

Educational and Entrepreneurial Initiatives to Support Youth in Places of Violence

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Bechtel Conference Room, Encina Hall

A Conference Presented by

Program on Poverty and Governance (PovGov)
Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law (CDDRL)
Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies (FSI)
Stanford University

CONFERENCE REPORT



Following in the footsteps of last year’s international conference on violence and policing in Latin American and U.S. Cities, on April 28th and 29th of 2015, the Program on Poverty and Governance (PovGov) at Stanford’s Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law (CDDRL) turned Encina Hall at the Freeman Spogli Institute of International Studies (FSI) into a dynamic, instructive and stimulating discussion platform. The exchange of experiences, expertise and ideals that flourished within this space helped create a “dialogue for action,” as speakers and participants explored the various dimensions of youth and criminal violence in Mexico, Brazil and the United States, while advocating for the importance of opening up adequate pathways to hope. The event was sponsored by the Center for Latin American Studies, The Bill Lane Center

for the America West, The Mexico Initiative at FSI, and The Center on International Security and Cooperation.

The motivation for the conference reflects PovGov's active agenda on criminal violence, which seeks to analyze the interplay of different crime networks and governance as it affects poverty, economic activity and citizen security throughout Latin America. Through the Stanford Violence and Crime Lab (CrimeLab), PovGov works to develop scientific and action-oriented research to assist community organizations, government agencies, policy-makers, police departments, and other relevant players in Latin America - and elsewhere in the developing world - to reduce violent crime and its devastating consequences. One of CrimeLab's main areas of research focuses on youth and violence, including efforts to explore initiatives successful in attracting (and maintaining) affected youth in educational and career-oriented programs in territories ravished by poverty and crime.

With scarce options for a quality education, prospects for gainful employment and the possibility for future economic sustainability, on a daily basis, young individuals from poor communities throughout Latin American and U.S. cities are exposed to a violent environment with easily accessed - and often attractive - gateways into the world of criminality. From casual affiliation to gangs in schools and neighborhoods in Southern California, to full-time armed participation in international drug cartels in Juarez and drug factions in Rio de Janeiro favelas, youth are the biggest target – and victims – of violence.

In attempts to shed light to this very complex and fundamental issue that is claiming thousand of lives every year and deteriorating the social fabric across cities, PovGov's two-day conference brought together a group of activists and practitioners from grassroots civil society organizations, community leaders, educators, professionals from development agencies, policy-makers, politicians and scholars - as well as some of the very individuals who have benefited from programs highlighted during the event - to discuss the many challenges faced by the youth population in these different locations and to share innovative and inspirational initiatives to generate opportunities and foster change.

At PovGov, we believe in the importance of creating an environment where actors with different backgrounds across sectors, disciplines, realities and environments can come together to share

their first-hand experiences, challenges and aspirations. We hope this wide-reaching and multiplayer conference offered suitable examples of different theoretical basis, policy strategies, practical models and individual narratives to enrich the discussion around the formulation of policies and development strategies to benefit the youth in places of violence and better inform the work moving forward.

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OPENING REMARKS

Political Science Professor and PovGov Director, Beatriz Magaloni, introduced the event’s main objectives during the welcoming remarks and emphasized its focus on exploring opportunity structures in territories impacted by poverty and violence: “This conference is the result of a long reflection on the connection of poverty, violence, inequality and corruption. However, our goal is not to reflect on the costs of violence, but to highlight alternatives that organizations, public officials and individuals are helping create. We want to reflect on this work that has been happening and on the revolution that these players are making.”

Larry Diamond, CDDRL Director and Political Science Professor, also gave an opening speech and took the opportunity to publically applaud the work PovGov has been carrying and its

continuous effort to open up platforms to bridge practice, public policy and research: “PovGov and other centers in this building that are also part of FSI aren’t just academic programs... [the work] goes beyond writing papers and evaluating theories. We want to make a difference in the world. We are happy to have here individuals that have life stories this conference seeks to address and that are dedicated to make the difference on the ground and give hope to the hopeless.”

PANEL 1. YOUTH VIOLENCE: RISK FACTORS AND CONSEQUENCES



BEATRIZ MAGALONI

Associate Professor of Political Science, FSI Fellow, Director of the Program on Poverty and Governance (PovGov) Stanford University



In her talk, Professor Magaloni reflected on issues of poverty and violence in the developing world, giving a broad overview of how crime and urban violence have become major global development challenges affecting Latin American countries disproportionately. “I have been working on this for five years now, and I have more questions than answers. But, I am eager to learn and that’s why I am partnering up with people on the ground,” she said, emphasizing her passion for the themes and issues the conference sought to advance. A map presented early on in the presentation displaying estimates of deaths by firearms in Latin American countries emphasized the gravity of the problem - particularly in Brazil, Mexico and Central American nations. “Latin American is one of the most violent regions in the world... this map tells us that there is something fundamentally wrong with Latin America that we need to understand,” she stressed. Some 740,000 people are killed by firearms every year in the region.

The map also showed that violence tends to concentrate in middle-developing countries. As Professor Magaloni explained, the rapid transformation of cities and raised inequality have brought about major challenges that weaken the social fabric and breed violence in the region and beyond: “As the world urbanizes without institutions of inclusion and justice this could be the fate of many other countries. Why does this happen in Latin America? What we know is that we are one of the most unequal places in the world... social exclusion breeds violence. When I go to Rio and Mexico, the inequality is striking, and I also see that when I talk to people.”

While some view the social exclusion of specific segments of the population in any given country as a source of resentment and, consequently, violence, Professor Magaloni choose to focus on issues of unequal distribution of public services when exploring patterns of poverty and violence: “When a society is unequal the government provides more to the rich, and that creates the divide,” she explained – highlighting that, often times (and as her research in Brazil has shown), the police acts differently in poor and rich areas - which increases exposure to violence for people in the poorer segments of the social pyramid.

Alluding to the recent events that took place in Baltimore and to a study expanding on the connection between gender and violence in Mexico, Professor Magaloni introduced a critical issue that resurfaced several times during the conference and took central stage in the discussion: the disproportionate high levels of homicides amongst the black and brown populations in Latin America, particularly the male youth. “Young men are the main victims and perpetrators of violence... there is a dramatic difference between homicide rates for blacks and whites. We know this to be true in Brazil and here in the U.S. as well,” she denounced, also speaking to issues of police violence and targeting of young blacks by law enforcement.

During her presentation, Professor Magaloni also called attention to the everyday instances of violence that people throughout Latin America experience, which extends well beyond the of scope of homicides. An extensive survey conducted by PovGov and their on-the-ground team in Mexico shed light on some of the extortion practices state security forces and criminal organizations in the country are engaged in. Although it’s hard to determine the exact amount of people who are living in this network of extortion of violence, results from the survey indicated that the poor are the ones mostly likely to be extorted by criminal forces. “The presence of these organizations in Mexico is striking... how many people have to pay these organizations so they can go on with their lives?” Magaloni asked, reflecting on the dimension of the problem in Mexico.

Professor Magaloni finished up her presentation by expanding on some of the main research themes guiding much of the work PovGov carries out, as well as their attempt to analyze issues of crime and violence – including intervention options – in a more systematic manner. The issues presented are as follows: (1) how to humanize the police and police work, and how to address the

“warrior mentality;” (2) how to generate opportunities for youth living in places of violence, what works, what doesn’t and why; and finally, (3) how to deal with issues of corruption in the highly profitable world of drug trafficking. “Corruption increases because there is so much to gain for the same individuals... [Thus] for as long as corruption remains, it will be hard to cope with issues of violence,” she concluded, reminding the public of the strong self-serving forces that hide behind the shadows of institutionalized crime and violence.



BRENDA JARILLO RABLING

*Post-Doctoral Scholar, Program on Poverty and Governance (PovGov)
Stanford University*



Introducing violence as a developmental process that affects the human experience and society in various dimensions, Brenda reflected on the consequences of crime and violent acts on education in Mexico. “Violence is a major threat for kids in schools; homicides have increased by 200% in five years in Mexico,” she explained, highlighting that children feel unsafe in school surroundings - which impacts their quality of education, hindering human development and well-being. The extensive study presented by Brenda sought to estimate the impact of criminal violence on education as indicated by the following moderators: the locality where the violence is taking place (highly context-sensitive), difference effects in terms of urbanization levels (expect stronger effects in urban areas and poor communities), as well as a stronger propensity for older kids to get involved in violence.

Brenda pointed out that researchers tend to assume a linear relationship between test scores and homicides rates when trying to measure exposure and persistence of the war on drugs on education – a limitation that has been further explored in this specific research by placing a focus on modeling drug-related violence as turf wars (high-intensity violence events led by criminal organizations, including – but not limited to – conflict with authorities, conflicts with other gangs over territorial ownership, human trafficking, arms trafficking, extortion activities, etc.). The propensity of high violent events in any given locality is measured by the rate of firearm murders, which is then analyzed alongside math test scores at the school level, heterogeneous effects according to poverty levels, size of the community, school grade level and presence of gangs in the school surroundings, as well as principle-reported mechanisms to explore teacher and student performance, including absenteeism from both sides, teacher attrition and student

tardiness. “We try to disentangle what is happening in schools where violence is taking place,” Brenda explained.

This formula was used to measure exposure and persistence of violence in schools in Ciudad Juarez, where a total of 60,000 panel data at the school level in localities exposed to drug war violence was analyzed between 2006 and 2010. Some of the main results highlight the strong connection between violence and the exacerbation of instructional time loss (i.e. students in violent localities are 30% more likely to arrive to class than students in schools not exposed to drug wars and teachers are also more absent), the stronger presence of youth gangs in schools impacted by violence (51.6% for schools exposed to drug wars against 23.5% for those not exposed), as well as the high proportion of schools suffering from high-intensity violence located in urban areas - regardless of poverty levels. The research also found a negative effect of drug-related violence on academic achievement (i.e. drug war exposure represents 24% of average annual change in standardize math test scores for the 2006-2011 year range) as well more acute negative effects on lower secondary schools compared to elementary.

“Violence is a serious public health problem in Mexico and it exacerbates the structural challenges of the Mexican educational system,” Brenda denounced, noting that – besides impacting human development processes – violence in schools lower the quality of education students have access to, further increasing educational inequalities in the country. Brenda concluded her presentation highlighting the necessity of investing in interventions that can help lessen the impact of drug-related violence on kids, schools and communities such as adding additional days of instruction during the academic year and implementing community-based strategies to prevent and attend to drug-related violence.



MONICA VALDEZ GONZALEZ

Director of Research and Studies, Mexican Institute of Youth (IMJUVE)



With an extensive background in research, policy and planning in the youth sector in Mexico, during her presentation, Monica expanded on the extensive investigation process required for the construction of suitable public policies to benefit youth in the country - particularly in scenarios of social exclusion and inequality. She acknowledged that, today, the overall public policy framework still lacks the necessary understanding of this particular segment of the population – a limitation that IMJUVE

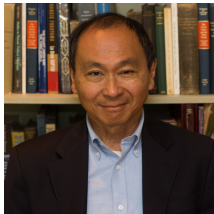
seeks to address and help minimize: “We seek to find new ways to understand the youth... new ways to think and work with them.” Out of the 38 million youth and young adults aged 15-29 living in Mexico, almost half of them are NEETs, which highlights the urgency of creating new and effective ways to engage this group in productive activities: “The youth in Mexico are in an alarming condition, they lack the most basic services... what can we do for them and how can we act with them? How can we help so they have their necessities met?” Monica said, expanding on some of the questions that are at the heart of IMJUVE’s work and their agenda.

According to Monica, issues of systematic prejudice still guide much of the work that is done in the youth sector, both at the institutional and public spheres; that is, negative perceptions of young people influences how the government, security forces and the society engages with them: “The greatest majority of governmental agencies in Mexico and Latin America carry a stigma towards the youth and what they represent. In Mexico, there is an exacerbation of violence against this population... the brown, poor youth. There is also a social stigma, and a stigma around discourses that are created around the youth,” she denounced.

During her presentation, Monica expanded on some of IMJUVE’s efforts in the provision and promotion of opportunities for young people, including the monitoring of national development policies. One of them, *Construye T*, is a program from the federal government (in collaboration with SEMS and the UNDP) that seeks to advance the schools’ capacity to help students develop socio-emotional abilities so they are better equipped to cope with eventual life changes and risks. Even though it is extremely important to advance these capacities in youth people (particularly those living in violent territories and/or experiencing difficulties and abuse at home), Monica called attention to the importance of also assessing the shortages of the formal educational system and the increased distance that is opening up between the youth and the mainstream classroom: “Boredom is the main cause of school dropout. The students feel like they are not learning things that they can use in their lives outside the school,” she explained.

Reflecting on the work she performs at IMJUVE and the various policy frameworks she has been exposed to throughout the years, Monica suggested several important actions that need to be at the center of the discussion when it comes to formulating proposals for life advancement directed at the youth population within the context of Mexico. Those include: (1) the advancement of

socio-emotional tools to help youth make responsible future life decisions, including building a connection early on with the job market; (2) increased focus on programs to encourage young people to use their free time more effectively, particularly in social adverse and violent territories; (3) a reform in the judicial system to expand national and local schemes toward a proper engagement with young offenders, (4) an increased focus on the capacitation of personnel working with youth populations; and finally, (5) the diffusion of a general law to guarantee the rights of the youth population, including access to education, health and work opportunities.



FRANCIS FUKUYAMA

*Professor of Political Science and Director of CDDRL's Program on Governance
Stanford University*



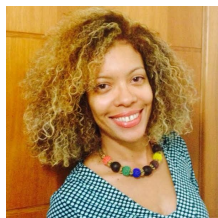
During his discussion comments, Professor Francis Fukuyama attempted to connect the broader themes of the conference to the recent events in Baltimore and expanded on the polarized debate that stems from the right and left wing discourses on issues of crime and violence. Fukuyama explained that one side of the pool claims structural arguments (the problem is largely driven by incentives such as lack of jobs, educational opportunities and the monetary gains offered by the drug trade) while the other pool expands on matters of values, culture and norms.

For him, all of these issues are intertwined and need to be tackled simultaneously if we hope to formulate effective solutions for the youth: “If you look carefully to any of these situations, you see a mixture of both strands. We socialize young men into norms that allow them to be productive participants in the economic activities of society... the effects of economic and structural changes undermine the cultural norms and expectations that people have. And then you have the trap... there are a number of interactive factors that have to be solved simultaneously before people can be lift out of poverty [and are then less likely to engage in criminal activities].”

Making reference to the popular show *The Wire*, a drama TV series that explores law enforcement issues in Baltimore, Professor Fukuyama highlighted the “poverty trap” that African Americans in the United States have fallen to since the 1970, and how that condition has also spread to the working class, impacting generations and changing social dynamics. Additionally, he pointed out that, across borders and races, the levels of children growing up in single-parent

families have become a general characteristic amongst less educated Americans, which - combined with high poverty levels, potential abuse and other family dysfunction issues - may increase an individual's prospects of involvement in crime later on in life.

For Professor Fukuyama, the interaction between cultural and structural factors, and how that influences people's experiences with crime and violence, are central to the discussion on the development of working interventions, but he also called attention to additional variables, such as moral factors, that we have to take into account when talking about these issues.



ANGELA GUIMARÃES

Brazil's Sub-Secretary of Youth and President of the National Council on Youth (CONJUVÉ)



In light of her work as a longtime supporter of social movements in the Brazil, Angela began her talk by reflecting on the social advancements the country has experienced since the ascent of the Worker's Party (PT) in 2003, particularly in benefit of the poorest and most neglected segments of the population - including the youth. "During this past decade we had many developments in the recognition of the youth as a subject with rights, which includes the promotion of a set of public policies and a national statute for the youth aged 15-29," she divulged, taking the chance to also highlight some of the challenges the legislation is facing today with the push toward the reduction of the criminal age in Brazil from 18 to 16 years old. Currently, there are over 51 million people in Brazil aged 15-29, which accounts for 27% of the country's total population. These youth, who are mostly urban (85%), experience different paths according to their realities; from the ones who are pursuing a degree and/or working, to the on who are inserted in the informal economy and have abandoned formal education.

Angela pointed out that educational achievements for young people are still well below the ideal mark, particularly when it comes to the actual quality of education received in public institutions; but once again, recent gains have been fundamental in the expansion of educational offer to the broader population. "In the past 20 years, we had significant advancements in the number of people completing basic education, in the number of applications for insertion into higher education, and in the universalization of education... the quotas legislation (*lei de cotas*) is the result of a historical struggle for social affirmation in Brazil."

Angela speaks with confidence about this specific measure; she was a major player in the fight for the approval of the affirmative action plan in Brazil. The Sub-secretary also spoke to the greater presence of young people in the workforce (which includes a high proportion of individuals working at the margin of the formal market) and the “worker spirit” of the Brazilian youth: “In 2012, 68.4% of young people in Brazil were either working or looking for work and we also experienced a decrease in the unemployment rate for youth (from 15,7% to 12,2% in the 2006-2012 period),” she indicated.

Although important pathways have opened up, Angela emphasized that proper and comprehensive educational and income opportunities for young people are still limited in Brazil (particularly for the black and poorer populations) - an issue that is further aggravated by the high levels of violence in the country. “The current youth experience is marked by violence... indeed, there has been an expansion in access to education, work, formalization and quality of life, but violence continues to mark this generation. 51% of youth in Brazil have lost someone close to them in a violent act.” As Angela pointed out, violence in Brazil isn’t generalized; it has age, color, race and territory. In 2012, from the 56,337 homicides that took place in the country, 53,4% (30,072) victimized young people aged 15-29, out of which 71.5% were black, and 93.4% males. “Seven black youth are killed in Brazil every day two hours, or 60 per day... social movements see this issue as a programmed extermination of the black youth population,” she stated. Young Black males also comprise almost 55% of the incarcerated population in the country.

As the issue of youth, race, crime and violence took center stage, Angela proceeded to discuss the current scenario for young people in Brazil, while expanding on nationwide policies put into place to benefit this specific segment of the population and guide future work in the field. She presented the campaign *Juventude Viva* (Youth Alive), a federal strategy that seeks to reduce the vulnerability of the Black youth to violence and prevent the occurrence of homicides. The plan works with base in the following main strategic areas: (1) the promotion and integration of actions from the federal government with a focus in the transformation of vulnerable territories, (2) the creation of opportunities for social inclusion and autonomy for youth in selected areas, and finally, (3) the rupture with the logic of racism and prejudice inside institutions.

Angela spoke to the importance of the strategy as a groundbreaking national effort to combat violence amongst youth: “This is the first time that states and municipalities across the country assume this situation within a comprehensive plan of action.” She also clarified the criteria for territorial selection in the program and the diagnosis tools used. For example, the 142 municipalities that account for 70% of all homicides of Black youth in the country are focus areas for the campaign. “These municipalities are dismantled territories with relation to state presence. There are no schools, any leisure or sports structures; there are no policies for professionalization, no public health. We run to those place where the state has not yet arrived... it’s a public policy injection,” she added.

To finalize, Angela talked about a set of legislative initiatives the campaign has developed to combat issues of institutionalized racism and police violence, and emphasized the importance of placing these issues at the center of the fight for ensuring human rights for the Black youth in Brazil: “We give police officers a certain judicial authorization to kill in peripheries and favelas, and that’s a result of the military dictatorship era... they know they won’t be investigated, so they kill. We surpass the U.S. in numbers of homicides per police intervention,” she revealed.

The secretary concluded her presentation pledging against the reduction of the minimal age for criminal responsibility, highlighting the dangers of further criminalizing the Brazilian youth in a prison system that provides little possibilities for reintegration: “Our punitive system has failed... it doesn’t re-socialize or prepare individuals for a life outside of jail. [But] what other actions, with a focus on the restorative justice, can we propose and implement? This is an initial debate... there is not much recognition; we want to blame and punish,” she declared during the Q&A session, stressing the difficulties of expanding the dialogue in a society where the “a good thug is a dead thug” rhetoric is still very much alive.

PANEL 2. INIATIVES FOR AT-RISK YOUTH IN RIO FAVELAS



IVANA BENTES

Brazil’s National Secretary of Citizenship and Cultural Diversity



Ivana - a prominent activist who has led important research and action projects in the communication and culture fields nationwide - framed her presentation around the need to improve and expand youth policies in the cultural field, but

from an approach that recognizes the agency and knowledge of individuals in the development process and in the creation of methodologies. That is, actions from the people and for the people. “We need to think of governance, proposals and arrangements that come from the very groups of youth,” she said. In Brazil, the circulation of these different territorial experiences derived from grass-roots networks is very prominent; often times, these articulations do not go through the state, political parties or universities, but emerge organically inside the territory, particularly with the rise of access to the internet. “We are talking about groups of youth with new technologies, open media, social media platforms... this diffusion of media and communication has a strong influence on youth culture. We now have a global culture... like the hip hop movement,” she explained.

Reflecting on the forces that act against the youth culture coming from impoverished spaces such as the favelas of Rio, Ivana accentuated the fight for legitimization and freedom that these groups are forced to undertake in order to claim their own space and ways of life. “We have a criminalization of poverty and the favela culture... they are seen as sub-cultures and the culture of crime,” she denounced.

Apart from creating advancements in culture, art, education, sports, transportation, technology, health and a variety of other services touching all fronts of social life, these spaces are innovative hubs for the development of income generation platforms and job creation at informal markets. “These youth are the base of the proletariat... they make the city function. We talk about hundreds of thousands of people under the age of 20 living in poor communities worldwide having an informal job. This is a characteristic of the majority, of our contemporary world... in a way they invent their own activities, giving sense to their lives from their cultural expressions,” she affirmed, calling attention to the need of paying close attention to what the youth are creating in these spaces (and incorporating these practices) when attempting to create solutions and sustainable options for this particular population.

As Ivana moved on to talk about practices and experiences of educational provisions formulated to “assist” these dynamic groups of youth, she highlighted the “ideological and practical crisis” in the current policy model that informs youth work in favelas and peripheries, from overly structured and restricting formal education schemes for socialization to “pre-given” and “pre-

fabricated” provisions of competencies to exclusively prepare individuals for the market. Ivana acknowledged that public policies have indeed created advancements for the favela youth, including expanding possibilities for employment and formal education. Nonetheless, the state keeps a problematic relationship with the youth, and that impacts how it chooses to engage with them. “The state won’t go to the base and speak the same language as this youth,” she claimed.

For Ivana, in order to build effective grounds in which to fight issues of poverty, violence and drug trafficking in Rio favelas - as it relates to the youth population and their victimization - we need not to oppose public policies in place, but seek to complement this insufficient model, working to amplify different forms of cultural expressions and platforms where the “richness of poverty” can shine and thrive. “Favelas have the power to create solutions in all grounds of informality that goes beyond our imagination. Social imagination has the power to transform violence and poverty in richness and production... the youth creates the economy of culture, a symbolic and affective culture. And that is worth a lot.”

Ivana finished her presentation with an overview of the government program *Pontão de Cultura* (Points of Culture), one of the most comprehensive cultural policies from Brazil’s Secretariat of Citizenship and Culture Diversity acting nationwide since 2003. Points of Culture are cultural entities designed to promote mobilization, the exchange of experiences, as well as the advancement of joint actions with different local groups and government agencies (and amongst different Points of Culture) that articulate and act under specific themes (i.e. Indigenous, African, Hip Hop Points of Culture). The over 4,000 Points of Culture currently present in the country are spread over 1,000 municipalities within Brazil’s 27 states, attending over 8 million youth. “This Secretariat thinks of this very cultural diversity as diversity. We work with distinct and dissimilar languages that amplify cultural experiences,” Ivana concluded, highlighting the Ministry’s commitment in supporting and “uncovering” the culture, languages, expressions, potentiality and values that are produced at the margin of the mainstream Brazilian cultural industry.



ELIANA SOUSA E SILVA

Founder and Director, Redes de Desenvolvimento da Maré (Maré’s Development Network)



Eliana began her talk by taking the public in a voyage into her background and work trajectory in movements from the organized civil society in the Maré favela

complex in Rio. Chasing dreams of a better life, she migrated with her family from the North of Brazil to Maré at a very young age and soon got involved with collective movements in the community. At the age of 22, she had been elected president of the Nova Holanda community association, the largest of its kind in the community. “My entire trajectory has been at Maré... all my knowledge is connected to my life history there. More than describing the experience, I reflect upon ways to change the lives of people in the place where I was raised at, to then change the country,” she declared, reflecting on her orientation and life search in academia and in her community.

The Maré complex is positioned at a central location in Rio de Janeiro, alongside two important expressways (Linha Amarela and Linha Vermelha) and visible from the most important airport in the city. The community is perceived as being historically violent; throughout the years, various criminal groups acted in the territory, jacking up the rates of crime and violence. Consequently, police presence has also been more acute in this area, particularly in recent years. Eliana explained that, up to the 1980’s, Maré, as well as other favelas in the city, were not represented in the official map of the city of Rio de Janeiro. “Favelas were not included in the cartography of the city, and that’s the same as not existing,” she said, as she expanded on the work her organization does from the angle of territorial presence.

At *Redes da Maré*, Eliana and her team seeks to affirm the community’s territory and create conditions so residents can have rights and autonomy inside the city. “We have chosen Maré to try and see how we can work with different territories in all their dimensions. Our efforts come from a perspective of community development, and we think, alongside the community, of ways to improve lives, guarantee public policies and break the relationship of politicians with the poorest areas of the territory,” she added.

Maré is a city within itself with a population of over 130,000 inhabitants, but the state has failed to support the territory in its dimension. To exemplify the inequalities present within that space, Eliana explained that, a little less than a decade ago, only 0.5% of Maré’s total population reached university. This absence of college graduates led *Redes da Maré* to generate an action plan to prepare residents to take the obligatory entrance exams to access higher education, the *Pré-Vestibular da Maré* program. In 18 years since the program’s establishment, over 1,000

residents of Maré have been admitted to public universities. The total percentage of residents with a tertiary degree is now 2%.

During her talk, Eliana also expanded on the importance of community engagement in the development process. “We can have many projects, but if the residents don’t understand their purpose, they won’t engage. If we don’t have people from inside the community thinking about the change that needs to take place, things won’t work out,” she explained. With that participatory framework in mind, *Redes da Maré* developed a project aimed at building a platform where members from the community can come together to discuss and advocate for policy changes and informed improvements in various areas of interest. Those include health, education, arts and culture, sports and leisure, infrastructure, work and income generation, public transportation, environmental sustainability as well as public security needs. Examples of some of the initiatives that were created from these demands include a monthly community newspaper, a comprehensive map of businesses and services available in the community, as well as a street guide comprising of maps, streets and zip codes of all neighborhoods in Maré, the very first of its kind to ever be developed in a favela in Rio.

Lastly, Eliana talked about public security and the structural position it holds in the lives and realities of Maré residents. “From when I was a child, everything that we achieved in terms of public policy was marked by violence. Do we have a school? Yes, but it isn’t open because of the traffic. Do we have a health clinic? Yes, but it won’t work because doctors are too scared to go to Maré. Do we have culture? Yes, but it isn’t of the same quality as in other parts of the city,” revealed Eliana, highlighting the historical connections between violence and the development of social agendas in Maré.

Redes da Maré hopes to continue working to mobilize residents of Maré to engage in discussions about the problematic of public violence and the construction of the public security framework as a fundamental right for people in the community. “If we don’t talk about this issue with the community, we will always have problems with effectiveness. We need to work with residents so they understand that we need spaces to dispute public security,” she concluded.

**JAILSON SOUSA E SILVA***Founder and Director, Observatório de Favelas (Favela's Observatory)*

Jailson started his presentation by reinforcing his origins and identity, expanding on how that relates to his position as a favela dweller, an intellectual and a creator of possibilities within the biased mainstream perception of these spaces:

“I’m a University Professor, I have a PhD in Education and I am an Ashoka fellow, but I am, beyond that, what my name says. My name is Jailson Sousa e Silva. This is a name from popular and poor origins... I am *favelado*, and I am proud of it. In Brazil, we used to be ashamed of being *favelado*... we were the paradigm of deficiency, absence and precariousness. I am proud to be able to help construct a new representation from the paradigm of potency, creation, creativity and capacity of millions of workers that have invented their own space within the city, against the state and the market.”

Reflecting on the work of the civil society within Rio de Janeiro favelas and beyond, Jailson explained that these groups exist to pressure the state and the market for recognition of favela dwellers’ fundamental rights, particularly from the angle of democracy: “Why does the civil society exist? Not to substitute the state... we exist to do what the state does not, and that’s it,” he asserted. In order to help create visibility for favela dwellers in the city, while guaranteeing their humanity and rights within a democratic state, Jailson and his organization, *Observatório de Favelas*, work mainly with three core goals: (1) Right to freedom and authenticity, people should be what they want to be, despite the state; (2) Equality, not Marxist, in the economic sense, but amplifying the minimum level of human dignity; and finally (3) Right to coexistence, learning how to live with the differences and fighting for the right to have different opinions.

Within this framework of search, intention and demands, *Observatório* has developed various projects and actions throughout the years, helping produce new knowledge and create new conditions so favela dwellers’ can reclaim the right over their lives and communities and their space within the city.

Some of these actions include, but are not limited to: (1) the training of new intellectuals from favelas, “we help form people that are conscious of their place, but that at the same time, are also able to speak to the city,” Jailson explained; (2) the production of methodologies and technologies to impact public policy and mobilize people, such as the development of the

campaign *Juventude Negra Viva* (Black Youth Alive); (3) Investment in communication initiatives to help create a new representation of favelas beyond the paradigm of violence and poverty, “We work with journalism, showing a richer and more potent common image of favelas... our youth are trained to show the favela as they are, in all their complexion. They are places with issues, but also invention,” Jailson added; and (4) The continuous opening of platforms to guarantee the presence and permanence of black youth, indigenous, favela dwellers and individuals from popular backgrounds inside the university (this is done through *Knowledge Connection*, a program that fosters dialogue between the universities and popular communities).

This last action - which began at Maré supported by *Observatório* - has been scaled up to the national level and is now present in 26 Brazilian states in connection with 33 federal universities. Jailson took the opportunity to talk about the importance of extending this initiative to high schools in popular territories, many of which present high levels of school absenteeism and dropout rates.

Expanding on the topic of crime and violence, Jailson praised some of the recent social developments Brazil has experienced in terms of opening up opportunities for production, social and economic development; nonetheless, he called attention to the fundamental need of creating more participatory spaces and deepening democracy in the pursuit of social cohesion and a more equal society. “The poorer states have become richer, inequality levels have lowered, but we are poorer now, because violence has increased... The fundamental problem isn’t poverty, but the perception of inequality that becomes so flagrant. The problem is when we see how much our neighbor has and how much we lack,” he said, highlighting the intrinsic connection between inequality and the propagation of crime and violence in developing nations.

To conclude, Jailson reiterated his commitment to work towards the creation of new platforms of thought and action to promote the integration of favela dwellers to the city and secure their right to education, health, culture, freedom and life inside and outside their communities. “It’s important that there isn’t segregation, that we all recognize ourselves in others as human beings. We don’t want to deal with matters of pain... we want to deal with matters that connects us as people.”



LARRY DIAMOND

*Political Science Professor and Director at the Center on Democracy,
Development and the Rule of Law (CDDRL)
Stanford University*



During his discussion comments, Professor Diamond spoke to the issue of crime and violence at a global scale and expanded on its relationship to the prominent position of the male youth population in the propagation of such predicament. “Let me make a controversial statement. We know that, sociologically and psychologically, young men have a propensity for violence. The highest propensity is if you take the combination of gender and generational groups, we have young males... then we have dislocation, humiliation, lack of dignity and opportunities. There is a level of randomness on whether they get involved with criminal organizations, gangs, Al-Qaeda, etc.,” he explained.

Professor Diamond noted that societies around the world have been dealing with issues of violence across time; thus, it is important that we do not commit the fallacy of thinking our problems are unique in world history and that they are a sole reflection of our distinctive present circumstances. “This issue has unique dimensions, sociologically and so on. But, these are problems human societies have been struggling with for a long time,” he said, noting that technological innovations have changed how people engage in these social discussions and fight for change, but the struggles have been similar across eras. “Revolutionaries throughout time didn’t need Facebook to coordinate actions to overthrow governments. We are dealing with enduring proceeding features... the inmate need of the human person for dignity opportunities, and so on. They are universe around the world and manifest themselves in different ways,” he added.

Reflecting on the issue of inequality and violence introduced by Jailson during his talk, Professor Diamond alluded to the social science concept of “relative deprivation;” that is, when individuals compare their lives and situation with the rest of society - which may, in turn, translate to violence and deviance actions. “We don’t want to preserve instability so everyone remains poor, but there are a lot of studies that suggest, within the context of protests of regimes, that revolutionary pressure and political violence are most at risk of erupting not when everybody is poor, but when there is change... when there is economic growth, and it stops, but also when it is bad distributed. We really need to worry about inequality,” he advised.

With the fast increase in global interconnectivity people are now more aware of how the rest of the world lives. Additionally, a number of changes as regards to globalization, technocratization, and the spread of capitalism, including the drive down of wages and mobility of capital instead of labor, have placed inequality at the center of the human experience for most. “Nobody has understood how to deal with inequality... now Piketty has gone deep in it, but no one knows how to fix it,” he added. Professor Diamond reminded the audience that working to formulate innovative short-term interventions, no matter how minor they may seem, is a fundamental step in the creation of longer-term responses to issues of violence and inequality. “If we feel disempowered by inequality and global trends, we are missing practical things that can be done to change, such as putting body cameras on the police and change the way they engage with the community, or generating microeconomic opportunities and transitions from informality to formality... we are not going to figure out on this conference how to deal with universal problems of inequality, but we can make progress on the other stuff,” he affirmed.

Echoing the core arguments in the presentations by Ivana and Eliana, Professor Diamond concluded his discussion address by highlighting the fundamental need to guarantee youth’s subjectivity, rights and dignity in the attempt to transform their social conditions through mainstream public policies: “It’s not just about jobs and education, and getting formality and security, and so on. All of that feeds into something bigger. How do we get these 15-29 year-olds to feel that they are someone so they feel like they have a path to follow?”

PANEL 3. REDUCING YOUTH GANG ACTIVITY AND VIOLENCE IN THE U.S.



AMY CRAWFORD

*Deputy Director, Center for Crime Prevention and Control
John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York*



Before diving into her presentation and expanding on U.S. public security practices that may inform the work being carried out in Brazil and Mexico, Amy wanted to offer an “apology” to the international community at the conference: “I’ve been doing criminal justice work for 20 years and we have seen inactive policies going abroad. We don’t have the answers,” she humbly said. As she introduced the work carried out by the Center for Crime Prevention and Control through their *National Network for Safe Communities* strategy, Amy highlighted a few important points from the set of principles that guide the consortium of

interventions promoted by the center. (1) Do no harm, figure out ways not to hurt the communities you are working at; (2) Find ways to build capacity within the communities so they have their own mechanisms for crime prevention and control; (3) Enhance police legitimacy and authority so they can drive action within that space; (4) Open up direct communication channels with the most problematic individuals in that community; (5) Diffuse the understanding of deterrence amongst these individuals; and finally, (6) Invest in strategic law enforcement to reduce violence.

Amy continued by calling attention to the large disparities in the levels of violence experienced by different communities within the U.S. “Violent crime has fallen in the U.S. and violence levels are very low, but it is not the case that there is safety in all communities. We have communities that are incredibly dangerous,” she said, explaining that, in some poor minority communities, particularly Black neighborhoods, violence is claiming lives at a disproportional rate compared to the rest of the U.S. For example, the national homicide rate for the U.S. is 4/100,000 inhabitants; however, in places like Rochester’s Crescent in upstate New York, young Black males are getting killed at a rate of 520/100,000.

Within this disastrous scenario, Amy and the working team at the Center for Crime Prevention and Control, analyze and explore ways to engage with groups that are responsible for causing violence in different communities. She explained that serious violence is concentrated in small groups; a very small portion of the population (about 1-2%) commits almost 70% of all homicides taking place in communities. A 2013 problem analysis carried out by the center in Baltimore revealed that 1.6% of the total population was driving 75% of violence in the city (including homicides and non-fatal shootings) and that these individuals belonged to 31 different groups and clicks. This is a common pattern across U.S. cities and it informs the work prevention work carried out by the center. “These people are not only driving homicides, but they are also at a greater risk. We see them and think of them when designing interventions,” she added.

One of the central strategies involves the evaluation of what takes place in the city, particularly in relation to these specific groups. This includes mapping their relationships amongst each other, alliance arrangements, changes in grouping patterns, etc. Expanding on the importance of understanding groups when combating crime and violence, Amy said: “It is not that groups and

violence has to do with money or pursuit of some kind of gang structure... it isn't about those things. It's about respect, and street code," she said, pointing out that, typically, less than 10-20% of violence has to do with money or drug issues.

Generally, there have been two main approaches used by law enforcement and other relevant players to deal with groups and individuals involved in violence: crackdowns and "iron fist" approaches or addressing the root causes of the issue and expanding social services. Addressing the actual effectiveness of those different "plans of attack," Amy said: "Neither one of those have had a meaningful impact on gangs or gang violence. There is no real solution for this issue." She also talked about the shortfalls of law enforcement and the devastating impact of mass incarceration in families and communities. For example, some 3 million children in the U.S. (including one in nine Black Children) have a parent in prison.

Amy and her working team believe that democracy is contingent on a legitimate law enforcement presence, but they also believe that communities need a different kind of law enforcement from what they have now. As a response, their strategic intervention in violent communities seeks to create a space where law enforcement, community leaders and social service providers can come together to speak and engage with offenders (particularly those involved in non-fatal shootings), offering them help and clarifying the consequences of their actions. Amy explained the rationale behind the strategy: "When we go to cities, we have to convince people this isn't a program, this is an approach. We make them rethink the way they engage with the community... we also send out a focus law enforcement message... the groups are told that consequences will go against the entire group if there are fatal shootings." "This is about deterrence. It's about showing them that we are "the boss"... this gives them a chance to know what the consequences are. This is a way of being clear and transparent... We are telling you what the rules are, just follow them," she added.

Amy explained that important players in the community such as ministers, activists, mothers and other family members of victims of violence, as well as offenders and ex-offenders, also participate in the strategy, providing a moral voice in support of those individuals. The efforts of outreach workers are also an important piece of the overall strategy, as they have an authentic voice and can engage with people involved in crime. For Amy, we need to start addressing some

of the underlying competing narratives, providing mechanisms for the community to stand with law enforcement to combat violence and reconstructing how we engage with those most propitious to engage in serious offenses. “Traditionally, [we would provide these individuals with] jobs, training and education... but the ones most engaged in street life won’t engage directly in those services, so we set them up for failure,” she concluded, introducing a deeply engaged and realistic outlook to guide work with at-risk youth populations in the U.S. and beyond.



LATEEFAH SIMON
Director, California’s Future Initiative
Rosenberg Foundation



“What I want to do today is talk about micro interventions around violence prevention. I will talk about those modalities... I will celebrate it, but will also talk about how much more work we still have to do,” Lateefah stated, as she expanded on her inspirational and prosperous professional career in social work and advocacy – which is closely intertwined with her personal experiences and early life as an African American woman growing up in a poor community in San Francisco’s Western Addition housing projects. “In 1995, I left high school. I was pregnant with my daughter and I was working in fast food making only \$4.50 an hour... and I had problems keeping the household,” she continued, expanding on some of the difficulties she faced in her own life before she first got involved with social justice work in her community.

Lateefah’s background, experience in the juvenile system and knowledge of the territory handed her the opportunity to work as a paid organizer who would take it to the streets in support of young women and girls facing similar struggles as she once did. At the Center for Young Women’s Development (CYWD) Lateefah learned how to engage with these young women in the creation of opportunities and opening of new life pathways, helping raise a new voice that spoke to what they really wanted and needed.

Lateefah recalled the initial difficulties of working with different research instruments such as data sets that, amongst other skills, required a strong foundation in mathematics - a limitation that she and her colleagues minimalized with hard-work and on-the-ground expertise: “What we learned really quickly, working with data, is that we were teachable... and we didn’t know that.

We got horrible grades in high school, but our lived experience was amazing,” she said, emphasizing the possibilities that open up when individuals are given an opportunity to build on their knowledge and competencies on their way to change their reality and that of their fellow community members.

Lateefah pointed out that once women began to understand what the center was and what it could do for them in terms of providing paid job opportunities to do community organizing and outreach – while valuing what they brought to the table – the organization grew tremendously. “When we talk about people that didn’t have an education, couldn’t do math, came from projects... people that were living in substantial conditions, facing degradation, mass incarceration... getting them a job and training them in those principles, not only can change lives, but if run successfully, it can turn the social service structure on its head,” she said, explaining the rationale behind the center’s work and their belief in placing young women at the center of the process for change: “We could create our own opportunities in self-determination, and that would lead to lower violence. We know from basic data, when girls are on the streets and unemployed, they are more likely to commit and be victims of violence,” she added.

Lateefah’s contributions in helping establish a platform to provide women with the tools to create a community of opportunities were quickly acknowledged and, at the age of 19, she became the CYWD’s executive director, a position she held for 11 years, helping raise millions of dollars for the cause (. During her tenure at CYWD, Lateefah was able to employ and train 500 young women who were out of jobs and in the criminal system, with a crime recidivism rate of only 6%.

For her, micro interventions have the power to promote macro effects when you help people meet their basic needs (i.e. employment, health, housing, education) but also provide platforms so they can become leaders, training them politically and opening up their horizons for new possibilities. Making reference to Paulo Freire’s work on critical pedagogy and expanding on the importance of politicizing young people in the fight against systems of structural oppression, Lateefah said: “[We believe in] having them understand the spiritual, social, economic underpinnings of their families situations.”

Before assuming her current position at the Rosenberg Foundation, Lateefah led the creation of San Francisco’s first reentry services division under the leadership of District Attorney Kamala D. Harris. The *Back on Track* program helps nonviolent, first-time, low-level drug offenders get jobs, enroll in school and improve their overall lives, lowering the chances they will return to the criminal justice system. “We will make sure, as a system, to address the economic conditions that brought people to the streets, not the choices,” she said, noting the program’s success in reducing recidivism by over 80% for a much lower cost than placing low offenders in jail. “It’s no rocket science. Just ask people what they need and what it is going to take. We need to understand what young kids face,” she added.

Throughout the years, Lateefah has received many awards in recognition of her work (she is the youngest woman to have ever received a McFaul fellowship). Her strong belief in the potential of young people to make a difference continues to guide her endeavors and shape her philanthropy, as she advocates for the expansion of support avenues for youth in all ranges of their social experience, from institutional and policy frameworks to communities and households. “If we can figure out how to support our youth’s voices, if we ask, and we really co-create opportunities for development, and humane the conditions, we will be doing a just job,” she concluded.



CHRISTA GANNON
Founder and Director, Fresh Lifelines for Youth (FLY)



In her talk, *Christa* took the audience on a voyage into her early work as a law student and a volunteering teacher in the juvenile hall system, and how those experiences helped shape her activism and inspired the founding of her organization. “I was raised in a very conservative family. My dad was in the Vietnam War... I grew up in law, and I didn’t have much compassion for people who didn’t follow it,” she explained.

A personal event led Christa to enroll in Law school with the goal of “punishing” those who engage in wrongdoing, but a Professor she met while a student at the Northwestern University School of Law had different plans for her future; he encouraged her to do work on the juvenile system and investigate into issues of racism. So, in the 1990’s, Christa began doing volunteering

work in juvenile halls. “I throughout I would do it, so it would look good on my resume,” she confessed. In little time, her entire experience with the law would begin to drastically change.

Christa recalled entering a maximum-security unit alone, “armed” with a piece of paper and a pen and the difficult job of teaching inmates about the 4th amendment. “I am a white girl from the suburbs, I have nothing to teach you,” she thought to herself on her first day. Christa was an avid basketball player during her college years, and decided she would use her sports knowledge to try and build a rapport with the inmates, without knowing this simple act would change her life forever. “We talked about basketball, and in the following ten weeks, I learned a lot more than I could have ever imagined,” she said.

The moving and straightforward “if only” accounts that she heard from those men had her invested in a permanent fight for the rehabilitation and resocialization of youth and young adults impacted by the juvenile criminal system. Christa found a mechanism to engage with those groups of men by helping them deal with legal system, and law became a vehicle for building an understanding of their world.

Christa transferred to Stanford Law School and continued to teach about the legal system in juvenile halls and help people work better with the law. She recalled talking to an inmate as she contemplated the possibility of doing work to benefit this population, but was unsure about her position; for which he then replied: “As long as you deeply listen and care, we don’t care what package you come from.” These words have guided much of what FLY stands for and works to promote.

Fresh Lifelines for Youth is an award-winning nonprofit dedicated to breaking the cycle of violence, crime and incarceration among teens in Northern California (Santa Clara and San Mateo counties) by providing legal education, leadership training and one-on-one mentoring to young people aged 12-18 who are in the juvenile system or at great risk of being incarcerated. FLY believes in the potentiality of each individual and their activities are centered on the principle that youth have the power to change their own reality. That is, they do not seek to “save” the youth, but to provide a platform so they can “save” themselves.

Over 80% of youth who have taken part at FLY’s law component are not reoffending. Additionally, almost 90% of those participating in leadership training now feel that they have hope for the future and 64% of eligible high school seniors graduate from high school or earned their GED. “From San Francisco to Gilroy, we are arresting 12,000 kids per year. Just tonight, 375 kids will be incarcerated here in the Silicon Valley,” Christa revealed, pointing out that for one tenth of the cost of incarceration (\$500 per person, per night) FLY can provide youth with a new life pathway, and one that does not leave them more propitious to reoffend - unlike detention.

To conclude, Christa reiterated some of the core values and convictions that are at the heart of FLY’s theory of change. “We have learned how important it is to be strength finders. We have challenges and frustrations, but we try to find the strength to magnify [so they can be] part of the solution... we try really hard to take on an “inside-out” approach with young people’s voices helping us pave the way.” For Christa, we need to be strategic about how we love our young people, and we need to take responsibility for their success, working for them and with them in the construction of a better future. “The most common reason why we fail in our behaviors it’s because, deep inside, we don’t believe we will succeed, so it’s our job to help them believe in themselves. And sometimes, we have to believe for both of us.”



BRUCE CAIN

*Director, Bill Lane Institute for the American West
Stanford University*



Stressing Christa’s work at *Fresh Lifelines for Youth* as an example of an effective measure, Bruce Cain opened his discussion address by speaking to the value of conducting “targeted work” in efforts to lower crime rates, focusing on opening up pathways to individuals who are most likely to become violent and commit crimes. For Professor Cain, there are still to many “iron-fist” elements guiding the criminal system in the U.S., hindering the advancement of more humane support systems for individuals involved in crime and violence and further criminalizing those already at the margin of society. Thus, he invited the public to turn their attention to the need of “treating the system that treats the people” when considering possibilities to improve security levels and improve people’s lives.

Expanding on issues with current incarceration policies, Professor Cain called attention to the malpractices and injustices embedded in some segments of the U.S. judicial system and how that can jeopardize potential effective interventions to provide new pathways and recovery opportunities for individuals who engage in criminal activities. “We think the only way to deal with people who are involved with drug trafficking is to put them in jail... then, whenever they get out, they have to associate with gangs so they can protect themselves,” he said, reaffirming the strong correlation between incarceration and re-offense that Lateefah also brought up during her talk.

Reflecting on some of the core motivations sustaining such principles and actions at a national level, Professor Cain explained that public and governmental obsession with “visible actions” in the U.S. stems from a performance-oriented democratic society, which, consequently, drives the state and the police to invest in “zero tolerance” policies, such as locking people up for simple little crimes or incarcerating individuals with mental illness. “Whenever there is a problem with violent men, there is a problem with people that are supposed to be bringing in the law... It only takes a handful of people to diminish the work being done by the larger part,” he denounced.

To conclude, Bruce Cain emphasized the need to invest in policies that can reduce the gap between public security officials and citizens, such as returning the police to its community roots. Alike proximity and community policing efforts in the U.S. and abroad, there are many encouraging initiatives that can help us pave the way for increased social cohesion and justice; however, for Professor Cain, the system falls short of giving different players the necessary support so they can, more properly and more effectively, carry out their on-the-ground activities.

PANEL 4. EVALUATING EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUTH



CLAUDIA DOMÍNGUEZ SÁNCHEZ

Director, Institute of Capacitation and Educational Offer of Zapopan, Mexico



During her presentation, Claudia expanded on the rationale, objectives and strategies behind the *Jovenes Con Porvenir* (Youth With Hope) program, an initiative promoted by the Institute of Capacitation and Educational Offer from the Municipality of Zapopan, located in the state of Jalisco, that seeks to offer employment and educational opportunities to youth living in violent territories and who are not engaged in a productive

activity. The program originated from an initial government strategy that sought to investigate (quantitatively and qualitatively) into the main necessities citizens had – as well as the main challenges they faced – from their own perspectives, as they shared in the construction of possible solution plans.

The lack of educational and sustainable work opportunities for the youth population was one of the most important issues emerging from this dialogue. “Youth told us they had repeatedly tried to enter the Universidad de Guadalajara with no luck, some up to five times, and that they could not pay for a private university either. This is a situation of a failed state for them. They can’t occupy a space within a normal academic process. Some of them end up looking for work, while others, remain indolent,” Claudia said, explaining the motivation for the development of the program and the urgency the municipality felt to help create a new – and more accessible – opportunity platform for the Zapopan youth.

The goal was to develop a program that would more closely related to the current social and economic situation of young people in the municipality, reflecting their needs, aspirations and capabilities. According to the OECD, Mexico is the third country in the world with the greatest number of NEET youth (not in education, employment or training). In Zapopan, out of the 353,000 youth aged 15-29 living in the municipality, 75,407 (almost 21%) are not working nor studying (this number is also over 20% in the state of Jalisco). This scenario is further aggravated by the high levels of violence Mexico has been experiencing in the last couple of decades: Zapopan alone is home to over 400 pandillas.

Claudia noted that, more than just offering youth with opportunities in education and work, *Jovenes Con Porvenir* wanted to also open up possibilities for personal development and resilience for the future. “[When asked where they would be in a few years], the kids would tell me... “I see myself married, with children.” They would not see their professional lives; they would not talk about this topic... they also did not know what they would study if they were to receive a scholarship to attend a university. They would say: “I am afraid of dedicating myself to something because I don’t think I’m good at anything,” she added, highlighting some of the demands that guided their thinking process when creating programs to benefit this youth and the expansion of their activities.

In light of their efforts to help re-construct the social fabric in urban communities impacted by violence through capacitation and the generation of opportunities for the youth population, *Jóvenes Con Porvenir* provide young people (aged 15-30) with the choice to participate in over 350 different courses, which take place inside over 30 universities and capacitation institutes in Jalisco. Some of their strategies to attract youth most in need throughout Zapopan and the metropolitan area include making use of georeferencing techniques to check on levels of delinquency in different locations as well as efforts to incorporate the needs of local industries in the development of new courses to be made available.

Claudia emphasized that, often times - particular in places ravished by poverty and violence - we need to invest in the creation of pathways for the youth in any way available before we can focus on monetary returns. The goal is to take engage the youth and keep them away from a reality where they can no longer see a “point of return.” “In the first instance, it may be the case that the course is not sustainable... but the objective is to motivate them, so later on, they can engage in something that is more productive financially,” she said, expanding on the many plans of study offered by the program, ranging from courses in the field of sports, dance, health and culture, to technology, video production, photography and art. The program - now on its sixth edition and with a waiting list of over 9,000 potential participants - has had a stronger impact on 69 neighborhoods with the highest levels of basic necessities in Zapopan, reaching over 15,000 youth in 2014 alone.



GUSTAVO ROBLES PEIRO

*Pre-Doctoral Fellow, Program on Poverty and Governance (PovGov)
Stanford University*



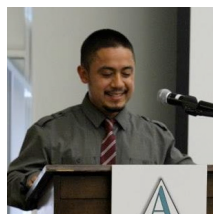
Expanding on Claudia’s presentation on the *Jóvenes Con Porvenir* program, Gustavo shared the results of a comprehensive impact evaluation study carried out by Stanford in partnership with the municipality of Zapopan, shedding light to the initiative’s overall achievements and on-the-ground impact. *Jóvenes con Porvenir* has benefited over 23,000 individuals since its inception in February of 2013, reaching almost 12.5% of the youth population living in the municipality who are currently not pursuing an education (approximately 53% of young people aged 15-24 in Zapopan do not attend school). In five

rounds of the program, over 32,000 applications have been accepted, which highlights the high uptake of this specific provision compared to other educational programs available in the area.

In terms of distribution by gender and age, 63.5% of participants are women; about two thirds of all beneficiaries are 24 years of age or less and at least 25% are 18 years old or younger. *Jóvenes Con Porvenir* has also become popular amongst young adults aged 24-30, who are starting to participate more actively in activities. Stressing the program's focus in attending youth in regions impacted by crime and violence, Gustavo explained that 65% of students in the program come from neighborhoods with medium or high levels of marginalization, where an average of 75% of young people are out of school. "31% of students come from neighborhoods with presence of gangs and other 30% come from neighborhoods with high levels of criminality, and many of them are NEETs," he noted.

Gustavo continued his presentation sharing information about the sample design for the study and the work developed around it. Him and his team followed random samples of students from the program's third and fourth generations, for an average of 800 students per round (or 10% of the total beneficiaries from each of the two generations). The sample was stratified in 12 groups according to sex, age and level of marginalization. In addition, a group of 875 individuals aged 15-30 who are NEETs and live in the Guadalajara's area (excluding Zapopan) were chosen to serve as the control group for the study. The questionnaire given to students has a total of 80 questions and covers a range of personal and educational/work-related questions, from questions to measure the personality of participant youth, to questions about work and educational patterns during the past 6 months, bullying and school conditions, as well as questions about their hopes and dreams for the future.

Some of the questionnaire's results display a change in "life approach" amongst beneficiaries in the program six months after their participation compared to where they were previous to enrollment. For example, after participating in the program, youth tend to answer more positively to questions about their future career and levels of satisfaction with themselves. In addition, results have also shown a greater opening of social networks and connections with people of interest in educational/career endeavors for participant youth and a rise in employment rates for those enrolled in the program's 4th generation.

**FELIX LUCERO***Prison University Project*

“I came from a similar background from what I’ve heard you guys talking about... those places sound like the places I grew up in,” Felix said, connecting with the conference earlier talks, as he expanded on his life growing up in Stockton in a single-parent household and his early problems with the law getting involved in gangs, drinking and doing drugs. When he turned 18, Felix was already carrying a life in prison sentence on his shoulders, and his existence was confined to the prison reality. “The prison system is built on levels. The population is mostly 40 and up, and then you come in, as an 18-year-old kid with a life sentence. There are no role models and not much to look up to. Early on, I saw a lot of violence... the typical stuff you hear about, and there are no opportunities to do anything much different. There are no programs. They just don’t provide opportunities other than to sit in a cell,” he said, comparing his earlier incarceration experiences with his move to San Quentin State Prison.

Although Felix refrained from saying that prisons are beneficial in any way, he did acknowledge the opportunities San Quentin provide inmates with in terms of educational programs – which, in his specific case, helped pave the way for a new life after prison. The *Prison University Project* is an initiative that provides higher education to incarcerated individuals in San Quentin State Prison, which, Felix noted, is one of the only inside prison programs in California, and even the U.S. As a graduate from the program, Felix spoke to the importance of the program in providing a new life outlook for young men in prison and of serving as an alternative to violence. “[The program] affects people not only when they get out of prison, but also while they are in there... it gives us something to look up to. It also has an impact on the prison system, instead of turning to violence, people tend to try and work things out more,” he added.

Felix recalled an event when a group of inmates from different parts of California were transferred to San Quentin, and upon familiarizing themselves with the possibility of getting an education while in jail, began to change their behavior and life outlook. “A lot of them had values from other prisons... violence, that’s what the people coming in valued. After only a few weeks being there, they started to think about what they wanted to do in the future... Education

allows people to think critically about their surroundings and empower people to do things differently,” he added.

Felix was incarcerated in California for 18 years, receiving a Liberal Arts degree and a Drug and Alcohol counselor certification during his sentence. He has worked with transitional aged youth in San Francisco and the greater Bay Area for over a decade and now serves as a clinical case manager for The Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice (CJCJ). Reflecting on the broader themes of the conference and the struggles faced by youth and youth adults living in underserved communities all over the world, Felix said: “You just switch the names from these towns... there is no hope. They can’t see five months beyond and they don’t think about education and possibilities.” He concluded by speaking to the importance of engaging the community in strategies for reducing the consequences of violence and reaching out to those most in need in efforts to provide life opportunities. “Nobody comes to us, we go and seek people in the community.”



MARTIN CARNOY
Professor, Graduate School of Education
Stanford University



Martin Carnoy served as the panel’s discussant and called attention to the need of pushing the discussion further to also include issues of employability and actual life advancements for individuals participating in educational programs, inside and outside the formal educational system. For him, there needs to be a level of competency for the labour market that follows individual’s experiences with different educational initiatives. That is, participants in programs like *Jóvenes Con Porvenir* in Mexico had something in hand that allowed them to be successful, as both Gustavo’s and Claudia’s presentations highlighted; however, if they are not fit to find a job upon graduation and improve their labor market prospects, the kind of social and economic platforms for development they will have access to will most likely be limited: “You can’t just give them self-esteem if they are not able to follow a career,” he explained.

On the same note, Professor Carnoy talked about the dangers of society’s reliance on education as a “silver bullet” and its limitations in serving as a “protective mechanism” against exposure to different life hardships, including violence, as in the case of Mexico. “Finishing high school, for

example, has great non-monetary impacts, and that is all very important. I don’t want to diminish those non-monetary qualities, but increasingly, having a Bachelor’s does not mean having a better life,” he affirmed.

“There is a lot of thinking around the idea that education can solve all problems in Latin America, but we have to be skeptical of that. If everyone has a Bachelor’s, that won’t solve the problem. Job training also does not have a very good record of securing employment,” he concluded, calling for more “harmony” between the labor market and education and training for the youth populations for increased social cohesion, in Mexico and beyond.

PANEL 5. THE “NETWORK FOR YOUTH AGENCY” EXPERIENCE

SECTION 1. INSTRUMENTS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE



VERUSKA DELFINO

Production Coordinator

Agência de Redes Para Juventude (Network for Youth Agency)



Veruska, a university student pursuing a degree in theatre, began her presentation by sharing a little bit about her background and first encounter with the *Agency* program. At the age of nine she migrated with her family from Maranhão in the Northeast of Brazil to Rio in search of a better life and was raised there by her grandmother. Veruska met Marcus Faustini, *Agency*’s founder, while a student at a theater project in Santa Cruz, located in Rio’s North zone. Thanks to her leadership skills and vast experience taking part in performing arts initiatives in popular territories, she quickly moved on to coordinate and lead important segments of the program. “The *Agency* program is a compact of actions and historical social projects that consolidated into a methodology. It is important to think about the youth as a student in a different place in time,” she asserted.

As she expanded on the rationale behind the program, Veruska called attention to the need of opening up a space so the youth can think and create with base on what they already know and the tools they already possess. “The youth cannot just be considered a student, they also need to be creators. So that’s what we want to do... we want to open up opportunities so these youth can create... we want to stimulate them, mediate their desires inside the territory, not just for the youth, but for the entire community.” *Agency* act in some of the most underserved communities

in Rio, including favelas and neighborhoods in the North zone of the city that are often overlooked when it comes to development projects.

At *Agency*, the youth is encouraged to expand their vision and understanding of the territory and the city, creating projects that can help expand and change the “legitimacy discourse” from the mainstream society. Speaking to the actual work that is developed with the youth, Veruska highlighted the importance of opening up networks and connections in various points of the city and with different players, expanding the range of possibilities available that can support participant youth in the process of developing their ideas and transforming those thoughts into actual projects that can impact inside their communities, and beyond. “First, it is important to think about the territory, then, the city, and later, think about the world. But these are stairs... it’s a process.”

Reflecting on the profile of students participating in the program, Veruska explained that *Agency* seeks to attract youth (aged 15-29) in different points of their lives and displaying different skills sets; that is, the focus is not on investing solely on individuals who have already demonstrated leadership capacities, but on creating conditions so all youth can realize their potential: “The youth only needs the tools to become leaders in their territory. Our evaluation is that not all of them will become leaders per say, but at least the program generates the opportunity so they can invent something and think of their territory in a different way,” she said, noting that some of the participants at *Agency* are enrolled in university and hold a formal job, while others have not yet completed basic education and are still working in the informal market. “We have youth in various educational and life stages... we have those who still live at home and work to support their families, we have the evangelical youth, we have the *funkeiro*, the *pagodeiro*, girls boys, gays and straights... the profile of our youth is the black poor favela resident,” she added.

Participant youth are given a monthly support of 100 reais to meet with *Agency*’s team every Saturday and participate in different production workshops (they also engage with a team of university students who support students in the research process). “If they miss a class, we deduct from their money. This is a way to exercise responsibility. Also, we write the check to their names; we think it is important that they have this autonomy,” she explained. In three years, 2,700 youth have enrolled in the program, 800 have experienced the methodology, and a total of

60 projects were put into practice with a funding of 10,000 reais (some projects have received up to 50,000 thanks to additional connections they were able to establish in the city). In addition, at the end of each cycle, every participant receives an educational certificate in communications from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), one of the most respected institutions of higher education in the state.

“We work so this youth can become “agents of the city”... With these 10,000 reais we provoke the youth to circulate in the city, in the community,” Veruska concluded, emphasizing the importance of offering support for participant youth to create projects that can support their neighborhoods, circulating money, ideas, opportunities and possibilities inside the territory, helping build a legacy for that space. “The youth starts seeing the world differently, and that changes the community.”



ANA PAULA LISBOA
Methodology Coordinator
Agência de Redes Para Juventude (Network for Youth Agency)



“At *Agency*, we listen to the youth in a different way than the model we are used to seeing... we don’t look at them from the prospect of deficit, but we see them as potency,” Ana Paula stated, as she developed on the work as a Methodology Coordinator in the program - a trajectory that began in the Borel and City of God favelas located in Rio’s North and West zones, respectively.

She began by expanding on the two main phases guiding the methodology’s progression: the first one, the “stimulus cycle,” has to do with the process of reaching potential participants. “It is important to say that we went after most of this youth. It is a mobilization... this is the moment to expand. The first thing we ask them is: “What is your idea or wish?” she said, explaining that, at a first moment, there are no limits for the youth’s desires and what kind of actions they can potentially develop to benefit themselves as individuals, their families and their territory.

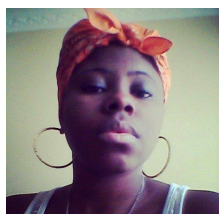
For example, she met a girl at Borel favela who dreamed of a pool for her community. “She definitely needs to be at *Agency*,” Ana recalled thinking at that time, as she identified a potential to invent and create significant improvements for the territory based on that simple desire. The goal is to mobilize individuals who find themselves outside the circle of projects and

possibilities. “We want to reach the “loose youth,” those that won’t even look for projects,” she added, explaining that they often reach out to grandmothers, aunts and mothers to establish a rapport with youth who are harder to approach.

The second moment has to do with the actual development of the youth’s idea, when they receive 10,000 to think, plan and execute their projects. This phase also requires mobilization; that is, youth are encouraged to look for ideas, connections and partnerships inside and outside their communities in order to develop their work. Visibility is also an important element in this point of the methodology, as the projects are also designed with the goal of helping build a new representation of the favela youth.

“We have observed, in a general sense, that the youth in represented in two ways: they either lack something, so let’s help them become better people, or they are violent and dangerous. We think all the time about how to represent this youth in another way... we want to change how this youth is viewed and represented. We don’t want to be one more project that represents the youth from a place of violence or deficiency... we want them to speak to the city from a different perspective,” she emphasized.

To conclude, Ana Paula talked about the importance of connecting youth with other platforms for social, cultural and economic development available within the city, helping further expand their repertoire, contacts, knowledge and access to new life opportunities. “The youth is not ours... they need to think about the city and the world. We create these networks and connections so their projects can go beyond of what the 10,000 reais can help consolidate.”



ELAINE ROSA
Former Participant
Agência de Redes Para Juventude (Network for Youth Agency)



During her presentation, Elaine expanded on her personal experience as a participant at *Agency* and the project she developed through the methodology.

Elaine lives at the Chapadão favela in Pavuna in the North zone of Rio, one of the most dangerous and underserved regions in the state. “Pavuna has two favela complexes that are not Pacified, Pedreira and Chapadão. There is no police there, there is no government,” she said. When Elaine was “fished” by *Agency*, as she likes to say, she had several ideas of what she would like to do based on her past experiences getting involved in community initiatives. “I was

in a transition moment with my hair, so I decided to do a project about hair and the valorization of Black women.” As a result, the “Curly Fair” was born.

The idea for the project originated from the necessity to provide local Black women with options to invest in themselves and their appearance, in close connection with their racial roots and their communities. With the 10,000 reais provided by *Agency*, Elaine and her team mobilized people from Pavuna and outside areas to participate in the event, bringing local businesses closer to local customers and creating a space for the Black community to engage and interact around common issues of interest. In the process, Elaine began to gain more clarity about the importance of the event as a platform to booster confidence and identity amongst Black women in the community, with transformations that went well beyond a change in hairstyle.

“We understand that women place a lot of value on their hair, so we went through this process and began to rescue some things. This woman has a function... she has to take care of herself, value and understand herself, so she can mobilize inside her household, for her children and for her family,” Elaine said, noting that in Pavuna, men are responsible for the bulk of the violence taking place, including domestic violence - which speaks to the necessity of opening up possibilities so women can take position of leadership in their communities and homes. “We understand that we need to honor this woman... the mother, the grandmother, the cook, the teacher... the Latin American, Caribbean woman,” she added.

Elaine also talked about the importance of the event in showcasing some of the many positive aspects of the community, moving beyond the “violence signature” that has characterized the region for decades. “We get together to show that we aren’t just violence and massacres... Pavuna has a lot of great things to offer,” she emphasized. Elaine, who traveled to Tunisia last month representing *Agency* at the World Social Forum, concluded her presentation by expanding on some of the additional initiatives she has developing within the “Black Fair” project - which she works to maximize in order to bring in more opportunities for the local people. “We have art, education, great products, expositions and workshops... and we occupied a public space to display those things.”

SECTION 2. WORLD EXCHANGE OF METHODOLOGIES



MARCUS FAUSTINI

Founder and Director

Agência de Redes Para Juventude (Network for Youth Agency)



Highlighting the need to invest in the construction of platforms where the youth can become active participants in the city, formulating, developing and promoting life opportunities for themselves and their own communities, Marcus began his presentation by expanding on the philosophy guiding *Agency*'s efforts to promote social inclusion and empowerment for young people in Rio de Janeiro favelas and peripheries. "Agency is a methodology, not a method. We are not trying to prove anything. We took things from different places and created an action out of it. To sound serious, we called it a methodology, but this repertoire is actually a 'making'," he explained.

Escaping poverty and the dry hinterlands of Brazil's Northeast region of Paraíba, Marcus' family migrated to Rio in search of better life opportunities when he was still a boy. He was then raised in a public housing complex in Santa Cruz, located in Rio's West zone; a place that accommodated people that had just been evicted from their homes in different favelas throughout the city. "My place of speech limits me, but it also potencializes me and reinvents my way of viewing the world", he said, speaking to the importance of his background in shaping his persona.

Marcus grew up wanting to be an artist - a wish that escaped his reality and didn't sit so well with his blue-collar working family. "For my family, the fact that I wanted to be an artist was a problem... also, I was far away from all possibilities so that could actually happen in my life," he said, expanding on the personal and professional quest for "possibilities within the city" he engage on for many years to come. "I invented ways to make things happen... I experienced new ideas and new spaces. I was *funkeiro*; I participated in student movements and followed the theology of liberation... I became a theater director, a writer, a film-maker; I created an organization... and those things started to increase my repertoire," he said, emphasizing the importance of those contacts and experiences in helping him find his potentiality - which, later on, would become the main principle behind *Agency*'s methodology. "Even though I was poor and very young, I participated in different social groups, but they did not look at me as if I were a

poor or dangerous guy... they looked at me as potency. And that's how we need to work with our youth."

Marcus also talked about the need to break the physical and symbolic walls that separate individuals from underserved communities to the rest of the city, limiting their access to different platforms of opportunities and mechanisms to express themselves. "The youth who is poor is afraid of stepping foot into a museum, he won't know what he will find. My daughter, for example, who grew up middle-class, acts completely different. [There needs to be] small undertakings, the access to small rights... the understanding that is it possible to express oneself. This is the paradigm to work with young people from poor territories; we need to put them out there... before they can think about who they are, they need to create, have the possibility to expresses themselves," he added.

Marcus continued his presentation with a brief summary of *Agency's* ideological approach to working with youth populations in popular territories and the methodological strategy they chose to apply. "We knock from door to door in the favela... We want to support the youth's ideas. This youth makes an inventory of everything that is inside the community and can potentialize their expression. We don't want to educate this youth; we want to walk alongside them. Social projects don't have to "give people fish," they need to teach people "how to fish." At *Agency*, we got to the supermarket, buy the fish and cook it with the youth. We do things with them," he interpreted.

Agency helps participants find partners throughout the city in order to maximize their project's scope and impact. Marcus explained that some youth are not prepared to engage in social movements, and that's why they need to work to foment their entrepreneurial spirit and open doors for new possibilities for presence and engagement. "*Agency* is like a kindergarten. We stimulate those survival strategies so the youth can have a voice in the city," he said. Towards the end of the presentation, Marcus highlighted some of the initiatives that have been developed inside the methodology, ranging from projects to provide social support for community members, such as young mothers and the unemployed, as well as projects to advance cultural and arts platforms inside favelas, including arts expositions inside residents' homes, community radios and newspapers, and hip-hop/rap spaces where participants are encouraged to discuss struggles of the youth population. "It isn't just the social movements, the politics, and the

university... the youth that we think that are the problem are producing solutions for the territory and for the city. We don't want to just help them find a job or get an education... *Agency* wants to be the place that changes the youth's first experience with the city," he stressed.

Marcus concluded by stating *Agency's* utmost commitment to help create a new approach to engaging and working with youth living in poor communities in Rio, and beyond: "This is an artistic methodology, it isn't theory. We don't want to prove anything; we want to display what is hidden. We want to break with the didactic approach to using art... it [art] needs to be an instrument to inventing new "time spaces" for the favela youth. The disengaged youth in Brazil and in Europe does not recognize himself/herself in the diaspora, and the city has yet to allow him to create his own place."



PAUL HERITAGE
Professor of Drama and Performance
Queen Mary University of London



Celebrating the 500th anniversary since the first publication of *Utopia* by Thomas More, Paul Heritage began his presentation by stressing that a collective vision of utopia is now more needed than ever, as we continue to see for solutions for some of the most pressing issues plundering our societies. The nature of exchange could be the solution, he noted: "While we may have lost our vision of utopia, many still look for Brazil for what it may offer."

Professor Heritage has wide experience investigating and participating in cultural and educational exchange projects between the UK and Brazil seeking to achieve individual and social change and currently serves as an International Adviser to the Brazilian Ministry of Culture on the "Cultura Viva" (Living Culture) initiative. During his presentation, he talked about some of the transformations he has seen happening on the ground and the importance of communities' self-organizing capacity and autonomy on the road to empowerment and development.

Expanding on a local tradition in which young people from an impoverished and violent community in Rio Branco, Acre, gathered four nights a week, eight months out of the year, to rehearse the "quadrilla" (a popular Brazilian dance characteristic of the June festivals) despite the struggle they faced, Professor Heritage emphasized people's ability to transform their world

through creativity and arts, changing their lives and their communities. “This is not a project or program... they are no objects or processes that they do not control. This is part of creating a safer community though beauty, excitement, cohesion. They sought survival, insisted and persisted. We know how complex our authentic nature is,” he asserted.

Highlighting the vast knowledge transfer possibilities that originates from these exchange experiences and the to unveiling of ways of life, cultures, potentiality and solutions that it fosters, Professor Heritage talked about the importance of continuing to move forward in the pursuit of a more social justice-oriented world, with individuals and their abilities at the heart of the transformation. “We have seen the way these social initiatives have put these people at the center of the process, helping them find their authenticity... but they haven’t completed their task. It is in our exchange that we can learn from each other, and that has become our utopia.”

Paul concluded his presentation with a saying by actor and director Antônio Albujaara that spoke to the wonders and conflicts that are embedded in the pursuit of knowledge and the discovery of new ways of seeing the world. “My journeys served so as I can know myself better and take a new way and direction; after realizing that the essence of my progress has been in the capacity to accept my own decadence.” To which Professor Heritage added: “We all recognize our own decadence and failure, and that’s why we need these exchanges and journeys to make ourselves better.”



LIZ MORETON
Senior Producer, Battersea Arts Centre

SUZIE HENDERSON
Head of Creative Development, Contact



During their presentation, Suzie and Liz - both who work for important institutions within the UK’s theater and arts scene - shared some of the learning and cultural exchange they have experienced while working with Marcus Faustini and the Agency program in Rio. Contact works locally, nationally and internationally, to provide life-changing opportunities for the next generation of creative leaders, artists and audiences. The institution places young people at the center of the creative process, generating opportunities and opening up a space so they can become decision-makers. Yearly, an average of 13,000 people participate in programs supported by Contact, out of which a great percentage come from Black

and minority backgrounds. Suzie explained that a lot of the projects are done in a collaboratively fashion – which promotes integration and knowledge sharing: “A 15 year old from the local community may be working closely with a graduate person from Manchester. We have amazing and fantastic debates happening in those places,” she said.

Battersea Arts Centre is based in South London, but the work they create trespass borders and travels all over the world, being adopted by many organizations internationally. The center provides a wide range of activities for young people, and they also invest in collaboration to enrich their creative activities. “It feels like a playground creating a dialogue between people coming together, who often wouldn’t,” Liz explained. She also talked about Battersea’s efforts in providing a space that can foster social development through art: “We have spent the last 10 years seeing how we can have a positive impact in our communities and use creativity to benefit the people.”

Thanks to a partnership between these two arts centers and *Agency*, the program’s methodology is now being delivered in Harpurhey and Moston in Manchester and Winstanley in London, all ranking in the top 1% of the most deprived neighborhoods in England. In those regions, an average of 29% of youth aged 18 are living in poverty and are unemployed, reflecting a generational problem immigrant families (particularly from Nigeria) have faced trying to make a living despite the dying industry. In addition, the “clash” with the existing White middle-class communities has inflated racial tensions in the area, which, as Liza stated, “makes it a challenging area to work at.” These regions also suffer with high levels of crime. Overall, the lack of opportunities, inequality and chronic unemployment has shattered young people’s expectations for a better future in those territories, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Seeking to help create a new way to engage with cultural production and dissemination in the UK, especially to benefit young people, the two organizations followed up on a contact they established with Marcus and *Agency* in 2010, marking the beginning of a new [phase] for Battersea and Contact. “We realized that we shared similar values, and the belief that young people could realize transformation within their lives and their communities... we took a risk and tried out the agency experience in the UK, and adapt it to the context,” Liz added, noting that, in

2012, Battersea won an important award for their work in the arts scene using the *Agency* methodology.

Both Liz and Suzie travelled to Rio to take a closer look at *Agency* and engage with its participants. Recalling some of the challenges that surfaced in the process of adapting the methodology in a new country with a completely different social scenario, Liz said: “There is a lot more bureaucracy in the UK, the young people we work with are on benefits. Also, it was a new area of work for us... it was the first time that we worked in the creative process.” She also found that, in Rio, young people seemed to be a lot more open and enthusiastic than the kids she worked with in Moston, for example; so they hired consultants to help them in the adaptation process. For Suzie, one of the most important exercises was learning about organizational change and networks; that is, how to engage young people in the building of new networks to create and expand their own projects.

An evaluation carried out with participants from the UK *Agency* initiative highlighted some of the individual growth and confidence young people experienced after taking part the methodology. For example, 96% of them felt that they now have a culture of creativity, 100% think that they are now more connected to the world, 95% think they can change something in their lives, and 100% of all participants who took the survey now believe in their potential to have ideas.

Liz and Suzie concluded their presentation by expanding on some of the projects developed by the youth through UK *Agency*. One of them, a board game similar to monopoly designed to help young people play out their life decisions, was created by a 14-year-old (who actually lied about his age to participate in the project) and was based on his own life experiences growing up in an impoverished and violent community. “If you chose to go through the gang zone, you might be asked to take a package with something. It’s a fantastic game and he has been developing it with public schools now, Liz said, explaining the rationale behind the game and its prospects for expansion. She also talked about the impact the project had in the boy’s life: “He was a shy boy at first, but now, he has done things like doing a speech for 200 people. He has been interviewed for national and local papers... He also fundraised a further 10 thousand pounds for the project.

He is empowered to go to the world and offer something, instead of just asking for something. It's an amazing powerful feeling for someone who hasn't felt powerful before."

Suzie also presented a project developed by a youth in the program that seeks to provide a platform for families and children to bake together. Families that rely on food stamps often do not have enough money to invest in cooking beyond the basics, such as baking cakes; through this project, free ingredients to bake goodies are provided to families, alongside free cooking lessons. Suzie explained that the children from some of the most notorious gang leaders in Manchester have taken part in the program, which speaks volumes to the project's capacity to reach out to people mainstream programs often cannot.



STEPHEN COMMINS

*Associate Director for Global Public Affairs and Lecturer in Urban Planning
UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs*



During his discussion comments, Professor Commins talked about the importance of helping people find their own voices and potentiality in the transformational process, particularly in work that engages with youth populations exposed to poverty and violence. "We are talking about people in formation. When we think about the youth, there are a lot of things going on; what we heard today is how those can be potentialized," he said, noting that development programs that successfully foster elements of confidence, self-discovery and risk-taking on young populations are helping build groundbreaking venues for transformation and empowerment, based on the individual's creative power and potential. "Arts, hip-hop... those are important expressions coming from the soul," he added.

Professor Commins expanded on five chief elements that young people can develop through these engaging platforms: (1) cognitive engagement, questioning and learning about themselves as individuals, their communities, their cities, and then, the world; (2) emotional engagement, thinking about oneself and discovering a different aspect of self-awareness; (3) productive engagement, becoming a creator of solutions and opportunities; (4) connecting engagement, learning about networks of possibilities inside their communities, and beyond; and finally, (5) community engagement, assisting in the transformation of society. "This moves beyond social movements and radical thoughts... it ties with having a social imagination."

On the topic of citizenship construction, Professor Commins called attention to the advancements that our society has made in terms of including people from different backgrounds, but emphasized the need to help people find a voice so they can fully exercise their citizenship – and that’s the transformational aspect. One of the ways to do that is by confronting inequality, which involves a sense of empowerment, identity strengthening and the provision of life opportunities that allows people to realize their humanity. “Inequality is not just a measurement, but a destructive factor that lowers the human conditions,” he added.

To conclude, Professor Commins stressed the importance of helping create pathways of hope for people from disenfranchised communities from an approach that recognizes the existing local capabilities and knowledge. “We need to get people thinking about the horizon of opportunity. Security is about more than violence... it’s about empowerment, it’s about the opportunity to change lives and find ways to be productive. To quote one of my favorite expressions “we drinks from our own wells...” from within these communities there is profound value... the meaning the purpose and power comes from people’s own wells.”



HECTOR CASTILLO BERTHIER
Founder, Circo Volador (Flying Circus)



Following *Agency*’s brief symposium, our second and final keynote speaker, Hector Castillo Berthier, took the stage to expand on his work at *Circo Volador*, a social platform that promotes arts and culture for youth from popular origins and seeks to find solutions for pressing urban issues in Mexico. *Circo* invests in a comprehensive and context-sensitive approach to work with youth in places of violence that combines elements of multi-country and multifaceted sociological investigation and methodologies - as well as community participation - to its on-the-ground practices. The 28-year-old self-supported initiative is regarded as one of the most successful social interventions in the country.

Professor Berthier began his presentation by expanding on his natural history as a researcher and practitioner in the field of social sciences. “Since the beginning of my career, I’ve had a question in my mind: If an engineer builds bridges, an architect builds homes and a dentist pulls out teeth, what is a sociologist good for? From the start, I tried to think about thinks that were useful for people,” he said, noting that, by the time he finished his degree in sociology, he knew that he

wanted to become an investigator, all he needed was a theme that proved important for him and others.

Hector recalled spending days on end at the library researching a variety of subjects in social sciences and possibilities for future contributions. During that time, he used to see a man walk by every day, gathering plastics, paper and other recyclables from the trash. Hector later found out that the man, named Pablito, would sell those materials to a local recycling center, and wondered how many “Pablitos” were there in Mexico. The theme - intertwined with socio-political issues such as work informality, class struggles, syndicalism, subculture, caciquism, and economic sustainability - became his main research focus for years to come.

For his initial field-work, Hector completely immersed himself in the trash-collecting world, becoming a trash picker and living amongst workers for months. “The first time I tried to enter the garbage field I thought I would see the pickers and ask them about their lives... the pickers told me the area was private property and that they would kill me if I went back there. If you arrive there as a worker, nobody sees you. The sociologist needs to be invisible,” he said, explaining that after a few weeks living as a picker, he established a rapport with the community and even got his own nickname for his lacking dance skills, “El Pavo” (the Turkey). “From then on, I wasn’t invisible anymore... I was El Pavo,” he joked.

Hector’s dissertation - a 187-page observation document reflecting the struggles and realities of trash pickers - was divided into two publications: one highlighted the hard data and the socio-political angles of the issue, while the other focused on the life stories of workers. “At the bottom of the trash, I found a perfect picture of the political system in Mexico... I published two books and understood the languages; they are distinct, but they refer to the same thing. Part of my work is to become invisible and manage the languages,” he explained, emphasizing the importance for sociologists to learn how to navigate through different discourses and priorities in their efforts to bring social issues to light and help foster tangible on-the-ground change.

Professor Berthier continued his presentation with a discussion about popular youth in Mexico and the concept of applied social investigation. “The academic investigation produces books, articles... but the applied one, produces other languages, and that’s our effort,” he said, noting the rationale behind the work promoted by *Circo*. Hector explained that, in Mexico, the

mainstream work dealing with the lower class youth are guided by stereotypical and negative understandings of this specific segment of the population. “There is a characteristic used to detain youth called “faces possession.” The “suspect” ones, black, poor young guys, are detained by the government so they can figure out who they are,” he said.

In 1987, a diagnosis showed that over 1,500 gangs existed in Mexico City on top of 2,300 in the metropolitan area. Within this context, the first thing Hector and his team sought to do was work towards reducing violence levels. “At that time, 95% of detentions were done illegally based on “faces possession,” he estimated. During their talks with street youth and gang members, they found brief hypothesis for the scenario of violence and disengagement they found themselves in, including the formal school’s inability to promote concrete options for social mobility, the lack of opportunities in the labour market and the limitations of the informal sector, the absence of a strong platform for primary socialization inside the household, the youth’s loss of connection with society’s traditional culture, and the association of law and institutions with the police and security forces. “This language [the youth] has many possible visions, and we have to continue to work with all of them,” Hector emphasized.

Professor Berthier took on to the streets of Mexico before many of the programs we see today were ever established, helping pave the way for a new approach to how we view and engage with youth in violent settings. “When we talk about this group of youth, it’s like they don’t exist. 3% of youth are the children of rich people, 18% are the children of businessmen who work with them, 58% are the children of those who work for those businessmen, and the others are screwed. What we have is a distinct group of youth, and this provokes a process of discrimination amongst the youth. We have very different groups of youth, and each one of them has a mark in the map,” Hector said, noting that an applied researcher’s job is to account for those different maps and hypothesis when seeking to formulate solutions.

In efforts to better understand the local popular culture and lives of individuals at the “bottom” of the youth social map, Hector started a local radio show to open up an avenue for engagement with young men involved in gangs and criminal organizations. “We created a radio that played the music they liked, with a phone line so they could call in and talk... then, they started to participate and talk about what happened in their neighborhoods. The program’s message was

simple: Denounce! Let us know if there have been illegal detentions in your community,” Hector said, explaining the process they engaged in to collect information on those groups, including who they were, where they lived, what struggles they faced, and how the show provided an important environment to gain confidence and respect with the gangs.

This work finally led to the creation of *Circo Volador*. “We started to work on the streets with those youth and to see what has happening. We made contact with hundreds of gangs and we started to create a popular culture archive.” As more and more youth started to take part in the activities they promoted in local soccer fields in different neighborhoods (as many as 2,000-3,000 per single event), Hector and his team demanded support from the government to open up a proper space to carry out those meetings, and, 7 years after the official launch of the program, an abandoned theater became the platform for the initiative. Hector explained that a lot of fundraising work was needed to inaugurate (and continues to support) *Circo*, as the government provided the space but no funding to build the necessary infrastructure for the project. “We told the youth: ‘We have the space, but we lack everything else.’ They helped us with the construction, which took three and a half years to complete,” he added.

Circo Volador seeks to establish “social cartographies” in order to understand the problems youth face, but from their own perspectives. “As we asked the youth to tell us about their own problems, we started to change the process. We created a new common language that we could all understand. We planned things with them, we drew with them... we produced things at the base,” Hector explained. The program supports excluded sectors of the society, develop new forms of social integration, professionalize activities undertaken and promote youth popular culture – all with the goal of advancing positive social action that can directly impact communities. In 2004, *Circo* was amongst 12 organizations recognized by the UN-Habitat with an award for excellence in social practices around the world, and, throughout their years, they have received the visit of illustrious human rights activists such as U2’s lead singer, Bono.

Through the organization of concerts and a variety of artistic events – added to some support received from the government, NGOs and companies (15% of total budget combined) - *Circo* has been able to mainly self-support its activities for decades, helping advance new forms of social grouping and reintegration. “Our work has helped us establish a guide on youth and

violence, and this methodology is precisely to be given to communities, social groups, the police, politicians and academics, so they can understand that it’s possible to construct a “youth vision” in a positive way.” Hector concluded by highlighting *Circo*’s commitment towards the construction of a system for social integration through the youth’s potential. “We need to give them respect, self-sustainability and the space... we can capacitate this youth, and this should serve in the construction of public policies. *Circo Volador* is an utopia turned into reality.”

PANEL 6. VICTIMS AND PERPRETATORS OF VIOLENCE: REDIRECTING YOUTH IN MEXICAN PRISONS



CARLOS CRUZ

Founder and Director, Cauce Ciudadano (Citizen Channel)



Carlos began his presentation by expanding on some of his personal experiences with crime and violence during his youth in Mexico. “I belonged to one of these groups; there was a political and an armed division, and we were one of the most violent ones... We assume that we are *pandilleros*, and some of our friends die because they don’t want to work for different groups. From 1987 to 1990, 20 people from my group were killed by rival gangs. Only 3 of us survived... that was a permanent discussion. That was the lifestyle that we were subjected to,” he asserted, pointing out that today, political parties in Mexico engage in the same type of violence, capturing youth to generate violence in electoral processes.

For Carlos, crime and violence are health problems, and they should be approach as such. In the process of building alternatives to complement the limited opportunities made available by the state, *Cauce* places the youth in a position of competency and agency in their efforts to advance better life conditions. “We have more capacity to resolve our own problems than those who claim to know it all,” he stated. The initiative is comprised of a network of community centers aimed at reducing youth violence in different Mexican cities through the provision of education and support platforms. With the help of volunteers, psychologists, medical doctors and other professionals, *Cauce* provides a series of workshops, therapy sessions and activities to combat addictions, reintegrate families, attempt to modify dangerous behaviors and prepare young Mexicans for employment. A core aspect of the program is that ex-gang leaders work as mentors to connect with at-risk youth at a deeper personal level.

During his presentation, Carlos expanded on the principles guiding the work that *Cauce* develops; much like *Circo*, they shine a new light on the “mainstream approach” to providing support and opportunities for youth in impoverished and violent territories: “Fundamentally, we don’t see ourselves as vulnerable groups, and from very early on, we build on a principle of building resistance, at the individual and community level.” Youth are the main victims and perpetrators of violence, suffering from and helping generate the thousands of deaths and disappearances that take place in the country every year. According to Carlos, within this scenario, there is a methodological error in focusing solely on risk factors; there is a need to work in building structures for anti-corruption and anti-criminal values in educational and cultural terms. “We want to help generate more than just a plate of food and a temporary job... we seek to sustain those interventions. At *Cauce*, we not only do our work, but we also have the responsibility to connect with other movements,” he explained.

Cauce intervenes in the territory through arts and culture, involving the youth in a formation process through their workshops. The organization is currently developing a program with incarcerated young man in Mexican prisons, offering a new pathway to those who lack institutional support for a possible reintegration into society. “Some of the kids we work with have a 75-year sentence and will never get out, other have never had an educational alternative or an alternative for participation. Now we are building schools... It may be that when this individual leaves jail and get back to the streets he either decides to become a monster, or get involved in corruption practices inside the community. For us, the important thing is to provide a third alternative. Don’t get involved in the criminal world... there is another way,” he highlighted, explaining that *Cauce*’s work in jails mainly take two fronts: one focuses on educational practices and the provision of workshops, and the other one carries out intervention work for those suspected to suffer from violence on the streets once they leave jail. “Alongside them, we question, fundamentally, who is winning with their criminal actions, and we want them to know that they can break with the criminal structure... this implies reorganizing the ways in which they chose to resolve their problems and conflicts,” he added.

Carlos also talked about the importance of tackling the issue from different angles, from working with families and communities, to working with the police and the government. “We cannot construct peace without joining all parts of the dialogue,” he emphasized. “We work heavily with

the youth on the streets. We not only have the kids from the *pandillas*, but also the kid's families. So, it's fundamental that we work these concepts... offer alternatives. Making use of art and culture," he added. To conclude, Carlos spoke to the multifaceted aspect of crime and violence and the need to tackle these issues from an approach that recognizes the various layers of oppression and inequality that foment a violent society. "We want these actions not only to rescue the youth, but also to generate a discussion around issues of discrimination, impunity, police violence and political corruption. If we fail to build our country based on these concepts we won't be able to thrive."



HUMBERTO PADGETT
Journalist; Editor, Emeequis Magazine



"Journalists don't normally engage with researchers, but on the line of work I pursue, I've met with Hector early on when he was doing work about urban tribes," Humberto said, expanding on the research he has developed throughout the years, which greatly aligns with some of the main themes advanced by Professor Berthier and *Circo Volador*, even though they are coming from different fields. In 2005, Humberto started to get involved in arts initiatives in some of the most dangerous jails in Mexico, which opened up a space so he could also investigate themes related to religion and faith amongst inmates. In 2006, with the ascendance of Calderón to the presidency, Mexico declared a "war on drugs," which further inflamed crime and violence in the country. "I am not sure if the war was really declared against drugs, because the consumption increased. Violent crimes also escalated... it was not a public health policy," he explained.

Within this scenario, Humberto and some of his colleagues began to conduct extensive work on the realities of incarcerated youth. For Humberto, the state finds it absolutely necessary to control particular groups of young people, which raise questions about the source of the conflict between the youth and the law. Young people are often considered a "nation's future," and in Mexico, this is no different. Humberto explained that each President elected promises that, with the help of the younger generations, Mexico will become a champion of the world. Today, the country has over 35 million young people aged 12-29, and their expectations have not been met.

A great proportion of this youth population works in the informal sector or help out at home in family productions, and few have the chance to contemplate different life projects. Despite

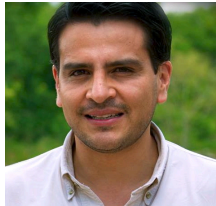
government discourses alluding to increased opportunities for this specific segment of the population, through his research, Humberto noted a sharp rise in the number of young people in Mexican prisons, with 60% of the incarcerated population under the age of 30.

Expanding on the extensive interviews (over 5,000) he conducted with incarcerated youth throughout his career, Humberto said: “We have to reflect about the drug trafficker stereotype; we think of them driving an armored pick up truck, covered in gold, but that’s not how things are... these kids make \$300 per month to do the same thing every day and they don’t even have access to basic rights. The school is no longer viable for social mobility... they tell me: ‘Why should I study? My brother did and he now drives a cab.’ If young people worked hard they could be somebody... but that’s not the case. This lack of viability is now converted into the possibility of becoming a drug trafficker.” Humberto also called attention to the state’s inefficacy when it comes to incorporating individuals who have been through the criminal system into the mainstream society once they are back on the streets. “The penitentiary system provides these kids with access to health, psychological support... when they get back to their neighborhoods, they find themselves in the same situations as before... they have no support or monitoring... the street creates conditions for these kids to re-adapt,” he emphasized.

On the issue of violent deaths and the great participation of youth in crime and violence as victims and perpetrators, Humberto once again questioned the states’ position in the escalation of the conflict. “Young people are killing and getting killed. It’s clear how this has been increasing. So, I get back to the question: Is the youth conflicting with the state or is the state who is conflicting with the youth?” he asked, recalling the recent events in Aguasblancas and the murder of 17 education students who worked in the farms and dreamed of taking education to the darkest corners of Mexico. “These kids wanted to go to places where there was no education, no bathrooms, no sewage, no electricity... that’s what they wanted to do. But, the connivance of the organized crime and the government brought us to this. One of the authorities that requested the crime was a businessman. For as long as we insist that the youth is the problem we will be missing an important part of the conversation,” he added.

To conclude, Humberto talked about the necessity of creating opportunities for youth to thrive as well as helping produce a new representation of young people beyond the violence label. “We

need to give young people the minimal conditions so they can be happier and have better community surroundings and families, this way, we can hope for better overall conditions in the country. The newspapers have young people on their pages when they kill or when they get killed... they do not show up for any other reason, such as for their voices... Violence has become normalized, violence is a constant element.”



ANTONIO CERVANTES

Producer; Founder and CEO, Komunika Veritatis



During his presentation, Antonio, a producer from Mexico City, reflected on the culture of violence in the Mexico, while proposing new media contents to combat it. Making reference to the popular cartoon Dragon Ball Z, Antonio called attention to the need of knowing modern youth culture in hopes to understand their world and work to change it. “Imagine a jail for young people in Mexico. These kids are being aggressive and say: ‘Sayarin, Super Sayarin.’ The mentor that is working with this groups needs to know what that means,” he explained.

Expanding on a survey conducted with young girls in a poor community in Mexico, Antonio talked about the easiness in which the media can spread and reinforce negative perceptions of women, especially because Mexican kids tend to spend a lot of time in front of the TV (Mexican kids are amongst the world’s greatest TV-watchers, spending an average of 4.30 hours per day doing this activity, 72% in open TV). In the survey, girls were asked what they wanted to be when they grew up, to which many replied: ‘I would like to work at a club and do pole dancing.’ “We have an educational problem with the TV, and violence is part of that. It’s an invisible enemy,” he asserted, emphasizing the importance of closely analyzing – and working to improve – the diverse messages being disseminated to our young people through the TV and the Internet in efforts to combat violence.

Antonio shared a couple of short videos with the audience developing on some of the new media projects he has been involved in. In one of them, a group of left politicians talk to kids from a rock band about issues of corruption in the country. “People believe in us, but not in you, politicians,” noted one of the band members. Antonio explained that initiatives like this are extremely important in promoting the exchange of languages and the creation of common dialogue bridges amongst different people. “This is an example of how to deal with violence; we

have to provide more powerful emotional options that compete with it inside people. We have to generate uncomfortable discussions. We have to shine light to places that we do not like. Violence lives in the anonymity, in the darkness, and the media can help with that,” he stressed.

Antonio continued on to discuss the position of violence at the core of today’s society, which goes way beyond the scope of cartels, street gangs, the military and the police. “What is violence? And what causes violence? I’ve heard dozens of definitions. But for me, violence is a language; it has a purpose. We have to understand this, and we have to ask questions in order to change it,” he said, noting, that apart from individuals who get involved in criminal activities, today we have “regular” people who lack humanity and act in a harsh way towards the rest of the population. “Violence is a form of coexistence,” he added. In another video presented during his talk, Antonio shed light on ways in which communities can come together, through empathy and compassion, in efforts to endure the devastating consequences of violence and find paths to keep moving forward, demanding change and working for justice. The documentary (in the making) covers the unfolding of a widespread community protest in Mexico after the murder of a resident. “The tragedy will win once more or shall we keep moving forward?” Antonio asked, noting that one of his contributors in the movie, the victim’s brother, was also assassinated after making denounces about the case.

Every three hours, three Mexicans lose their lives. Stories like the ones presented by Antonio allow us to feel the pain a loss of a human life causes in individuals, families, and communities; and the numbers and figures become fuel to the incessant fight for social justice and human rights. “Sometimes we have to work with fear, but that’s how we can conquer violence. We need a sense of urgency... [And] the media can help a lot in this path. For that, it’s fundamental that we continue to work on independent project,” he concluded.



BEATRIZ MAGALONI

Associate Professor of Political Science, FSI Fellow, Director of the Program on Poverty and Governance (PovGov) Stanford University



In this talk, Professor Magaloni presented primary results of a study on the rise of torture in Mexican prisons in light of the war on drugs and an increase in incarceration rates. “We are talking about the dark violence that take place in the basements. We

all know that there is torture in Mexico; it has been used by the police as an institutional operational method. The police was the PRI's armed hand, and there was no counterweight," she stressed. The objective of this specific study - which Professor Magaloni took part in and presented on behalf of her sister, CIDE Professor, Dr. Laura Magaloni - was to collect numbers reflecting this practice at the institutional level (Professor Laura Magaloni and her research team was given access to federal prisons to collect surveys with inmates for the project).

Before expanding on the results from the study, Professor Magaloni talked about her passion for doing this kind of work and how the pursuit for human rights, as an individual and professional, has brought her and her sister even closer. "This is something that unites us in a bond between sisters. I understand this theme as a process that has changed my life, same as for the work in Rio. We defended an innocent person who was in jail accused of homicide, and that was an experience of proximity with these processes. This is a common passion, of denounce and frustration," she asserted.

Highlighting the dimension of the issue rather than the data set alone, Professor Magaloni explained that, amongst the inmates interviewed (aged 31-40), 55% said they have experienced torture while in imprisonment. The list of abuses is quite extensive (for example, 60% report having been slapped in the face), but, more than defining those different torture actions, the goal of the study was to understand the degree to which these practices escalated – and have been incentivized – within the context of the war of drugs.

The results indicate that, as for acts of violence and torture that require a specific space to take place, there has been an increased of 4% (on four specific types of torture) after Calderón became President (37% against 41%). "It isn't a very large increase, but indeed, accounts of general violence have escalated," Professor Magaloni noted. Yet, in terms of violence committed by military forces, the increased has been a lot more substantial, from 20% to 80%. "We want to highlight the fact that torture has increased three times from part of the military... they became an instrument of it," she said, pointing out that excessive use of violence has also been noted amongst the federal police.

Professor Magaloni concluded her presentation by shedding light on the real victims of violence in Mexican jails. "These tortures are being committed against people that are selling marihuana

on the streets. The majority of people are incarcerated for crimes against health, and a lot of them are being sentenced for possessing or selling marijuana (61%). It's an institutional form of violence... and I ask myself, what do we do with the Mexican state?"



ALBERTO DIAZ CAYEROS

*Senior Fellow, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies (FSI)
Stanford University*



Reflecting on the parallels that link issues of crime and violence in Mexico, Brazil and beyond, during his discussion comments, Professor Cayeros expanded on four main points that are particularly relevant to the Mexican case and that need to be addressed in efforts to promote social cohesion and a safer environment for citizens. First, victims of violence shall not be deprived of their identity and dehumanized in the process of “documenting” violent acts. “They aren’t 130,000 anonymous people. Every single one of them is a life that was lost; they had a mother, a family. They must have their names, they cannot be just a number; there needs to be transparency,” he emphasized.

The second point had to do with the fundamental need to continue establishing platforms of hope for individuals involved in crime and violence. “We are asking the wrong questions. We have to think of a completely different public policy framework... we have seen here new ways of thinking of and doing public policy. This is an enormous challenge, but we can have opportunities there,” he said. Thirdly, the government must take a position of responsibility for what is taking place in different municipalities in the country in security-related issues and beyond. “The state begins in every space where there is a political power... and the state has abandoned these people,” he denounced.

Finally, Professor Cayeros talked about politics as an imaginative space; a platform that allow politicians to fully exercise their capacity to invent discourses. To him, the presentations in this specific panel helped shed light to the limitations of these types of institutional dialogues that are not reflected in reality. “The images that we saw today are part of what turns into the symbolic value of politics... it’s our responsibility to create these spaces [for discussion]. That’s part of the challenge,” he concluded.

PANEL 7. YOUTH EXPERIENCES: SHARING LIVES, PRACTICES AND KNOWLEDGE



FRANCISCO VALDEAN ALVEZ DOS SANTOS

Imagens do Povo (People's Images) Project, Observatório de Favelas (Favela's Observatory)



Valdean - a 12-year veteran at Favela's Observatory People's Images project - shared his migrant experiences with the audience and his relationship with education throughout his life trajectory. "I live in the Maré favela complex, and like a large portion of the population there, I am Northeastern, from Ceará. I moved to Maré when I was 14 years old, carrying some of my dreams and the idea of studying in my baggage. I finished the third grade at the age of 14... a kid like that gets very few opportunities. But my dream remained, and I went back to school. My reality wasn't so nice, I had to work in order to survive, and that came before my studies, of course. But that's how I constructed my trajectory," he said, noting that, although his life has been marked by poverty and struggles, he has never gotten involved in criminal activities. "I've never been interested in violation of the law, and I am not a minority on this. The greatest majority of young people are also in this situation," he added.

Valdean's commitment to education led him to a career in the field, which he coincides with his work at *Observatório* and graduate studies in the social sciences. "Education was the only way to transform my life and my condition... and I continue to bet on it. I am a sociology teacher in public schools. I believe in the possibility of contributing with the educational pursuit of other youth, some who share a similar background to mine," he asserted.

Expanding on his personal interest in photography and work at *Imagens to Povo*, Valdean explained that one of the main objectives is to document the every-day life of favelas, supporting the strengthening of territorial culture and helping generate income for local artists in the process. "We work from a critical perception that takes local culture and human rights into account... we don't have a methodology to orient what photographers are producing; they have autonomy to develop their own projects," he explained, highlighting that *Imagens do Povo* has helped produce a collection of over 15,000 photographs since its inception. The project also supports the exhibition of these photographs in different points of the city, including other favelas and arts galleries (some of their work has also been presented internationally).

Reflecting on the conference broader themes, to conclude, Valdean talked about experiences of violence in an urban setting and stressed the need of looking beyond the negative perceptions of favela as a space that feeds into violence in its totality, despite its complexities. “I have experienced two worlds; a context of extreme poverty with no urban violence, and the city, where the youth is the biggest victim and perpetrator of violence... In Maré, we have this thing called “*miolo*” (core) where violence takes place, but there is so much more than that. What I am trying to say is that the favela isn’t just violent, but it also suffers violence,” he said, proposing a new engagement and public outlook towards these communities.



MARILUCE MARIÁ DE SOUZA

Community Activist and Social Entrepreneur, Complexo do Alemão



“I want to tell you something that we take as a life lesson in the favela. We cannot allow repression to depress us. We lack urbanization and all human rights. Constitutional rights do not exist for us. There is no access to education, health, liberty, culture... we have no rights at all. But we try to show to our children that there is hope,” Mariluce said, starting her presentation with a manifesto of perseverance.

She explained that ever since the Pacification was introduced at Complexo do Alemão and the cable car was inaugurated, the community has received nothing but police, despite its urgent need for social and infrastructural interventions. “That’s how people live there. Children are being frisked; they are used to hearing shots and seeing rifles... People can no longer take it,” she denounced.

Through her Facebook and Twitter pages that, combined, have an audience of over 20,000 people, Mariluce and her husband share news and updates of common interest to the community, denouncing human rights violations and opening up a space so dwellers can make their voices heard. Reflecting on the importance of using social media tools to alert the community about shootouts and police operations, Mariluce said: “Before the Pacification, when we goy back from work, we could signalize with fireworks that the police was about to enter the community [this was a common activity under the drug trafficking command]. We can no longer do that, but we exchange messages through social media. We come together to demand that our rights are respected.”

Mariluce also talked about the importance of engaging the younger generations in Alemão in a variety of activities throughout the community in efforts to minimize the impact of daily violence on their daily lives. “We try and help, anyway we can, so these kids have something to occupy their time with. We have events in commemorative dates; we give them toys and they all play together... we want them to leave their fear aside, and we show them humanity,” she said, noting that a lot of families need this extra support, as parents often have to work several jobs to support the household. “The kids have parents, and their parents work... they aren’t just fooling around,” she added.

Mariluce continued to highlight the community’s attempts to “take back” spaces that have been occupied by the police. For example, *baile funk* (funk dance parties) used to take place on a regular basis in different points of the community, but the events were banned with the introduction of the Pacification. “The churches, the cinema and the theater became meetings points for people, because those are the very few places that the police cannot shut down,” she explained, sharing pictures of a soccer field the community united forces to build with the goal of providing more public options for residents, but that was also been appropriated by the police. “This soccer field didn’t exist; it was a deposit for garbage and cars parts. We asked for help, and gave children the only soccer field in the community. Now, the police has placed an armored base there, and people can no longer play.”

To conclude, Mariluce reaffirmed her position as favela resident and stressed the continuous battle for legitimacy and dignity that favela dwellers engage on. “Our kids dream of playing on the streets again... we want to live, and have our rights for sports, leisure, education and liberty guaranteed. We want our right to thinking and to knowledge... A language from the community to the community.”



CHRISTIAN PARONABLE
Former Participant, Fresh Lifelines for Youth



During a very personal and emotional presentation, Christian shared his inspirational account to recovery from a life of violence and misconduct. “I grew up with a lot of abuse at home from my dad; he was locked up in jail and I saw him drunk all the time. When I was eight years old, while my dad was high on drugs, he

grabbed my mom, put a knife against her throat, my sister and I were watching... he said that we would kill the whole family if my mother divorced him. We hid, but we came after us.” Christian revealed, noting that by the time the cops came in that night, his father had already disappeared.

He continued with a reflection on how his childhood experiences with abuse impacted his adolescence and life choices. “By the time I got to high school I didn’t know how to be a man. I didn’t have a father figure and I didn’t know whether things would be ok. I started doing the same things that my father did... I just copied him. In high school, it got even worse; I got involved in gangs, used drugs... I have been arrested for so many things, attempted robbery, stealing, and the list goes on. I am no proud of it, but it gave me strength,” he asserted. While at probation, Christian was introduced to Fresh Lifelines for Youth (FLY) - an encounter that would completely change his future. “If it wasn’t for FLY, I wouldn’t be here today. When I got out of jail, the people I thought were my friends weren’t there for me. FLY was there for me. When my friend committed suicide, FLY was by my side... they had my back,” he added, highlighting the organization’s support system during and after incarceration.

Christian attributes his recovery and new outlook in life to the help, dedication and compassion that FLY and its team extended to him, without asking question or expecting anything in return, but his commitment to work towards being his better self. “FLY didn’t judge me from my past, they were there for me... they showed me how to act; they showed me the good instead of the bad, and that is really powerful. After I got into the leadership program, my whole perspective started to change. I did much better in school, and FLY helped me with that too... FLY opened their hands and heart to me, which is something I had not experienced before,” he revealed, stressing the organization’s persistent work to keep youth engaged. “FLY is so annoying; they will keep calling you, they will know at your door, they go to your home,” he added.

Christian concluded his presentation with a heartfelt comment on his recent accomplishments and a reflection on the person he has become after taking part in the program and taking charge of his own life. “I am only 20 years old and I bought my sister her first car; I am also going to school to become a registered nurse. I will support my mom and my sister though life, and becoming a nurse is my way of giving back. My mom is very proud of everything that I’ve done,

and all of that fills my heart. And, on top of everything that has happened, despite what my dad did, I forgive him, because I no longer have anger in me.”



EMANUELLE PEREIRA MALLETE

Affiliated Participant, Agência de Redes Para Juventude (Network for Youth Agency)



Emanuelle - whose father used to bike miles every day to get to work and serve as her biggest life inspiration - got involved in social justice-oriented from a very young age. Along with her mother, she started a project to offer support young offenders. “I remember how much it impacted to see so many young people going to jail,” she said, recalling her early thoughts around social issues. During her presentation, Emanuelle expanded on a project she developed in 2009 in her community in Rio, Sepetiba, located in Rio’s West zone. The *Espaço Cultural a Era do Rádio* (Cultural Space The Radio’s Era) is an initiative that promotes the importance of radio for community-based communication and was inspired in the work of Emanuelle’s great-aunt, Emilinha Borba, a popular Brazilian singer of the 1940’s and 50’s who was known as the “queen of radio.”

“When we started the project, we began to look at the community as a social movement. There were many people with low self-esteem, violence levels were high, education was precarious, there was only one school for 56,000 people. So, we all united, friends, family. And though this union, we started to think of ways to contribute to improvements,” she said, expanding on the rationale behind the creation of the project. Historically, Emanuelle explained that Sepetiba’s character as a fishing community meant that women were the primary caretakers of children and the household. “It’s a beach community. Women would sit by the ocean, doing embroidery, until their husbands came back from work.” With the increased need for income and the introduction of more women into the workforce, the family nucleus was impacted; the lack of quality schools and childcare options in the area forced mothers to leave their children at home, often times, alone.

Emanuelle noted that a young man who killed 12 children and wounded other 13 inside a public school in Realengo in 2011, was a resident of Sepetiba and had actually planned to commit the crime there: “He suffered from bullying in school and was HIV positive. During 6 months he sat in front of a school in Sepetiba planning the crime... It could have happened there,” she said,

highlighting that a study conducted by a health agency in the state found a great number of children in the area suffering from sexual violence and living in dysfunctional families, as well as high levels of adults with HIV.

Within this scenario, Emanuelle and her team felt the necessity of creating platforms for community development and the valorization of local arts and culture. Urban arts, photography, theater, alternative media and critical communication became the basis for such efforts, and alongside *A Era do Rádio*, various projects were developed with the goal of preserving the local popular memory and motivating the self-esteem of residents. “People begin to take on a new life outlook by getting involved in different local arts and culture projects... young people participate in our projects and are not on the streets,” she concluded.



ALMA YURENI ESQUEDA GARCIA

Activities Coordinator, Morelos, Cauce Ciudadano (Citizen Channel)



Alma has been involved with *Cauce* for the past ten years and now coordinates the organization’s activities in the state of Morelos. She began her presentation speaking to the perception of sadness and hopelessness that characterizes the current situation in Mexico. “We, Mexicans, have an issue that we think someone is going to come and save us. And we continue to wait for that,” she asserted. Alma presented some of *Cauce*’s experiences on behalf of a person who had his visa to enter the country denied, even though he had an official invitation from Stanford to participate at the conference. “The consulate official saw him as an immigrant, but sharing the project’s story allows me to tell his story as well,” Alma explained.

The project Alma chose to expand on during her presentation is a cultural/educational space offering a variety of activities for residents in Morelos, ranging from soccer lessons for children and graffiti instruction for adults, to water aerobics classes for parents. “Our effort is that our cultural activities have an integrative component that uses local cultural as a vehicle for expression,” Alma said, sharing the picture of a mural that youth from the community helped create to decorate one of *Cauce*’s bases in Morelos. The community where this space was developed is home to 175,000 inhabitants and over 52% are young people aged 15-29. Levels of violence are quite high, and the municipality presents the highest level of extortions at the national level – which highlights the urgent need for interventions to benefit the youth.

Alma also talked about the participatory nature of *Cauce* and the community’s engagement in the process of building the center in this particular municipality. “The young people help take care of the space and they worked really hard so it could be built. They would bring bread and coffee for people working in the construction, and that means a growing trust.” Despite the support from residents, Alma explained that many youth still chose not to participate and there are high levels of distrust. In order to reduce this limitation, *Cauce* conducts participatory diagnosis with youth, investigating into conceptions and characteristics, all with the end goal of bringing in more young people to the programs.

“We want to impact the public space, we want it to be a dignified space. Our workshops seek to provide infrastructure to those public places... the entire community has come together to take care of this youth and children; now, they are no longer alone. The community participates and get involved with us,” Alma concluded, highlighting the importance of having the support from all residents in the construction of new pathways for youth and of continuously seeking new knowledge to improve the intervention.



VALNEI SUCCO

Escola Popular de Comunicação Crítica - ESPOCC (Popular School of Critical Communication), Observatório de Favelas (Favela’s Observatory)



During his presentation, Valnei expanded on his work with ESPOCC’s publicity agency, *Diálogos* (Dialogues) – an educational platform that produces knowledge and culture through a variety of audio-visual avenues including the publication of magazines and videos, as well as the development of campaigns and events. At *Diálogos*, Valnei works with other producers and technicians in the field of audio-visual creation and planning, generating other working groups throughout the city and partnering up with important social players beyond Maré. “We talk about social topics that have direct relevance to our communities, for example, the “hunting” of our Black youth in Brazil,” he said.

Through *Observatório de Favelas*, *Diálogos* helped develop the campaign *Jovem Negro Vivo* (Black Youth Alive) that seeks to raise awareness for the extermination of Black youth, mainly from marginalized territories, in Rio favelas and peripheries, as well as throughout the country. “We launched the campaign in a popular zone in Rio and our goal was to attract a lot of people.

For every person that signed the petition, the Governor would receive a call asking him to stop killing our youth,” he explained. Valnei also talked about the larger work developed by ESPOOC: “*Observatório* has created ESPOOC to advance themes that are reflected on the school’s agenda. We pass on knowledge to our students, the ones that are going to become producers, so they can create their own campaigns,” he said, extending an invitation to the audience to visit Maré and take a closer look at some of their initiatives. “It’s a rule. Once you step your feet in Maré, you fall in love,” he assured.

Valnei finished his presentation reflecting on his identity as a Black male living in the peripheries of Rio, which was illustrated by a story about the origin of his nickname “Suco” (juice). “I’ve always been Black, since I was a little kid,” he joked. “Culturally, we have this problem with racism, so from a very young age, people in school would call me things like “grease doll,” “asphalt popsicle,” and many other nicknames referring to my skin color. So, when I was around 15, I was working as a DJ and I needed a stage name. My friends were very creative, and started to call me “car tire juice”... so I adopted that name, and that became my signature,” he added.

On the importance of his nickname to the development of his persona and as a source of inspiration for his work against prejudice and injustice in Rio favelas, Valnei said: “Suco is a street and color identity... it represents what I am, who I am, what I do. It’s part of me, and it needs to be. It reminds me of my place, of the society in which I live in and where we need to go. A “red sea” opens up every time I walk down the street... I have a daughter, and I don’t want her to go through this,” he concluded.

This conference report was written by **Veriene Melo, Research Assistant at the Program on Poverty and Governance (PovGov).*

***This document is based on a written record drafted during the conference and not on the official voice recordings from the event (the videos are available on the program’s website). Some quotes were slightly modified to assist with clarity in the writing process and coherence of the final document. Though not verbatim at times, the main ideas/meanings conveyed in the presentations and discussions were kept unchanged at all instances for all participants.*