencies as a local government. In 2003, the city won the UNDP Prize "Example of local governance in the region."²⁵ Rosario's experiences have been an example for other municipalities as it has created the capacities to transform its social and physical space with a clear political project of participation and innovation (Experiencia Rosario, 2005).²⁶

The Municipal Youth Center and its programmes were established by the Municipality of Rosario in 1998. Youth Programmes are part of the Secretary of Social Development. It aims to a) develop the recognition of the rights of young people; b) to stimulate their participation in community life; c) to promote spaces of expression, communication and dialogue that help prevent social risks that affect young people; d) to coordinate with other departments of the Municipality the involvement of young people in their programmes and offering accurate information about themes of interest and the needs of young people. The main activity of the

²⁵ The name of the prize in Spanish is "Experiencia Ejemplar de Gobernabilidad local en la región."

²⁶ The city of Rosario is a leading member of networks of local governments, for example, Mercociudades, local governments of Mercosur and the International Association of Educating Cities.

Center is to provide information and support to young people about employment, education and health, especially HIV/AIDS prevention and testing. Furthermore, the Center organizes workshops, training seminars on identity and human rights, especially dealing with Argentina's past history of dictatorship and human rights violations, in cooperation with other areas of the Municipality such as the Museum of Memory. Finally, it has developed the Youth Participatory Budget. The latter consists of a participatory process to involve young people in deciding the use of part of the municipal budget for youth issues.

As it was expressed by the Coordinator of the Youth Center, Diego Berreta, and youth workers Romina Trincheri and Silvana Turra in an interview in December 2005, the main challenge of the Municipal Youth Center is to reach out more to all neighborhoods of the city with information, awareness-raising and participatory projects. The Center is improving its strategies to make their activities more accessible and interesting for those vulnerable youth. It has the potential to play a key role in mediating between the groups of young people, other local governmental and non-governmental institutions and the judicial system as often there is no place for dialogue among these groups. The Youth Center, run by young people and professional social workers and psychologists, helps bridge these actors. According to the Report of Activities 2005, during this year, the center started a process of decentralization, aiming at implementing projects in all neighborhoods of the city. Thirty-four workshops functioned in cooperation with civil society organizations in all districts. The main two projects during 2006 were the Projects on Identity and Social Insertion and the Participatory Youth Budget. Even though the activities are different the aims are similar: to promote the participation of youth from a rights-based approach, allowing their personal as well as their social development.

The Participatory Youth Budget (PYB) was initiated in 2004 as a pilot project in South West District, in collaboration with the Municipal Participatory Budget staff and Educating Cities Latin America.²⁷ Now it is a formal space of participation, discussion and decision-making organized by and for youth in which 1,496 youth participated in 2005. The project is aimed at young people of 13-18 years of age. They are invited to attend meetings organized in schools per district. During these meetings municipal youth workers organise trust-building exercises and present the aims of the project to the participants. As a second step, youth workers facilitate discussions through which young people identify the main problems in their neighborhood and design together solutions for those problems.

The PYB is a space for young people to identify common goals and re-discover previously perceived incompatible goals. Youth know a new reality and become actors in changing those aspects that bother them or that they believe are unfair. Needs and problems are analysed and solutions are planned as a group. Discussions often start with sharing of negative experiences but projects to change reality have to be developed. Youth understand that they are contributing to avoiding negative experiences for other youth in the future, and develop socially responsible attitudes. As the coordinators of the project explain (Berreta *et al.*, 2006), this initiative is innovative as it differs from others in various ways:

²⁷ This pilot project was financially supported by GTZ, acronym in German of the German Government's Development Agency.

- Most of the spaces of participation use an “adult-centric” frame. The PYB respects youth’s ideas, concerns, ways of communication and participation.
- Often youth public policies define an asymmetric power relationship between adults and youth, youth are beneficiaries of projects. In the PYB, youth are protagonists and partners of the local government in the design and implementation of the projects.
- Often youth are considered the “future”, in the PYB young people have to make decisions and implement projects in the present. They become actors here and now.
- The PYB aims at integrating a youth perspective into all public policies. The PYB is a part of Rosario’s Participatory Budget Programme.

The PYB is an excellent example of how public space and public policy can become spaces for conflict transformation. Youth have an opportunity to identify the problems in their neighborhood and in their city in a way relevant for them. Problems are discussed and solutions are sought jointly by youth and local officials in a spirit of cooperation. Youth are not manipulated, they are consulted and mobilized, but most importantly they are in charge and participate meaningfully and exercise their citizenship rights (Muñoz, 2004). In this way, youth public policy promotes spaces where social conflicts become opportunities for constructive change.

3.2.1. Recommendations for improvement of the youth local government’s public policy

The main challenges for the local youth policy are to sustain these innovative and participatory experiences involving more young people in all districts and neighborhoods and to open or improve spaces for interaction, participation, dissemination of information and recreation in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods and slums in the city. The municipal process of decentralization has opened public spaces through the municipal centers per district and these have started to host youth events. However, these activities should be organized on an ongoing basis.

The staff and youth workers of the Center are professionals and have been sensitized about human rights education and youth issues. However, it is advisable that youth workers and youth in Rosario complement their training with peace education understood in a broader sense (Cabezudo, 2006), including knowledge, skills and attitudes that are relevant to deal constructively with every day conflicts relevant to the life of youth in our societies. Important skills to be included are conflict transformation skills (e.g. listening, communication, mediation skills). These skills could help and support the development of other youth participation activities as youth learn to listen to others with different opinions, to deal with their emotions and anger, to express their needs and to engage in constructive dialogue among other important skills. The Municipal Youth Center has not taken up the issue of reconciliation and methods to heal and close a painful past. This is a pending task not only for the Center but for Argentinean society as a whole which has difficulties in dealing with its own past and mistakes before looking into the future.

Finally, in relation to juvenile delinquency, the Municipal Youth Policy does not engage in accompanying or supporting youth who have been in jail or who have committed crimes. This is an area in which the Municipal government could cooperate with the Provincial government

(Police and Judicial system). Their experience and human resources could help in designing programmes to improve the reintegration of young delinquents into society through securing a social net, training and employment opportunities.

3.3. The work of youth organizations

Several youth organisations work with and for young people in slums, both doing educational and preventive work as well as working with young people who are referred to as “young people in conflict with the law”. Youth organisations offer valuable non-formal education opportunities which often are more effective than formal education programmes as youth are closer to the reality of their peers. The importance of non-formal education was acknowledged in 1994 by UNESCO’s International Conference on Education which adopted proposals on education for peace, human rights and democracy (Schell-Faucon, 2003). Despite the negative image of youth portrayed by media as rebellious, instable and self-destructive, many youth organisations worldwide and in Rosario are examples of how youth are committed to change the reality in which they live (Ardizzone, 2003). Again, given the limited scope of this thesis, only two experiences are presented here.

3.3.1. La Vagancia Youth Group

“La Vagancia” Youth Group was established by a group of young people who were preparing themselves for the catholic ritual of “confirmation” in 1993 in the Community called Sacred Family. Their name, “vagancia” means laziness and it plays with the idea that youth are considered lazy and indifferent. Their main thematic interests are child and youth issues, empowerment, political education and communication. The activities they organised were youth camps, human rights, media and bible workshops, walks for human rights and visits to other youth groups. They also edit and publish the youth magazine “La Nota” and contribute to the Project “Ángel de Lata” and organise a youth music group of “murga” which has 30-40 members.

They reflect on their own approach and how their experiences have shaped their social activism. The following text is a translation, almost literal, of a text that they used to describe themselves on their webpage.²⁸ I decided to include it in its original format, a text without punctuation, because the words and the rhythm reflect the logic and way of thinking of these young people. For a moment, it helps to understand the value of their work that builds social relations and a social space of belonging, solidarity and dialogue, both among young people and between young people in the slums and society as a whole:

“This is a way of being politically active; we understand this as a way to build spaces, to build humanity, that is, to make more human our social space, let’s say, building the city. This is why it is important to learn to listen to each other, to understand each other, and to achieve this takes us a lot of time. We are excluded or we come from exclusion, and from the start we do not know what there is inside. We are outside. We are very beaten. The slum beats you. That makes you do things that we don’t understand, that cannot be explained. We do not understand the reasons of those hits, of the bullets that know us down, they kill us! With time

²⁸ <http://www.tau.org.ar/aa/images/blank.gif>

we are going out, but the bullets are there, and that limits and bothers us in what we are doing. We know that this is like this, that we make other people suffer, but still it is painful when they do other stupid things to us. That is anti-politics, to break and destroy. This we understand but it is tiresome. We wait for time to teach us. However, people always surprise us and are more generous than we expect. As a group we lost several battles, the radio programme, we started, it was going well, but we could not sustain it, because we honour our name, but it was an important experience, interesting. As one of us said “ruining something we learn”.

It is important to highlight the level of awareness the group has about the links between direct, structural and cultural violence. They know they are or were excluded. They acknowledge that they were hurt and that they hurt back and now, they want change. The most interesting aspect shown in this text is that they see themselves as actors, not only as victims. They believe in building a new social space and the social conflict that they are part and victims of is an opportunity for change. They are the change agents. They do what nobody else can do, express their own concerns, problems and their own way of seeing reality and devising solutions that would fit them. They are self-organised and work in a horizontal structure promoting ownership, responsibility, and that projects are managed and implemented by the group. Their activities are non-formal schools of citizenship and participation.

3.3.2. Scouts group in slums

A second example is work of two youth groups (“Martín Miguel de Güemes” and “Itatí”) which gather in a room provided by a Catholic parish (San Casimiro) and a chapel (Itatí), in South West District. Güemes group functions in a catholic parish situated in a low-middle class workers’ neighbourhood in the limit with a slum. Itatí group functions in Itatí Itatí chapel situated in the heart of the slum. These groups are part of the national association Scouts of Argentina, which is a member of the World Scouts Organisation Movement. The Scouts have been considered quite traditional in its values and methodology. However, the Scouts of Rosario decided to open youth groups in slum areas. They were inspired by new currents which place commitment and service to the poor in the center of their educational values. Traditionally, activities to help the poor were seen as a moral duty. This group considers it that social injustice is the product of unfair social, political and economic structures. Their main activities are educational. They organise workshops and meetings every Saturday when they prepare for other actions. Youth who are 15-18 built a small library and they help children, especially those who come from the slum, to do their homework and organise cooperative games. The aims of this activity are to avoid school drop-out, to keep children out of the street in a space where they can plan safely and learn social skills. They organise camps and environmental activities in which children and youth from the slum interact with those of middle and upper classes. For example, since 2003 they are involved in an environmental project. Their aim is to preserve the river Saladillo and raise awareness about the pollution produced by companies and the negative effects on the health of those that live by the river. They walked and camped along the river. These moments were spaces for dialogue and ways of getting to know the “other”. Their explicit aim was not to promote dialogue among youth of different social background, but it did, and in an effective way.

Through their work, social conflict is talked about and it is used as an opportunity for positive change. Youth are treated in a personal and caring way. They are offered a space to belong and simply “be” where they are accepted and respected as they are.

3.3.3. Recommendations for improvement of the work of youth organisations

The work of these youth groups, “La Vagancia” and “Scouts”, show the enormous and unique contributions of youth organizations to conflict transformation. Their potential is still not fully explored and their work is hindered by the lack of sustainable resources and support. Youth workers are then the main drivers and often, they become tired or disempowered by the difficulties and there is a high turn-over of youth workers and volunteers. Youth workers, who are experienced and trained, often leave. Consequently, there is a lack of continuity in the activities. The work of youth organizations should be supported so that their projects and actions are sustained over time, improved and multiplied. Their continuity is fundamental to accompany the difficult phase of adolescence and to work in long-term programmes. Youth organizations should be supported financially by the state and the contributions of civil society. Participatory structures, such as youth forums, networks of youth organizations, students’ associations and self-organized youth groups should be encouraged as they have proven to be valuable non-formal education spaces (Schell-Faucon, 2003).

Youth workers should be supported through training, peer-to-peer counseling and coaching, and psychological help. Youth workers should acquire, develop and shape conflict literacy skills, including for example, mediation, negotiation, and facilitation of group decision-making. These skills are basic for any community organizer and to act, if necessary, as mediator or facilitators of inter-personal, inter-group or societal conflicts.

4. Conclusions

"Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace. If, however, they are left on society's margins, all of us will be impoverished. Let us ensure that all young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies."

(Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations.)

This thesis describes and analyses youth criminality in the city of Rosario as an expression of a wider urban social conflict and as reflection of a situation in which structural and cultural violence are present. The first chapter aimed to clarify the conceptual approach used, based in conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Conflict is understood as an opportunity for social change, which should not be avoided or suppressed, but dealt with in a constructive way.

The second chapter started with a general historical background, both of Argentina and of the city of Rosario. It aimed to explain how social exclusion has been caused mainly as a result of the introduction of neo-liberal policies and deficient processes of democratic participation plagued by a history of dictatorships and political violent struggles. The problem of youth criminality was illustrated through statistics that show a clear increase in the amount of crimes against property committed by young offenders. An alarming fact was that the age of offenders has been decreasing, even to the extreme that children of 8 to 12 years old have been detained for this type of crimes in possession of arms. To understand the problem and its causes, not only the direct violence observed was described but also other forms of structural and cultural violence. The situation of social, economic and political exclusion was highlighted and how culturally this inequality has been accepted as normal or natural.

One of the main conclusions of this work is that youth urban crime is inextricably linked to social, political and economic exclusion and marginalisation of youth. Even if media and society understand it in a superficial way relating its causes to deviant youth, it is clear that this phenomenon is linked to process of structural inequality and degradation of societal relations. Another conclusion is that inequality becomes more evident in cities where both rich and poor coexist and the feeling of being "in" or being "out" of the system is exacerbated by proximity of the "other". The main argument presented in this thesis is that the conflict is not only about "youth" versus "adults" or between "rebellious youth" against society, but rather between those that are included and those that are excluded from society. Youth who engage in gangs feel expelled out of society and see violence as the only way to become powerful and respected, and as a way to survive and revenge. Youth that are not born criminals but it is society which denies their rights to education, health and a secure space to grow up.

The attitudes and the way in which actors understand the conflict was presented to be able to understand the reasons underlying their actions. The example of "el Ale" as a former young offender was a key illustration of how aware he was of the social exclusion he suffered and the choices he made in his life. The interviews with youth and youth workers were also helpful to show that they are aware of the effects of structural violence in society and that the solutions should aim at including and bridging the gaps, instead of promoting tensions and polarisation. All young people and youth workers interviewed agree that the responses to the problem until now have not worked.

The third chapter explores experiences and policies of the state and the work of youth organisations. Policies which have limited their interventions to stopping direct violence have proved to be ineffective. The penal approach to youth crime has not improved the situation; on the contrary, it seems to promote it. Repression and direct violence are seen by the police, both in their discourses and actions as a legitimate way of solving or, at least, mitigating a problem. A double discourse can be witnessed in police and state institutions: on the one hand, police's role is to guarantee security and the respect for the law; on the other, the penal system has served as a way of social control. Even though direct violence is not desired by all the actors, they use it. From a peacebuilding point of view, there is an inherent contradiction between two ideas of the state: the state as having a monopoly of the use of violence and the state as a space for dialogue, deliberation and participation and joint decision-taking towards a more just and peaceful society. The response to the problem can continue to be dual, that is, on the one hand, control and repression, and on the other hand, more democracy and social inclusion. However, this will not be effective. A non-violent, integrated and coherent approach is needed. If social exclusion is not transformed, the levels of youth urban violence will continue to increase.

Public policy which works on the root causes of the conflict and address issues of direct, structural and cultural violence in an integrated way seem to be the most appropriate as illustrated by the Municipal Youth Participatory Budget. This experience is an example of a good practice which should be further studied and multiplied. The experience of the Municipal Youth Center shows that the state can lead a conflict transformation process through its public policy. Its programmes aim to avoid an "adult-centric" or paternalistic approach and to open up "youth" social spaces. As the inequality crystallises in space, in the form of slums and private rich neighbourhoods, public urban planning can help to unroll this tendency, and public space can be used as unifier and as a space for participation. The lack of space for young people to express themselves and develop sport and recreational activities was mentioned as one more form of exclusion. The city can create physical spaces which will become social spaces for interaction and dialogue. Creating a better city will require a multi-layer and long-term approach, with the involvement of all actors, especially youth. All actors should engage in dialogue and work jointly when designating strategies to respond to the problem, beyond the inequalities of power and status, using an inter-generational approach. Young people and youth organisations are an untapped resource, and they should be empowered to join this conflict transformation process. Social conflict seen as an opportunity for positive change seems to open new paths instead of narrowing them down as when social conflict is seen as a disease to be cured or sick limb to be cut.

This work also attempted to analyse the situation of youth in the context of urban social conflict. The discourses and responses of some actors to the problem have been described and analysed from a peacebuilding approach, and some recommendations for improvement in public policy and action have been presented. Specifically, this thesis encourages the development of more participatory and appropriate youth public policies which take into consideration the changing needs of young people and the changing environment. However, several questions remain answered and more depth in the reflection on youth public policy is needed.

In the first place, the Municipal government's youth policy – presented as innovative and participatory –, mainly illustrated by the Participatory Youth Budget has not been evaluated in depth and its conflict transformation potential has not been established. It is still being developed and the projects proposed by young people are still being implemented. It is difficult to determine to what extent the meaningful participation of young people in this programme decreases the amount of violence and youth crime, and to what extent, young people acquire and practice the mediation and community organising skills through the proposed intervention strategies. Other areas of possible research are : a) to what extent the Youth Participatory Budget promotes young people's empowerment and shapes their political cultural, b) to what extent a gender perspective is included or/and whether gender mainstreaming is undertaken at municipal level and more specifically, in the youth municipal policy as this aspect was not explicitly nor thoroughly discussed in this paper.

In the second place, there is a need to analyse the quality and type of cooperation among actors in developing youth public policy. A through mapping of all concerned actors could be a good starting point, including the role of educational and religious institutions which were not part of this thesis. Through my observations and the information gathered in the interviews it seems that the cooperation among actors is scarce and embedded in the political tensions. However, no in depth analysis of this has been undertaken. It would be important to look into the way the provincial and municipal government cooperate in this field for example, so as to devise more integrated strategies and avoid duplication. At the same time, there is a need to look into the type of inter-generational dialogue present in Rosario. Youth-adult partnership in implementation of peace and social development projects presents several challenges. Often adults tend to dictate or impose their diagnosis of the conflict and consequently, solutions. Intergenerational cooperation and partnership need to be enhanced.

Finally, public municipal youth policy as a space of conflict transformation and peacebuilding should be further researched from an interdisciplinary approach. One important question is: to what extent can municipal governments and local actors deal with the root causes of violence found in unfair global structures of domination and inequality which exceed their capacities? How can local and global forces of change be better coordinated? Another issue which requires further research is the issue of reconciliation and healing. How can governments and youth organisations facilitate processes to deal with the past in the public local space? Studies of public administration, youth and conflict transformation have rarely been combined, therefore, lots of work remains to be done. If social planners, politicians, youth workers and public officials would learn to see conflict as an opportunity for social change, more innovative and better practices would be developed to achieve a peaceful society which values diversity and which builds a world where many worlds can fit.

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Annex 1: Transcription and translation of interviews from Spanish to English

Note: Some of the content has been adjusted and summarised. The full original transcription is available upon request.

Ezequiel (M-19)	Problem	Lack of security and police officers
	Cause	Insufficient number of police and police cars. Because of the rebels in the neighbourhood can do whatever they want as they are not ruled by the same more principles as us. Delinquents are addicted to drugs, alcohol and they steal. The reason why they do this is the economic situation, lack of employment and its relationships with society.
	Responsible	Those that rule our society, our people. They do not impose their power but only benefit themselves. They ruin everything giving "Work Plans" to ensure there are voted. The government is not the only responsible, the lazy who accept these conditions are responsible too.
	Needs	Youth: love as they feel insecure and are not protected by their families and this sorrow leads them to drugs. Neighbours: security
	Positions	Youth: they want money to acquire drugs and alcohol. They do not care about the neighbour's complains. Neighbours: they protest and denounce the situation.
	Solution	
Pablo (M-16)	problem	Insecurity, gangs that get together to drink and disturb
	Cause	poverty
	Responsible	politicians
	Needs	Neighbours: That they can walk without being stolen Youth: recreation
	Positions	
	Solution	That they are not allowed to hang out after a certain hour
Damián (M-16)	problem	Insecurity and lack of controls
	Cause	Nobody limits the gangs as everyone is afraid of them. Lack of lights in the streets. Manipulation of society that does not allow people to be someone. Lack of education. Family problems. Drugs and stealing
	Responsible	There is a general lack of interest. Politicians are the main responsible ones as there is no fair policy for all poor youth that fall into this.
	Needs	To have a family, that they feel secure, basic human needs
	Positions	Youth who are in gangs have no interests as they have fallen into drugs and stealing. They wander around. Neighbours: are selfish and complain about everything
	Solution	There should be programmes to contain youth and that include all society with the help of social workers and workshops
Florencia (F-17)	problem	Lack of security in some places. I think it is insecure because of the flow of drugs and alcohol among children of little age, this leads them to have violent attitudes.
	Cause	It is due to the environment in which they live, let's say, lack of education, family problems. These influence in kids of middle age. Lack of money, to see that other kids of their age have a nice life and they have rights and they do not have the same opportunities.
	Responsible	We all have a responsibility, starting with ourselves and ending with the politicians.
	Needs	Many, it depends on the person, children and young people have a need to express themselves, it is what it is most difficult for us. I think we all have the same interests, that is, to be well, have a life without many problems and to be respected.
	Positions	The problem is that no problem seems to have a solution, that is, nobody can think in the place of the other, people are only interested in their own needs.
	Solution	Many things and projects can be done, but you need to start from below, and start with ourselves.
Claudio (M-39)	problem	For me the main problems are robberies, violence, intolerance, revenge (if the people in the neighbourhood catch a thief they hit him until they become tired), drugs, laziness, few public spaces, lack of public security, mistrust in institutions, environmental problems, (laughter), and yes, gangs of youth that in their way of playing disturb and commit acts of vandalism, sometimes product of the effect of alcohol, drugs, or simply, because they are purely rebels, the people in the neighbourhood and those that own shops only take care of their own needs within an individualistic culture. More and more everyone isolates themselves in their own homes, maybe due to an issue of insecurity. Police is not trusted by citizens due to their behaviour and being so far from the needs of people.
	Cause	Lack of education, proper employment, clear public policies, lack of commitment, individualism, corruption, disempowerment
	Responsible	We are the first responsible because we accept living like this, in this model of society of shit, and secondly, those that impose this to us.
	Needs	To reply to youth needs is difficult. They live today with no hope in the future, far from planning a family in a decent home. It is easier for someone who was raised in a simple house to start a new life than for those kids of middle class, or at least for those in my neighbourhood to think of having their own house, a job that can sustain their home. This is why they stay living today in such a crazy way. The people in the neighbourhood that are older are more used to social changes and that everything happens. They know that to protest is not enough, because they lack the commitment and determination to protest and to generate change. The only thing that remains is that a new summer comes and they can sit in front of their house and see how life passes by.
	Positions	Today everyone has a mobile phone, everyone takes care of their own problems and are individualistic.
	Solution	To reform education, to general spaces for cultural expressions in the neighborhoods, to generate new employment policies, new policies of housing, security, health and environment.