

'The place where I buried my bellybutton' –
A longitudinal study of transitions and belonging among young men on the street in
Salvador, Brazil

Marit Ursin

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Marit Ursin

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Tel: +47 75 51 72 00

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Articles

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1. Introduction

1.1. Two decades of personal and academic history with Barra, Salvador, Brazil

My first encounter with the neighbourhood Barra in the Brazilian metropolis, Salvador, was a two-month holiday in 1992, visiting my father who was working as a guest lecturer at the university. Our lifestyle was similar to our middle-class neighbours; moving by car between our enclosed condominium, restaurant, the Yacht Club and Shopping Barra and spending the evenings playing in the closed cement yard at the ground floor.

Twenty years later, I still remember my first sight of people sleeping on the street: Arriving from the airport at dusk, driving through Barra, passing old men, families, and groups of children clustering together in front of closed shops and restaurants, tumbled in sheets, on pieces of cardboard. It resembled corpses. Later, when I went eating at outdoor restaurants, children at my age would come, begging for my leftovers. When I was playing on the beach, children would come, selling food and bracelets. There is especially one episode I can recall: Poor children and youngsters, probably living on the street, hanging out outside our restaurant. A boy, their middle class counterpart, walks by, obviously nervous. They stop him and take his plastic bag. The boy runs away. The bag only contains a VHS cassette. The young crowd look curiously on the video tape, one after the other. Then they start to take out the plastic tape, metre by metre. They laugh while they cover the street, its cars and traffic signs with video tape. Their presence made us feel nervous about walking to the car, even though it was within eye sight. As we left the restaurant, the youngsters surrounded our car. An encounter became inevitable. My parents, siblings and I all had a heavy heartbeat, terrified of what they would do to us *gringos*.¹ Reaching the car, I smiled and made the 'thumbs up' to the youngsters. Holding the thumbs up is an informal gesture of amiability common on the street in Brazil. They all greeted us and stood away, so we could enter our car. Afterwards, one of the older stepped up to my father's window, asking for change for having 'guarded' our car.

Brazil and its young people on the street kept haunting me during my teenage years in Norway. I would occasionally come across newspaper articles and TV reportages on Brazil's 'lost generation' on the street, portraying young children in dirty rugs. In 1995, the International Week

¹ Tourists

and Operation Day's Work ² chose to focus on poor, young Brazilians living on the street. As a result, together with my Norwegian school peers, I learned about the poverty and hardship millions of young Brazilians encounter in their everyday lives.

Seven years would pass since my last visit before I returned to Barra and Brazil, this time as a young woman, travelling alone for my first time. A three months stay, renting a room with a Brazilian family, learning Portuguese and Brazilian culture, before setting out on a three months round trip in Brazil. Two years after, I spent six months in Barra. During this period I got to know most of the young people hanging out and sleeping in my neighbourhood. Unique friendships developed, years before my first fieldwork, even before I realised that I wished to follow an academic career, and without knowing that this would become 'my field of expertise'. I still remember what astonished me these months; the life energy, positivity and joy among these young people – features never appraised in the media, school campaigns and fundraising projects at home.

When I returned to Barra in 2005, I had become a master student on my first academic fieldwork. I was eager to understand more of the complexities of street life. I spent eight months practically on the street, trying to absorb every aspect of street life, ranging from how to deal with hygiene measures and sleeping rough to hostile police encounters and prison conditions. Then later, I had to come to grips with my field notes, memories and experiences in an academic manner, writing my master thesis.

I took a course in photo and journalism in Salvador the year later. This gave me a deeper experience of Salvador's more hidden corners, as the prisons for men, woman and the mentally ill. My final coverage story depicted the many non-identified corpses passing the institute of the forensic medicine on their way to the public graveyard, the majority of the corpses being young, male, dark-skinned, skinny, and with poor clothing.

All these diverse and intense experiences of Salvador have not only come to form who I am as a person today, but have also made this PhD thesis possible. The fieldwork was enabled by my lingual knowledge, my established network of contacts and last, but not least, my long-established position among the young people in Barra and our mutual trust relationships. In analysing and writing, I have relied on my greater social, cultural and geographical knowledge as well as the empirical material gathered.

² Every October, pupils in Norwegian schools abandon their normal curriculum for a week, focusing on global issues of poverty, inequality, education and development, spending the last day carrying out 'a day's work' and donating their salary to the ODW project.

1.2. So why continue to do research with young people on the street?

The international year of the child, back in 1979, launched a worldwide concern about young people who use urban space as sleeping and working space. The so-called 'street children' of urban Brazil have, since then, received great attention in academic, activist and policy-making quarters. Within academia, this kind of research exploded in the 1980s and 1990s, at the same time as the new social studies of childhood emerged. This research eventually cut across the boundaries of academic disciplines and transcended national borders, exporting the Latin American model to African and Asian countries (Ennew 2003). This resulted, according to the Brazilian researcher Rizzini, in 'a prodigious outpouring of texts' on the phenomenon (in Ennew 2003), resulting in a rich body of literature. Thus many researchers within this field have begun to emphasise that these young people only represent the top of the iceberg of the millions of young people living in poverty in deprived communities in the urban outskirts (Costa Leite 2001; Klees, Rizzini and Dewees 2000), arguing for a focus shift in research and policy development from the street and towards these communities (Bush and Rizzini 2011).

With this in mind, one might ask: Why should we continue to do research with young people on the street? I argue that although these young people are marginal in absolute numbers, they cannot and should not be ignored. In my point of view, there are three reasons to why it remains important to do research with young people on the street besides the obvious reason of increasing our knowledge about their situation. Firstly, by exploring the reasons why these young people live periodically or permanently on the street, we also gain invaluable insight into their homes and communities of origin. In this lies knowledge on how to potentially avoid new waves of young people heading to the streets, as I argue in the last chapter.

Second, as the societies are moulded by local and global changes, the social conditions of poor young people alter. Young people on the street thus never represent a single, stable and homogenous phenomenon. Rather, their presence and everyday lives in public space mirror the abrupt changes in society, and the impact of these changes needs to be unravelled. This is true whether these are socio-economic or political changes, or changes in the pattern of global drug trafficking (Ursin, in review).

Third, it is not only the surrounding society which is in constant change. The children, who lived on the street in urban Brazil during the peak of academic research (and media attention) a couple of decades ago, age and mature. While there is an abundance of academic literature on

'street children' in Brazil and in other countries in the Majority world,³ literature on young adults inhabiting the streets of these countries remains strikingly scarce. Far too little attention has been paid to the young people on the street after they cease to embody the impression of innocence and vulnerability of childhood, and become marked by the responsibility and accountability of the adult world. Of course, to be able to study the crossover of childhood and adulthood, a longitudinal research approach is required, which is deemed to be difficult among such a mobile population as street dwellers. The transition to adulthood among young men on the street therefore remains poorly understood, a gap which is acknowledged in a recent literature review as well (Thomas de Benitez 2011).

On a personal level, I also had this feeling that I was not yet finished with the field of Barra. I still had many unanswered questions. I particularly pondered over what would happen to these young men who were on the verge of adulthood. Would they remain on the street or eventually move back to the *favelas*? And how would these transitions come to pass? The fact that I seldom encountered adult versions of 'street children' – that is adults who have lived on the street since childhood – made me even more curious and, somehow, worried: Would they all eventually disappear, imprisoned or killed? Additionally, I had a wish of further unravelling their complex feelings towards Barra, its residents and traders, and the police, in order to increase my understanding of why they had chosen Barra as their home and what kept them there (or, in some cases, made them move on).

The young men in this research are clearly situated somewhat betwixt and between the on-going debates in academia. By being young adults, they do not represent 'street children'. By living in Brazil, they do not represent 'homeless youth' or adult 'vagrants' as encountered in the US, UK and other Minority world countries. By periodically or permanently sleeping on the street and not forming any brotherhood, they do not represent common descriptions on 'youth gangs' as the drug traffickers in the *favelas*, the Maras in Central America and the Bloods and Crips in Los Angeles. However, the fact that this field does not fit neatly into any academic debate underscores the importance of this kind of research: 'Street children' do not cease to exist just because they grow up. Young adults living on the margins of society in the Majority world are of equal socio-

³ The term 'Majority World' refers to what has traditionally been known as 'the third world' or more recently as 'the Global South', while 'Minority World' refers to 'the first world' and 'the Global North'. This acknowledges that the 'majority' of population, poverty, land mass and lifestyles is located in the former, in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and thus seeks to shift the balance of our world views that frequently privilege 'western' and 'northern' populations and issues (Punch 2003).

political and academic importance as right-bearing citizens, key users of urban space and fathers of a next generation children born into poverty and deprivation.

These three arguments not only shed light on the importance of this kind of research, but also touch upon the main research question of this thesis. The central question asks what this particular elite neighbourhood has to offer these marginalised young men. To fully answer this question, reasons for both leaving home and community of origin and deciding to settle down on the streets of Barra must be explored. In regards to the latter, it became necessary to examine the social relations between the young men and the surroundings; the middle class residents, traders, police and security guards. These social relations did not only enable sentiments of safety, autonomy and belonging, but also revealed the multifaceted character of street life and the young men's interchanging and ambiguous positions in society.

Furthermore, by adding a longitudinal perspective, the thesis grasps the dynamic and intricate changes of the relation between the young men and the neighbourhood they occupy. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to develop an understanding not only of their relation to this specific neighbourhood (and thus also their former homes and communities), but also illuminate important transitions in their life paths as they age. As many other researchers within this field (i.e. Beazley 2003b; Hecht 1998; Kovats-Bernat 2006), I find age and maturity crucial in street life. As an individual's passage from birth to adulthood is shaped by cultural ideas of what is appropriate behaviour at certain ages, the roles and relationships of a person who lives on the street change with maturity.

When the boys grow older, reach puberty and become physically taller and stronger, the image changes from threatened to threatening. This period of life – neither child nor adult, or in this case, neither 'street child' nor 'vagrant' – entails many interesting aspects ignored in the academic debate. The feelings their presence evokes among the middle class residents and traders may change from casual nurture to prevalent condemnation in just a matter of months. This has severe implications in their everyday lives, for instance in regards to survival strategies.

The key informants are labelled 'young men' throughout this thesis in order to avoid stigmatic expressions such as 'street youth' or 'homeless', as argued in the theoretical chapter. However, I could easily have switched to 'youth' as most of the informants identify themselves as such. According to Bucholtz (2002), youth foregrounds age not as a trajectory, but as identity, and the study of youth emphasises on the here-and-now of young people's experiences. 'Young men' was ultimately chosen to underscore the gender aspect, since these voices are pure male.

1.3. Frame of thesis

Besides this introduction chapter and the three articles, this thesis is composed of four themed chapters. The next chapter begins by laying out the historical and contemporary context of this research, with special attention to the status of young people on the street in Brazil throughout history. Due to the emphasis on urban space and social relations in the forthcoming articles, a description of the patterns of socio-economic segregation encountered in Salvador is also included. The third chapter briefly outlines the two major theoretical debates in which this study is situated, young men and public space, and 'street children/youth' in the Majority world. These debates have strong connections to Youth Studies and the New Social Studies of Childhood,⁴ respectively, and these are therefore also briefly mentioned.

The fourth chapter is concerned with the methodology employed in this study. Because the key focus in the three articles is on the street life in Barra, particularly as experienced by the young men occupying these streets, the methodology chapter mainly focuses on this part of the fieldwork. It also questions choice of method, explores some of the ethical issues encountered when researching and writing, and reflects on my own position in the field. Some of the empirical material I refer to in the articles also stem from fieldwork outside the street ambience in Barra, the methods employed and difficulties encountered in these fields are therefore also included, albeit more superficially. Introducing the articles, the fifth chapter frames this thesis as it sums up the three analytic arguments and investigates the three overarching themes of this thesis, divided into spatial, social and temporal dimensions of street life.

⁴ Although it is over twenty years old, it is obviously not so *new* anymore, as pointed out by Tisdall and Punch (2012). But it still bears this label and will be named accordingly in this thesis.

2. Research context

In this chapter I aim to position my research in a broader context, first historically and then contemporary. Initially, I wish to concentrate on poor young people on the street in Brazil throughout history. The historical context demonstrates that there is – on the contrary to how it was portrayed by international organisations and the media in the 1980s – nothing *new* with poor people inhabiting the streets. In fact, poor young people living on the street, especially young men, have been in the limelight in over a century in public debates, classic novels, movies and documentaries, provoking a range of strong sentiments among activists, policy-makers, politicians and legislators, as well as journalists, artists and other citizens. What is even more thought-provoking, in my opinion, is that the way these debates was coined a century ago, bears much resemblance with contemporary debates.

In elaborating on the contemporary research context, I have chosen to primarily focus on two main topics due to their relevance to the articles, socio-geographical segregation of urban Brazil and the status of young people on the street today. Both topics have strong historical roots. This part describes the segregated socio-spatial patterns of Salvador and urban Brazil, with a particular emphasis on class, racism and social consequences in way of living. In accordance with previous research, I argue that the Brazilian urbanites literally live in two separate spheres, ranked hierarchically when it comes to comfort, security, access to education and employment, and level of social problems. These polarised ways of living also mark the everyday lives of the younger generations. I thereby draw on a national census report on young people on the street in Brazil, carried out in 2010, in order to add some quantitative essence of the field in focus. Finally, I discuss recent developments when it comes to police violence towards young street dwellers, over twenty years after the Child and Adolescent Statute saw daylight.



Fig. 1: Maps of Brazil

2.1. Young Brazilians on the street throughout history

The existence and destinies of poor, young people occupying the streets in Brazil are tightly interconnected with the country's socio-political history. Literature shows that young people in the urban streets are not a new phenomenon. As far back as in the seventeenth-century, during Portuguese colonial rule, significant numbers of beggars, vagabonds and abandoned children in the streets of the growing cities were reported (Costa Leite 2001). The numbers increased drastically at the end of the nineteenth century, as a result of slave abolition in 1888 and failed politics to integrate the freed into educational and labour institutions (Risério 2004). The poor child was perceived as a danger for the society who needed 'salvation' (Costa Leite 2001). In 1907, a professor at the faculty of law and a mentor for a new disciplinary institution in São Paulo, compared the 'abandoned childhood' with epidemics as typhus and cholera, and urged for 'sanitary prevention' (*ibid.*).

With the modern European metropolis as the ideal, the Portuguese-descended elite was preoccupied with the urban centres in Brazil as increasingly disorganised, dangerous and dirty. Among the upper classes a pervasive fear of the society's 'Other' emerged – labelling the poor masses as primitive, semi-barbaric and infantile (Rizzini 2002) – a fear which endures and continues to distort social relations between the classes today. The well-to-do thus deliberately removed themselves to elitist neighbourhoods, shaping the segregated socio-economic patterns of contemporary urban space (Sangodeyi-Dabrowski 2003). Moulded by history, the place for the rich became the enclosed house, while the place for the poor became the open and unpredictable street (Da Matta 1984).

Public debates on poor young people eventually led to new regulatory measures. In 1927 the Juizado de Menores was constituted and the first law to secure the rights of abandoned and delinquent children saw daylight, called the Minors' Code (Código de Menores 1927). In practice the focus on protection was forgotten and penal coercion substituted to control the juvenile criminality, often using adult sentencing framework (Rizzini 2006). It gave the government the right to take custody of all children who were considered neglected, abandoned, orphaned; or whose parents were vagabonds, beggars, prostitutes, missing, arrested or declared incapable, with bad habits or too poor to take care of their offspring. The governmental institutions were not perceived as transitional but definitive measures, excluding the children from family life and the society in general until eighteen years of age (Da Silva 2004). Children who were formally adopted by legitimate, nuclear families would cease to be covered by the Código de Menores, and instead become protected by the Código Civil in the same manner as the children born into upper class families (*ibid.*).

Two classic Brazilian novels, written by Jorge Amado and published in the 1930s, depict the phenomenon of poor, young boys on the street in Salvador. The most recognised is *Capitães da Areia*⁵ (1937), which Amado wrote after having spent much time getting to know the children on the street in Salvador. However, in *Jubiabá* (1935), Amado depicts the destiny of at slightly older character, Antonio Balduino, following him into youth and young adulthood. Baldo grows up in a poor, peripheral neighbourhood with his aunt. The author is critical to the low social mobility in the Brazilian society, writing that the poor children know their future as underprivileged harbour or industry workers. Brazil would later become renowned for the immense gap between rich and poor, and the near impossibility of climbing the class ladder. Baldo daydreams of the bustling city centre. As an adolescent, he becomes a street thug, roaming the city with his peers, flirting,

⁵ 'Captains of the Sands'

playing and hanging out, begging and assaulting, leading a life in many ways similar to the young men in this thesis. Like much of the contemporary research on young people on the street (i.e. Ursin 2011), Amado also depicts a love for freedom among the 'vagabonds', referring to it as the 'great adventure of freedom' and the 'freedom of Africa' which the majority of the poor had forgotten.

After the military coup in 1964, young people on the street were seen as threat to national security and thus treated as such (Da Silva 2004). The regime established National Foundation for the Welfare of Minors (FUNABEM) and the State foundations of the Welfare of Minors (FEBEM) which still exist in some states today. Unfortunately, the culture, institutions, staff and punitive incarceration model of previous institutions were inherited (Klees, Rizzini and Dewees 2000). While the Brazilian educational system was affected by the regime's National Security Doctrine, reinforcing feelings of patriotism and nationalism among pupils, children in the custody of FUNABEM/FEBEM were raised in military style, emphasising discipline and obedience (Da Silva 2004). The new law constituted in 1979 continued to give the authorities the right to take children in custody, either from the streets or from poor families, where they were imprisoned in 'proper places' to be given 'proper treatment'.

In the 1980s, after almost 20 years of dictatorial military regime, Brazil experienced a far-reaching social movement that mobilized the population in the defence of the rights of children.⁶ As part of this mobilizing the national movement of street boys and street girls (MNMMR) was established in 1985. They held their first national meeting the following year. With considerable participation of the children themselves, the attention was drawn to the underlying forces which led them to the street and the widespread institutional violence they met (Klees, Rizzini and Dewees 2000). Besides the national meeting, the organisation also published a report (MNMMR 1991) that analysed homicide statistics of young Brazilians in the age bracket 0 – 17 years in nine states in a five-year-period (1984-89). The report demonstrated that 1397 children – the vast majority teenage boys of poor origin – suffered a violent death in this period, often executed professionally and in public spaces. Furthermore, the MNMMR report advocated that the lack of public information and media coverage proved the indifference and apathy of the society regarding the loss of these young lives.

With political and legal support from the MNMMR and financial funding from Italy, Projeto Axé was funded in Salvador in 1990 (Almeida and de Carvalho 2000). The project offers a creative

⁶ This was part and parcel of a global movement on children's rights, initiated by the UNESCO International Year of the Child in 1979.

and socio-educative space for young people on the margins of the society, especially those who spend most of their time on the street. Since the start, over 15.000 children have passed through Axé, among them the majority of the participants in this research.

Also part of this movement, the movie director Hector Babenco produced *Pixote – A lei do mais fraco*⁷ in 1981, based on the novel *A infância dos mortos*⁸ by José Louzeiro. The movie was appraised by international critics and won several prestigious awards. The main character, Pixote, is a young boy who grows up on the street in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and in the FEBEM. It depicts how young people on the street are widely exploited and abused physically and sexually by authority figures in the police, institutions and criminal organizations. Pixote is played by Fernando Ramos da Silva who was recruited from the street ambience. After the movie was completed he returned to the street life and was killed by the police six years later. Although the police insisted that there was a shootout, all six bullets were in Fernando's back, indicating that he was either lying down on the floor or on his knees (Dimenstein 2005).

On a national level, the social movement finally led to one of the most progressive transformations of laws protecting young people seen anywhere in the world; namely the development and adoption of the Child and Adolescent Statute, signed into law in 1990 (Klees, Rizzini and Dewees 2000). The Statute refers to children and adolescents, not to 'minors', 'offenders' or 'abandoned' as previous, a terminological change which was meant to be an indicative of a radical change. A constitutional obligation to family, society and the State to ensure, with absolute priority, the rights of young people, was incorporated. The Statute provoked profound changes in the roles of all public and private entities dealing with street and working children. It replaced the Minors' Code as the organising principle for the legal system, the social welfare system, and the policy-making process regarding young people. The Statute also contained an innovative mechanism for implementing children's rights, namely Children's Rights Councils at the national, state and municipal levels (Bush and Rizzini 2011).

As a momentarily result, all youngsters who were imprisoned without justified reason, got released in 1990 (Costa Leite 2001). The downside was that there was no gradually accustoming to the free world or arrangement of future housing opportunities, and thus many went straight to the streets. Since then the number of public prosecutors who are allies of the Statute has increased, gradually leaving the correctional-repressive perspective of the past behind. However, in the last two decades, the co-existence of new legislation and old structures has caused many

⁷ 'Pixote – The Law of the weakest'

⁸ 'The Childhood of the dead'

conflicts, especially between judicial authority and the police forces (Klees, Rizzini and Dewees 2000, also further discussed in the last section in this chapter).

2.2. Racial and socio-spatial segregation in Salvador and urban Brazil today

Salvador da Bahia – the city of this research – is situated on the triangular peninsula at the entrance to Todos os Santos Bay, at the northeast coast of Brazil. Due to its location on the Atlantic coast, several Portuguese ships disembarked in the area in the 16th century.⁹ In the centuries to come, the city served as the capital of the Portuguese colony and a vital link in the Portuguese empire. The extensive import of African slaves in the period between 16th and 19th century has made Salvador a historical and contemporary centre of Afro-Brazilian culture. Today, Brazil has the largest population of African descendants outside of Africa (Kenny 2007), with the highest concentration in Salvador where over 80 % of the population is defined as black or brown (*negra* and *parda*) in the latest Demographic Census (IBGE Census 2010).



Fig. 2: Map over central parts of Salvador. Barra is situated on the tip of the peninsula.

⁹ Among these, a ship which actually disembarked in Barra, the main site of this research.

Salvador has nearly 3 million inhabitants and is the third largest city in the country. As the other Brazilian metropolitan areas, Salvador has experienced a steady population growth since the 1950s. The latest national Demographic Census shows that nearly 85 % of the 195 million Brazilians now reside in urban areas (IBGE Census 2010).¹⁰ This process of intense urbanisation has been exhausting and socially disruptive, according to Martine and McGranaham (2010). They posit that the difficulties originate from two principal factors: A historically rooted and enduring structure of social inequality and the persistent failure to foresee and plan for massive urban growth.

Rooted in colonial history and fuelled by a continuous post-colonial fear of the 'Other', Salvador – as most parts of urban Brazil – is still highly segregated and polarised along socio-economic and racial divisions. As Sheriff (2001) asserts, the coloured inhabit the deprived *favelas* and the street ambience while the white middle and upper classes withdraw from public space to enclosed residential, commercial and leisure areas.

Being neither universal nor based on fixed biological differences, the perception and experience of 'race' and colour is relative and contextual. In the context of Brazil is class also essential, because class and colour are intertwined and mutually reinforcing (Sansone 2003). However, racism is condemned by most people, perceived as anti-Brazilian (Soares *et al.* 2005:87). Therefore there is a weak presence of explicit racist comments in everyday life. Instead in Brazil 'colour is the unspoken' (*ibid.*) and highly racialised structures are perceived as part of a normal, taken-for-granted world (Sheriff 2001). I came to realise that the discursive constructions on 'race' were subtle and that many of the unpronounced social codes of everyday life were based on class and colour, defining 'your place' in society. As Sheriff (2001) found in Rio de Janeiro, class and colour are extremely relevant in making and maintaining social and geographical boundaries throughout Salvador. For instance, the people on the public buses were mostly coloured while the people who went shopping in the exclusive Shopping Barra were white. Trespassing these boundaries and becoming 'out of place' resulted in uncomfortable situations and sanctioning, such as hostile gazes, comments or police confrontation (Sansone 2003; Sheriff 2001; Ursin 2006). These gestures make part of a finely drawn web of interactions that constitute concealed racism; or in Caldeira's words: 'the art of discriminating while denying it' (2000:89).

When Sansone (2003) investigated racial relations in Salvador, his informants reported of widespread racism within the work sphere, in dating and marriage, and in encounters with the police. Structural racism is also evident in socio-demographic statistics. Official statistics in Brazil

¹⁰ Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística

operate with three main colour groups – white, brown and black – and demonstrate that the illiteracy is highest among blacks, the income level is lowest, and they are overrepresented as domestic and labour workers and underrepresented as employers (*ibid.*). Blacks are also overrepresented in the prison system (Caldeira 2000) and in homicide statistics (Bush and Rizzini 2011).

In her study of São Paulo, Caldeira (2000) describes how the white elites seek refuge in ‘fortified enclaves’:

These are privatized, enclosed, and monitored spaces for residence, consumption, leisure, and work. Their central justification is the fear of violent crime. They appeal to those who are abandoning the traditional public sphere of the streets to the poor, the marginalized, and the homeless (p. 213).

The way Caldeira portrays modern São Paulo bears many resemblances to the socio-spatial trends observed in Salvador. In middle and upper class neighbourhoods, such as Barra, the main site of this study, most residential buildings, hotels, shopping centres and fitness studios are enclosed spaces (see Ursin 2006).



Fig. 3: Photo of Barra, showing the beaches, high-rises and the famous light-house in the front.

Salvador is the second most popular tourist destination in Brazil (after Rio de Janeiro) and the beach of Porto da Barra was recognised as the third most beautiful beach in the world by the British newspaper The Guardian in 2007. Hence Barra does not only house the affluent middle and upper class but also host seasonal waves of tourists. This neighbourhood is therefore highly monitored, with a much stronger police force than other areas, a widespread use of private security guards, high walls and fences, and advanced electronic security systems (see Ursin 2011; 2012 for more descriptions of Barra).

As a result of this socio-spatial segregation along racial and socio-economic divisions, the city inhabitants no longer share a defined public space, but live in insular, parallel spheres. Gottschall (2003) asserts that this new form of socialization among the well-to-do in Salvador obstructs the young generations in experiencing the social interaction and diversity which distinct street life. Sheriff (2001) emphasises that the upper classes end up having extremely limited opportunities to interact with people of colour outside of the employer-servant relationship. Reis (2005) explored the urban elite's perceptions of poverty and inequality. She discovered a tendency to emphasise the negative consequences of poverty for the *non*-poor. More explicitly; when asked about the worst consequences of poverty, over half of the interviewed stated violence, crime and insecurity while only five per cent or less stated declining quality of life, social misery, unemployment and housing problems.

Outside the large, gated homes of the middle and upper class are the *favelas* – shantytowns – where the majority of the poor reside.¹¹ The *favelas* are underprivileged neighbourhoods consisting of brick houses with roofs of sheet metal, surrounded by haphazard nets of streets and alleys (see Ursin 2011). These areas have mushroomed, often illegally, without construction planning, neither geographically nor architectonically, and coat large parts of urban Brazil today. Privacy is an aberration in the *favela* homes (Kenny 2007), where three or four generations often live under the same roof; children live with their aunts, uncles, cousins, step-aunts and step-uncles, and so forth.

According to Rizzini (2011), living in a *favela* means a physical separation from the major metropolitan job markets. Because of the high level of unemployment, many participate in the informal economy, turning their homes into work spheres, selling everything from haircuts, to kites, sweets and crack. Every available economic niche is capitalised on, though competition is intense and limited by the low purchasing power of the community. In other words, selling to each

¹¹ It was estimated that nearly 30 % of the urban population in Brazil, 45.7 million residents, lived in these slum areas in 2007 (UN-HABITAT 2010).

other is not very profitable, and higher-income consumers in general do not enter the *favelas* (Kenny 2007).



Fig. 4: Photo of *favela* housing, taken along the Subúrbio Ferroviário.

Another issue affecting young people in the *favelas* is the crack epidemic and the violence the drug trafficking causes (for an analysis on the crack phenomenon, see Ursin, in review). Due to the increasing drug trafficking in many *favelas*, its residents are getting increasingly labelled for the expansion of criminal and perverse forms of sociability (Ribeiro and Telles 2000), further intensifying the discrimination and stigmatization they encounter, especially targeting young *favelado* men (Soares *et al.* 2005). According to Soares and his colleagues, the politicians strategically define the poor, young men as the main threat of society. By creating a mutual 'outside' enemy among the 'righteous citizens' they manage to produce a felt need for the government and their institutions, protecting them against the 'enemy', and establish confidence, loyalty and solidarity among the middle and upper classes. With a defined problem, the politicians are able to propose and implement 'solutions' such as increased financial support to the police and prison systems, and revised and aggravated penal codes.

2.3. Contemporary status of young people on the street in Brazil

In 2009, slightly over 50 million Brazilians were aged 10 to 24, accounting for 27 % of the total population. In 2010, it was registered 3.4 million child workers (IBGE Census 2010). Between 1997 and 2008, the per cent of children (aged 0 to 17) living in households below the poverty line declined from 43% to 36%. However, numbers from 2009 demonstrate that almost twice as many black and brown children live in poverty compared to white children (Bush and Rizzini 2011). The general improvement of the conditions among many of the poor is reckoned a result of the national politics of the government of the former president Luis Inácio Lula da Silva. During his years in power, Brazil experienced a steady expansion of the national economy, increased minimum wage, and the expansion of *Bolsa Família*, a national family income support program which gives economic aid to over 12 million families. Lula also introduced the program *Fome Zero*, resulting in reduced child malnutrition by 73 % and child deaths by 45 %.

Strongly rooted in former institutional and legislative practice, the negative attitudes towards the children of the poor continue among the middle and upper classes and the authorities in contemporary Brazil. Cardarello (2012) provides two examples of this: 1) Judges authorise so-called 'legal' adoptions of poor children without respecting the legal formalities and without the consent of the families of origin. 2) Medical staff in clinics negate women's role as decision-makers, especially when they are poor and black, and advocate for their sterilisation as the most suitable contraceptive method. These practices echo outdated laws, such as the Minor's Code (1927), where the state was entitled to define 'proper places' and 'proper treatment' for children, based on hegemonic models of the nuclear family and the perception of the poor as immoral, lazy, unclean and irresponsible, unsuited for child rearing. Quoting judges and journalists, Cardarello (2012) writes that the children involved in the adoption cases are depicted as potential street children and beggars, and future drug addicts, armed robbers, and 'in the best-case scenario' incarcerated (p. 232). These cases of entitlement to parenthood and 'stratified reproduction' are perceived by the elite as acts of 'anti-poverty', and vividly demonstrate the gravity of structural prejudice against children from the poorer segments in Brazil today.

Also echoing cultural-historical developments, as well as contemporary urban segregation, Hecht (1998) argues that there are two kinds of Brazilian childhoods, related to the family's socio-economic conditions. He suggests that the children in the *favelas* are 'nurturing', that is, expected to work, either at home or in the street. Children in the middle and upper classes, on the other hand, are 'nurtured', that is, taken care of economically by their parents. They reside in affluent

neighbourhoods, differing greatly from the *favelas* in aspects such as appearance, security and comfort. They grow up behind the bars of their closed condominiums, private schools, semi-public commercial playgrounds and shopping centres. All while some of their 'nurturing' peers actually work, play and sleep right in front of their gates.

The relationship to the street of 'nurturing' children is an imperative difference from that of their 'nurtured' peers. Hecht stresses that many *favela* residents consider it unproblematic for children, especially boys, to be in the urban areas, which they regard as a site of employment rather than of danger.¹² Unsupervised children navigate beyond their local neighbourhoods, working on buses or in downtown areas, begging, juggling, etc. Spending both day and night far from home often becomes customary.

Carrying out research with youth (aged 14 to 25) in Recife, another city situated along the northeast coast of Brazil, Gough and Franch (2005) detected similar dichotomised patterns as Hecht described about children and as seen in the socio-spatial urban patterns. The middle class youth lived in enclosed spaces, rarely used the street as a meeting place, but rather congregated in semi-private areas such as shopping centres. The youth who resided in a *favela*, on the other hand, reported that they used the street as a prime location for socialising. Although some of the poorer youth also explained that they felt uncomfortable and 'out of place' in shopping centres, and thus avoided such arenas, the poor young men often experienced the greatest freedom in the city, exploring large public areas by bus or bicycle. The street, in the case of these young men, is important in forming their male identity, but, as the authors remark, it does also represent danger for them. There is a risk of becoming too absorbed by street life, living the 'wrong way' (*vida errada*), engaging in drugs, crime and violence (*ibid.*), resembling the way of life of several of the key participants in this dissertation.

Although young people occupying the street only represent a marginal few of the millions of young people living in poverty in the *favelas*, their presence cannot be ignored. In grasping this phenomenon, the first problem encountered is the actual number. This is related to two major problems: 1) The variations of definitions in use and 2) that this population is very hard to count due to the nature of their lives (Bush and Rizzini 2011). The conceptual imprecision is related to the 'street children' debate discussed in the theoretical chapter. Worth noticing in this matter is Hecht's (1998) argument that

¹² However, I suggest that the current crack epidemic and the drug-related violence have made many parents in the *favelas* perceive the street as increasingly dangerous.

The varied circumstances of children labelled as street children – comprising those who work, those involved in prostitution, and those who are impoverished, among others – has added elasticity to the concept in a way that makes counting impossible (p. 99).

Many organisations, journalists and academics from Brazil and abroad have presented estimated numbers of the country's so-called 'street children' population. Both Hecht (1998) and Rosemberg (2000) have analysed many of the numbers publicised during the 1980s and 1990s. Based on their own experiences, they draw the conclusion that although many 'guesstimates' report millions of children, the actual number is only a percentage of this. These high estimates may have been a result of an increased awareness of the phenomenon in this period of time and an urge to increase attention and underscore the gravity of young people living on the street.

The Human Rights Secretariat of the Presidency and the Institute for Sustainable Development of the Federal Government of Brazil conducted the first-ever national census and sample survey (2011) among young people on the street in urban Brazil in 2010. This census has also been criticized, arguing that it was fielded without adequate consultation of local experts and was completed in too short a space of time to fully develop and implement an adequate methodology to get a reasonably complete count (Bush and Rizzini 2011). Additionally, based on experience from my own field, I would like to add that the census was conducted in the winter months of May and June, which probably result in a lower number than if conducted in the period of summer and Carnival.¹³

This said, Bush and Rizzini (2011), the latter a local whom have exceptional knowledge and comprehension of the phenomenon, argue that the draft census provides a much more detailed demography of street children than any other existing study. Even though the census excludes young people above eighteen years of age (as my own key participants), it gives a unique picture of the contemporary situation of young people on the street in Brazil. I have therefore chosen to elaborate on some of the data as a backdrop to my own research.

The census was conducted in 75 cities, including all state capitals and other cities with more than 300.000 inhabitants. A total of 23.973 children and adolescents in a street situation were registered on a national level. Most were encountered in the state of Rio de Janeiro, 5091

¹³ Many leave their homes in the favelas for some days, weeks or months during this period. This annual nomadic drift towards the city centres is popular because of the summer weather with high temperature and fewer tropical cloudbursts, the holiday movement with peak season of tourism thus increased income possibilities, and many street parties, such as New Year's Eve and the Carnival. The estimated number of *seasonal* street dwellers in Salvador in 2000 was ten thousand (A Tarde 9.5.2005).

(21 %); and São Paulo, 4751 (20 %). 2313 (10 %) were encountered in Bahia. ¹⁴ In all the cities, a census with 18 questions was applied on 22.476 participants ¹⁵ and a sample survey with 60 questions was conducted with 2246 participants.

The answers from the census and the survey sample provide a firmer grasp on the reality of the everyday lives of the young participants. The census showed that over half used to sleep in their families' houses while 23 % stated that they slept only on the street (See Pie Chart below).

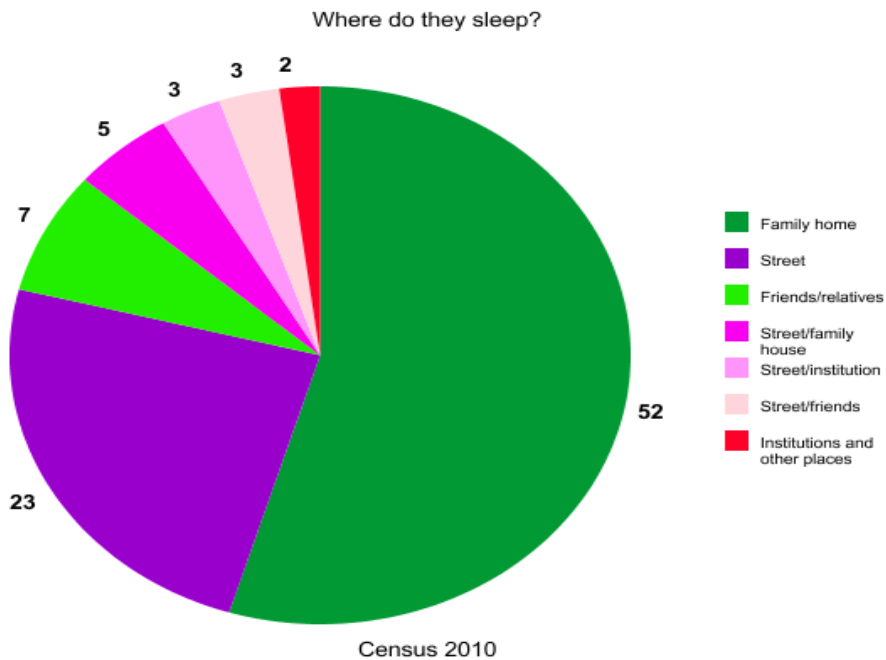


Fig. 5: Pie chart illustrating where the young people participating in the census slept.

¹⁴ Although the numbers are higher in the states of both Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, these states also have more cities and a much bigger urban population. Based on numbers from IBGE in 2010, São Paulo has twenty cities above 300,000 inhabitants with a total of over 20 million inhabitants while Rio de Janeiro has nine with a total of over 11 million inhabitants, and Bahia has only three with a total of less than 4 million inhabitants. Therefore, the fact that 10 % of the young street population was encountered in Bahia is relatively high compared to the total population number.

¹⁵ Nearly 1500 of the registered did not participate in the survey because they refused, were drugged or sleeping, mentally ill, or other reasons.

This entails that over 8000 of the respondents (34 %) sleep permanently or occasionally on the street. Of these, more than half stated that they had spent more than a year on the street. Of the survey sample of 2246 participants, among the ones who slept on the street, 65 % stated that they slept with friends while 15 % slept alone. The rest slept with parents, siblings or partners. The survey sample also demonstrates that the older the cohort is, the higher percentage sleep on the street, in institutions or circulate: While approximately 75 % of the respondents in the 6 to 11 age bracket sleep in the houses of families or friends, or on the street with their family, this percentage is reduced by 20 % in the 16 to 17 age bracket.

The census reveals that motives for sleeping on the street or in institutions were verbal fights with family, domestic violence, alcoholism/drugs and freedom. Not surprisingly, in the survey sample nearly 80 % of those sleeping in houses of friends and family consider their familial relation to be good or very good while over 70 % of those sleeping on the street or in institutions report of a bad or non-existent relationship with their family. The survey sample also shows that over two-thirds prefer sleeping on the street to sleeping in an institution while less than one-fourth prefers institutions to the street.

Confirming previous studies, the census reported that 72 % of the respondents were boys, and that 73 % were brown or black. It also shows that the total number increases along with years of age, where approximately 1700 are in the age bracket of six and seven years old and over 6400 are 16 and 17 years old. Additionally, the survey sample shows that two-third of the ones who stated that they slept with others, stated that they also slept together with people over 18 years old, suggesting that there is also a considerably amount of young adults on the street, as my empirical material demonstrates.

The sample survey also asked whether the participants knew how to write more than just their names: 12 % of those living in houses reported negatively while this number was noticeably higher among those who sleep on the street or in institutions (30 %). Most strikingly, this counted for nearly half of those who live on the street *with* their families. In total, the great majority in the sample survey earn money by selling cheap goods (39 %), begging (30 %), washing cars (20 %) and recycling garbage (17 %). Almost half state that they take all the money for themselves, while 35 % share with their families and 11 % give everything to their families.

Although crack is not an explicit topic in the 2010 Census, some statistics may shed light on the rising problem: 15 % of the survey sample states that they work to sustain their alcohol/drug habit. A minority of the survey sample reported involvement in theft, assaults, prostitution and

drug trafficking.¹⁶ Of these respondents, many stated that they left family homes because of alcoholism/drug abuse and conflicts in the neighbourhood. The former motive was perhaps intentionally referring to parental abuse by the researchers but I suggest that some of the youngsters may be referring to own abuse. Furthermore, I believe that the latter refers more often than not to conflicts with drug cartels and/or informal security forces connected to either drug abuse or crime economically supporting drug abuse (see Ursin, in review for more on this line of argument). Supporting my argument, the survey sample divulges that 21 % of the ones who are involved in illegal income strategies have been in detoxification centres, which is a significantly high number when referring to young people under eighteen years old.

Two decades after the implementation of the Child and Adolescent Statute, ensuring the rights of all young people, a total of 14 % of the survey sample in this census state that they do not eat every day, 28 % of the ones sleeping on the street. Furthermore, nearly 80 % of those sleeping on the street had suffered some kind of discrimination (denied access to shops, shopping centres, health services, public transport, etc.). However, the number of incarcerated minors has declined, with nearly 40.000 adolescents (aged 12 – 18) serving some kind of socio-educative measure, the majority in liberty or semi-liberty (Paula 2006). Research among convicted youths in São Paulo demonstrates that the offenders represent all socio-economic classes. However, Paula asserts, what determines whether an adolescent is incarcerated in FEBEM is not the infraction committed, but the socio-economic and racial characteristics of the offender, disfavours youth of colour, with low educational level and unemployed.

The patrolling police¹⁷ are in general negative to the Child and Adolescent Statute, encountering juvenile delinquency on an everyday basis and witnessing how criminal organizations, such as drug cartels, strategically recruit legal minors because of the protection the Statute offers. As a response, many police men and former police men participate in death squads, killing those they cannot imprison. This was most vividly demonstrated in the Candelária massacre

¹⁶ This number might of course be higher since the researchers probably lacked the time resources to develop essential long-term trust relations to enable discussion on sensitive and stigmatised topics such as crime, prostitution and drug abuse (Bourgeois 2003; Moura *et al.* 2010).

¹⁷ The Brazilian police are strongly influenced by its history. The police department has since early eighteenth-century been divided into a military and a civil force. The street patrolling is carried out by Polícia Militar, and the judiciary, administrative and investigating tasks by Polícia Civil. The main work of Polícia Militar is perceived as to control the poor, according to Caldeira (2000). This perception is rooted in the police's legally obligation to punish the slaves which later, when forbidden, continued as the valid norm. During the military regime the police was subordinated the army, fighting political opponents and criminals with torture and executions. Most of the sergeants continued in service under the new democratic regime. The country has experienced an escalation in police brutality in the last three decades (*ibid.*).

in Rio de Janeiro in 1993. Two cars arrived, shooting towards young people sleeping rough outside a church. Eight was killed, the youngest only eleven years old. According to Amnesty International:

[S]urvivors of the massacre alleged that the gunmen identified themselves as members of the police. It is also reported that the day before the killing one youth was detained for glue sniffing and in response the children had stoned a military police car, injuring a police officer. The children alleged that they were threatened by the military police officers.¹⁸

Wagner dos Santos survived a shooting in the face. He later became the prime testimony in the judicial case. As a response, the police shot him and left him for dead. After pressure from human rights organisations, Wagner dos Santos was finally moved to Switzerland. The authorities failed to provide the young witnesses with witness protection and compensation appropriate to their needs, and they drifted back to the streets. It has been estimated that at least 39 out of the 72 children sleeping in Candelária at the time of the massacre died violent deaths on the streets by 2001.¹⁹ Only three military policemen were convicted in the end.

Another survivor of the massacre, Sandro Rosa do Nascimento, witnessed his mother's murder at the age of six and grew up on the streets. After a bus assault went wrong in 2002, he took passengers as hostages. Sandro screamed to television cameras about how mainstream Brazil denied humanity of the homeless and that the police surrounding him at the scene was the same that killed his friends at Candelária. He died shortly after he had surrendered and the cameras were switched off, in the custody of the police. His life trajectory came to be known internationally in a documentary film and later a movie.

Recent updates on policing in Brazil divulge a continuation of the perception of poor young people as dangerous and a threat to the social and economic order, particularly those on the streets (Rizzini 2011). The practice of 'solving the problem' by occasionally sweeping the streets of poor children and youth – either by removing them to juvenile justice facilities or, much worse; by killing them – also continues. For instance: Prior to the South American games in Rio de Janeiro in 2007, the garbage company and the police hustled young street dwellers into the back of the garbage trucks, leaving them in city periphery and shelters (Bush and Rizzini 2011).

As noted, adolescent boys and young men living on the margins of the Brazilian society have gained pervasive attention during the last century in best-selling fictional novels and movies,

¹⁸ <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR19/022/1993/en/f223889f-ecba-11dd-85fd-99a1fce0c9ec/amr190221993en.pdf>

¹⁹ <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,AMNESTY,COUNTRYREP,BRA,,3f4dcda60,0.html>

and media coverage, documentary films and human rights reports of real tragedies. As a result, the structural discrimination and horrendous violence in the everyday lives of young people on the street is widely recognised and condemned, nationally and internationally. The combination of documented knowledge, the interest fanned by the press and an extensive international recognition is still not sufficient to save the lives of the young men at stake and prosecute the perpetrators of police killings. This proves that the corruption reaches far beyond the police departments, affecting both political and judicial decisions. Not only are the police incapable of preventing crime, but far more importantly; the state is also incapable of preventing the crimes of the police.

The stories of the Pixote-star and the Candelária massacre survivors indicate that once the media attention subsides, little changes for the young people living on the streets. Although these destinies are exceptional in that their names have made it to human rights reports, front pages and movie screens, they symbolise, at the same time, the destinies of all the anonymous young people inhabiting the street in Brazil and the many failures of the state to ensure their rights. Although another massacre at the scale of the Candelária massacre has not yet taken place, the attitudes, conditions and circumstances in which the killings took place have been allowed to continue.

3. Theoretical discussions

In this chapter I wish to embrace some of the classic and contemporary literature within disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and geography which can highlight essential aspects of this research. The chapter is divided into two main parts; *Marginalised young men and public space* and *'Street children/youth' in the Majority world*. Since I locate my research primarily in academic debates of Youth Studies, acknowledging the age bracket of the key participants (18 – 28 years), I begin the first part with some notes on the emergence of the 'Youth' category and how scholars came to interpret it. After introducing Youth Studies on a general level, the focus narrows down to marginalised young men and their relation to public space. A short overview of previous research – ranging from studies on North American gangs in the beginning of the 20th century to contemporary research with young Ghanaians – highlights important aspects of marginalised young men's relation to the street which I find relevant in this dissertation. But young men's relation to the street is also strongly affected by society's attitudes towards them and their usage of public space, and these attitudes are discussed in the end of the first part.

Although there are differences between the experience of street life between pre-adolescents, teenagers and young adults, there are also many similarities. Some of these similarities, reported in the large and growing body of literature on 'street children/youth', are discussed in the second part of this chapter. Critical reflection around the epithet 'street children/youth' forms the introduction of this part. It then moves on to shed light on the structure – agency debate in the context of research with young people and the New Social Studies of Childhood. Some of the existing literature is used in order to describe essential features of street life, how space is used, how income is generated and who are included in social networks on the street. The chapter ends with an overview exploring – in my mind one of the most intriguing questions with this kind of research – why some young people head for the street.

3.1. Marginalised young men and public space

3.1.1. Youth Studies in the social sciences

Historically, the conceptualisation of the young was fostered through the development of formal education and the belief that young people needed schooling before they could take on adult roles (Valentine *et al.* 1998). Initially, 'childhood' was separated from adulthood only among the upper classes, where families had the time and the money to provide years spared from social and economic responsibilities for their offspring. When the mythical condition of 'childhood' was legally protected, child labour became illegal and mass schooling was popularized, childhood came to be distinguished from adulthood among the poorer classes as well (Ariés 1962; Jones 2009; Valentine *et al.* 1998).

Developments within the educational system kept young people who could afford to take a higher education outside labour market and economic independence for increased number of years. As a result, the epoch of 'maturation' also increased, inventing 'youth' to give some breathing space between childhood and adulthood (Valentine *et al.* 1998). Valentine (2003) states that the terms 'youth' and 'young people' are popularly used to describe those aged between 16 and 25, a time frame that bears no relation to diverse legal classifications of adulthood.²⁰ However, Bucholtz (2002) suggests that the youth category lacks clear definition within academic literature, and that it is based on social circumstances rather than chronological age. Hence in a given culture, a pre-adolescent may count as youth as well as those in the 30s or 40s. She argues that classification of youth, just as child and adult, is contextual, strategic and contested, changing with the socio-political circumstances. To capture the highly contextual and relational aspects of 'youth', Durham (2000:116) describes the expression as a 'social shifter'. In linguistics, 'shifter' is a word that is tied directly to the context of speaking and hence takes much of its meaning from situated use (similar to the words 'I', 'here' and 'now').

As the academic attention to young people increased, scholars tried to grasp what it entailed to be 'youth'. It was traditionally linked to the period before becoming wage-earners, studying linear trajectories to adulthood (Bucholtz 2002). A more recent trend in youth studies

²⁰ Similarly, the Brazilian National Policy of Youth defines the period of youth as from 15 to 25 (Dalsgaard *et al.* 2008).

replaces *adolescence* with *youth* as a response to a renewed focus on as ‘the here-and-now of young people’s experience’ rather than as a stage of transition to adulthood (*ibid.*:532).

Dominant discourse in many societies urges young people to follow the ‘traditional’ life-course expectations – finish school, get a job, get married, have a family, buy a house – in order to become ‘good citizens’ (Sharkey and Shields 2008). However, the diversity and fluidity in transitions from childhood to adulthood in modern times have challenged this view. Valentine (2003) offers a wide range of examples of contemporary youth activities, such as school, college or university, other forms of vocational training, paid work, unemployed, voluntary work and travelling. In the context of urban Brazil, Dalsgaard and her colleagues (2008) found that class shapes the period of youth. The middle class youth try to follow a cultural script for the passage to adulthood in a more traditional sense while the lower classes take a variety of paths to adulthood. The latter is also recognised as adults earlier, even though they have fewer means to fulfil the traditional adult expectations. On a more general level, Giddens (1991) suggests that youth in the modern age can be seen as a transition from private to public spheres, and from ascription to achievement in terms of identity, values and social status.

3.1.2. Marginalised young men and the street

Traditionally, sociological studies on youth have focused on groups of young people, men in particular, considered ‘deviant’ by larger society. This was also the case with the scholars at the Chicago School of Sociology. Perhaps the most famous work from this period is ‘Folk Devils and Moral Panics’ by Cohen (1973), demonstrating how folk devils are created out of youth subcultures through media discourse and how ‘moral panics’ often ensue. These ‘moral panics’ are based on a fear that normative values and practices are being threatened. Equally famous, Becker’s ‘Outsiders’ (1963) alleges that deviance in an objective sense does not exist, but is rather defined and imposed by the dominant group in society. Furthermore, deviance works as self-fulfilling prophecy.

There was also an increasing interest in youth at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham. These scholars produced a theoretical paradigm that situated social class at the centre of any understanding of youth culture. Drawing heavily on Marxist theory, it was argued that young men’s identities were determined by their class position

and proposed that young working-class peer groups were operating in ways which unconsciously reinforced rather than challenged existing power relations.

The presence of young men from the lower socio-economic strata in the urban streets has been an issue of researchers for nearly a century. This is especially manifest through research on 'gangs' in the US. Besides poverty, the young men studied also have other traits in common: They encounter stigmatisation because of inferior status based on class, race or ethnicity and marginalisation within the educational and employment spheres. One of the first academic studies of the phenomenon was in Chicago in the 1920s. In 'The Gang' (1927), Thrasher investigated how the urban landscape shaped the gangs and posited that these gangs were more likely to appear in neighbourhoods in flux. He also situated these gangs of European immigrants in a historical context, tracing the gang culture back to feudal and medieval power systems. Whyte (1943), another Chicago-school scholar, studied gangs of Italian immigrants in Boston a decade later. Due to the Great Depression the gang members were older than those encountered in Chicago, often in their mid- to late twenties. The pursuit to increase personal wealth was a common motivator for group foundation and essential features of the gang relations were loyalty, trust and hierarchy.

Of more recent date, Anderson (1999) studied the social and moral codes among poor, Afro-American young men in the street ambience in Philadelphia. He argued that these aggressive codes work as informal rules that govern interpersonal public behaviour. The codes were interpreted as a cultural adaption to the stigma of race and the lack of faith in the police, the judicial system, the formal labour market and the social welfare system. Bourgois (2003) reasons that the crack economy in New York emerged from young men's search for respect, absent in the subordinate positions offered them on the formal labour market. Bourgois thus perceived the crack market and the urban street culture as reactions to the inequalities poor people suffered in mainstream society. Similar to Anderson, Bourgois perceives violence as a part of the order of society and a legitimate way to earn respect in the context of street culture.

With immigrant drug dealers in the capital of Norway in the limelight, Sandberg and Pedersen (2011) draw on the works of Anderson and Bourgois and elaborate on the concept of 'street capital'. The street capital symbolises the embodied character of skills and competence on the street, and the practical rationality of street culture, portrayed by masculinity, violence, retaliation, fashionable clothes and female attachment. Although street capital is a form for relational power and has the capacity to generate profit, it is of little use in the mainstream society and thus difficult to transfer, making it problematic to escape from the street culture and the engagement in the illegal economy.

There has been an increased interest in exploring the significance of the street as meaningful space among young people within social geography. But in order to understand young people's relation to the street it is necessary to touch upon the significance of home.²¹ Home is perceived as an important place in young people's lives as it is a key site of development (Gough 2008). However, scholars emphasise that homes also are spaces of parental control, spatially demarcated along generational lines (Gough 2008; Sibley 1995; Valentine *et al.* 1998). According to Jones (1995), young people who have experienced unhappiness and abuse in the parental home, or have grown up in 'surrogate' family settings, often have other connotations to the concept of 'home'. She argues that to abandon home includes leaving parental control, and gaining responsibility, power and control. In the case of young men, research in Ghana reported that men who are not able to contribute financially to the household budget experience the home as a 'space of exclusion' (Langevang 2008), while research in Brazil shows that young men tend to spend little time at home, reckoning it a female domain which obstructs the development of masculine identity (Gough 2008).

The street, according to Matthews and his colleagues (2000), carries imperative meaning for many young people as it offers spaces temporarily outside of (adult) society. This space allows social conventions to be contested and independence asserted. In this view, the street is not seen as a backdrop where activity takes place, but it is instead human activity and the meanings ascribed to space that produce place (Langevang 2008; Massey 2005). The street gives youth an opportunity to gather and socialize and reaffirm their excluded position (Sharkey and Shields 2008). It is also a site of agency and empowerment that allows space to test out identity, to formulate and assert new self-narratives (Gough and Franch 2005; Langevang 2008; Matthews *et al.* 2000; Robinson 2009). But by having these qualities, the street is evidently not only a place of enjoyment and adventure, but also of risk and danger (Robinson 2009).

From her fieldwork in Ghana, Langevang (2008) explains that due to the widespread unemployment, many young men in the poorer areas have time on their hands. Because of the limited leisure activities available and limited funds to pay for them, the street ends up being a space of great significance and positive meaning; a place where they 'feel free' and where they can engage with the hardships they face on the labour market and at home. Gough and Franch (2005) report that being in the street, 'doing nothing', is also common among poor young men in urban Brazil. Being on the street is part of their formation of male identity while 'doing nothing' reflects their status as youth without responsibilities.

²¹ See Ursin (2011) for more on the discussion on young people and the concept of home.

3.1.3. Feared and fearful in urban space

Poor young men 'hanging out' in the street are often outside the educational system and formal labour market. Their presence is perceived to threaten the normative values of mainstream society (Langevang 2008; Sibley 1995). They are thus labelled as dangerous or unwanted in a process of 'othering' (Koskela 2009). Young men are in the limelight within research on fear of crime, yet they are commonly excluded as research subjects from the same field (Pain 2000). To shortly summarise this body of literature; young men are commonly constructed as provoking fear in others (Pain 2001). But this fear should be interpreted not only as a result of factual crime but also as an indicator of the power relations in which marginalised men are embedded. By being constructed as a threat, marginalised young men regularly experience exclusion from social life and urban space (*ibid.*). Hence fear can reflect power relations in society as a product of systematic structural violence (Koskela 1997).

Being labelled the feared 'Other', marginalised young men who occupy the street ambience often become the source of public fears in 'moral panics' and the targets for political scapegoating. Views of risk and danger are both produced by and support social structures, and social fear is often a projection of the society's failure and guilt (Glassner 2003:53). In the context of urban Brazil, young men from the *favelas* are being scapegoated for the expansion of criminal activity (Soares *et al.* 2005:123). Ferrándiz (2003) notes similar stigmatisation of young men from Venezuelan shantytowns. According to prevalent official discourses, they are lumped under the label of *malandros*,²² street-smart thugs, with strong associations to irresponsibility, drug addiction, violence and criminality. Ferrándiz reasons that this hegemonic prototype acts to obscure the structural causes of poverty and unemployment, and argues that since being a *malandro* is the preeminent form of masculinity available to poor young men, they are trapped in a forced gender identity that mostly breeds stigma, suspicion and abuse.

More recently, research has challenged some of the common dichotomies within the literature on fear of crime, such as 'victims–offenders' and 'feared–fearful', and opened up for the possibility of multiple identities and positioning in relation to violence and fear in public space.²³ Pain (2001) suggests that some of those groups traditionally labelled as 'feared', such as young men and homeless people, may also be 'fearful', and these fears are in many cases justified by the risks of personal crime against them. Goodey (1997) emphasises the concept of multiple identities

²² This is similar in Brazil where *malandro* has the same connotations.

²³ See Ursin (2012) for more on this discussion.

while questioning the stereotype of fearless men, arguing that fear is contextual and transient, depending on age, race and class. Koskela (1997) describes 'The fear paradox' of public space where women are most fearful, yet men suffer more violence.

As a response to fear of crime and as a process of 'othering', the society seeks to regulate public space (Koskela 2009). Studies have suggested that young people are only welcome in public spaces if they are working or actively consuming (Valentine 2003). The spaces the young are able to 'win out' from the adult world are temporal and in continual threat of being reclaimed (Matthews *et al.* 2000; Sharkey and Shields 2008). Access to public space is regulated through criminal justice and community safety policies, such as legal prohibitions of 'loitering', discriminatory policing, and privatisation of public space with private security forces and close circuit television (Sharkey and Shields 2008; Valentine *et al.* 1998). Enclosed communities are the most extreme reaction to fear of crime (Koskela 2009). Pain (2001) asserts that such policies aim to improve the safety of some groups at the expense of others, while Koskela (2009) and Davis (1992 in Pain 2001) propose that the policies generate cumulative fear, distrust, isolation, social exclusion and further marginalisation of the marginalised.

3.2. 'Street children/youth' in the Majority world

3.2.1. 'Street children/youth' – the epithet

Academic colleagues at international conferences and among journals' referees regularly label the key participants of my research as 'street youth'. Personally, I have tried to avoid usage of this term as far as possible and I wish to clarify the main reasons for doing so. Many of the reflections and arguments launched in this terminological debate, particularly in the context of Brazil, also shed light on the socio-political climate and academic discussions in which my dissertation is embedded. Although much of the literature refers to 'street children' – often including research with young people in their late teens²⁴ – I amalgamate 'street children' and 'street youth' as the

²⁴ Youth on the street in the Majority world are habitually defined as 'street children' while their counterparts in the Minority world are often labelled 'homeless youth'. Hall and Montgomery (2000) argue that this terminological division reflects that while the socially and geographically distant youth are perceived as innocent victims, are youth 'at home' believed to have left childhood and innocence behind.

expressions are used interchangeably and, in my opinion, represent two versions of the same epithet, only differing in regards to the maturity of the subjects.

According to Hecht (1998), the use of the term 'street child' in English literature is old. In Brazil, the expression *moleque* was probably the most used historically, originally referring to children of slaves, signifying 'little negro', bastard, rogue or knave (Rosemberg and Andrade 1999). When the international focus on the phenomenon exploded during the 1980s, politicians, journalists, social workers and so forth blew dust of the old expression as it was purportedly free of derogatory connotations (Hecht 1998).²⁵

Hegemonic discourse positions childhood in the frames of family and home, within closed spaces with adult supervision (Rosemberg and Andrade 1999). This discourse is particularly strong among the upper classes in Brazil, following in the footsteps of the Minority world. Thus the epithet becomes an oxymoron, combining two contradictory terms; 'street' and 'children'. It is rooted in mutually constructed oppositions of home/street, moral/amoral and social/antisocial and situates the young people labelled as such outside childhood (Ennew and Swart-Kruger 2003). Interestingly, the debate on 'street children' has no meaning in the *favelas*, even less the older 'street youth':

[A] poor, ragged child running unsupervised along an unpaved road in a *favela* or playing in a field of sugar cane is just a 'kid' [...]. That same child transposed to the main streets and plazas of town, however, can be seen as a threat or a social problem: a potentially dangerous (or potentially neglected) *menino de rua*, a 'street kid' (Scheper-Hughes and Hoffman 1998:358).

The epithet thus comes to symbolise the segregated society of urban Brazil.

The expression is also problematic because its conceptual imprecision obscures heterogeneity, hence its 'universalism' stigmatises poor children in general in the Majority world (Panter-Brick 2002). A demarcation between children *of* the street and *on* the street has been introduced to increase the precision. The former refers to those who actually sleep in the street and the latter those who spend much time there, working or hanging around, but return home at night time. But as Hecht questions, how many times must a child *on* the street sleep *in* the street before becoming a child *of* the street (1998:103)? Most of the young people encountered in my research would have been impossible to pinpoint in a dividing like this. Pinpointing demands rigorousness and homogeneity, traits obviously lacking in the life narratives of these young men. I

²⁵ In Brazil, the Portuguese equivalent to street child, *menino de rua*, was introduced.

found that there seldom exists a strict dichotomy between being on, of and off the street, just a continuous migratory process.

The categorisation of so-called 'street children' has also strongly differentiated young people on the street from their peers in the *favelas* (Panter-Brick 2002). Panter-Brick (2004) divulges that although many believe that homelessness endangers health, this is refuted by a number of studies, concluding that poverty is a greater health risk. By categorising in this manner and focusing on a small minority, one deflects attention from their 'home-based' peers, also facing hardship and poverty. In fact, there seems to be a backlash among academic researchers, stressing the necessity of focusing on the poor young people in the *favelas* (i.e. Bush and Rizzini 2011; Klees, Rizzini and Dewees 2000).

Last, but not least, 'street children/youth' are expressions seldom employed by the young people labelled as such. As I also experienced, both Hecht (1998) and Rodrigues (2001) found that the young people only referred to themselves as 'street children' in conversations with adults, street educators in particular. In my case, I felt that by simply using 'young men' I would capture the heterogeneity and play down associations to delinquency and street life.

3.2.2. The structure – agency debate in the light of research on young people on the street

Research on young people on the street conducted in the era of the 'developmental paradigm' was predominated by ideas of dysfunction, pathology and psychological breakdown (Ennew and Swart-Kruger 2003). This research also bears witness of a manifest hierarchy between the adult researcher and the children, where so-called adult 'experts' (for instance social workers) were consulted on behalf of the children, who were muted, perceived as incompetent in contributing to research purposes (Ennew and Boyden 1997).

The New Social Studies of Childhood (NSSC)²⁶ which was initiated by scholars who disliked the idea of childhood as a developmental phase marked by vulnerability and dependency leading

²⁶ Youth studies and the NSSC have a lot in common, including corresponding theoretical discussions, such as the structure – agency debate, and methodological approaches, such as the popularization of 'participatory research' (see chapter on methodology).

to the 'perfection' of adulthood as presented by Piaget and other developmental psychologists.²⁷ They perceived childhood (and youth) as something worth studying in itself, and emphasised young people's agency and competence (James and Prout 1990).

The NSSC also had a radical impact in research with and literature about 'street children/youth': Simultaneously as children came to be recognised as popular and meaningful research subjects and NSSC gradually gained foothold in the academia, 'street children' were (re-) discovered by academic scholars (and a range of other vocations). This resulted in a vast body of literature on 'street children' that stretches over three decades; is multi-disciplinary, 'fragmented into small islands of research within separate disciplines' (Thomas de Benitez 2011: ix), and covers large parts of the Majority world.

Considering the size of the body of literature today, a review naturally falls beyond the scope of this chapter. However, I will refer to research which helps illuminate the forthcoming analyses. The structure – agency debate is of particular importance since individual choices and structural constraints form the backdrop in all the articles. The focus on young people's agency is one of the main 'mantras' of the NSSC (Tisdall and Punch 2012), and probably the core aspect of the paradigm which has had greatest impact on research with young people on the street. By highlighting agency, young people ceased to be depicted as vulnerable and dependant orphans abandoned by their caregivers, but were rather described as autonomous and street wise survivors, focusing on their knowledge, strengths and aptitudes. The emphasis on agency is thus vividly present in this body of literature as evident in the research topics further discussed in the last section; spatial use of urban space, livelihood strategies, social network, and reasons for heading to the street.

As mentioned, the emphasis on the agency of young people on the street is pervasive in this body of literature. For instance, Beazley (2003b) asserts that children who live on the street take responsibility for their own actions and exercise some control over their lives. Similarly, Butler (2009) writes about a scope for action, and degrees of freedom in the choices made by young people on the street, choosing the best path within the context of confining and often oppressive circumstances. As, Butler, the majority who focus on agency also stresses the structural

²⁷ However, as the paradigm on childhood studies matured, it eventually met criticism. Many scholars felt that the pendulum had gone too far in some aspects. The NSSC is accused of oversimplifying a variety of different and nuanced theories within developmental psychology, especially more recent perspectives (Tisdall and Punch 2012). Due to fear that acknowledging human maturation with ageing would contradict young people's rights to participate and be heard, biological aspects were rigorously ignored. Prout (2005), a pioneer within the paradigm, asserts that it denaturalised childhood and ignored the importance of how young people's evolving capacities and competences shape their social experiences.

constraints and limited range of possibilities that often restrain the life paths of poor young people, such as Kovats-Bernat (2006):

The danger in emphasising the agency of street children lies in the erroneous assumption that they are not simultaneously victims of larger political and economic machinations that severely impact their lives, complicate their survival, and place them at higher risk of dying younger and more violently than other children (p. 7).

Yet, a recent critique of the NSSC argues that while researchers have attributed agency to child soldiers, child prostitutes and street children, offering an alternative to the stereotypical image of them as helpless victims, the concept of agency is not sufficiently problematized (Tisdall and Punch 2012). By emphasising agency on behalf of the surrounding context of extreme structural constraints, the researchers run a risk of unwittingly substitute vulnerability by responsibility.

Although writing with young Africans in mind, Boeck and Honwana (2005) stress the importance of addressing the paradox of young people as both 'makers' and 'breakers' of society, while they are simultaneously being made and broken by that society. They make themselves through ingenious self-realisation and identity politics, and make society through acts of resistance and resilience. They are 'breakers' in that they expose themselves to risky behaviour, such as drug use, breaking hegemonic norms, conventions and rules. At the same time, they are at risk, sometimes even broken, by encompassing structures and processes over which they have little or no control, resulting in unemployment, exploitation, poverty, homelessness, and lack of access to education and medical facilities.

There are also attempts of nuancing the agency regarding young people on the street, such as Abebe (2008) who de-establishes the dichotomy by arguing that children, as adults, are resilient, capable and knowledgeable in some ways while vulnerable and dependent in others. Klocker (2007) introduces a notion of thick and thin agency, where 'thin' agency refers to decisions and actions that are carried out within highly restrictive contexts, characterized by few alternatives, and 'thick' agency refers to contexts with a broad range of options. Klocker imagines that structures, contexts, and relationships can act as 'thinners' or 'thickeners' of individual's agency over time and space, by constraining or expanding their range of viable choices.

Agency has been treated as a property of persons in much sociological theory, including the NSSC, in Lee's (1998) opinion. He argued that while many scholars interpret agency as a social

attribution, it is more correctly to understand agency as an effect of independence that emerges from fundamental dependency. This is because agentic independence is necessarily embedded in patterns of dependency.

Prout (2011) has also recently expressed scepticism towards the dichotomisation of agency and structure within the NSSC. Based on Latour, he underscores that childhood is a complex phenomenon, constituted through the heterogeneous networks of the social. Prout argues that the actor-network theory (ANT) is a possible way of bypassing the Gordian knot of structure and agency. The central feature of ANT is to search for relationships (or *networks*) between all things (or *actants*) relevant to a phenomenon (Latour 2005). ANT does not presuppose the agency of human actors, but instead highlight the *agentic forces* of spaces, objects and actants, thus attributing agentic forces to not only humans but non-human entities. Action is the product of specific network associations that spatially and temporally link one actor with another. The relations in networks are mechanisms for production, distribution and utilization of agency (Law 2004). While the development of novel associations in networks necessarily transforms an actor's specific capacities, such capacities are dependent on the ongoing maintenance of these relations. If relations are disrupted, if relationships break down or actants fail, then the individual's capacities will decline.

3.2.3. Characteristics of street life

Leaving this debate behind, I will now explore aspects of agency (and structure) in some of the central tenets of research with young people on the street, namely spatial use of urban space, livelihood strategies, social network, and reasons for heading to the street. However, as mentioned, young people's agency is a main theme also in this section as the issues discussed both emerged out of a focus on agency and draw on the concept of agency (and structure). These topics – spatial use of urban space, livelihood strategies, social network, and reasons for heading to the street – are not only linked through the concept of agency, but are also interconnected to each other.

The body of literature on young people on the street reports of socio-spatial marginalisation as well as social exclusion, confirming the status of poor young people as 'unwelcome elements' in public space (i.e. Beazley 2003a; Scheper-Hughes 2005; Scheper-Hughes and Hoffman 1998; Young 2003). Despite this, young people refuse to be confined to the poorer

areas and appropriate whatever space available – open spaces, cinemas, arcades, malls, public toilets, rooftops, sewage systems, parks, fountains, beaches – to suit their everyday activities of work, leisure, personal enrichment and survival (Ennew and Swart-Kruger 2003; Scheper-Hughes and Hoffman 1998; Young 2003). By occupying the urban space over time they gradually develop an exceptional spatial knowledge and establish a unique relationship of belonging to the urban environment (Beazley 2000; Conticini 2005; Van Blerk 2006). Van Blerk (2006) also demonstrates that the relationships to the urban space are not homogenous; in her Ugandan study, choosing where to work, bathe and sleep was tightly determined by categories of gender and age.

Research also explores spatial strategies of resistance when occupying urban space. Ruddick (1998) demonstrates a usage of marginal spaces at marginal times, while Young (2003) explores the claim of ‘untouchable’ spaces perceived as impossible, impractical or immoral by adults. Young also detects two processes of resistance, antagonised and dominant resistance. The former refers to an (spatial) encroachment of crowded spaces and the latter refers to take (temporal) advantage of the desertedness of night spaces. The mobility characterising street life covers both public and private spaces, street and non-street locations, family homes and institutions, rural and urban areas, and the movements are fluid and circular rather than linear (Evans 2005; Kovats-Bernat 2006; Van Blerk 2005, 2012). It is identified as important in the construction of ‘new identities’ (Van Blerk 2005) and as an on-going journey in search of safety, respect, care and freedom (Butler 2009). This nomadism is also interpreted as an important survival strategy, adapting to the temporal shifts of urban space, changing from friendly to unfriendly or from productive to barren at different times of day and night (Kennedy in le Roux and Smith 1998). Young people in Ethiopia illustrate this; they strategically move between the city centre, commercial districts, transportation hubs, and the grounds of churches and mosques, depending upon the temporal availability of the perceived livelihoods (Abebe 2008).

Livelihoods are, in fact, another tenet in this body of literature which strongly elaborates on the young people’s agency. Research across continents demonstrates a creativity, versatility and resilience in creating, modifying and innovating multiple and complex coping strategies to meet the basic needs of street life (i.e. Beazley 2003b; Conticini 2005; Evans 2005; Hecht 1998; Kovats-Bernat 2006; Marquez 1999; Orme and Seipel 2007). Several researchers assert that the young people take pride in earning their own money as it asserts their independence (Beazley 2003b; Orme and Seipel 2007). While some researchers note that they provide money for family households (Abebe 2008; Hecht 1998), others find that they spend it mostly on the street (Kovats-Bernat 2006; Orme and Seipel 2007). Furthermore, on the contrary to public assumptions, many

researchers report that the majority on the street prefer to earn their money legally (i.e. Kovats-Bernat 2006; Orme and Seipel 2007).

Social perceptions of age/maturity and status/stigma are essential in the choice of livelihoods (Abebe 2008; Gössling *et al.* 2004). For instance, Beazley (2003b) studied the Tikyan street culture in Indonesia, and found that begging and scavenging were reckoned low-status jobs and often done by the youngest boys, while shoe-shining was most common among prepubescent boys, still being reckoned cute and innocent. Older boys often engaged in selling small merchandise. There is also evidence of other coping strategies, not necessarily being income-generating, such as simple systems of generalised reciprocity and egalitarian redistribution among the young themselves (Kovats-Bernat 2006), attending NGOs for the sole purpose of obtaining food and money (Orme and Seipel 2007), and selling inherited clothes (Gössling *et al.* 2004).

In a street ambience supportive social networks can increase agency and thus improve access to better economic opportunities (Conticini 2005). Many researchers have explored how children and youth gradually become socialized into a street culture by groups who are already there (i.e. Beazley 2003b; Hecht 1998), and how these groups form relations of protection, encouragement and emotional support (Kovats-Bernat 2006; Orme and Seipel 2007). Although there are seldom noted any specific leaders among these groups – as Hecht (1998) was told in Brazil; ‘chiefs are for Indians’ – many researchers observe power hierarchies based on gender, age and street experience (i.e. Beazley 2000, 2003b; Van Blerk 2012). The more hostile character of these street relations have also been explored, as for instance the ‘Sleeping wars’ witnessed in Haiti, where the children violently attack their sleeping peers (Kovats-Bernat 2006:130)

The image of the ‘abandoned street child’, which saturated newspapers, NGO brochures and reports three decade ago, presumed that young people living on the street were orphaned, or, at best, had no contact with their biological families. Longitudinal and ethnographic research has challenged such assumptions, demonstrating vital links between street life and family household. Hecht (1998) concludes that by being on the street, the young people ‘betray motherdom’, that is living the righteous life and being with and helping one’s mother. However, most maintain some contact with their families, albeit sporadic, maybe only a couple of times a year, as Kovats-Bernard (2007) found in Haiti. Exploring familial relations among youngsters on the street in South Africa, Van Blerk (2012) finds that they are part of powerful inter- and intra-generational relations that connect them to their families, thus situate them relationally in between street and family life. Not only focusing on parental generation, she asserts that many

visit their family household to see their younger siblings. Furthermore, she notes that familial relations also are important on the street, between younger and older siblings.

Although research with young people on the street increasingly focuses on their relations to family and household of origin, little attention is being paid to the wider community of origin. An exception is Van Blerk's (2012) study in Cape Town which depicts the young men's relation to their former communities, riddled with gang culture and crime, and how they seek protection from danger and avoidance of community power hierarchies by heading to the streets.

The body of literature also provides some attempts to demonstrate that, although many young people live without parental guidance, they constantly interact with other adults in their everyday lives. Though many of these adult relations are characterised by violence and exploitation, there also exist a multitude of positive relations with surrounding adults, including social workers, police officers, guards, traders, vendors, adult vagrants and passers-by (Hecht 1998; Marquez 1999; Young 2003). Young (2003) also detects an 'incorporation' of young people living on the street in the Ugandan society, where they are engaged in legal work alongside others. Although transient social relations are far more difficult to map, hence seldom studied, Gössling and his colleagues (2004) discovered the importance of tourism in the everyday life of children on the streets of Madagascar. They reported that three-quarters of the monetary income and all non-monetary donations the children receive came from tourists.

These extended social networks are claimed to be bigger when living on the street than in family households and home communities, and may provide resources not encountered in former homes as well as increase their agency, making the street more appealing (Conticini and Hulme 2007; Ennew and Swart-Kruger 2003; Ursin 2011). One of the main research questions within this body of literature is why do they live on the street and not with their families. In Uganda, Young (2003) cited that one third left family home because of adult mistreatment, one fourth left because of poverty issues and one fifth because of parental death. Based on a fieldwork in Bangladesh, Conticini and Hulme (2007) argue that even though many studies identify economic poverty as the main, and sometimes the sole, cause leading young people to migrate to the street, the breakdown of social relationships within the household plays a more significant role. The Bangladesh study reveals that the children interviewed divided adult punishment into two categories: fair and unfair violence. This division might explain why some children decide to leave their households and other – also living in violent circumstances – do not: If the behaviour of adults is perceived by children as unfair, this unpredictability breaches potential trust relations and they are more likely to leave and seek security and social relationships elsewhere. The conclusions

of Conticini and Hulme resemble the arguments of Butler (2009) who have interviewed young people in Rio de Janeiro: Family homes were described as lacking affection and a sense of protection and belonging, and moving away from home to the street many felt that they were moving away from danger and towards protection.

Of course, the street ambience also entails violent encounters, but the empirical material from Bangladesh confers that in the intensity of violence was reported to be worst in the original households, followed by governmental institutions (Conticini and Hulme 2007). The street was reported as a place where violence was less intense, but more frequent. Conticini and Hulme reckon that while the street is perceived as insecure and the perpetrators are often unknown, the home is supposed to be safe and the perpetrators are known. Therefore, in evaluating the intensity of violence, the children consider not only the harm and pain caused by the abuser but also the emotions of a breakdown in trust and feelings of loneliness.

When young Indonesians finally have established an everyday life on the street, Beazley (2000) discovered that many fantasise of going home. Nevertheless, when they do return most stated that they were happier and better off in the streets. Reasons for this were witnessing their family members suffer, less economical resources, feelings of isolation, problems of adaptation, verbal and physical abuse, missing street peers and longing for the adventure and freedom the streets offer.

4. Methodological reflections

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, a longitudinal approach was a natural outcome of my strong curiosity when finishing my master degree: What would be the 'outcomes' of these young people I had come to care for as they reached adulthood? In addition to ponder over the future destinies of these young people, I also felt that my previous fieldworks did not capture their life narratives as I had found it hard to quote dialogues and stories in retrospect in my field notes. Moreover, although I had discussed the police and the middle class residents to a great extent in the analysis in my master thesis, I had never interviewed them properly. Therefore, I was interested in hearing their point of view as well. In sum, these were the ideas that formed the choice of research methods as I decided to return to the field once more.

This dissertation works partly as a continuation of my master thesis. I therefore include a table overview at the end of this introduction, sketching a general outline over my three fieldworks in Salvador (two fieldworks during my master studies and one as part of my PhD project). The first two fieldworks consisted of participant observation, casual, conversational interviewing and visits to former (private and institutional) homes, principally exploring street culture and everyday life, routines and socialising on the street (Ursin 2006). Thus some of the empirical material gathered is analysed previously. I would also like to add that due to the large volume of material I gathered in the PhD fieldwork, parts are left out for future analysis, after finishing my PhD.

In this chapter I wish to elaborate on methodological as well as ethical issues. It is divided into four sections. The first section is entitled 'Fieldwork among young men in Barra' and focus on the methodological and ethical challenges that emerged when doing a longitudinal fieldwork among young people on the street. Firstly, I discuss some of the consequences of doing longitudinal research in this field. Thereafter, I describe the methods I employed in the PhD fieldwork. Since I had previously conducted consistent participant observation in two fieldworks and elaborated on this in my master thesis (Ursin 2006), I decided to focus more on my choice of using narrative interviews in this last fieldwork. I chose to have key informants among the young people in Barra, exploring their life narratives in depth through interviewing. My eleven key participants were all male, aged between eighteen and twenty-eight years old at the time of the interviews. At the end of this section I offer some critical reflections on why I chose *not* to carry

out so-called 'participatory research', although extremely popular in research with young people, arguing why I found this approach unsuitable in this research.

In the second section I describe how I gained access among a 'hard-to-reach' population, discuss issues of ethics and trust, and depict dangers encountered in the field. In relation to this, I continue with some reflections on my positionality in the Brazilian society, being a white, female, European researcher, and I also briefly reflect on what a longitudinal research aspect has involved in regards to my position in the field.

To increase my understanding of young people living on the street in a wider context I sought substantial empirical material outside the street population of Barra. In the third section, I discuss some methodological challenges encountered when doing additional research, conducting interviews and drawing exercises with children and adolescents in a governmental institution, and interviewing neighbours and traders in Barra and represents from the military police. Since all the three articles have a focus on the street ambience in Barra, mostly referring to my field observations and the narrative interviews of the young men, this section is much shorter. The fourth and last section explores the processes of analysing and writing, and also discusses ethical issues encountered post-field.

When	Where	Who	How	What
Dec – July, 2004/05, MA, 1st fieldwork	Barra	× Young people on the street (aged approx. 10-24 yrs.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Participant observation × Casual, conversational interviewing × Short visits to their families and institutions where the young people resided/had resided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Street culture × Social relations × Everyday life and routines on the street × Carnival
Dec – Feb, 2005/06, MA, 2nd fieldwork	Barra	× Young people on the street (aged approx. 10-24 yrs.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Participant observation × Casual, conversational interviewing 	× A follow-up on the whereabouts of the participants in the first fieldwork
Dec – Feb, 2008/09, PhD fieldwork	Barra and institution	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Young men on the street, incl. 11 key participants (aged 18-28 yrs.) 2) 15 children in a governmental institution (aged 7-15 yrs.) 3) 20 formal residents of Barra 4) 10 traders and workers in Barra 5) 8 police officers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Participant observation. narrative, semi-structured and open-ended interviewing 2) Participant observation, semi-structured and open-ended interviews, drawing exercises 3) Structured, open-ended interviews 4) Structured, open-ended interviews 5) Structured, open-ended interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Home and sense of belonging × Social relations × Temporal use of urban space × Networks, drugs

Table 1: An overview over my three academic fieldworks executed in Salvador, Brazil in 2004 – 2009.

4.1. Fieldwork among young men on the street in Barra

4.1.1. Some consequences of carrying out a longitudinal street study

Van Blerk (2005) discloses that there is a widespread trend in academic research with street populations to draw analytic conclusions based on single ‘snapshots’ from the field. Likewise, in an extensive review of international academic research on young people on the street, Thomas de Benitez (2011) reports of a gap in the present body of literature: Longitudinal research exploring the transitions from child to youth and young adulthood. Of course, a longitudinal perspective is challenging due to the mobility characterising the lives of these populations, as they normally lack postal or electronic address and phone number (Abrams 2010). Still, longitudinal research is strongly advised by experienced researchers who argue that such an approach increases the understanding of time and space as well as results in a more nuanced understanding of the lives of young street dwellers (Ennew and Swart-Kruger 2003; Hecht 1998; Thomas de Benitez 2011; Van Blerk 2005).

Carrying out longitudinal research is about capturing a ‘movie’ rather than simply a ‘snapshot’ of social life (Berthoud 2000 in Neale and Flowerdew 2003). A longitudinal research project entails repeat situational analyses based on interviews and/or participant observation, enabling the researcher to ‘walk alongside’ their respondents and capture the flow of their daily lives (Corsaro and Molinari 2000). Neale and Flowerdew (2003) argue that while longitudinal quantitative research links time to linear trajectories, longitudinal qualitative research opens up for complexity and variety. They conclude that the latter approach increases comprehension of how the personal and the social, agency and structure, the micro and macro are interconnected and how they come to be transformed.

In the same way as I got to know this street ambience without having academic research on my mind, I also started this research project without knowing that I would continue this research engagement for many years to come. This research project was therefore never planned as a longitudinal study. Luckily, continuous economic funding has allowed me to turn this into a longitudinal study along the way. This longitudinal perspective – that is my personal and academic history with Barra prior to my PhD project – marks this dissertation in multiple ways: My established relations made my latest fieldwork possible. My previous participation in and acquired understanding of street life was immensely useful when carrying out the last round’s interviews.

Last, but not least, my former field experiences and academic analysis form a backdrop when exploring the interview material. I will also emphasise that a longitudinal perspective is not only encapsulated in the long-term periodic presence in the field, but also in the narrative interviews, focusing on the past, present and future.

Although the longitudinal perspective may not be evident at first glance in the articles, the empirical material used would not have been available in a single 'snapshot' research. For instance; a long-term presence and narrative interviewing capture how notions of 'home' are transitional and complex, closely interlinked to temporal sentiments of safety, autonomy and belonging (Ursin 2011). It thus succeeds in exploring some of the transitions on and off the street, as Thomas de Benitez (2011) suggests. Furthermore, although I use the temporal shift of night and day as an analytic tool, a much longer time aspect was necessary to fully grasp the complexity of street life (Ursin 2012). As a result, the rich empirical material challenges common stereotypes and reveals how the young men are not only feared, but trusted; not only threatening but threatened; not only socially excluded, but included; and how they not only attack passers-by, but also protect them. The longitudinal approach is perhaps most evident when exploring the impact of crack in the street ambience (Ursin, in review). By being able to witness the arrival of crack cocaine in Barra – experiencing the same people and places before and after crack gained foothold – facilitated reflection over the devastating consequences of drug use and drug trafficking among the poor in Salvador.

It is also important to emphasise how the longitudinal aspect has radically changed my field. By the last fieldwork the field had not only 'grown up', but the field had changed character in several ways: I initially started out researching with a great number of 'street children/youth' (aged 10 to 24) and eventually ended up primarily writing about eleven 'young men' (aged 18 to 28); excluding children and women along the way. This was not a conscious choice, but rather a natural outcome of the time elapsed since my first encounter with Barra. As Abrams (2010) suggests, those who actually complete a longitudinal study tend to be the most 'stable' among their 'hard-to-reach' group. In my case, the most 'stable' were the young men who either continued to appear in Barra (or other central areas in Salvador) or returned to their families. Many of the young men who participated in my previous fieldworks were unreachable during the last fieldwork, as some had been killed, quite a few imprisoned and many others had just disappeared.

It is important to note that the composition of the street population in Barra has changed dramatically during the last two decades. When I first experienced Barra in 1992, the streets were

filled of poor preadolescent children, some as young as pre-school age. When I returned in the early 2000s, I encountered mostly teenagers, but also children occasionally. In the last fieldwork, the age of Barra's street population had increased as some of the teenagers had become adult street dwellers and children appeared only sporadically, just passing through. Though there were some children working albeit not living here. This does not signify that children do no longer live on the street in Salvador. Other neighbourhoods continue saturated by children, such as Pelourinho and Cidade Baixa.

Likewise, although the street ambience in Barra has always been a masculine one, there used to be some girls present in the former fieldworks. Some had ran away from their family homes in the interior of Bahia, others lived in impoverished houses in the *favelas* but preferred hanging out on the street in Barra, sleeping there occasionally. A couple of girls also lived on the street on a more permanent basis. As the years passed, the girls grew into womanhood and some also became mothers. By the time I returned I only encountered a very few of these girls, accidentally, mostly at other sites in the city. Most of them had settled down in the *favelas*. Of the more atypical destinies was a young woman who became a maid for a wealthy old woman and resided with her, and another young woman who first served a sentence for drug trafficking at the state prison and later married a foreigner who had a hotel in Barra. A more unfortunate destiny was the one of a girl who came to Barra from a small city in the interior. According to her ex-boyfriend (one of the key informants) she came to Barra, not escaping domestic violence, but simply seeking juvenile adventure, and later got attached in the same way as many of the young men. Getting hooked on crack, she tried out a career as a street dealer in Barra. She was later killed by the same drug cartel which shot one of the other key informants in the abdomen.

Although the near absence of children and women left me puzzled, I have never learned why the demographics of Barra's street population have changed. As a result, my dissertation does not include a female perspective, but I have tried to focus on both childhood and adolescence in addition to young adulthood in the narrative interviews. By carrying out research in a governmental institution for children and youth (aged 7 to 15), I also gained substantial information, embracing several generations; 'street children/youth' and former 'street children'/young adult street dwellers.

4.1.2. Doing participant observation in Barra

As in previous stays, I resided in the neighbourhood of Barra during my PhD fieldwork. I would thus pass many of the young men who I had come to know years earlier on an everyday basis. Conducting participant observation was therefore almost a natural outcome of my everyday life, living amidst the different social groups I aimed to study. As my previous fieldworks, I conducted participant observation as a combination of methods interweaved with lifestyle, involving participation in everyday life and community activities and in-depth informal social interaction with the various inhabitants of Barra, especially young people on the street (see Ursin 2006 for more on doing participant observation in Barra). Obviously, there was no clear distinction of when I was 'doing fieldwork' and when I was just going out for a walk.

Grills (1998) argues that participant observation is advantageous as the researcher [...] pursues an intimate familiarity with the 'world of the other', through getting close to the dilemmas, frustrations, routines, relationships, and risks that are a part of everyday life (p. 4).

In Barra, this meant to earn these young men's trust and be able to experience their everyday routines of eating, sleeping, taking care of their hygiene, 'chasing money' (*correr atras*), pursuing and doing drugs, hanging out, flirting, and so forth. Spending mornings, afternoons, sunsets and sunrises in public space, I also faced the dynamics of social life in Barra, mapping out interactional patterns between the different social groups. As a researcher, neighbour and young woman who spent hours on the street, I also got intertwined in these dynamics, encountering a range of reactions, not primarily among the young men, who came to perceive me as a natural part of their environment, but among middle class residents, traders and police officers. Some of these – sometimes awkward and other times terrifying – situations are discussed later in this chapter. As in previous fieldworks, I kept field notes on a daily basis, including observational notes, reflections on methodology, analytic hunches, and personal memoirs.

The participant observation also included 'guided walks' and trips both within and outside Barra, to their homes or former homes, institutions, the houses of friends and family members, and so on.

4.1.3. Exploring the life narratives of young men on the street

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, one of the main reasons for me to decide to return to this field a third time was a desire to explore the life narratives of these young people who had come of age on the street. However, to settle for narrative interviewing was not a straightforward methodological choice since this entailed excluding other, so-called 'participatory-friendly' research approaches. Some of the reflections I made in taking this decision are described in the next section, after I have elaborated on the advantages of the method I ended up employing.

As previously described, when I arrived in Barra the last time, determined to carry out narrative interviews with young people on the street, I encountered mostly young men. As a natural outcome of this, my key participants – that is the ones who shared their life narratives with me in this research – became eleven young men, having in common that they resided or used to reside on the streets of Barra. The exact number, eleven, was never a conscious choice, but, once again, a result of the size and composition of the street population at the time of the fieldwork. However, I felt that this number was enough since I would also draw on additional research which I had previously carried out in this ambience as well as the research I was doing simultaneously among residents, traders, police and young people in a governmental institution.

Stepping out of my well-known role as a street observer and into the role as interviewer, I elaborated more on my research project and why their participation was valuable than I normally did in street encounters. I also emphasised that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at whatever moment without giving any cause. At the same time I stressed that their participation would be anonymous and that they would be referred to by pseudonyms in field notes, interview transcripts and in published material. All participants were given time to think about whether they wanted to carry out the interview or not, but none withdrew, neither in initial stages nor later.

Narrative interviews are defined as semi-structured and open interviews where the researcher and the participant together explore the meaning of concepts, categories and events (Gudmundsdottir 1996). The key participants were engaged in these interviews. A basic set of topics (see appendix 1) were discussed with all interviewees to enable comparability and facilitate analysis. The outline of the interview included personal trajectory; family life; places where they have resided (family homes, neighbourhoods, institutions); relationship to drugs, crime, police, middle class residents and tourists; expressions as 'childhood', 'freedom', 'being at home' and

'pivete'; differences of being a child and an adult on the street; possible changes in Barra day from night, whether you are rich or poor, woman or man; reflections on their street situation, becoming parents, important happenings in life, death and religion; and dreams for the future. Other relevant questions were developed as the conversation evolved.

Based on my personal experiences and literature on narrative interviews, I will argue that this method has several advantages. Primarily, narrative is a universal phenomenon: everybody narrates. In my field I realised that talking and telling stories was not only something the young men were familiar and comfortable with, but also extremely good at. Narrative interview as a method is basically conversation transformed into a research tool (Gudmundsdottir 1996). Thus narrative interviewing is particularly advantageous among people with strong oral tradition, such as the young men in Barra who often use personal narratives to achieve money, food, clothes, medicines, etc. from the surroundings and also spend a lot of their vacant time telling stories on the street corners. Similarly, Abebe (2009) argues that the extraordinary skills in telling stories of young boys on the street in the capital of Ethiopia probably were due to their usage of narration as a livelihood strategy. Choosing narrative interview as a main method was not rooted in a view of the young men as incompetent or incapable. Rather than running the risk of them feeling distressed or patronised by using special 'participatory-friendly' techniques (Punch 2002), I acknowledged their skills and treated them as competent research participants.

In the period of youth and young adulthood, there are two reasons which make narratives especially significant. First, young people often have many questions about one's self (both identity and roots; past, present and future), which often are answered with self-defining narratives (McAdams, Josselson and Lieblich 2006). Second, narrating is also important as a way of entertaining to form comradeship, strengthen peer bonds and demarcate the group from others (*ibid.*). Among the young men, some of the most common topics at the street corners were about thefts and assaults, histories in which the middle class, tourists and police were ridiculed as weak, frightened, evil or easily fooled.

Even though literature on participatory research often depicts narrative interviewing as conventional, as 'just talking' and as a passive way of communicating (O'Kane 2000), I argue that narration actually allows people to use their personality and creativity. The interviewed are at the helm and get to choose subtopics, structure, choice of vocabulary, and mode of narration, using the innovative linguistic *bricolage* particular for this street ambience. This *bricolage* consists of an elementary version of the mainstream language, English expressions adopted from the passing tourists in Barra, local slang from the *favelas*, the drug-trafficking milieu and prison ambience, and

their own secret argot.²⁸ In this way, they create their own version of social reality, constructing something particular for themselves:

[T]heir narratives exhibit an artistry and uniqueness, a personality, which removes them from any overdetermination by the collective language and the public forms which they employ (Rapport 1997:59).

At the same time, narratives are also moulded by acculturation and socialization. The products are of both individual and society, bonding personality with universality (Josselson, Lieblich and McAdams 2003; Rapport 1997). Since the narratives are formed by contemporary cultural concepts, categories, values and ideas, a personal narrative uncovers many features of a historical epoch as well (Gullestad 1996).

The next argument is based on the ideas of 'hidden stories' of Jackson (2002). He states that personal narratives either reaffirm the existing paradigm and conserve the social order, or enlighten new perspectives by challenging the social order. He refers to Habermas while claiming that the voices of marginal groups tend to be silenced by being denied public recognition. The narratives of these young men, living on the margins of society, are indeed unfamiliar to many, even to most of the people who pass them on the street on an everyday basis. Their narratives question widespread assumptions, as for instance definitions of 'home' and 'street' (Ursin 2011) and challenge some stereotypical images of their relation to crime, drugs, police and middle class residents (Ursin 2012; in review).

But as we narrate, we also make memories comprehensible in words. As words restrict, memory contaminates. Thus what is told is never what happened but rather a version of the past tainted by how the narrator perceived the happening, what the narrator wished happened, which occurrences the narrator considered of importance and of less value, and how the narrator is able to recount it limited by his own creativity and vocabulary. In my empirical material there are many examples of narratives that are not telling the objective 'truth'. As in the case of one young man who served six months in state prison because of pick pocketing on the beach: in retrospect the fatal incident was narrated as an act caused by his demanding and cruel girlfriend who complained incessantly of being hungry, making him ignore the high risk of getting caught. The fact that the money the girl had received from her mother to visit him in prison was spent with the new boyfriend who she had conquered in the same street ambience, probably had a great impact on the recreated narrative. Another teenager proudly told me that his father was a well-known police

²⁸ For a more detailed description of their language, see Ursin (2006).

officer in the area when I first got to know him in 2002. I later discovered that his father was unknown, being one of many sexual clients of his deceased mother.

The process of narrating inevitable includes interpretations, misinformation, hiding and lying. A longitudinal research perspective complicates the narratives even more, as Kenny (2007) reports from her field among poor, young Brazilians:

Life stories are always works in progress, and they grow, change and decay over time. Since life histories are living things, some children I met years ago had revised what they said earlier, or no longer emphasized things that were once important (p. 19).

This implies that the combination of longitudinal study and narrative interviews actually give the young participants the opportunity to revise their outlook in regard to what they have stated earlier.

Narratives do not function as historical records and should never be understood as such. The important feature with narrative is not that it reduces data but that it attributes new meaning (Bjerrum Nielsen 1995). We do not only fail to tell the whole story but we also add something new. As Gullestad (1996) recommend, this 'impurity' of autobiographical narratives is best read as *reflexivity*, which makes it an important quality to study (see also Ursin 2011). For an orphaned street boy who grows up to be a criminal, one can only imagine all the suppressed feelings and day dreams the claim of having a father, and even a police officer as a father, conceals.

4.1.4. Some reflections on my field and participatory methods

Academic literature on methodology in research with young people confirms an outspread enthusiasm for participatory methods. I therefore believe that it is necessary to clarify the reasons for me to exclude such an approach. A participatory approach is argued to be most appropriate not only in research with the younger generation (i.e. Ennew and Boyden 1997; Hart 1992), but also in research with 'individuals, groups or communities whom we regard as 'silent', vulnerable, disempowered, poor and disadvantaged' (Clark 2004:5). This approach include 'participatory techniques' such as visual techniques (drawing exercises, diagrams, photographing, etc.); role play and drama; written techniques (essays, diaries, etc.) and group techniques (focus group, group activities, group drawings, etc.) to name a few (Ennew and Boyden 1997). According to Punch

(2002), these techniques are believed to be more suited among young people based on the assumptions that they prefer 'fun' methods, are more competent at them and have a shorter attention span. These techniques thus aim to allow communication between the different conceptual outlooks of children and young people on the one hand, and those of researchers on the other (Frazer in Conolly 2008).

Some researchers within the 'participatory paradigm' push the pendulum further. They promote the 'employment' of young people as co-researchers, working collaboratively with researchers to shape the research agenda (Cahill 2007; Clark 2004; Connolly 2008; O'Brien and Moules 2007). In her review of the large body of literature on participatory research, Clark (2004) sums up the benefits of young people as co-researchers:

- They know each other
- They have the ability of talking the same 'language'
- They are able to talk about 'taboo' subjects with peers
- They are more able to know when the respondent was 'pissing about' or not
- They are less intimidating than adults and able to make the interview situation 'informal'

As a result, participatory research is reckoned to enable the articulation of voices of young people and transform power relations within the research setting, and therefore enhance validity and reliability (O'Kane 2000).

More recently, literature on young people and participatory research has been criticised for presenting these methods as 'an epistemological and ethical panacea' (Gallagher and Gallagher 2008). Several researchers warn against blindly adopting such a strategy before entering the field, without acknowledging the specific research topics, participants and socio-cultural context (Gallagher and Gallagher 2008; McCarry 2012; Punch 2002; Thompson 2007). One of the arguments presented is that many research studies seem to perceive young people as a homogenised group, ignoring aspects of age, maturity, gender, socio-cultural and educational background (Conolly 2008; Punch 2002; Thompson 2007).

In line with these critical voices, I argue that there are unique ethical, methodological and practical implications that arise in the intersection of research topics, participants and socio-cultural context. It was these case-specific implications which made a participatory approach inadequate in my research project. The implications were chiefly related to the fact that the field

was predominantly *street-based*. Instead of, for instance, inviting pupils at a local school to participate, I depended on access to a male street ambience. A participatory approach would have been time-consuming, including identification and recruitment of co-researchers; training; piloting; evaluation of performance; collection of data and payment of services (Clark 2004). All this seemed difficult to conduct due to the uncertainty and mobility of street life: The young men were always on the move, having their routines as well as their ad hoc activities, being busy, on the constant lookout for opportunities to improve their day (see Ursin 2012). Due to the unpredictability of street life, many of the young men also had great difficulties of keeping appointments. Therefore I also expected that focus-groups would be near impossible to arrange.

Trying to adapt their lifestyles to my research plans would not only entail extreme practical difficulties, but also, more importantly, raise ethical issues. Regarding the issue of co-researchers, I reasoned that even though they would be economically rewarded, a long-term research presence would necessarily involve an absence from the street. This could have resulted in the participants losing their fixed spots, customers, and small jobs, all which allow a certain economical predictability in their everyday lives.

Concerning both the question of having co-researchers and doing focus-groups, previous experience had revealed that instead of being a united peer group, this street ambience was marked by internal differences and violent conflicts, at the level of homicides and homicide attempts. Doing focus group interviews with young people on the street in Fiji, Vakaoti (2009) reports that the level of participation was severely determined by positions in the street hierarchy, with a few dominating voices silencing the others. Even though I do think that most of my participants would have been active in group discussions, I believe important, but sensitive issues would have been disregarded (O’Kane 2000). Furthermore, it would have been very difficult to ensure confidentiality and although it is beyond my imagination how confidential information could be misused in this hostile street ambience, it was a risk I was not willing to run. Therefore, taken into account both practical and ethical implications, I reckoned it more appropriate for me to adapt to their everyday life and fit their schedules than the other way around.

Nonetheless, I initially planned to employ some participatory techniques. Due to poor literacy skills, I had chosen exercises of drawing, diagrams and time schedules as potential research methods. Entering the field, however, I soon realised that many of the young men became intimidated by pencil and paper. Bearing in mind that most of them had not only minimal educational background, but that it also in some cases had passed two decades since they last were enrolled in a school, it is easy to understand that all exercises resembling school-tasks

evoked distress and embarrassment. I also suspect that since the street population had grown up, they had also 'aged out' of some of the participatory techniques. Still, there was one technique I knew they would enjoy: Photographing. Discussing this with a couple of the key participants, they thought that some of the more crack-addicted participants would find it too tempting to sell even a disposable camera. Thus instead of presenting unnecessary temptations or choosing who were 'trustworthy' and not, I had to leave that one out as well.

In the end I also wish to emphasise that while reading about participatory research, I came to realise that the advantages of my longitudinal research, resulting in street experience and long-term relationships with many of the young men in Barra, resembled the benefits of having young people as co-researchers (listed above).

- Since I already knew them, I had easy access to them and sampled the eleven key participants through direct contact. Of the eleven, I knew nine from previous fieldworks and almost half of them from 2002.
- Because of established trust relations, sensitive and 'taboo' topics, such as involvement in crime and police abuse, were easier to discuss.
- Knowing their backgrounds also enabled me to ask appropriate questions which again improved the quality of the empirical material. To some extent I could also verify their stories and know when they were 'pissing about'.
- Knowing the street ambience and many of the key participants for years, talking their 'language' (further discussed later), and being only a couple of years older than many of them, I reckon that I – as a researcher – did not appear intimidating in their eyes.
- As recommended in research with people on the street, the participants suggested places and times that suited them (Hanbury 2002:28), making the interview setting informal. Although most of the interviews were conducted in public space, our words were safely drowned out by the bustling street sounds.

All in all, compared to participatory research, I argue that longitudinal participant observation can create equally valid and reliable empirical material, as well as help to neutralise power relations within the research setting in similar ways.

To sum up these methodological discussions, I would like to make a few points. Methods, their rules and practices help to *produce* – not merely reflect on – the reality they understand (Law 2004). In research with young people the different realities are created, defined and re-defined

through different methods, ranging from cognitive testing of children in laboratories to pupils being co-researcher and making their own radio-programs, and to young men telling their life narratives on the street. I agree with Law (2004) in that the choice of methods decides the outcome: Some parts of the 'out-there' are made visible while other parts, though necessary, are pushed into invisibility. Obviously, no single theory has been, or will be, able to account for all aspects of street life. I believe that wherein each theoretical onset or methodological stand contribute with an important piece to the puzzle, the information in sum should be perceived as complementary, not contradictory.

4.2. Ethics and trust issues

4.2.1. Gaining access to the field

The young men in this research, encountered on the street in Barra, represent voices from the margins of urban Brazil. Many of them do not have a permanent address but are labelled 'homeless' by the society. Most of them do not have a formal work permit and some of them do not even have a personal ID number. All of them are outside the educational system and the formal labour market. Many use drugs and some commit other illicit activities, such as thefts, burglaries, assaults and drug trafficking. They represent an inaccessible and 'hard-to-reach' population in multiple ways. As Almeida and de Carvalho (2000) emphasise, young people who live on the street have internalised a deep distrust of everything and everyone, especially those that are not part of their world.

The access I have achieved is thus not a matter of course, but a result of many instances. As mentioned, I first got to know many of these men, then adolescent boys, on a private basis, seeking their friendship not out of research purposes but out of personal engagement. In gaining and maintaining their acceptance, it has been essential to show interest in getting to know them and to treat them with respect. Obviously, being marginalised and excluded by the society, not many people with my background – white, middle class, foreigner – seek their friendship. As Bourgois (2003) experienced in the ghetto in Harlem; the young men expressed relief when they realised that I hung out with them of genuine interest rather than to obtain drugs or engage in other illegal activities. In research with young people on the streets of Dhaka, Conticini reveals

that establishing these research relationships 'is also a matter of respect and love, showing that researchers care for those children beyond the purpose of their research' (2007:80).

By choosing to be with them, ignoring warnings by the police and ugly looks and comments by passers-by, I gained status as the 'Wise', a sympathetic normal that for some reason gains accept and membership among stigmatised (Goffman 1963:41). As a 'Wise', I earned their confidence and protection which later enabled research access at times and in places others would have avoided or been excluded.

Issues of trust, both in the interview setting and in everyday interaction, both from their side and mine, are imperative to comprehend my position in the field (see also Ursin 2012). To trust, according to Warren (1999), is to accept vulnerability and the risk of potential harm based on positive expectations in exchange for the benefits of cooperation. Bourgois (2003) reflects that marginalised individuals – such as drug users and dealers – distrust representatives of mainstream society and will not reveal their intimate experiences of substance abuse or criminal enterprise to a stranger. He argues that only by establishing long-term relationships of trust can one document the lives of these people. Similarly, I had to continuously demonstrate both my trustworthiness and trust in the young men in my field when necessary in encounters with the police, residents and traders. Demonstrating my trustworthiness was for instance done by confidentiality regarding personal information they shared with me, not reporting illegal activities to the legal authorities and caring when they were in some kind of trouble. Demonstrating my trust in them was likewise important, and was also done in various ways, such as ignoring warnings from passers-by and police, and using both my camera and my Dictaphone in their presence. The latter was similar to Drybread (2006) who carried her bag into the juvenile prison as a display of trust to demonstrate that she did not presume the young prisoners' criminality.

These relations of trust and trustworthiness are reciprocal, thus the young men also demonstrated their trust and trustworthiness in various ways, for instance by sharing their personal narratives with me, never stealing my personal belongings and protecting me in places normally defined as dangerous for me (Barra and other areas at night, *favelas*, places where drugs were distributed, state prison and so on).

There was always a fine balance between showing loyalty and remaining neutral, for instance in conversations and conflicts about drugs and crime. I never encouraged involvement in illicit activities, but at the same time avoided a judgemental stand. I only expressed disapproval when asked for my personal opinion. Doing participant research in the street ambience among young people involved in both crime and drugs, it was impossible to set myself apart from illicit

activities. To prove loyalty, trust and trustworthiness, I had to silently witness drug consumption, pick pocketing, car burglaries and so forth. But, as Drybread (2006:43) reasons, by witnessing these crimes, one establishes oneself as a person who can be trusted. However, this also led to some unpleasant situations, such as witnessing people being assaulted in humiliating and frightening ways. I often sympathised with the victims and struggled with my consciousness at several occasions, but I knew that to interfere would mean to breach these relationships of trust (see Abebe 2009) and the end of my fieldwork. Thus I reminded myself of my ethical considerations towards my informants. Besides, considering the brutal police response (which I had witnessed many times), it became obvious that reporting was not an option.

My position in the field is also a result of learning the street version of Brazilian Portuguese, considered by the middle class as gross, only suiting the poor and uneducated.²⁹ In this way I gained access to an 'oral field' not available for many: For instance, I learned how to decode their secret argot used on a daily basis to discuss criminal activities while others were present. I also employed their street language as a trust-inviting signal (Offe 1999), demonstrating my status as a 'Wise' to strangers, for instance when someone I had never met arrived in Barra, newly released from prison, regarding me as a potential victim. Another trust-inviting signal I used was 'insider knowledge', for instance during the interviews with the two key informants who I did not know prior to the last fieldwork, I repeatedly stressed knowledge of crime, drugs and street life, such as the routine of buying and using crack, to prove that I was a trusted 'Wise' in order to make them feel at ease with discussing sensitive topics.

4.2.2. Reflections on ethical matters

Since the field is not set apart from hegemonic discourses in which power is distributed, my research position was situated within these existing power relationships (Ansell 2001). At first glance, I had a dominant position as white and middle-class in contrast to the stigmatised, poor, homeless young men (Ensign 2003). But as power relationships are dynamic, so was my position in the field: While it is imperative to highlight the power that I, as a researcher, had over the researched and the research process, the young men also had a great impact on the research process, choosing whether to participate or not, what to tell and not, where to take me and who

²⁹ In Willson's *Dance lest we all fall down* (2010), the author depicts a situation where her street Portuguese makes an academic audience burst out in laughter, finding it incompatible with intellectual talk.

to introduce me to, and if to protect me and thus give me access to different locations. However, as the academic author, I choose how – and if – their voices will be conveyed in the final product. This process touches upon an ethical issue of representation, further discussed in the section on post-field analysis.

Taking part in the world of the young men, it is also impossible to avoid noticing the material inequality between us. As a general rule, I tried to tone these differences down when I was among them by never wearing watch, jewellery or cell phone, walking or using public transportation, avoiding chic shops and restaurants, etc. Though this reduced the social discrepancy, the reality remained obvious: when they headed for their card box beds on the pavements, I locked myself in to my upper class apartment. I realised early that my relationship to the young people on the street had to be based on mutual respect, not on one-way charity. Thus I have tried to be consistent in not giving money when someone has begged. As time passed and crack smoking became common, this got easier, knowing that the money more often than not ended up in the hands of the drug cartels. Instead I have offered help in other ways by providing clothes, food, medicines and bus tickets when necessary. I have also helped in non-material ways, as mentioned, by caring whenever someone was in trouble or missing. Similar to the reciprocity Abebe (2008) experienced with poor children in Ethiopia, I also encountered a genuine generosity among the young men in Barra, always sharing when eating and drinking, inviting me home to their families, and giving me small presents.

In the last fieldwork I also had to reflect on whether to pay my key participants. Although researchers are advised to not give money for research participation (i.e. Ennew and Plateu 2004), other researchers have emphasised the reciprocal character of research. I agree with Abebe (2008), who underscores that time is a valuable resource for young people living in poor conditions and argues that they should be compensated for their effort. Although I never promised money in change for interviews, I chose to compensate some of the participants in retrospect of the interview, aware that they had lost costumers because of their absence on the street corner, mending cars or selling merchandise.

4.2.3. Danger in the field

Doing research in a violent ambience entails certain dangers for the researcher. Lee (1995) divides the dangers into two, the ambient and the situational danger. The ambient danger is caused by being present in a potentially dangerous setting, more specifically in this field; the street at night and the places where drugs are distributed. Access to nocturnal urban space was essential with my research purposes. Luckily, I had already gained some 'street wisdom' (Anderson 1990; Ursin 2012) from previous stays in Salvador: Caused by a sheer proximity to the street ambience, I became familiar with elements of Barra – young men living on the street, prostitutes, women selling hot dogs and *acarajé*, drug dealers, police men, security guards and middle class families. I gradually routinized and de-mystified the urban space of Barra, expanding my 'mental map' filled with indirect descriptions by media and stories told by terrified middle class residents (Koskela 1997). On the street, people send out 'vibes' of either fear and hostility or comfort and a sense of commonality (Anderson 1990). Anderson argues these vibes can tip the balance in creating the subsequent interaction. Sending out vibes of trust rather than fear was an essential safety strategy in my fieldworks, or in Bourgois' (2003) words; 'To be successful in my street ethnography, I had to be relaxed and enjoy myself on the street' (p. 35).

Also by using the urban space, I gained friendships and 'sponsors' (Lee 1995), protecting me against potential dangers. As Willson (2010) recounts from her stay in Salvador; she consciously befriended the 'Other' to gain access to a field perceived as dangerous by many. Other safety strategies I employed were; adopting the street version of Portuguese, wearing 'street wear' and walking 'the bold walk', that is walking determinedly, with confident steps and keep my head up when meeting someone, not avoiding eye-contact, projecting the message of fearlessness (Koskela 1997).

The other kind of danger Lee (1995) mentions is situational and arises if the researcher's presence evokes hostility or violence from those within the setting. Among the young people on the street, I felt protection rather than hostility. However, the arrival of crack influenced the street ambience, and although I continued to have my sponsors among the young men, the drug added some unpredictability in the behaviour of the most addicted, especially when the cravings were strong, normally around midnight and later. While this resulted in some discomfort, the only confrontations I experienced were persistent begging. It thus became even more important to have visibly empty pockets, avoiding the tedious discussions (Ursin, in review).

I also became increasingly aware that my field site was an important territory for the drug cartels, involving my key participants as both dealers and addicts. In order to avoid dangerous misunderstandings on my research purposes, I avoided all information connected to drug cartels and trafficking. At one time I was asked to turn off my tape recorder by one of the participants when this issue came up during an interview. Goldstein (2009) experienced the same in her fieldwork in a *favela* in Rio de Janeiro while Bourgois (2003) shunned information about the Italian mafia in Harlem, N.Y.

My presence was not welcome by the police patrolling the streets, and their negative attitude caused situational danger at several occasions. Once, when a police man off duty was out drinking in Barra, he pushed one of the young men towards the wall, trying to force him to reveal my 'real intentions' in Brazil. He then approached me and stated that he would either discover what crimes I conducted, insinuating that I was involved in international drug trafficking, or incriminate me in order to get me imprisoned and later deported. The police also loaded their guns at me and body searched me at several occasions. At one time twelve loaded guns were aimed at me because I was walking with a young man who lived on the street after midnight, assuming that my intentions had to be illegal, probably connected to drug dealing.

4.2.4. My position as an anomaly in the field

The longitudinal aspect of my research also had consequences for my position in the field, as I – alongside the research participants – 'aged' through different life phases. When I first got to know the street ambience in Barra I was a single female foreigner in my early twenties. By the time of my last fieldwork, I had become a wife and a mother. This affected my research position in several ways, some which are discussed in this section.

The changes of my position in the field had some methodological and ethical implications, especially concerning my motherhood. I was used to roam the streets of the city centres after midnight, (startlingly) seldom feeling fear. To have my one-year-old son waiting for me at home changed this radically. It was not chiefly that I was willing to run less risks, but that my definition of 'risks' was altered. Areas and situations I previously had interpreted as ok – as drug outlets and certain areas of the city centre after midnight – suddenly appeared dangerous and hence became partly off limits. Taking my son out for strolls, I would also feel a certain vulnerability which I was not familiar with. These changes were results of my responsibility as a mother, not being able to

take decisions only on my behalf but also having to take my son's well-being into consideration. In retrospect I was lucky that I had already done many months of consistent participant observation, being able to focus more on narrative interviews, a method that entailed less hours on the street at night.

Initially when getting to know the young men in Barra, being female in a masculine street environment, I experienced several of them flirting with me. During my first fieldwork I began dating a Brazilian who later became my husband. Thus the flirting gradually diminished. In fact, the gendered aspect of my presence in the field was a greater concern among some of the middle class residents who sometimes warned me about the risks of rape and other times accused me for having a sexual predilection for poor young men. This is similar to what Drybread (2006) experienced by the staff while doing fieldwork in a juvenile prison in Brazil. She describes how she was treated with attention and respect by the staff at first, being a researcher from abroad. Then later, as her affinity with the incarcerated boys was established, suspicion and hostility developed among the staff.

Hence, the trust, respect and friendship I have gained from the young men, I often lost from the middle class residents. As the police, the middle class residents did neither like nor understand why I kept hanging out with people on the street. Being a white, European young woman, I represented the Brazilian middle class image of the Western ideal. Mingling with the young men, I represented the opposite. I was indeed an anomaly, 'a matter out of place' and a threat to good order (Douglas 2002). The reactions were many: The police warned me, strangers on the street tried to 'save' me, and neighbours criticized me in public. In the beginning I found this sort of speculations and reactions entertaining, later I found it challenging and sometimes humiliating.

Whiteness is viewed as a genetic resource and a racialised form of cultural capital among Brazilians (Sheriff 2001). As a white European doing research in Brazil, my range of movement within the highly racialised and classed society was extraordinarily broad, ranging from the nocturnal street and the *favelas* to shopping centres and the university. My whiteness and foreignness proved to be a cloak of privilege in a range of contexts, as in gaining access to institutions as police stations and prisons. Many of the young men also used this strategically as their protection, for instance by drawing attention to our friendship as a trust-inviting signal towards residents or tourists. Of course, in other settings, this same whiteness and foreignness was a disadvantage, turning me into a potential victim of pickpocketing or assaults.

Being a white European in the complex discourses on race, class and nationality in contemporary Brazil, my physical appearance also came to be the root of my greatest field frustration. Reading Margaret Willson's (2010) experiences from Salvador, I recognised many of her reflections. Her memoirs depict the discomfort of constantly being betwixt and between: while she identifies with her poor Afro-Brazilian friends, doing *capoeira* and speaking street Portuguese, she continues to be identified as a white foreigner outside the circle of her closest associates.

Finally, regards to my positionality, I wish to emphasise that my perspective as a researcher is influenced by my close relation to the young men in Barra. But obviously, as depicted above, I share many experiences with the middle class residents. As concerning the police, I understand their despairing fight against crime; working long hours for low salaries, facing danger on an everyday basis, being criticised by the politicians and upper classes while distrusted and detested by the poor, within a system where the law protects the minor, the courts have everlasting waiting lists and the prisons became inhumanly overcrowded a long time ago. I thus hope I have managed to explore social interaction in the urban space of Barra without being too partial.

4.3. Doing research outside the street ambience of Barra

4.3.1. Children and adolescents in a governmental institution

In my PhD fieldwork I also visited a governmental institution for children 'at risk' twice weekly. The institution was in the suburbs, half an hour with bus from Barra. The fifteen children who participated were of both sexes and ranged between seven and fifteen years of age at my time of visit. They spent their daytime at the institution while going to dormitories located elsewhere in the evenings. All the children were from poor backgrounds, most of them had previously resided in the *favelas*, but one resided on the street with her mother and a couple were from the interior of Bahia. Among half of the children had spent periods living on the street and had strong connections to the street ambience, but only one had spent time in Barra.

My days at the institution were spent participating in the everyday activities, such as class room conversations, meals, football, etc. I also conducted interviews and drawing exercises with the children. Since the custody of the children was in the hands of the institution, I sought

permission to execute the research first of the head of the institution and later of each child. The same ethical precautions were taken as when I carried out interviews in Barra.

Prior to the interviews, the children made drawings with the following topics; 'street life' (*vida na rua*), 'a beautiful place I know' (*um lugar bonito que eu conheço*), 'my family', 'dreams', or own choice of topic. According to Punch (2002), the advantage of using drawing with children is that it can be creative, fun and can encourage children to be more actively involved in the research. The use of drawing gives children time to think about what they wish to portray. The image can be changed and added to, which gives children more control over their form of expression, unlike an interview situation where responses tend to be quicker and more immediate. However, I also experienced that some of the older did not wish to participate, reckoning it as childish. While they were drawing, I circulated and talked with them about their work to facilitate interpretation. This was also an excellent way of getting to know each child and prepare for the future interviews.

The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended and had similar topics as the ones listed previously (see appendix 2), encouraging the children to narrate. Although the topics were similar, the matters discussed in detail differed among the two cohorts, due to the different settings. The children talked more about the life on the institution and their relation to their families, while the young men in Barra talked more about street life. My focus in these three articles has been the *street ambience*; consequently my analyses are based to a greater extent on the empirical material from Barra.

Although there were many similarities between the empirical material acquired in the institution and on the street, I wish to discuss some of the differences. Machado (2003) did semi-structured, open-ended interviews with children and adolescents in the same institution some years earlier, and reports:

[I]n all of the recorded interviews, the presence of the researcher as speaker is undeniable. [...] In most interviews, the answers given by street children are not sufficient to the research objectives. This was one of the obstacles faced in collecting the empirical material. As a way to overcome the problem, the researcher [...] seeks a more complete answer. Another difficulty arises when the researcher realizes that his research subjects often refuse to respond, remaining silent or claiming not to know or not to understand the question (p. 59, my translation).

The empirical material of Machado is similar to mine. The interviews from the institution were shorter. Analysing the transcripts I noticed that in the interviews with the older generation, I always drew on previous knowledge and observations in Barra while supplementing follow-up questions. In the case of the youngest generation, I only knew them in an institutional setting and this limited my ability to create follow-up questions and thus shortened the interviews. Some of the children also had a more abrupt way of narrating, and others were more impatient, eager to return to whatever activities the rest was doing.

In general, the older generation was more open in the interviews. Some of the younger ones reported lower involvement in illicit activities. However, the age difference between the two cohorts justifies the possibility that the older generation had more experience with such activities, having spent years on the street. Many of the youngest generation also seemed to withhold sensitive information. This is probably a result of my different roles in the two fields. My relationship with the children was more transitory and dependent on the institutional setting, and I was more easily associated with the staff; being one more adult asking questions about their lives. Nevertheless, I was deeply impressed by many of the children's honesty and ability to recount stories and reflect on important changes in their young lives, and hope that I get a chance to further examine this material later on.

4.3.2. Neighbours and traders in Barra

In my MA thesis, I analysed the relationship between the young men on the street and the surroundings; formal residents (mainly middle class), traders and the police. In my last fieldwork I further explored these relations by also approaching these latter users of Barra, carrying out structured, open-ended interviews (see appendix 3 and 4) to increase understanding of their relationship to Barra.

Barra (and other prominent areas of Salvador) is a 'walled' neighbourhood with physical barriers controlled by security guards around private apartment buildings and semi-private office buildings and shops. These fortified enclaves (further described in the context chapter) are products of a general skepticism and social fear among the upper classes in Brazil. In order to include the voices of the middle class residents in my project, I could not approach the ones I encountered on the street, since this only would have represented the residents who actually use the public space of Barra. I thus decided to carry out a door-to-door research. After a couple of

hours, ringing door bells, explaining myself in intercoms and to security guards, with no result, I realised that no one was willing to let strangers in, not even a young female European.

To resolve this problem, I decided to conduct the interviews in apartment buildings where I had resided and where the security guards knew me. They then talked with the residents and arranged the interviews, either in the lobby or in their homes. After managing the hindrance of anonymity, the people I finally interviewed were open and talkative. I interviewed a total of 20 residents, both male and female, ranging from youth to elderly, and including both users and non-users of the public space of their neighbourhood. Several of the residents also encouraged me to speak with the head of the Association of Residents of Barra, which resulted in a two hour long, very interesting conversation, enlightening many aspects of how the affluent use their positions in moulding everyday life in urban space.

I also interviewed eight traders running business in Barra. This included owners of shops, restaurants and hotels. These participants were in general easy to find and willing to participate. The only problem was the busy schedule of many of them, making it difficult to find hours that suited them. The local newspaper was also a source of increasing understanding of the formal residents' and traders' relation to public space in Barra, since letters to the editor regarding relevant issues were frequently published, as well as journalistic stories covering the latest news of the neighbourhood.

4.3.3. The military police

Doing research on social relations in public space in Brazil, it is impossible to ignore the role of the patrolling police forces, the *Policia Militar*. As described in the previous chapter, contemporary way of policing is widely criticized by social scientists for being corrupt, violent, discriminatory and racist (Caldeira 2000; Rizzini 2011; Soares *et al.* 2005). Unfortunately, this has also become my perception of the patrolling police forces in Barra and Salvador. Early in my first fieldwork I witnessed police violence at first hand, when the police escorted a teenage boy with mental illness into a police booth formed of windowpanes. Shortly after:

The illuminated improvised stage displayed four police officers furiously bending to and from something on the floor, with their thick truncheons moving up and down as fast as lightning, all accompanied with the loud screaming of a pivate, echoing throughout the neighbourhood. When he finally was thrown outside on

the sidewalks he barely managed to walk. His nose was bleeding and his face was mashed up, he clenched his ribs, and staggered, losing his sandals, heading against the road without noticing the busy traffic. I ran towards him to pick up his sandals and to give him a helping hand. One of the police officers [...] stepped outside and pulled his gun, first aiming it towards me and then towards the praça, shouting 'This is what happens to *cheira-colas*³⁰ in Barra!' (Ursin 2006:43).

Later I had countless encounters with police corruption, discrimination and brutality. As a result, I came to the same conclusion as Goldstein (2009); that the police only made matters worse for poor people, thus I never sought their service and distanced myself from the police while doing participant observation.

In my last fieldwork I aimed to interview some of the police men and women who patrolled the streets. In order to gain permission to carry out the interview I was directed to the head of the Military Police in Salvador at their main headquarters situated outside Barra. He demanded a kind of formal notification of my research issued by the Brazilian Embassy in Oslo. When I contacted the Embassy, they claimed that no such document existed. Returning to the head of the Military Police, he argued that it was sufficient with an interview with him since he represented the attitudes of the Police department. I had to give up and sampled police men through acquaintances or while they were patrolling instead. Luckily, some years had passed and there were many new faces among the police squad in Barra and some of these were willing to talk with me when introducing my research project on issues of safety and danger among the residents in the neighbourhood (although I left out a definition of 'residents', making them assume that the middle class was my main focus), resulting in eight interviews (see appendix 5).

4.4. The journey from field notes and tape-records to academic articles

4.4.1. Interpretation, analysis and writing

All the interviews with young people were tape-recorded and the duration of each interview was between 15 minutes and two and a half hours. They were transcribed by an assistant. The rest of the interviews were written down while interviewing. My assistant was a student in psychology and an experienced and efficient transcriber. However, due to his middle class background, there

³⁰ Slang for a person who sniffs glue.

were some parts of the interviews related to talk about street phenomena, especially where slang, argot or local name references were used, which he found unintelligible. Therefore I always conducted a second round of transcribing to correct occasional misinterpretations and fill in potential empty spaces. This process also increased my apprehension of the empirical material.

Ideally, I would have arranged a workshop, discussing the empirical material with the young men. But for reasons partly discussed above, this was not done. Nonetheless, I discussed many of my early analytic hunches with the young participants along the way, either while interviewing or while hanging out in Barra. Therefore, although they have not been explicitly involved in the data analysis, many have contributed to interpretation. As I found the reflections of the young people invaluable, many of their quotations are consciously incorporated in the published articles, keeping their voices vivid post-field as well. After finishing my PhD, I have also agreed to send my dissertation and hold a lecture at the institution for young people 'at risk' I visited when in the field.

Returning back home, I continued to analyse the empirical material. Initially, I printed the interview transcripts in paper and read them several times, in addition to going over field notes, written interviews and newspaper clippings, while making notes on possible categorisations. I then colour-coded the electronic interview material according to relevant over-arching themes, such as 'home', 'police', 'drugs', 'trust', 'relation to street peers' and 'relation to middle class/traders'. Some sections covered several themes and were labelled thereby. Since previous fieldworks and analyses had already triggered my curiosity towards notions of home and temporal use of urban space, empirical material focusing on these themes was separated on an early stage. Even though I never intended to study the crack epidemic, reflections around the arrival of crack saturated both my own notes and the interview material, thus this ended up being the focus of the last article (Ursin, in review).

After browsing all the different kinds of material, the next stage was to gather all relevant material in an electronic document. The most essential quotes were translated into English. Simultaneously, I read multi-disciplinary literature on contemporary debates on the actual topics. This process was dialectical, moving my focus back and forth between empirical data on the one hand and existing theory and relevant literature on the other. In analysing, I used two different approaches which Nilsen (2005) has called a 'top-down' and a 'bottom-up' approach. The latter approach is based on the principles of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967), and was employed when I decided the theoretical concepts of my analysis of notions of home on the street (Ursin 2011): The concepts of autonomy, safety and belonging as core elements of 'feeling at

home' are 'empirical-near', grounded in my own empirical material, and generated for the purpose of this exact analysis. I felt that this approach was more true to the participants' reflections, thus was best suited to grasp the notion of 'home' among people living on the street, stepping outside common definitions and descriptions of 'home'.

When analysing the influence of crack in the street environment, I used a 'top-down' approach, 'importing' and applying the actor-network theory (Ursin, in review). This time I felt that a 'grand' theory would not restrict the analysis, but rather facilitate the tracing of essential factors and associations to increase understanding of the phenomenon studied, enabling a manifold approach.

The writing – from the first draft, mapping out ideas, to the published articles – has been a long and bumpy journey. Rather than writing up a fixed idea, I used writing as a method of discovery and analysis (Richardson 1994), elaborating on a synthesis of the empirical material and the pre-existing literature. The articles are also a product of various academic dialogues, receiving consistent and constructive feedback from my supervisors, and, on a later stage, from the anonymous reviewers of the academic journals. Thus the writing has been a dynamic and creative process, and these dialogues have not merely improved the quality of the articles, but also raised my awareness on writing for an academic audience as well as enhanced my knowledge on theoretical and methodological matters.

4.4.2. Ethical issues in representing the marginalised

All though many of the young participants have been genuinely engaged in the process of (re)producing knowledge, I, as a researcher, cannot act as neutral conduit for their authentic voices (Ansell 2001). The empirical material has been translated, interpreted and simplified since leaving the field, adding my voice as a researcher on behalf of theirs.

As the author, I choose how – and if – their voices will be conveyed in the final product. This process touches upon a sensitive issue of ethics: How to represent my key participants in order to avoid further negative stereotyping, just as the society has done for centuries. Although I have struggled over these issues for a long time, I have come to believe that by not ignoring the negative aspects of street life (such as drug abuse, petty crime and physical violence), but rather try to be faithful to the young men's reflections around these aspects, this thesis increases our understanding of their everyday lives on the social as well as geographical margins of urban Brazil.

In fact, I feel that by analysing some of the more incomprehensible, disapproved and controversial street phenomena, such as choosing the pavement as home (Ursin 2011), assaulting passers-by (Ursin 2012) and using drugs (Ursin, in review), this thesis can challenge some of the existing negative stereotypes and contribute to an understanding of the more complex mechanisms involved (Sandberg and Pedersen 2011). As I argue in the second article, the empirical material *dismantles* some common dichotomies – displaying the young men’s multifaceted and sometimes contradicting identities as victims and offenders, fearful and fearsome – which again destabilises the prevalent stereotypes. Although one of my main aims is to demonstrate how these young men employ their agency – and simultaneously show their humanness, rationality, strength and adaptability – there should be left no doubt that the society which they inhabit is fundamentally hostile towards them, being marginalised in multiple ways and rejected by countless of institutions since birth and throughout life. I thus hope to capture both individual agency and surrounding structures in my analysis.

4.4.3. Some notes on race and gender

As further discussed in the last chapter, I have chosen concepts of ‘home’, space and time, and networks to analyse the empirical material in the three articles. In examining the social relations, I have foregrounded class (Weber 2004) – the division between the affluent middle class residents and traders, and the deprived young people from the *favelas* – for instance in how power is distributed through time and space. Although not examined explicitly, the experience of the street is also *structured* by categories of race and gender. These are neither attributions nor descriptive, but rather social *relations* which are based upon unequal distributions of power (Pain 2001).

The division between the poor and the middle class in Brazil – and between the people who inhabit the street and the people who reside in the surrounding high-rises in Barra – is not only a division of class, but also of skin colour. The great majority of the young men in Barra and the children at the governmental institution have a darker skin complexion than most of the middle class and traders interviewed, concurring with other studies among young people on the street in Brazil. Although non-whites are rare in the upper classes and blacks are overrepresented among the poor, class is emphasised as the valid distinction by the Brazilians in general, not skin colour (Sansone 2003). This was also the case in my empirical material. Only one of the key participants highlighted skin colour as essential in everyday social interaction. As a result, I have

neither discussed race as a discourse nor employed race as an analytical tool. However, I acknowledge that discourses on race permeate my empirical material on social interaction on the streets of Barra, probably forming patterns of attitudes representative of the Brazilian society worth exploring further.

Gender intersects every dimension of the lives of young people on the street (Mickelson 2000). The street is considered as principal domain of males in the Brazilian society (Gough and Franch 2005; Rosemberg 2000; Scheper-Hughes and Hoffman 1998), closely connected to the ideas of the street as a place of work, struggle, danger and rascality (Da Matta 1984). Thus girls and women are perceived as 'out of place' (Douglas 2002) not only because they create a *home* in the street, but also because they are *females* in a masculine space. Females, in general, are at greater risk than males due to the gendered division of labour in the informal economy and the dangers they face as sexual targets (Mickelson 2000). There are indeed many interesting issues which should be investigated further in the future. Such as how these young women refuse to be merely objects in space where they experience restrictions and obligations, but rather actively produce, define and reclaim space, and thus subvert conventional gender norms in the Brazilian society. As social expectations shape and are shaped by not only gender, but also class, race and age, maybe being a poor girl on the street is looked upon with less prejudice than being a poor woman, which might explain the lack of women in the latter stages of this research.

Although the research excludes a female perspective, it has a gendered dimension. The field is moulded by being a masculine space and gains its character through this. Moreover, behind the issues in this thesis, culturally proscribed versions of manhood – of what the Brazilian society and its individuals define what it means to be a man – are at play. There is a social pressure to achieve a productive version of manhood by whatever means necessary, achieving financial independence and showing a firm attitude as a 'real man' (Barker 2005). The participants meet these expectations and express their masculinity by seeking independence, embracing the chaos of urban environment instead of family homes, and cultivating impressions of themselves as both trustworthy and hard-working employees and unpredictable, fearsome and violent assaulters.

Barker (2005) explains that traditionally, in gender studies, researchers have carried out analyses examining how culturally proscribed versions of womanhood have constrained the life choices, health and well-being, and human rights for women. He argues that women's well-being cannot be improved without including boys and men, and highlights the importance of exploring the destructiveness of some versions of manhood, resulting in crime involvement, violent behaviour, and risks of dying young.

5. Exploring marginalised young men's relation to the street ambience in an elite neighbourhood

The last chapter of this thesis presents the three articles in a summarised form and then teases out some of the overarching themes emanated in the following analyses. These themes focus on space, social encounters and transitions. They are chosen not only to connect the various theoretical and empirical strands mentioned, but also to form a complement to the articles in order to clarify the academic contribution of the thesis. At the end I discuss some policy implications of the empirical data.

5.1. Summary of articles

5.1.1. *'Wherever I lay my head is home' – young people's experience of home in the Brazilian street environment*

The first article sets out to explore what the notion of *home* entails for young men who live or used to live on the street in Barra. Based on the young men's home narratives, the empirical material scrutinises the homeless status they are ascribed by academics, journalists and policy makers and offers critical reflection on academic and hegemonic definitions of home. The article illustrates how many of these young men define the street, or rather specific parts of it, as their home. At the same time, the article divulges that their relations to their families' homes often are imbued with feelings of being 'out of place' and fear. In exploring their home narratives, the analysis reveals earlier ignored dimensions of *why* young people prefer the street rather than family home or institutions, emphasising the crucial significance of autonomy, safety and belonging. Their sense of autonomy, safety and belonging is deeply embedded in the social network in which they are part of in their new everyday lives in Barra.

However, it also demonstrates the personal, dynamic and changing character of these notions of home: When the street ambience roughens – as often occurs when boys mature and the attitudes towards them alter – their sentiments of autonomy, safety and belonging might radically alter.

5.1.2. *'The city is ours': The temporal construction of dominance among poor young men on the street in a Brazilian elite neighbourhood*

The second article is based on pervasive 24-hour participant observation in Barra and interviews with the different users (and non-users) of its public space. By juxtaposing daytime and night time social interaction between the young men and the middle class residents and traders, manifold and sometimes contradictory interactional relationships emerge. The young men depend largely on their surroundings to achieve access to survival and leisure resources, such as fresh water, food and money, and many of them therefore adjust to hegemonic social norms. Despite persistent processes of social exclusion and discrimination on both an individual and a structural level, they consciously strategize to challenge stereotypical perceptions to enable personal bonds with residents, traders and others. This includes a range of tactical moves, such as a preoccupation with their physical appearance, trying to present themselves as clean and sober, and a consciousness around their behaviour, expressing politeness, gratitude and professionalism when interacting with the residents and traders.

However, at night, many of the young men deal with these stereotypical perceptions fundamentally different: Rather than to try to prove them wrong, they fulfil these stereotypes by behaving in an intimidating and aggressive manner. But by being in this dominant position, they are also allowed the privilege to choose whom to attack and whom to protect. Thus, as the daytime interaction witnesses of both social exclusion and inclusion, the night time interaction reveals both street crime as well as street protection. In this sense, their position towards the residents and traders changes from subordinated during daytime to dominating at night time.

Regarding the academic debate on urban space and fear of crime, the article confronts prevalent stereotypes portraying these young men simply as dangerous offenders at the same time as it does not conceal the more callous aspects of street life. In this way it uniquely embraces the complexity of social relations in this field.

5.1.3. *The influence of crack among young people on the street in urban Brazil*

The third article examines how crack cocaine has changed the street ambience in Barra. In order to better comprehend the phenomenon of the 'crack epidemic', the article employs a holistic approach, using actor-network theory (ANT). The article demonstrates how different scales and places are intersected, from the global drug trafficking patterns to the local crack scenes in the impoverished *favelas*, to grasp why the drug gained foothold in urban Brazil. But when most literature on crack in Brazil concentrates on the drug cartels operating in the *favelas*, the main focus of this article is how crack influences the everyday life of young people on the street. However, as revealed by the empirical material, the street and the *favelas* are mutually interconnected. Thus the changes experienced in the street ambience are largely results of occurrences in the *favelas* where the drug trade is primarily rooted.

The combination of the empirical material and the ANT approach enables an account of the addictive and destructive character of crack, which again explains why these fatal consequences have become a reality now and not when other drugs – such as glue, marihuana and plain cocaine – dominated the Brazilian drug market. The manners which crack translates the different youth ambiances are exemplified through harmful consequences such as juvenile drug addiction and increased street violence.

5.2. Overarching themes

5.2.1. Spatial aspects of street life

One aim with this thesis is to provide a textured portrait of street life in urban Brazil. To be able to do so, the conceptualisation of time and space is crucial. The analyses are based upon an understanding of time and space which is inspired by Massey (2005). She conceptualises time as the dimension of change which is further discussed in the part on transitions. In regards to space, Massey disapproves of the idea of space as a flat surface, and practices and relations as something which occur *in* space and time. Instead she encourages us to see space *relationally* where relations create and define space and time. This relationalism echoes ideas in the actor-network theory (ANT), which regards spaces and times as emerging from processes and relations (Murdoch 1998).

ANT also adds a concern with networks, where space is supposedly enacted into networks of materialities, technologies, objects, natures and humans (Fariás 2010). Massey (2005) also shares with actor-network theorists a perception of space as something dynamic and as something that enables *multiplicity*. Space is, according to ANT, not an out-there reality, but rather made of assemblages, through which it can come into being in multiple ways (Fariás 2010).

With respect to the site of this study, Barra, the empirical material divulges that the neighbourhood is no one space but is differently enacted at multiple sites and times. The second article briefly displays the different meanings of the neighbourhood as it has multiple functions and significances for the various users (and non-users), as a residential and commercial area, as well as a tourist destination, in addition to work and living space for poor people. The functions and significances of Barra are flexible, contextual, relational and contestable. The empirical observations in the article reveal how the users' perception of the public space of Barra changes with the circadian rhythm in a correlative process: The users' sense of place (i.e. ours or theirs, familiar or unfamiliar, safe or dangerous), character of the place (i.e. sunlight or nightfall, populated or deserted), the social relations, and the power distribution mutually mould and are moulded by each other. For instance; due to the darkness, closed businesses and empty streets, many middle class residents' sense of nocturnal Barra is imbued with hesitation, anxiety and fear, resulting in a fear of the 'Other' and a further abandoning of public space. In the case of the young men who occupy the streets, the ambiguity of space is even stronger as the nocturnal desertedness both encapsulates increased power and fear. Simultaneously as their power over public space is substantial compared with the middle class and residents, they are also vulnerable to violent attacks by others, such as drug cartels and death squads.

These different user groups have gradually developed opposing place attachments. The middle class residents and the traders running businesses in Barra reckon the area as territorially theirs simultaneously as the young men with *favela* backgrounds express strong feelings of belonging. The first article elaborates on these sentiments of belonging, employing the concept of 'emplacement' (Hammond 2003) as the process where space become meaningful place through daily interaction with the physical and social environment. These feelings of belonging are embodied in various ways, as a physical addiction, as something running through their veins, or as one young man states: 'Barra was the place where I buried my bellybutton'. The strong sense of belonging is also a core element in many of the young men's home narratives.

All three articles touch upon the question of why Barra has come to be of such a great importance among these young men, originally born into impoverished families socio-culturally as

well as geographically distant from Barra. So what does this particular elite neighbourhood offer the poor young men? In order to properly comprehend the young men's preference of Barra, it is crucial to understand their backgrounds, namely the *favelas*. The vast areas of poor settlements in and outside Salvador receive little political attention and economic investments. Public buildings are left to decay, crooked and narrow streets lack streetlights and sidewalks, trees and shrubs flourish wildly in between piles of litter and construction material. Playgrounds and football fields are rare. A combination of a failing public school, widespread unemployment, economic hardship, low level of policing and a haphazard and labyrinthine physical landscape has allowed organised crime to gain a firm foothold in these areas, resulting in neighbourhoods permeated by drugs and violence.

Barra represents the opposite of the *favelas* in many respects. Because the neighbourhood houses some of Salvador's most affluent citizens and monthly attracts thousands of tourists from around the globe, its aesthetics, comfort and security is of high political priority. Barra is thus enhanced with renovated buildings, maintained pavements, clean beaches, modern playgrounds, and public sport facilities. Besides political attention, both local and international investors allocate capital in luxurious residence complexes, fashionable shops and restaurants and expensive hotels. In a city saturated by poverty, such pockets of wealthy people and lavish locations also include high levels of police and security guards.

The reasons why these investments – intended for people who have money to spend – attract young men with empty pockets are not necessarily obvious at first sight. The empirical material in these three articles, however, discloses three vital reasons. Firstly and perhaps most importantly; the wealthy locals and foreigners who congregate in the area create both legal and illegal income generating opportunities for the young men, ranging from minding cars, running errands and washing dishes at restaurants to selling drugs, pick pocketing and assaulting. Second and evidently of increasingly significance; the high level of security guards and police patrols also partly protects the young men from revenging enemies, such as street companions, drug traffickers, and so on. Furthermore, due to the high educational level and high employment rate among the middle class residents, the presence of organised crime, drug trafficking and lethal weapons is low compared to the *favelas*, making the urban space safer in general. Third argument is also central, although scarcely mentioned only in two of the articles, namely that the physical features of Barra offers free leisure activities for the young men, such as the beach and football facilities.

5.2.2. Social encounters across classes

However, to fully understand these young men's strong sense of belonging to Barra, it is not enough to emphasise leisure opportunities, less violent urban space and the possibilities of economic benefits. As I quote one of these young men in the first article;

People say they feel at home in Barra because there isn't any lack of alimentation, no lack of soft drinks, no lack of beer, no lack of money [...] But really it is because it has developed a bond between friends and acquaintances.

I found that the social encounters between the different users of Barra are imperative in order to comprehend a range of issues concerning street life, and I will discuss three issues more fully below.

The question of level of agency among young people who live on the street has intrigued me since my first encounter with the street population of Barra and was coined as the main research question in my PhD project description. While an increasing number of researchers claim that young people who live on the street are creative entrepreneurs who find alternative ways of surviving in the segregated class society,³¹ others continue to deterministically underpin their existence as mere products of the society, 'socio-historical determined' (Graciani 2001). I therefore became deeply aware of the necessity to increase the understanding of their agency and simultaneously avoid obscuring the devastating structural constraints in which their lives are embedded. I found the perspective of ANT constructive, regarding agency as decentred, not located in humans, but rather as the result of relations enacted through networks. Agency is indefinite and the precise contribution of each actant always remains unclear due to a lack of autonomy of action (Gomart 2002).

All three articles discuss different, but deeply intertwined, aspects of agency, and implicitly and explicitly highlight the relational character as crucial in order to unveil the relation between agency and structure. It is important to stress that these aspects of agency explored in this thesis are neither determinate nor inclusive. As Law (2004) argues, there exists more than one dimension but less than two. Because of the world's complexity, it cannot be fully understood as a specific set of determinate processes. However, Law states, local processes can be discovered, which is what I attempt to do in the following analyses. Law and Mol (2002) argue that one way of

³¹ See more on this in the theoretical chapter.

dealing with this complexity without embracing it fully (or 'celebrate' it, as they put it) is to focus on multiplicity rather than simplification, or on *orders* rather than one specific *order*. These different orders of the same field do not always underpin the same simplicities, but often work – and relate – in different ways (p. 7). As argued in the methodology chapter, the choice of methods decides which orders are made visible. It becomes essential – through employing different methodological and theoretical approaches – to create various orders which each of them capture important aspects of the field, and then discuss how these aspects are interrelated.

The three aspects which define a sense of home on the street in the first article – autonomy, safety and belonging – are all relational. Regarding autonomy; by occupying the urban space of Barra, new kinds of social relations become available. People encountered in Barra can offer legal and illegal income possibilities and facilitate access to commodities absent in other areas. Hence, what might at first seem like a paradox; through their cooperation and interdependency, their array of choice improves and their feeling of being independent and self-reliant increases.

These relations can also provide increased sense of safety. By knowing influential people who are reckoned important by main society, the young men are able to 'become someone' in the eyes of society and therefore a riskier target of violence. Their proximity to police officers and security guards might also increase their safety, both on a personal and impersonal level, where the former is based on personal acquaintance and the latter on shared spatial presence. In line with ideas of ANT, the safety of these young men is decentred, anchored in their attitudes and behaviour, their relations with a spectre of people, the character of Barra, and so on. In this manner, the young men are potentially encompassed in a 'safety-net'. But as all networks within ANT; there is nothing fixed with this 'safety-net'. A small change may translate the entire network, making it foster danger rather than safety. For example, if a young man suddenly becomes the police's prime suspect of a crime in Barra, this same network of influential residents and armed police may turn against him.

These relations also form a vital component in their sense of belonging in Barra in ways strikingly similar to the sense of safety. In order to develop a sense of belonging and emplacement, identity politics are crucial. Through opportunities encountered in Barra, many of these young men manage to establish a new identity which they find more satisfactorily than previous ones. This new identity is nurtured by an increased sense of safety, and is furthermore possibly related to a greater sense of autonomy, an improved economic status and increased

social network of a wider range of people, both among their street peers and the surroundings. Hence their sense of belonging is also embedded in a complex network.

The empirical material divulges that the feelings of autonomy, safety and belonging are not only embedded relationally, but also mutually reinforcing through these relations. Although they are separable analytically, the three aspects are, in practice, inextricably linked. Together these three sentiments constitute the young men's notions of home. These relations therefore become central in grasping why many of the men continue to live on the street, or equally relevant, why many leave their former homes or Barra. When one or more of these sentiments weakens (they are not only mutually reinforcing but mutually weakening), the reasons to stay condense, thus many move on to find a new home environment where they try to develop these sentiments once again.

These positive relations, potentially enabling sentiments of autonomy, safety and belonging, are imbued with trust, or rather, made possible by people being capable of trusting each other. Hence the relations depend heavily on the young men cultivating an impression of trustworthiness and the surroundings investing trust in them, as argued in the second article. However, strong structural forces continuously contravene. They have little education and their street capital (Sandberg and Pedersen 2011) hardly transfers to main society. Their life situation on the street, although enabling certain kind of legal and illegal money opportunities, is marked by insecurity, irregularity and unpredictability. This obstructs their chances to gain a formal job which again would entail economical predictability and thus a possible exit from sleeping rough and an entry to the real estate market. Worsening the structural conditions even more; as they grow up, hegemonic discourse increasingly labels them as dangerous offenders rather than endangered victims. This is evident not only in acts of discrimination and social exclusion in everyday social interaction, but also in severe institutional violence with mortal consequences.

The second article reveals ambiguous processes of social inclusion and exclusion occur concurrently with a continuous spatial struggle over Barra. The power of the different users of Barra – the young men, middle class residents and traders – is connected to the positions they occupy in the networks in which they are embedded. This reminds of Giddens' structuration theory (1984). Giddens proposed that structure and agency are not opposing entities, but rather different ways of looking at the same social practices. A core aspect of his theory is *duality*, namely that structure and agency are synthesised and exist in a recursive relationship. Structure and agency are at the same time the medium and outcome of the practices and activities they organise. The duality between structure and agency is made possible through enabling and

constraining modalities. One such modality is domination, which is interlinked with access to resources facilitating domination. Giddens (1984) underscored that individuals are 'positioned' differently both relationally and in time and space within a network. Thus this access to resources is not equally distributed. The residents and traders draw on their political influence and strong connections to the police and media when they represent the young men as 'Others' and 'out of place', attempting to remove them from Barra.

But Giddens asserted that although the power relations are asymmetrical, it always exist interchange of autonomy and dependence, giving the weakest part agency as well. In the case of the young men, they call upon whatever resources available to them – such as their social networks of street peers, spatial knowledge, fighting experience and the society's fear and impression of them as dangerous offenders – and in this way manage alternative access to both money and territory at night time. The urban space of Barra is thus performed through these relations, at the same time as the relations and users are also being performed. Through these encounters, the meanings of Barra is defined and refined in regard to the users' perception of control, safety and danger.

Ultimately, by observing these social encounters I also gained awareness of the destructive character of crack and how crack transforms and distorts these relations, which is discussed in the third article. As the empirical material reveals, the relation between crack and the user is marked by mutual agency and dependency. Whereas the user first invites crack into his life, the crack often ends up transmuting his everyday life. Of course, as depicted in the article, the reasons why crack is available in the first place and why the user decides to smoke it the first time are embedded in complex networks of associations also on a structural level.

The arrival of crack results in the development of novel associations in the existing networks, transforming the actors and their relations. The strongly addictive character of crack modifies the priorities of the users, reckoning immediate drug use more important than safety measures and investment in long-term trust relations. In this way, when many of the crack users engage in criminal activity to achieve drugs, established trust relations both within and across the social classes are deteriorated. Furthermore, the risky behaviour of the users augments the list of potential enemies of former victims, police, death squads and drug traffickers. The distortion of these relations in general has a crucial impact on sense of autonomy, safety and belonging, as seen in all three articles. Crack addiction and crime involvement often result in drug debt, fear of retaliation and paranoia which again create feelings of insecurity and displacement. Many crack

users thus seek refuge in new places. This results in patterns of oscillation between Barra, the *favelas*, city centre locations, detoxification centres, and so on, further discussed in the next part.

5.2.3. Transitions in the life paths of young men on the street

The combination of retrospective narrative interviews and longitudinal research unearths different kinds of transitions in the young men's lives. This thesis therefore also deals with these transitions, fundamentally altering their social relations and, ultimately, their life paths. Whereas space enables a simultaneous multiplicity of on-going trajectories, time fosters change (Massey 2005), or transitions. The first article illustrates how important transitions in their lives, as leaving family home and then, later, sometimes leaving the street life in Barra, are triggered by altered sense of autonomy, safety and belonging. As children, most of the men worked long hours to support their families and many also experienced domestic abuse. After long periods of spending occasional nights on the street, many of them began sleeping at specific places in a more permanent manner.

As revealed in the second article, the circumstances on the street changes when small boys physically mature. Although many glamorised the years as children in Barra, one young man also remembered how his older brothers predicted how they would be called *vagabundos* when growing up. In the eyes of society, they change from innocent and vulnerable victims to culpable and dangerous offenders. Not being able to evoke sympathy among passers-by, charity becomes a non-option for food and money. This transition into a dangerous 'Other' also revises the premises on which trust relations are based. When it becomes even more difficult to appear as trustworthy, the legal livelihood options on the street are further reduced.

At the same time, and perhaps as a reaction to the prejudice, many of the young men start to explore how they can master this transition by using their matured physical appearance and their label as dangerous to their advantage. They become involved in illegal activities, such as thefts and assaults, in search for money (and respect). However, as mentioned, this often results in further distorted social relations and social exclusion. Emplacement is an on-going process that changes character throughout the life (Hammond 2003). For these young men, their feelings of safety and belonging, primarily based on a sense of acceptance and inclusion, evaporate. Thus as they mature, many – those who engage in criminal activity in particular – cease to feel at home in Barra.

Simultaneously, their physical maturity and life experience from years on the street make it harder for their families to confiscate their earnings or abuse them. Thus several of the young men had more contact with their families as young adults than as children and adolescents. Although some of them spent more nights at home, many continued to spend most of their waking time on the streets of Barra. Their strong street identity endured, which most families disliked, hence familial relations often remained psychologically distant.

Even though the majority of these young men left family home due to parental (mis-) behaviour as children, the third article also depicts another emerging life path among young people on the street of contemporary urban Brazil: Young men who have left family home and neighbourhood of origin in late teens and early twenties as a result of their own crack abuse and deviant behaviour. Work and family life appear to be irreconcilable with crack addiction. Additionally, some of the young men who already inhabited the streets of Barra also experienced that the introduction of crack into their everyday lives triggered great transitions in their life paths. The destructive and aggressive behaviour which often follows crack addiction transformed the young men, as mentioned previously. Their proximity to the drug cartels and increased involvement in street crime push young men on and off the street, and, far worse, often have fatal consequences in the long run.

Taking into account the life paths of the majority of the key informants, it appears that street crime and 'rebelliousness' is strongest in their mid-teens to early twenties. Gradually, the urge to fulfil the duties as a righteous male citizen intensifies, encapsulated in their hopes and expectations for their future as husbands and fathers. Some even manage to take this step: They abandon street life in Barra in favour of a shack in a *favela* with their newly constituted family. However, due to immense difficulties of entering the formal job market, these continued to depend on their social connections on the street, minding cars or street vending. Thus in order to gain small change, countless hours each week is spent in Barra. Their continuous presence in the street ambience among street peers seems to make it even harder to abandon their street identity, especially when they also feel that they fail to fulfil their behavioural ideals and economic responsibilities as husbands, fathers and righteous citizens.

A second path to adulthood among these young men is to continue in the same street ambience of Barra, but to establish themselves as adult vagrants. The vagrant is perceived as an honest and hard-working homeless adult in the Brazilian society, although often struggling with alcohol and drug issues. Thus, by distancing themselves from the rebellious *pivete* identity and approaching the vagrant lifestyle, they generate more sympathy and help from the surroundings

at the same time as they are largely ignored by the police. However, to be perceived as a vagrant, it is absolutely necessary to keep away from violence and crime (besides the purchase and consumption of illegal drugs). Even though many of the young men strive to do this, many fail due to lack of other money opportunities. Since drug addiction is costly, it becomes especially difficult to remain on the righteous track for those who are hooked on crack.

Therefore, the third path to adulthood is simply to continue or increase their involvement in violence and property crime on the street. However, the empirical material suggests that there is just a matter of time before their enemies catch up with them and they end up imprisoned or dead. Although this path is unfortunately common, it is not so in this empirical material, since the participants were recruited on the street and not in the prison system.

These different life paths demonstrate heterogeneity in the outcomes of the transition to adulthood and challenge whatever assumption one may have that transitions are patterned in predictable ways among boys coming of age on the street. However, at the same time, these life paths also mirror the scarce options of masculinity available to these young men, reflecting on the strength of the structural constraints and the self-fulfilling prophecy of hegemonic discourse.

5.3. Concluding remarks and policy implications

The articles in this thesis draw a picture of a street ambience which is deeply interconnected with the surrounding world consisting of affluent residents and traders in Barra as well as families, neighbours and drug cartels in the *favelas*. The young men are mutually causing and being affected by social changes. This proposes that people occupying urban space cannot be treated as a separate problem in future policy making. It will never be enough to focus on the individuals who already occupy the streets. If they are removed by force and left at the outskirts of the city, they come back walking. If they are imprisoned, although they might stay behind bars for years, they are inevitably released due to the overcrowded prison systems, and eventually return back to the street. If they are killed, a new generation is waiting to take over their position on the streets.

The political focus in contemporary urban Brazil is first and foremost on the pavements surrounding the residential and recreational complexes of the affluent citizens. At the same time, little attention is being paid to the deprived *favelas* in the outskirts of the city. This prioritisation does not seem to hinder new recruitment of young people in the street ambience. The fact that young people from the *favelas* manage to feel a greater sense of autonomy, safety and belonging

on the street in an elite neighbourhood, raises critical questions about the social conditions in their communities of origin. On a deeper level, this empirical material reveals that the *favelas* fail to offer this youth public safety, decent educational system and equal employment opportunities.

Much remains to be done with the public safety of the *favelas*. To enable young people to use the public space and develop sense of belonging to their home communities, they need to be able to feel safe. Unfortunately, as divulged in this dissertation, this is stalled by the strong presence of drug cartels which makes young people the number one target of crime involvement, drug addiction and mortal violence. Rather than to prevent this destructive development, the police departments reinforce it with their prejudice attitudes and violent strategies towards young men from the *favelas*. Consequently, poor young men's relation to the police is riddled with ambiguity and fear.

Equally important in maintaining these young men on the street, and potentially creating new waves of young people heading towards the street, is the exclusion of poor and uneducated young men from the formal labour market. This does not only intensify poverty, but also increase the attraction of the illegal and violent alternatives of property crime and drug trafficking. But once again, the high unemployment rate among poor young men is not simply a consequence of a lack of employment opportunities. The hegemonic discourse which labels these young men *vagabundos* and untrustworthy criminals is not only prevalent among police officers, but – as throughout history – is an established 'truth' among politicians, journalists and, inevitably, potential employers.

Luckily, some positive changes have been noted after I left the field. In Salvador, the issues of police brutality and military-style operations, the widespread violence due to drug trafficking in the *favelas* and the endemic crack epidemic have resulted in a state-level program called O Pacto Pela Vida (PACTO).³² PACTO involves a new strategy of Public Security, headed by the governor himself, and aims to reduce crime, homicide and drug addiction. Based on experiences from Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Bogotá and Medellín, it focuses on prevention through social assistance in critical areas by reaffirming the social rights and providing access to public services to the deprived population residing in chosen *favelas*. PACTO is manifold, including socio-educative campaigns on drug abuse and the value of human rights, improved governmental services for drug addicts, strengthened penal system, and, finally, a so-called 'community police'; Base Comunitária de Segurança.

³² The Pact for Life

The community-based police forces are especially trained in passive policing; promoting security and peaceful coexistence in alarming areas when it comes to level of violence and crime. In concurrence with PACTO, these police forces aim to improve the integration of public security institutions within the local community and reduce the levels of violence and crime. A coincidence or not, the *favela* of Calabar – which borders the affluent neighbourhood of Barra – was the first area to receive the new police forces in 2011. Previously being abandoned by the police, except from occasional heavy armed invasions against the drug cartels, the region is now monitored by video surveillance and over hundred military policemen, patrolling the region. As a result, the number of criminal occurrences has been reduced by a staggering 90 %. Additionally, services such as pre-university training and literacy courses, community health services, governmental register offices, public internet access and the *Bolsa Familia* program have been made easily available to the population of Calabar.

It is also worth mentioning that the state of Rio de Janeiro adopted a policy on ‘street children’ for the first time ever in Brazil in 2009 (Bush and Rizzini 2011). The policy was created through successful use of expertise and technical assistance from the university sector and sets out specific directives and responsibilities for municipal departments and for civil society in general. For instance; the Department of Education should give priority for places in crèches to the children of adolescent mothers in a street situation; the street children and their families should be included in *Bolsa Familia*, housing programs, work programs, etc.; and the police should also receive adequate training in Children’s rights and how to respect them.

To sum up: This thesis reveals how these young men, although many are engaged in crime, are not simply ‘dangerous offenders’, but also common victims of prejudice and discrimination and therefore particularly vulnerable to structural violence. As argued, their presence in Barra is deeply interconnected to occurrences in the wider society and individuals and ambiances mutually interact on each other. An improvement of the social conditions in which their street situation is rooted, is probably only possible after profound structural changes. On the bright side, the cross-class trust relations in Barra encompass a glimmer of hope that these changes might be possible as well as demonstrate that such changes are not only beneficial for the marginalised young men, but for the society in general: These trust relations challenge the stereotypical images of poor young men and enable more work opportunities, at the same time as they are positive for most groups in urban Brazil, potentially reducing street crime and facilitating a more secure and vital public space.

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