



# VIOLENCE IN TRANSIT

## *Non-places* are inhabited

Transnational Comparative Research Report  
on youth violence and social exlusions on the railway  
and bus stations of Pescara (Italy),  
Barcelona (Spain) and Porto (Portugal)

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This report was produced within the project “Violence in Transit” (JUST/2010/DAP3/AG/1231) financed by the European Commission in the frame of the Daphne III Funding Programme of the DG Justice.

The project, coordinated by On the Road ONLUS Association (Italy), was carried out in collaboration with the partners: EAPN Portugal - Rede Europeia Anti Pobreza (Portugal), APIP-ACAM Foundation (Spain), Europe Consulting Onlus (Italy) and the associates: Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane (Italy), OSCE-Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe - The Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Being (Austria).

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# Introduction

by Fabio Sorgoni<sup>1</sup>

This publication is a deliverable of the project *Violence in Transit*, funded by the European Commission within the Daphne III programme. The project began in June 2011 and lasted two years, dealing with the **problem of youth violence**, often linked to the phenomena of marginalization and social exclusion, especially in its manifestations in specific urban spaces: the **areas of transit** (train stations, bus stations, metro hubs, etc...).

The partnership

The project partnership involved the Associazione On the Road Onlus (Italy - project coordination); the Portuguese organization European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN Portugal); the Foundation APIP-ACAM (Spain); and the Social Cooperative Europe Consulting (Italy). Associates of the project were also the Italian State Railways and the anti-trafficking office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The first three organizations have developed activities in direct contact with the target (WS1 Research and WS2 Action Testing). The fourth project partner, the Social Cooperative Europe Consulting (IT), provided its expertise in accompanying research and social testing activities and plays a prominent role in the dissemination of project results.

The State Railways and anti-trafficking office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) provided a significant contribution in the definition of action models (WS3), their transferability to other transit areas, and dissemination and mainstreaming of results (WS4). For years, the Italian railway company Ferrovie dello Stato has developed its internal department that promotes and implements actions aimed at people in trouble (especially the homeless). It is also part of a European Network of Organizations (public and private) that manage train stations and

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1. Coordinator of the research activities of the project at national and transnational level.

collaborate in planning and implementation of social actions. The anti-trafficking office of the OSCE is particularly interested in enhancing the identification and first support to victims of human trafficking. The transit areas, both within countries and in the border areas (stations, ports, and airports) are spaces where it is possible to get in contact with these people and provide help to them.

Scope and project actions

The overall objective of the project was to identify the effective action practices to address the problem of youth violence and improve the situation of the affected areas and all the people passing through, living, and working there.

To achieve its objectives, the project was organized in four broad actions called Work Streams (WS):

- WS 1 - Research
- WS 2 - Testing of social and community actions
- WS 3 - Creation of action models and transferability study
- WS 4 - Dissemination and mainstreaming of project results

Field activities (Research - WS 1; Testing of Actions - WS 2) provided elements to create action models (WS 3) transferable to other areas and territories with similar characteristics (railway stations, ports, border areas).

In the WS1 - Research, three national surveys were promoted in Italy, Spain, and Portugal. In particular, the area of the train station of Pescara Centrale in Italy, the area of the station Sao Bento in Lisbon, Portugal, and the area of the North Bus Station, in Barcelona, Spain, were studied with an ethnographic and participatory approach.

This book is a collection of summaries of the three national researches and proposes a transnational comparative analysis.

# 1. Space and time for the construction of a model of urban safety *Violence in Transit* a paradigm of space-time welfare

by Vincenzo Castelli<sup>2</sup>

The project *Violence in Transit* tries to compete on youth violence in the areas of transit and flow, such as railway stations.

The project offers a great opportunity to plan and test actions on space and time as essential and indispensable vectors to build social inclusion policies in different contexts and for well-defined target groups.

First, a special attention should be paid to **ethnography of social space**. Very little ethnographic work has been done on the factor of space architecture, how space can determine relational aggregative or disaggregative similarities or dissonance, whether they build community processes or barriers of social exclusion. Spatiality is a dynamic process that interferes with segments of everyday life and that is why it must be equipped not only with effective and efficient volumes, but also with segments and spatial indicators to describe what characterizes the experiences of everyday life (places to meet, spaces of leisure and entertainment, spatial geometry, find the quiet and tranquillity, etc...). Furthermore, we are faced with diversified space (vertical vs. horizontal; full vs. empty; subjective vs. objective; accessible vs. inaccessible) that alter the meaning and prospects; public space with its areas of scrolling, transit, transport, rest/relax, waiting, storage spaces; finally, the private space delimits the boundaries of individual privacy.

From the above, we should read the variable of space as a place (home/country/district/town) able to determine the sense of territorial belonging (identity process), the dimension of home,

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2. Project General Coordinator.

space communication among those living deeply their own territory, who recognize themselves from it, and rooting their essence in those spatial links.

Unfortunately, there is also space as a “non-place” (to use Marc Augé’s word): the space that does not have and does not create social identity, which is not conducive to relationships between social actors in a context. This conception of space (but often implementation of space) designs and determines the boundaries between groups and individuals, defining the limits between normal and deviance, creates the margin (and its marginality), and ultimately builds the social stigma.

In this laceration, fragmentation, degradation, and explosion of sensible space, we must take a strong action of space regeneration and redevelopment, a reconstruction of harmonic space covering at the same time social heterogeneity, urban-architectural variety, multi-functionality, conditions for participation, concrete ways of daily life, organization of services as an organization of public spaces, the population dimension, the recovery of district centre, boundaries, connections, networks, and transports.

In a historical situation in which physical space is facing extinction (submerged by virtual space), epistemological importance must be given to spatiality re-conceived within a kind of ‘Village Design Statement’ (with variables of place, identity, and social governance rules) characterized by description, interpretation, quantitative and functional topographic representation of space, a facsimile of identity Atlas (territorial, environmental, and socio-cultural values), environmental (physical geography), socio-economic, and cultural (social-economic geography) heritage, and new social practices (political geography).

It is also necessary to reformulate here Michel Foucault’s concept of Heterotopia, which is able to reformulate those spaces that have the special feature of being connected with all the other spaces, but in such a way as to suspend, neutralize, or reverse the set of relations that they designate, mirror, or reflect.

Only this operation allows us to say that the space is us (I/space relationship): our psychological sense has a spatial dimension that we recognize in our feelings of comfort/discomfort in relation to the places that we visit or where we live.

Secondly, a strong consideration should be made on **ethnography of time**. Time, from its origin, has always had deep meanings: sacred time vs. profane time, full time vs. empty, and time vs. work (with the birth of free time and holidays).

Perhaps little work has been done on the construction of social time, its correlation with speeding up of time (and its consequent interference on social phenomena), its dehistoricization (and its consequent interference on the possible loss of historical memory), and defuturization (and its consequent persistence of “extended present time”, which actually replaces the future). In particular, no social value was given to the correlation between time and construction of social policies: daytime policies have been structured for social groups living during the night (young people and teenagers); a Fordist policy has been built (with the commandment to never lose time) with those (deviant social groups) who always lose time in their daily life (and so how are we going to work with these groups other than learning how to “waste time”?). Hence the importance of taking the time of the social groups we work with, the centrality of modelling time in a harmonious way to give quality to everyday life, the ability to integrate spatial policies with temporal policies (spatialize time and temporalize space). From this space/time harmonic correlation, **epistemological segments for space/time construction of security** emerge, to which the project *Violence in Transit* was inspired. We refer in particular to considering space from the perspective of welfare, considering time of social groups, the implementation of community care to build urban security, the promotion of peer education to give balance to the context, the contribution of social networks to the construction of urban security, finally the choice of non-repressive and dialogic methodologies (street work, harm reduction, entertainment, education, mediation, participatory planning...).

The idea of the project *Violence in Transit* started from this knowledge, methodologies, and practices. The idea originated from long-navigation experience, such as the street entertainment actions in Europe (in relation to prostitution, addictions, poverty, wandering youth); in Latin America (acting on “callerizacion”, on “maras”, structuring of street businesses, etc...); in the areas of transit and flow (spaces of immediate acceptance in the ports of the Adriatic-Danube area in Europe and in

Central America, on the borders of Central American and Andean area, etc...); actions in favour of the involvement of young people in the use of assets confiscated from the Mafia in Italy; actions for urban regeneration (see EU Programmes of the European Fund for Regional Development, Urban, Quartier en crise, UN-Habitat programmes...) in suburban areas; education actions in contexts of violence (see the experiences of street teachers in Naples; schools of peace spread in Europe; the programme Eurosocial 1 involving Italy, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, and Costa Rica); and community welfare and social mediation in marginal neighbourhoods (see the ECO2 model and “Barrios terapeuticos” of the Federal District of Mexico City; the project “Bologna Sicura” (safe Bologna); “promotores sociales” (social promoters) of Managua, rural areas of the Department of Potosì in Bolivia; the Project “Mediamente” of Urb-AL 5, etc...). It is also worth mentioning the actions on time of daily living (rites, myths, symbols, parties, events, etc...); timing of social groups (time of children, young people, and women); the world of the night and leisure (see projects “Azienda Notte” (Night Company), “Social Entertainment Service”, and “Notte Brava” (Wild Night) of Consorzio Nova).

*Violence in Transit* capitalizes and hoards all this and at the same time raises the challenge of a space/time welfare to be implemented on a specific flow area (railway stations) in favour of emerging social groups (teenagers and young people) who often live and inhabit these places in conflictive and dissonant ways.

To these protagonists (often marginalized) of our time we devote some beautiful fragments of the sociologist M. Foucault:

If you think that, after all, a boat is a floating piece of space, a place without place and that is entrusted at the same time to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, ... from a brothel to another, goes so far as to colonies to look for the most valuable things they conceal in their gardens, you will understand why the boat was for our culture not only the greatest tool of economic development, but also the largest reserve of imagination. The ship is the heterotopia par excellence. In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage replaces adventure, and the police replace the pirates<sup>3</sup>.

3. Foucault M. (1967), *Le parole e le cose*, Milan, Rizzoli.

## 2. Summaries of the National Research Reports

### 2.1 S. Bento at the heart of the city of Porto. An ethnographic approach to the railway station Report of National Research - Portugal

by Carlota Quintão (coordination), Ana Luísa Martinho, Mário Borges, Pedro Machado, Sandra Oliveira<sup>4</sup>



4. The entity in charge of research is A3S - Associação para o Empreendedorismo Social e a Sustentabilidade do Terceiro Sector.

### 2.1.1 Starting point

This action-research study is part of the transnational project *Violence in transit*. The purpose of this project is to research and experiment models for intervention on youth violence at passenger transport hubs or other locations related to mobility, namely railway stations in urban centres.

The experience of Italian project partners has revealed that these territories tend to be privileged spaces for contact with phenomena relating to several forms of violence, criminality and social exclusion. Drug trafficking, prostitution, concentration of homeless people and delinquency are often found in urban railway stations. In particular, partner's previous work has identified the concentration of groups of youngsters associated with new deviant subcultures as an emergent phenomenon. The project focus on three case studies: Pescara in Italy, Barcelona in Spain and Porto in Portugal. In Porto, the project chose S. Bento, one of the two train stations in the city.

In order to ensure comparability between the results, the project had common methodological guidelines for the performance of national research, including common instruments for collecting primary data. These guidelines involved an approach focused on the territory under analysis and resorting to ethnographic methods, namely observation techniques complemented by interviews to local actors.

This study completes the first stage of the Portuguese research component. Starting off from the general project framework and its margins for flexibility in the adjustment to the specific characteristics of each case, we designed an approach based on a paradigm of qualitative, inductive and phenomenological research. The prior knowledge and perceptions of the research team, as well as the first results of the exploration stage, revealed a greater heuristic capacity through this option as compared to an approach following a hypothetical-deductive logic.

In fact, the combination of the main theoretical problematics in this project – violence, youth and railway stations / passenger mobility locations – turned out to be of little relevance in the Portuguese

context. In other words, the hypothesis of railway stations being privileged locations for the occurrence of youth violence is not supported by significant empirical evidence, nor is it reflected in scientific research in Portugal.

However, the S. Bento station is acknowledgedly a territory where problematics similar to those identified through the Italian experience are also present, among which we can point out delinquency, prostitution and drug addiction. This case study is pertinent in terms of the exploration of the hypothesis of an association between this kind of physical and social space and the expression of phenomena pertaining to the wider theoretical scope of poverty and social exclusion.

Faced with this context, we decided to keep the research within an eminently exploratory perspective, guided by open starting questions. These questions are intended to help understand and describe the social problematics present at S. Bento, youth violence in particular, as well as to examine the connection between the occurrence of these phenomena and the specific characteristics of this space.

The research was performed between December 2011 and April 2012. It configures what would be expected from an ethnographic research, considering the limitations in the resources available, namely the scarcity of time. With only 12 weeks available for fieldwork, the possibility of employing more thorough ethnographic techniques – namely the actual participation by the researchers in the empirical reality under research – was rendered unfeasible from the start.

This study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter provides an account of the research design and path followed, the second chapter introduces the results from empirical analysis and the last chapter presents the conclusions and leads for the subsequent stages of the project.

### **2.1.2 Research design**

This research was conducted according to a paradigm of intensive analysis centred on an in-depth understanding of its object – S. Bento station. Starting from a restricted number of dimensions of

analysis, we opted for an interpretive approach, performing the research in a context of discovery instead of testing hypotheses. We began the exploration of our empirical objective through three starting questions:

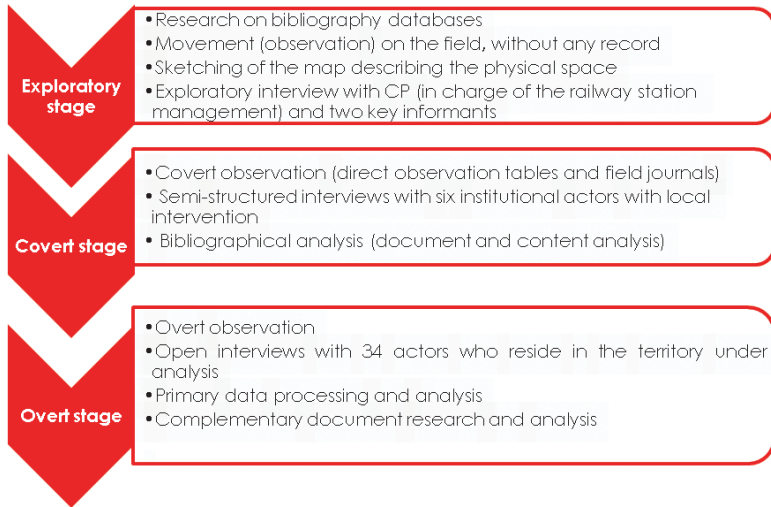
1. *How can one characterize S. Bento, viewed as a case study of a physical and social space whose functions of passenger transportation originate high levels of mobility of people?*
2. *Which social phenomena involving poverty, social exclusion and youth violence take place at S. Bento?*
3. To what extent are these phenomena connected to the station and the specific characteristics of the space?

Methodological procedures typical of qualitative approaches were adopted in order to guarantee a “multi-perspective triangulation”<sup>5</sup> (Pais, 2000, p. 14). In particular, we adopted theoretical and methodological principles and instruments for the collection of empirical information that are typical of ethnography. Observation techniques, complemented by the use of a field journal, played a major role in the strategy used to approach the field. This technique, used since the inception of the exploratory stage, involved permanent reflection regarding the strategies adopted for ‘being’ on the field and interacting with local actors. Specifically, it involved a multi-staged process during which the complementary data collection techniques (bibliographical analysis and interviews) were strategically planned and redesigned according to the knowledge and experience gained.

We therefore preferred flexible techniques for data collection and intentional/theoretical sampling, based on emergent, “cascading” research designs (Pais, 2000, p.14) supported by methodological eclecticism. The approach adopted was essentially inductive and phenomenological, using the field as the basis for the definition of the general research profile; in other words, we used experience as a starting point for the generalization of knowledge (Freixo, 2009, p. 77). The research was structured along 3 stages.

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5. “Triangulação perspectivacional”.

**Table 1 | Research stages**

Source: the authors

The exploratory stage of the work led to a conclusion that proved decisive to the course of research. We found the emphasis given to the phenomenon of youth violence to be somewhat inadequate. Based on our observation and on the testimonies of the actors interviewed, we concluded that this phenomenon was not so relevant in this specific case. The phenomena observed were related to the young population in particular and in fact the general scenery involves several different types of social deviation.

The entities in charge of the public safety and management of railway structures at national level also do not consider this subject to be a priority, since it is limited to negligible, episodic and dispersed incidents. Likewise, the subject is not viewed as relevant by scientific research. The main conclusions resulting from bibliographic analysis were the following:

- Research on youth violence in Portugal is very scarce, and actually non-existent regarding the city of Porto and the locations for passenger transit or mobility, including the S. Bento railway station.
- There is a great output of scientific production regarding violence, although in broad terms or with particular emphasis on the themes of violence against women and without any significant correlation with youth. In the academic scope, the theme of youth turns up particularly associated to the concept of delinquency.
- Deviant behaviours of youngsters tend to be researched in correlation with drug use and other conditioning factors, namely disadvantaged social background or deficient parenting.

This youth violence variable was thus awarded the same status as all the other variables under analysis, within a wider framework of the problematics related to social exclusion.

The matrix for territorial analysis that guided our study, as well as the nature of the information and of the approach we adopted led us to present the results using the contribution of visual anthropology. The themes are addressed with the scientific rigour required for a study of this nature, and the analysis of the territory is presented with the use of a cinematographic language that aims to provide a picture of the space and its phenomena, particularly to those who are not familiar with the territory (Ribeiro, 2004).

We begin with a descriptive analysis of the research object and its setting within the urban territory, based on observation and documental analysis. We sought to illustrate this description by resorting to photography and cartography. Then we present the personal perspectives of the protagonists in this scenery: the people who inhabit this social space and the institutional actors who intervene on it. To conclude the presentation of these results, we propose a narrative - *'A typical day in S. Bento'* - of cinematographic and literary inspiration, inviting the reader to experience "being" in the space and "observing" our object of study. The final chapter is dedicated to conclusions and a diagnostic reflection about intervention on the territory.

### 2.1.3 Conclusions

The research provided by the different national teams involved on *Violence in transit* invite us to the study of a case, an empirical reality at a micro analytical scale, in order to explore highly complex theoretical problems. Specifically, they invite us to problematize the object of research, crossing tangible variables, such as those relating to the characteristics of physical space and its economic and social occupation, with intangible variables, such as the social appropriations of space and the expression of phenomena of youth violence, poverty and social exclusion.

In order to respond to this challenge, we have developed a comprehensive inductive and phenomenological approach that allowed us to define a research path based on a cumulative analytical strategy.

In this way, in an attempt to respond to the first starting question, we studied the S. Bento train station through an examination of the most tangible characteristics of the object of research. It was a matter of characterizing the scenario, setting out the reference context for deepening the empirical work, and collecting elements for the theoretical problematization of the heuristic features of S. Bento as a case study in the context of the transnational research.

Once the scenario was apprehended and described, we proceeded with the analysis seeking to respond simultaneously to the second and third starting questions, approaching the object of research through the perspectives of two types of actors of great relevance in the space's social life. The social phenomena involving poverty and social exclusion were identified and described, and the extent to which the occurrence of those phenomena is related to the station's specific characteristics was explored.

In accordance with the qualitative and phenomenological approach adopted, we began by presenting the results obtained through the probing of the actors we designate as 'residents', in other words, the people who, for professional or other reasons, spend most of their time at the station and the area surrounding it. We wanted to provide an account of the resident actors' perspectives and

experiences about this social space without the researchers introducing the themes under analysis.

To the intricate storylines revealed by those perceptions and experiences, we then added the perspectives of the institutional actors who were involved in the intervention. The approach to these actors, responsible for ensuring public order and safety in the space (police forces), for managing and ensuring the quality of the transport services (CP) and intervening directly on the actual phenomena under analysis (TSO), was based on the exploration of their analytical and reflexive perspectives.

Finally, we concluded the empirical analysis by creating a cinematically inspired narrative, viewing it as a means of sharing the experience-based, compound knowledge acquired by the team throughout the research process.

### **2.1.3.1 Questions for research**

*1) How can one characterize S. Bento, viewed as a case study of a physical and social space whose functions of passenger transportation originate high levels of mobility of people?*

S. Bento is the case study of a railway station located at the heart of a city centre and within a historic area classified as World Heritage. The building where the station is located, dating from the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, is considered of great value both in terms of heritage and tourism. The station was therefore a central element in the history of the economic and social development of the city during the modern age.

The development of this city followed a pattern similar to that of countless urban centres. After the phenomena of tertiarization, desertification and decay of the city centre, accompanied by a correlated growth in the suburban periphery, the city has seen very significant changes over the last two decades. The historic centre and 'downtown' (modern area) have undergone successive urban requalification processes followed by an economic, social and cultural resurgence, as well as a considerable growth in tourism. Currently, the centre of Porto is undergoing a process that is typical of what sociologists, geographers and urban planners have called *gentrification*.

The second largest city in Portugal, Porto has 240 000 inhabitants and is the hub of a metropolitan area with over 1.6 million inhabitants. Despite the noticeable decline in important indicators of its social and economic development over the last few years, namely in those relating to the job market, it is a large urban centre by Portuguese standards and has historically been a centre of attraction. S. Bento is one of the two railway stations in the city. It is connected to Campanhã railway station, which is located in the eastern part of the city and outside the urban centre. Within the transport network, S. Bento serves mainly (95%) as the hub for suburban and regional railroad (Minho, Douro and Aveiro), and also as a connection to the Northern line which gives access to long-distance and international destinations. A relatively small physical structure, with 8 railway lines (6 of them active) and a terminal with an extension of 180 metres, the passenger average in S. Bento is approximately 35 000 per day. It is built on a foothill, with three sides facing south, west and north. These characteristics contribute to the feasibility and efficacy of a strong surveillance and social control of the space (as was later confirmed). In the analysis of this physical space and its surrounding territory, the themes of poverty and social exclusion appear as unavoidable in order to understand the actual urban development. Its historical and structural presence at the heart of the city has been identified and updated in the social diagnostics for this territory over the years. This presence is made apparent through the impact of urban requalification and social housing policies (which tend to expel the impoverished population from the 'noble' parts of the city to the periphery), and by the areas filled with derelict buildings visible in the cartographical and operational maps of the urban centre, but also by the empirical openness of mendicity, drug addiction and other phenomena that can be witnessed here and there all over the urban centre and also in S. Bento.

*2) Which social phenomena involving poverty, social exclusion and youth violence take place at S. Bento?*

In their response to the open question – how would you describe S. Bento? – the 'resident' actors revealed a hegemony and predominance of negative indicators for the social representation of

the space, associated to the problematics of poverty and social exclusion. Many of the interviewees used strong expressions such as “this filth”, “this is hell broke loose” or “the *bas du fond* of the city of Porto”, and / or suggest a mosaic of social exclusion phenomena, such as “faggots, prostitution and a lot of drugs” or “an environment full of poor people, drug addicts and alcoholism”.

The central role of violence is common to these testimonies and experiences. It is expressed mainly under the form of references made to a sense of lack of safety or otherwise emphasizing the value of safety. In fact, even the interviewees who expressed the more positive opinions of this space did so by reference to an expectation of latent violence, induced by the acknowledgement of the structural characteristics of the scenario. Examples of this are the use of the expression “fear”, or even the preponderance of suggestions for intervention based on hygienist and policing outlooks.

It is through what Bourgois (2009) calls *invisible violence* that this issue is most significantly revealed. In other words, understanding violence as a structural element in the organization of social life throughout history and in different cultures, tending to assume forms of coercion that are veiled and legitimised and therefore are not seen as occurring between perpetrator and victim, between fear and subjection. This author identifies three dimensions of reproduction of *invisible violence*. A *structural* dimension, associated to the limitations on life opportunities promoted by the economic and social conditions of the environment; a dimension *normalized* by means of the cultural values, the practices and the daily interactions that reproduce social differences; and a *symbolic* dimension corresponding to the internalization of social control structures and stigmatization of the victims.

Examples of violence seen in this way are present in the described scenario, whether in the criticisms by some ‘residents’ with regard to what they consider to be an insufficient action by the police and security forces in “cleaning the filth” in the area, in the dissuasive actions performed by the station’s security guard in relation to beggars or groups of youths they suspect are delinquent, or even in the resigned comment of a female sex worker, referring to the frequent insults she is subject to.

From the perspective of the common acceptance of violence as physical aggression, the expression of this phenomenon is usually occasional. Specific examples that can be offered are the conflicts between women who are engaged in prostitution and clients or procurers, occasional vandalism at store windows or disorder associated to large numbers of people grouped together and the use of drugs and alcohol.

In line with the initial finding of the research, youth violence is not a core variable for the comprehension of this case study. Youth, as an age indicator, is of little relevance for the characterization and comprehension of the phenomena at hand. The most relevant indicators in this regard are the scarce references made to young males from poor family backgrounds who resort to prostitution, and situations of drug and alcohol abuse by groups of youths, associated to nightlife during weekends.

From this perspective, as opposed to what was suggested by the project design, this case study suggests a closer look into the problematics of aging and gender. Alcoholism, the demand for male and female prostitution and homosexual pick up practices are phenomena and behaviours associated to men, many of whom are above 60 years old and compose the S. Bento's daily scenery.

The mosaic of social problematics revealed by the testimony of the 'residents', was corroborated and complemented by the institutional actors. Some of the elements of this mosaic, corresponding to different characters in the plot, are associated to conditions of extreme hardship and marginality, an example of which are the homeless who regularly visit the station, as are also others who also beg frequently.

Within this threshold, or on its border with less extreme conditions of vulnerability, we find drug addicts and alcoholics. The former group is composed by both adult men and women belonging to different age groups, while the latter group is composed mostly by men above 40.

Another permanent presence is women and men who work as prostitutes, the latter considerably more hidden from direct observation. These practices are often, but not exclusively, associated to drug abuse.

Other pictures on this mosaic bring up different concepts and reveal other practices, which also correspond in part to different characters in the plot. The concepts in question are delinquency and criminality, as well as social deviation and deviant behaviour. The phenomena and practices that we identify in these domains do not necessarily imply an extreme level of vulnerability. To the contrary, they frequently reveal a greater capacity to mobilize resources of different natures.

The practices we often call “scams” (pickpockets, petty theft, contraband, small scale drug traffic) can to a large extent be comprised within the concepts of delinquency or criminality, seeing that they are specified and punished by law (Negreiros, 1990). The structural presence of these practices inevitably leads to considering the theoretical issues of deviant trajectories and careers (Negreiros, 2008) as one of the crucial factors in the reproduction of poverty and social exclusion in this territory.

The amplitude of the concept of deviant behaviour, as a transgression or violation of the norms and expectations of a certain group or community (Negreiros, 1990; Antunes, 1999) covers for most of the described mosaic. Bringing it up in order to help understand this territory is useful mainly in order to account for phenomena that are not a legal matter and regarding which the concept of poverty does not provide sufficient heuristic background, as is the case of the practices of the clients of male and female prostitution, as well as homosexual pick up practices. In this field, the emphasis is put on social condemnation and stigmatization, suggesting that the concept of social exclusion is more adequate in order to properly understand these empirical realities.

The opinion of a significant part of the interviewed interlocutors is that this mosaic of phenomena tends towards improvement and stabilization. In order to understand the evolution of the occurrence of these phenomena on the territory, one should analyse the strategies for intervention implemented there over the years.

In line with the phenomenon of *gentrification* that has occurred over the last two decades in Porto, political priorities have been centred around creating conditions for territorial competitiveness according to the standards of societies based on advanced

capitalism, whereby the city is viewed as the supreme symbol of economic and social development. Therefore, the approaches to poverty and social exclusion are merely instrumental in the pursuit of this ideal, which reveals the hegemonic order of values according to which these issues are relegated to a secondary status.

In this sense, the preponderant tendency in the intervention within the urban territory under analysis has been to intensify hygienist strategies, both through urban requalification policies and social policies, particularly in terms of housing and social action. As of the 1990s, these interventions started off by reversing the situation of extreme degradation of the historical centre, including dismantling one of the main drug markets in the region, at a time when the issue of drug addiction was reaching alarming proportions in Portugal. These interventions were progressively reaching a wider territory including the city's 'downtown' area.

Given the centrality of S. Bento, the impact of these interventions was clear in the station's space and its immediate surroundings. The concentration of homeless people, drug addicts and the related transit of people decreased considerably at the station. The strategies of intensifying security and policing have both contributed towards this.

In as far as concerns policing, we would like to point out the choice of the public space of the station as a priority, with regular presence of a police force specifically commissioned to assist tourist activities, as well the creation of a special railroad police force in order to operate inside stations and trains. The creation of the latter police force is also, as we mentioned, paradigmatic in terms of the preventive and dissuasive model adopted.

With regard to security within the station, the strategies adopted follow the same approach, maintaining continuous surveillance and social control over the space. As our empirical results have shown, the station's security guard is a central character in the implementation of those policies, to the extent that its main functions imply a lead role in the daily interaction with the actors in the social mosaic of poverty and exclusion.

The opinion of the interviewed institutional actors who provide security and policing reflects the tendency towards stabilization and

progressive endogeneity of this mosaic. The handling of these phenomena is integrated in the day-to-day management of this space. These actors are focused mainly on addressing emergent phenomena regarding which surveillance and dissuasion-based strategies do not provide solutions. In this category we have the cases of groups of Romanian citizens who use the transport network, or the graffiti painters who seek places for expression along railway lines and facilities, hidden from the ever present surveillance system, practicing acts that are classified as vandalism against CP property.

The legitimization of these approaches is supported by approximately one third of the 'resident' actors, who consider that this type of intervention should be intensified.

From a different perspective, a smaller number of these actors, among which five interviewees experiencing situations of social exclusion, consider that the intervention in this space should be focused on the needs and problems of the disadvantaged population. Naturally, as is inherent to their missions, this perspective is shared by the TSO's that intervene in this space.

The testimonies of these institutional actors suggest the same tendency towards stability of this mosaic of phenomena. This stability is also associated to the acknowledgment of an improvement in the models of institutional articulation for social response, with the reporting of all individual cases and coverage of their immediate needs. The priority of intervention that results from their diagnoses is the need to create responses capable of providing continuous social reintegration processes with adequate follow-up. Although it is not possible to quantify the phenomena at hand, we can safely say that the number of 'residents' involved in this mosaic amounts to dozens or close to a hundred. It should also be noted that since this is a priority policing zone the number of recorded incidents is very low.

To sum up, S. Bento is the study of a strip of urban territory where poverty and social exclusion are manifest endogenously and whose in-depth analysis reflects the mechanisms of its structural reproduction. The station is a space where these phenomena become apparent, but not a point for their concentration, something

which has been effectively avoided through strong surveillance and social control. In order to understand these phenomena in their full complexity, an overview of the wider territory would be required, as well as of other points in the urban centre.

*3) To what extent are these phenomena connected to the station and the specific characteristics of the space?*

The empirical research allowed collecting two distinct sets of results with a view to answering this third starting question.

The first set of results is composed of the answers provided by the 'resident' actors, when they were asked what is the connection between the social phenomena they identified in their testimonies and the S. Bento station. These answers provided leads for reflection upon the connection of these phenomena to the station's function of passenger transportation and the concentration and the mobility of people resulting from it.

The station is viewed as a "place for opportunities" from several different perspectives. On the one hand, it is a privileged location for the business of merchants and service providers as well as a point of arrival for the female prostitutes' countryside clients. On the other hand, the characteristics of the space are favourable to the operation of "scams", as well as to the daily survival routines of the actors experiencing extreme marginality situations (such as beggars and the homeless). From yet another perspective, this perception is associated to a sense of historic background and to the polarity S. Bento reveals within the wider setting of poverty and social exclusion in the city, as suggested by expressions such as "terminal point", "central area" or "it has always been a strategic point, some do it out of need, for others it's an addiction".

The station's function of passenger transportation and the resulting concentration and mobility of people therefore constitutes a crucial element for the understanding of this mosaic of social problematics. However, these characteristics are similar to those found in other places within the urban centre, where thousands of people pass by, other transport infrastructures are to be found and similar phenomena take place. In this context, the autonomization of

empirical indicators to respond to this third starting question is particularly difficult to achieve.

Also in order to contribute towards finding an answer to this starting question, the ethnographic approach to the territory privileged the social appropriation of physical space as the main dimension of analysis. The results of this analysis revealed a segmentation of the space, something that deepens the understanding of the mosaic of phenomena discovered, but does not contribute towards clarifying the starting question.

From the perspective of the development of urban territory, the first approach to the terrain had already revealed the distinctiveness of the location of S. Bento at the frontier between the medieval city, of popular and neighbourhood-based tradition, with the modern city, more impersonal and anonymous. The expression of the abovementioned phenomena in the station area corroborates this initial conclusion, by presenting a matching geography of the “microcosms of deviation”.

The data obtained from the observation and the interviews bring to light the polarity of distinct phenomena on one and the other side of the frontier. On the Loureiro street side, contiguous to the Sé neighbourhood and where there is still housing and traditional businesses, the phenomena fit the framework that we can designate as a territory of “normalized” or instituted poverty, where begging and especially female prostitution are the historically and socially endogenous expression, notwithstanding their description as “rot” or “cancer”.

In the transition to the modern city, on the Madeira Street side and including the main part of the inner space of the station, the phenomena that resist this institutionalization or social normalization tend to be polarized. This resistance is associated both to its nature on the threshold of unlawfulness and criminality and also to the high degree of social disapproval and stigma, as is also the case with alcohol and drug abuse and homosexuality – “the most revolting thing in the station”. This side of the border is therefore a territory of increased opacity, which benefits from the greater anonymity provided as a result of the physical characteristics and the social occupation of the space.

These results, as well as the overall results of the ethnographic approach chosen by *Violence in transit*, lead to viewing S. Bento as a privileged scenery to observe the emergence or the concentration of poverty and social exclusion, but also – and above all – the structural mechanisms for its reproduction. The research methodology implemented had the advantage of revealing the outline of the daily interactions between the different social actors, through whom the interpersonal processes and macro-structural mechanisms of social exclusion are reproduced.

The characteristics that make this such a privileged space are its functions of passenger transportation, its status as a tourist attraction and its location at the heart of an urban centre undergoing a *gentrification* process. Located in a more ample territory characterized by the gradual increase of social control and police surveillance, the railway station is perhaps one of parcels of city territory where this control and surveillance are most clearly present.

This statement is revealed most clearly by the role of the station's security guard, a participant in the day-to-day storyline of each of the subjects who make up the mosaic of poverty and exclusion, as well as during the hours and the minutes of a day's work of direct observation in the territory by the research team.

### **2.1.3.2 Leads for intervention**

Finally, in view of the research conclusions, it is important to consider the opportunities for intervention highlighted by the *Violence in transit* project.

The first key-element for these considerations is thematic. From this perspective, structural poverty and the reproduction of mechanisms of social exclusion appear as central themes, within a context of stability in the manifestation of social problematics. In this way the research results principally invite us to design an intervention geared towards critical reflection of themes such as:

- The representations of poverty and social exclusion and their reproduction through progressively endogenous social inequality mechanisms at individual and collective levels, both objectively and subjectively.

- The historic character of these problematics in the Porto city centre, the models for social intervention that were already implemented, their results and impacts.

- The scenarios of evolution of the situation, considering the current context of crisis and the trends in the field of social policies.

Also within the thematic field, and taking into account the empirical configuration of the different phenomena in the mosaic of problems described, the results of this research invite to further consideration of the social diagnosis regarding this territory. Some of the specific themes identified are the following:

- The correlation between these same problematics and issues relating to ageing and gender.

- Issues related to the social treatment of homosexuality and the lack of knowledge about and difficult access to the population involved in male prostitution practices.

- The prevalence of situations of extreme marginality – despite the significant improvement in social intervention strategies – regarding which social response at the primary and secondary intervention levels remains insufficient.

- The difficulties felt in the development of long-lasting social reintegration solutions.

The specific characteristics of the physical and social space of S. Bento are another key-element for intervention. The same characteristics that make the station a privileged location for observation of the mechanisms of reproduction of social exclusion constitute extraordinary opportunities to design an intervention geared towards a comprehensive work in raising social awareness. Actions focusing on this space can count on great diversity and number of targets, namely:

- Thirty thousand CP clients per day, including large numbers of people who inhabit the Douro, Minho and Aveiro regions and the Porto Metropolitan Area;

- Thousands of people passing by in downtown Porto every day, including tourists;

- Hundreds of people who we designated in this study as ‘resident’ actors, including merchants and service providers at the location and the immediate surroundings as well as the actual people in

situations of social vulnerability. In addition to these, there are also those who inhabit the buildings around the station, which continue to serve as residences.

- The institutional actors responsible for intervening in S. Bento, the actual managing entities, CP and REFER, as well as the TSOs and the police authorities – PSP, Railway Police and Tourism Patrol teams.

Finally, and in line with this listing of potential target-audiences for intervention design, it is important to take into account other actors who may influence, contribute and / or benefit from the actions to be implemented (*stakeholders*). These include public, private and third sector entities, such as:

- The Town Hall, Local Councils and other entities with jurisdiction over the different areas of sectorial politics (social action, employment, gender equality, urban requalification, tourism, etc.).
- The private agents with interests in this urban area, among which real estate agents and tourism agents.
- The TSO's that intervene in the Porto city centre.
- Universities and researchers dedicated to the study of these phenomena in the city.

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## 2.2 Violence in Transit: Stigmatizations, Conflicts, and Violence around the “Estació del Nord” Station in Barcelona.

### An Ethnographical Review

#### Report of National Research – Spain

By Eduard Mateus (coordination), José Sánchez García, Pep Cura

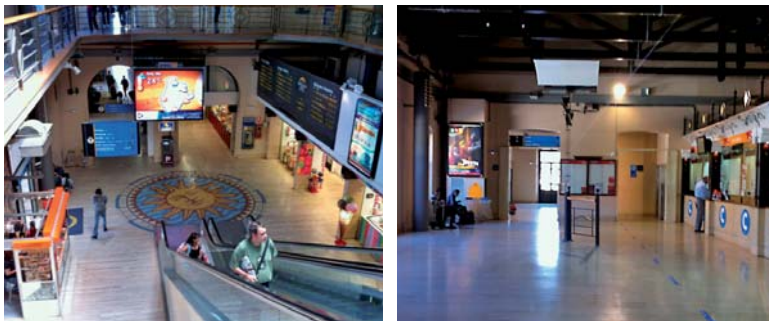


This study is part of a broader investigation about youth violence in transit areas of three European cities: Barcelona (Spain), Porto (Portugal), and Pescara (Italy). This study is funded by the DAFNE programme of the European Commission, which is aimed at fighting violence against children, youth, and women in Europe, as well as supporting the victims and reducing their vulnerability to violence. Our objective is to contribute to opening new ways in investigation and action in favour of the most vulnerable citizens in Europe, as well as other investigations being carried out in the framework of this European initiative. The project's aim is to create reference models for action in cases of youth violence in transit areas of the European Union, starting from the assumption that during the last thirty years these phenomena have shifted from central areas of towns to areas with lower monitoring and repression, such as the transit areas.

### 2.2.1 Action area

The project *Violence in Transit* is aimed at developing transferable actions to public authorities and social entities in the context of youth violence in urban transit areas, public transport stations in particular. According to the project hypothesis, these phenomena have been shifting since the 1980s and 1990s from the centre of towns to urban transit areas with lower social monitoring. This has been observed by “On the Road”, the project leading organisation, in the city of Pescara (Italy).

Once APIP-ACAM foundation joins the project, it is first necessary to check whether said formulation is applicable to the metropolitan area of Barcelona and whether this is a relevant issue. After a first exploratory visit to the railway station of Sants, the most important in Barcelona, it was found that it does not meet the formulation of the project, as violence phenomena are fortuitous inside and outside Sants station. That is why it was decided to perform an exploratory investigation of other stations of the metropolitan area, while simultaneously contacting bodies and entities considered as relevant to deepen the knowledge of the incidence of youth violence phenomena in urban transit areas. Ultimately, the purpose of this project is to check the adequacy of the statement of the problem, if said issue is likely to respond by investigation and its significance, and if there are already works about this issue.



*Second part of the station. On the left, the hallway with lockers; on the right, the distributor providing access to the lower floor*

We opted for the “Estació del Nord”, despite presenting at first sight less signs of latent violence than other infrastructures in the metropolitan area of Barcelona, as it is within the city and meets more appropriate characteristics to the hypothesis of the project. It should be noted that the area where the station is located is unstructured at the urban level and the population density is lower than the average of Barcelona. There are several large non-built spaces: some have sports facilities, while other areas are gardens, squares, avenues, or transition areas to other neighbourhoods. All these areas make it possible to create meeting spaces of various groups of young people living in the area, the rest of Barcelona, and its metropolitan area. A high percentage of people of various ethnic backgrounds live in the surrounding neighbourhoods, making it more complex to establish social interaction in this area of the city, but it is also more interesting to study. The “Estació del Nord” is the bus station of Barcelona. Buses are the most common means of transport used by foreign people, many of them young and poor. To complement the “Estació del Nord”, the “Estació Arc del Triomf” station is about fifty metres away from it. This station, including the Metro line 4 and Rodalies Catalunya RENFE railway service, connects the city centre with suburbs where the resident population’s purchasing power is low, in the north of the metropolitan area, making it one of the important points, without being the main point of arrival, for young people from these areas to the capital. It is therefore a key factor in choosing this urban transit area that an important part of “Estació del Nord” users, and of its complementary station “Estació Arc del Triomf”, and people who live or are related to it, combine the characteristics of the target group initially set for the project presented here.



*The bust stop area. Police inspection of buses on the Algeciras line*

The “Estació del Nord” (officially *Barcelona Nord*) is a former railway station, which is now used as bus terminal. It is one of the three most important bus stations in Barcelona in terms of passengers - 7 millions per year - and national and international connections. In 2008, the station went through a major renovation in the lobby, due to the intercommunication plan with Arc de Triomf metro station and Renfe railway station. Work is continuing on the plan. This exchange unit, used by sixteen thousand passengers a day, links the bus station on Line 1 of the Metro of Barcelona and three commuter railway lines (R1, R3, and R4), and one regional train line (R12).

The area defined as the unit of analysis is significantly influenced morphologically by the imprint left by the old railway network in the relief and distribution of land. The constructions of the land surrounding the station have been conditioned by the limitations imposed by the presence of roads, thereby producing spaces “disconnected” with each other, preventing continuity between urban areas and creating urban boundaries between adjacent neighbourhoods.



The red star marks the location of the “Estació del Nord”, and the research area is bounded by the black lines.

All these lines on the map correspond to physical barriers (always streets and large avenues), symbolically demarcating a clear border to those living or travelling through the area. Also, micro-areas like the park adjoining the station are natural symbolic barriers.

In Fort Pienc, a district in which the “Estació del Nord” is situated, 1.19% of the shops of Barcelona are concentrated. During the last few years, there has been a significant increase in the Chinese and Pakistani populations in the neighbourhood. Furthermore, these businesses are concentrated in the area around the “Estació del Nord”, making the other areas appear as poorly commercial areas. The industrial infrastructures account for 1.34% of the total of the city, reflecting some historical continuity with the industrial tradition of the nearby district of Poble Nou. The office premises account for 2.05% of the total of Barcelona, mostly professional and real estate services, which scarcely influence the sociological characteristics of the area. Finally, accommodation facilities are 1.20% of the total. These data reflect an economic activity, which is below the level that would correspond to a neighbourhood with this population weight, to an important point of arrival of travellers, and to its proximity to critical areas of the city, such as the Ciutat Vella or the Sagrada Família district.

Also, the population of the district of Fort Pienc is 2.20% of the total population of the city of Barcelona, of which 18.80% are foreigners, compared to 17.40% in the whole city. The growth of foreign population has been of approximately 4% annually, according to the census data of the city of Barcelona in 2012. 16.52% of the foreign population is of Chinese origin, making it the largest foreign group in the area. The rest of the foreign-born population consists mostly of EU origin population and small numbers of people of other origins.

### 2.2.2 Investigation methodology

The *Violence in Transit* project of the European Programme Dafne aims at pinpointing the causes and needs of groups at risk of social exclusion, in particular youth – as defined in the cohort between

eighteen and thirty years of age. We study the relationship of this group with phenomena associated with behaviours perceived as deviant that would occur in passenger transport hubs, as a significant element for the production of such behaviours. Thus, the train and bus stations, as unique elements of urban space rather than as non-places, are understood as sites which, due to their socio-morphological aspects, alter the perception of the buildings and their adjacent areas. In that sense, the field research produced under the project attempted to test the hypothesis that the “Estació del Nord” in Barcelona influences the appearance of violent behaviours, especially among youth groups, both in the buildings and in their area of influence.

In this report, it is understood that the stations are “places”, and “spaces” from an anthropological point of view. That is, they are “territorialisations” containing a socially determined representation of categories – crossed by positions of power; or “practiced places” as de Certeau would define them, or “social products” according to Lefebvre. As Hall stated, “like speech shapes thinking, the built environment is not passive but communicates and conveys meanings” (Hall, 1997). But does this refer to public spaces? According to an instrumental definition, ‘public’ would refer to areas of the city differentiated from private spaces, which have the property of allowing access declared as “free” to anyone wanting to pass through them. However, sometimes, as we will see, there are limitations arbitrarily agreed in both uses and times by some bystanders. But beyond that simple definition, most theorists that have faced the problem of specifying the concept of ‘public space’ agree on the need to approach it as socially perceived, conceived, practiced, and produced places.

In that sense, Signorelli (1999) points out the mistake of thinking the city as a container and the society as content, both isolated and independent. For her, city-society relationship is a historical condition and must be analyzed culturally. Signorelli refers to Lefebvre’s approach in characterizing space as political and ideological. Public space would appear as a specific place where

people live the city (Lefebvre, 1974), experienced many times as “spacing” but where nobody can ever be completely alone. “The public” is as what can “be seen” by all and that “belongs” to all, accessibility and visibility argued by Joseph (1999). The ‘public’ includes the obligation to see and be seen, the option of anonymity or the opportunity to interact socially. Its users are of any kind, as in principle there are no access limitations. They are ‘urban’ citizens using the various places perceived as public areas as their own property and territory, and ‘de-territorialising’ them continuously, moving like a liquid that solidifies and is liquefied constantly, full of insecurity and ambiguity. However, Manuel Delgado has meanwhile questioned the connotation of ‘public’ for urban space in that it can be understood in the sense of “res publica” (2004). So, Delgado says that space is categorized as “property of public institutions”.

Therefore, the uses and appropriations exerted by society on them are multiple, heterogeneous, mutant..., and elusive. At the same time, it is considered as a resource, a source of power, and in a given context as a way to exercise dominion by the social sector that holds it. This recourse to the domain is a phenomenon especially critical in public space, because, as Delgado says “it is the most abstract of spaces” (1999) then its planning and design become a definition of what is appropriate and inappropriate, of the stigmatized and stigmatizing ones. For, Delgado “public space is “the urban part” of a city, characterized by its individual, unique, open, fluid, undefined, volatile uses, occupations, and appropriations... “The public space, street, square, garden, [the station] has no inhabitants but various bystanders, pedestrians, and walkers producing their specific forms of random and uncontrolled sociability” (2004). The conflict would appear precisely due to the possibility that all the ways to perceive, conceive, and live public space that have a chance to occur in it are juxtaposed, overlapping, and influenced by each other, one of them exerting domination over the others. Therefore, any action that takes place on and in public space becomes a way to wield the authority seeking to make some uses visible and few other uses invisible. This invisibility can appear

as a strategy of users to avoid conflict with the authorities, as a result of restrictive policies in its use, or stigmatization of groups and uses deemed as inappropriate or insolent. It is this latter argument that would allow understanding youth behaviour in public and in places like stations as deviant, conflicting or violent.

In this type of micro-sociological analysis relevant to the relationship expressed in the public space, it is necessary to mention the work by Erving Goffman on the interaction of people in everyday contexts. Goffman unveiled invisible facts to a structural look of human experience, being a key to the analysis of situations in public space where 'exhibition' and 'reserve' had already been considered by Simmel. Goffman uses the theatrical figure of "drama" in which people show up with a concrete façade as if on a stage, while backstage reserves other self. The interactions are resolved through rituals that depend on the perception of a framework that forms a social situation. Following Lefebvre, public space would be the place in which "social relations have real existence" (1974). It is then essential to define the public space through its dialectical triad: practice of space (perceived); representation of space (conceived); and representation spaces (experienced), not forgetting the diachronic aspect through which space becomes a historical process. Thus, a preliminary, almost ethological, observation of interaction in the selected area or space is imperative to Goffman.

From this perspective on urban space and the influence of morphology for perception, understanding, and ownership of territories, both the previous prospection step started between the months of November 2011 and April 2012, in a more cursory way, and the investigation of the selected observation unit that took place between the months of April and May 2012 with greater dedication. This time limitation caused a certain degree of anxiety in the pursuit of objectives. This restriction forced the adoption of an intensive analysis looking for a deeper understanding of the research object through an inductive and interpretive approach to provide a "multi-perspective triangulation", as proposed by Machado Pais (2009),

starting from the observations, interviews, and informal meetings conducted. The methodological principles of ethnography were followed as a strategy for approaching the field through methodological eclecticism, which combines open data collection techniques, purposive sampling, and an emerging or “cascade” research design. Thus, observation techniques – mainly guided by Goffman’s proposal –, the entries in the field diary, and observation forms would subsequently be combined with standard data collection techniques, which allow triangulation, such as detailed interviews.

From an inductive and phenomenological approximation, with no particular focus on the phenomena of youth violence, the activities started from observations in the “Estació del Nord” building to develop a preliminary map of its area of influence, thereby establishing the implementation area. An essential part of the work was the adjustment of observation forms to the needs of the field, and “observation marathons” were carried out trying to cover the possible time slots as much as possible through ‘clandestine’ observation without interaction, whose goal was to detect any deviant or stigmatized behaviour in the area between youth groups. This research phase was conducted for twenty-four days, but, at the same time, some informal contacts began. This technique allowed us to discover the changes in the use of the various areas perceived and defined by researchers across the catchment area of the station, taking into account the temporal variability and the groups that territorialised the various spaces. Thus, the focus on the users of the target age cohort resulted in the identification of other phenomena related to social stigmatization of groups at risk and marginalized livelihoods, whose protagonists belonged, in some cases, to the cohort defined.

From that moment, observation became open, trying to engage with individuals involved in the phenomena detected through informal meetings. This was combined with semi-structured interviews to the key players in the territory of observation. The interviewed informants were selected from purposive sampling technique,

whose premise remained the need to carry out one of these interviews with each of the detected sociological profiles of both stakeholders and individuals involved in stigmatized or deviant behaviour. The end result was twenty-two interviews, some of which are not recorded due to respondent refusal, which can be divided as follows: eleven interviews with public institutions that perform community service in the project area and eleven interviews with people suffering stigmatization, produce deviant behaviour, or suffer these behaviours. It should be noted that interviews with stigmatized people - one person in homeless situation, a sex worker, a recycler of informal urban waste, Latino youth group, and a group of young teenagers - were done with their consent. However, a greater number of voices of people involved in these phenomena could have been received, if fieldwork time could have been extended. At the end of the second phase, a specific period of time was dedicated to the analysis of data collected based on the triangulation of the various techniques which, at times, required a timely return to the field to confirm or rule out some hypotheses proposed for the analysis group sessions. This report is intended to be the end product of an approach to the phenomena of stigmatization, exclusion, and deviant behaviour favoured by the presence of the “Estació del Nord” station as built space, often disarticulating the territory it influences, with no claimed completeness, but only for the purpose of providing the first x-ray of the area.

### **2.2.3 Investigation results**

The objective of the research was to detect deviant, conflicting, or violent youth behaviour initially in the area established as under direct influence of the bus station, and later in the unit formed by the bus station and the railway station of Arc del Triomf, as it was identified as an inseparable urban unit after the early stages of research.

The investigation showed the existence of such phenomena in the study area. The presence of the station and of other major cultural

facilities de-structures the territory. They create several spaces around the facilities with no apparent specific use, which is even worsened by the considerable unevenness of the terrain in this area, due to which spaces are more inaccessible. Moreover, the cultural infrastructures are used for punctual activities. Therefore, most of the time these spaces do not show any activity, which accentuates this perception of emptiness. The various development plans have failed to resolve the breakdown of the territory and provide a defined use for such empty spaces. Thus, the official planning does not give them any function, and the neighbouring communities do not consider the areas as their spaces and do not use them. It is in these spaces that conflict phenomena, violence and social exclusion, mainly prostitution, large alcohol consumption, informal scrap collection, ethnic ghettoisation of public spaces for common use, and people experiencing homelessness were detected. Of these, the research team decided to prepare proposals for intervention with the last two phenomena.

It should be noted that some of said phenomena are perceived as more or less conflicting by neighbours, shopkeepers, and security forces in the area, depending on who carries out the various actions. In fact, when they are performed by stigmatized groups such as Latinos, North African, or “system-fighting” people, the perception of conflict increases. This perception is conditioned, therefore, by public imagination established by the hegemonic culture that points to these groups as being potentially dangerous. Attention is also attracted by the fact that in strongly stigmatized groups, such as prostitutes, homeless, or scrap collectors, their youth status is diluted. When they are detected by institutions and neighbours, the stigma of their *modus vivendi* prevails. That is why many of them try to make their living conditions invisible to go unnoticed, avoiding the dominant imaginary labels proposed as characteristics of individuals in this situation of social marginalization. A clear example of this is given by the new “homeless” people that move through the area trying to be invisible to avoid conflicts and violent situations. This makes any kind of social intervention more difficult, as the identification of these people is more complicated.

### ***2.2.3.a Violent and Criminal Acts with Youth Involved***

Regardless of whether they are committed by individuals categorized as young, it could be argued that certain behaviours are considered as deviant, conflicting, or violent, therefore as belonging to the “youth” social category. However, those same people in the cohort defined maintain adult behaviours and attitudes. Job, family, social, and political responsibilities are exercised by individuals in this age group. Therefore, the stigmatization of certain behaviours of this group that the dominant hegemony is reluctant to accept is attributed to youth in general and not to the social conditions putting them in that state. This situation is necessary for the society to stigmatize certain behaviours and turn them into a quasi-biological matter. In the same vein, the homeless, sex workers, or urban recyclers are not considered as “young”, despite being, as shown by the data collected, in the age group established (Goffman 1986). Therefore, it seems necessary to consider the categories of activities, behaviours, and situations significantly present in the area always, but never exclusively, referring to individuals of the defined age group. Thus, there are three main sections to group detected potentially conflicting behaviours: free time activities, livelihood, and residence.

#### ***2.2.3.a.1 Youth Leisure in Empty Territories***

As noted above, spaces territorialised by groups of young people to carry out any activities that other agents - law enforcement, social services, and neighbours primarily - consider as deviant or conflicting activities have been observed in what has been defined as empty territories. These activities include meetings for consumption of alcohol and hashish within groups, which occur mainly during weekend nights. However, the location does not produce a direct conflict with the agents mentioned above, as these activities occur in “invisible” areas. The lack of conflict and violence of these encounters, with no direct consequences for either neighbours or law enforcement, is held in the absence of damage on urban furniture and private property surrounding these “empty spaces”.

Of greater importance to the objectives of the study is the presence of Latin youth groups that territorialise some hardly accessible parts in the research area. As can be seen, the encounters with the authorities are so common to these young people that the requirement of identity documents by the city police does not produce any anxiety or nervousness among them. Moreover, the economic precariousness of most young people, together with a lack of understanding of their needs, prevents the success of activities proposed by Fort Pienc Civic Centre, Sandaru, and the Library of Fort Pienc -although in the latter case no activities are scheduled to be directly aimed at young people.

In general, leisure activities and leisure time of youth groups in the area are perceived as conflicting by residents, shopkeepers, and security forces in the area when they are carried out by stigmatized groups such as Latinos, North African, or “system-fighting” people. However, independently from being or not specially conflicting or violent behaviours, they are always perceived as such through public imagination established by hegemonic culture by pointing to these groups as being potentially dangerous.

### ***2.2.3.a.2 Homeless People***

One of the most conflictive situations of marginalization is the presence in the area of population without the necessary financial resources for livelihood and a place to stay overnight. As noted earlier, in this case, age characteristics are not taken into account in classifying individuals who are in this situation. Their identity is dominated by the stigma of not having financial resources and yet many of them are included in the population of the research cohort. The latter are hardly classified as homeless by residents and traders, as they are not labelled by public imagination like the other individuals in this situation of social marginalization. However, the investigation confirmed the steady increase in youth population without the necessary resources to meet their basic needs. In this regard, the new line from Romania and Eastern Europe to the bus station has led to the emergence of individuals and sometimes entire families who come to the city without any resources and

ignoring the context in which they are trying to enter. This often leads to further settlement in the station or nearby, in the barracks of empty territories that urbanization is creating in the Poble Nou area known as '22@'.

Among the most difficult to detect due to their lack of stereotypical labels – beard, trolley with belongings, bags, poor personal hygiene, and pathological psychological behaviour, and invisible for this reason – there may be individuals who had labour and social problems and lacked a network of solidarity enabling them to meet their basic needs. Shopkeepers and neighbours, in many cases, are unable to recognize them. Only if you spend much time in a place it is possible to identify these people. Therefore, the marks of stigma structure the perception of the phenomenon by neighbours and shopkeepers not directly involved in social work. Many new homeless choose to get around obtaining resources to maintain hygiene and eating habits to become invisible and thus prevent violent conflicts and situations.

### ***2.2.3.b Discomfort, Social Exclusion, Marginalisation, and Implemented Policies.***

The relative good maintenance of public spaces in the city is in contrast with the lack of equivalent policies for managing their use by youth groups who occupy them and cause problems with the rest of the citizens. Many of these groups occupy the space in an extensive way in time and in space, and project symbolic violence from time to time as a component of cohesion and delimitation of the territory. This problem requires urgent actions before it becomes more difficult to fix. It is also to be noted that Barcelona has become very complex at the sociological level during the last 15 years, and the current problems of coexistence that are arising and will emerge are inseparable from such complexity.

As noted by several informants, the works of the 'Teatre Nacional' (National Theatre) completed in 1996 and the National Auditorium in 1999 put and end to the de-territorialising space occupied by the

arrival routes to the Estació del Nord unused since 1972 and produced an extension of the observation area of the youth gangs who occupied the area. Recently, the renovation of the bus station building, and especially the unfinished works of the exchange unit between the bus station and railway, finally moved the presence of Latino youth groups as neighbours and shopkeepers reported. As a consequence, the presence of potentially conflicting youth groups in the observed spaces has declined significantly in recent years, as they were displaced to marginalized areas where they suffer less the stigma of their appearance from neighbours and law enforcement authorities.

The urban changes made in the spaces occupied by homeless people forced them to move to marginal lands. *“Before, we could sleep”* says Y about the area of the square of Fort Pienc.

A series of actions to remove corners of the architecture of the building that houses the civic centre, library, and primary school, forced overnight occupiers to leave the area. There they would now be more exposed to the gaze of passers, with the consequence of an increased perception of insecurity of the homeless. As pointed out by volunteers from the Community of Sant’Egidio, these populations more than perpetrators of violence are victims of it. Robberies, beatings, and attacks are common. As a worker of the municipal social services says, often such violence occurs between them rather than against neighbours or passersby, as a result of their marginalized and disadvantaged situation, which forces them to fight for scarce resources.

From these two different statements, we can interpret two ways to approach the problems of the homeless. For professionals, the main thing is to control them and give them an opportunity to normalise their situation. It is not to offer false hopes. For example, for paperless homeless people, somehow this professional attitude can become a first filter for expulsion or placement in qualified centres for immigrants. Through speaking, professionals can coerce homeless immigrants to facilitate their expulsion. The role of professionals is to detect and act, especially when this is requested

by neighbours “*who are those paying our salaries through their taxes*”. Again, the conflict situations depend on the perception of the phenomenon.

Moreover, the investigation revealed the use of some of the areas under observation by the population in situations of social exclusion for activities aimed at obtaining some livelihood. Although the presence of the Estació del Nord station does not have a direct influence on them, these activities do occur in the spaces defined as “empty territories”. Basically, two types of phenomena associated with these activities have been detected.

First, on the outskirts of the Park of the Estació del Nord, mainly in Almogavers Street in the stretch from Marina to Roger de Flor Street, on the west sidewalk of the Meridiana Avenue toward Glòries Square, and to a greater extent in Ramon Trías Fargas Street, near the Parc de la Ciutadella, eleven sex workers, including transsexuals, were detected.

If the tram changed the nearby Parc de la Ciutadella, the works performed after the Olympic Games for the Auditorium and the National Theatre had the same effect on the Puente de Marina area: “*before there were more of them in the Puente de Marina, now they have almost disappeared*” explains T. The association Cabiria confirms that this was a traditional area of prostitution in the city of Barcelona until those works were completed. This confirms, again, the use of urban actions to remove potentially conflicting phenomena for the city or for mass tourism.

Second, as in other parts of the city, the observation area is constantly occupied by individuals dedicated to collecting scrap and all kinds of objects left in the trash. While they do not cause any inconvenience to the residents in the neighbourhood, their number may cause poor image of the area, though, in general, their hard work is recognized. This bad image again appears to be directly related to the poor appearance of these people, which may affect the appearance of the areas where they act.

## 2.2.4 Opinions of local stakeholders

As Signorelli noted “urban space is culturalised” (1999) and should be considered as “practiced place” (de Certeau (2000 [1974]) or “lived spaces” (Lefebvre 1974). Therefore, it is essential to determine the perception, design, and experience of the place, considering the social characteristics of its users, mediated by their cultural patterns. The voices presented here were collected both during informal meetings and through semi-structured and in-depth interviews with stakeholders and target populations. We will present them in this section. The interviewees were selected from clandestine observations made during the first phase of the research. These investigations allowed establishing different ideal categories. This operational classification – with no hierarchy or more importance of one or other agent in the subsequent ethnographic analysis – serves as a guide to group the voices of the agents in the research area.

The first category corresponds to the grouping of all stakeholders present in the area who are not directly involved in the activities considered as conflicting or potentially conflicting. This category includes residents, key informers, local stakeholders, and institutions. The second grouping fulfils the criterion of including persons involved in the phenomena described and target groups on which social intervention can be potentially directed, with the purpose of reducing and preventing violence in transit areas.

### ***2.2.4.a Residents, Key Informants, Local Stakeholders, and Institutions (Positioning and Analysis of Observed Phenomena)***

This first category includes the views of residents and shopkeepers in the area. The majority opinion of neighbours is that the presence of people experiencing homelessness has increased in recent years, especially people “*sleeping in ATM machine shelters*”. For most residents, the station does not significantly influence neighbourhood life, although they argue that the presence of young offenders in the station building sometimes causes discomfort when trying to enter their property as they often hide in the lobbies of the buildings in the area.

Meanwhile, shopkeepers in the station building perceive that the neighbourhood is not affected by the presence of the station. Again, the most significant is the presence of homeless people living in the station building, without involving deterioration of relations and security. Moreover, they argue that in some cases, these people do small jobs for shopkeepers, earning a small income. In general, conflicts in the station increase depending on the person performing private security duties.

In the case of stakeholders and public institutions, the views of the Social Integration Services, Library of Fort Pienc, company Barcelona Serveis de Mobilitat – responsible for the management of the station building –, Civic Centre of Fort Pienc, the NGO Community of Sant’Egidio, and youth cultural centres La Resposta and Alobicenc stand out, although the latter could also be presented in the next section.

The views of the representatives of Servei d’Inserció Social (SIS), a municipal social work service covering the entire metropolitan area of Barcelona, express the perception of a change about five years ago (2008). This occurred not only in the Estació del Nord, but also in all the stations as a result of increased security within these facilities. In the case of the investigated area, the library and civic centre stand out as usual place of “occupation or use” by people experiencing homelessness. In fact, in these spaces, more visible conflicts have occurred sometimes, due to overuse of bathrooms to wash, bad body odour, or urinary incontinence of some of these people. We currently have detected a group of chronic homeless people living in the area, while at the same time new waves of people without resources and with no social network, especially from Romania, are identified.

This is also observed in conversations with workers from the Public Library of Fort Pienc. The library has detected an increase in people experiencing homelessness, often indigenous people, causing some discomfort among its users.

For the members of the Civic Centre, one of the main problems of the station is that it has become a “psychological or symbolic barrier” in the urban context, receiving few users from adjacent areas such as Sant Martí or Pont de Marina. At the same time, they feel that “*conflict situations have to do with the proximity of the station, as people ask us if we found any identification documents (petty thefts).*” In a way, they assume that the centre is located in an area of urban transition that affects their activities.

In the case of the management company of the bus station, the greatest conflict comes from people experiencing homelessness. “*They’re a bad image problem for the station to tourists.*” They consider, as in any other station, pickpocketing or thefts perpetrated by people taking advantage of the confusion of tourists to rob their belongings as something unavoidable.

The Community of Sant’Egidio, with long experience in assisting people experiencing social exclusion, confirms that more and more Spanish people from the working middle class with socioeconomic problems add to the typical profile of homeless people. After a period of stability, they currently perceive a greater presence of a new profile of users of free food services offered by the Community. They believe that this phenomenon is caused by the current financial crisis and lack of access to public subsidies and solidarity networks. They found an increase in the number of homeless people in 2004, when they were sent away from the city centre. The policy of the station has chosen “*to pull out the poor*” to conceal the phenomenon. That is why for them this situation can now create a false sense of reduction of the problem. Thus, it seems that the security policy of the station has managed to eject homeless people from its premises but not from the area. Given this situation, homeless people seek alternative shelters in ATM machines in the vicinity of the station in search of a “safe” place to avoid dangerous encounters during the night. We can not forget that, as reported by interviewed volunteers and professional social workers, many times people in a homeless situation are those who suffer violence during the night due to their vulnerability.

The youth cultural group Alobicienc has no hesitation in describing the area as being quiet. According to them, the centre of Barcelona is territorialised by various youth groups and there are no disputed areas. They speak about a *“hot zone beneath the Marina bridge”*. Moreover, metro or bus stations are not related to the *“property”* of a particular gang, as it was the case 4 or 5 years ago. In fact, they believe that *“violence between youth gangs began in the metro stops and stations, which were territorialised, but now violence has shifted to parks, gardens, and squares”*, which we defined as empty territories in the research. This phenomenon is referred mainly to increased security measures in the stations in the heart of Barcelona. In this way, and always based on their perception of the area, this would refute the main assumption of the research. The station, except for its surroundings, would not be an attraction point for the phenomenon of youth violence, but rather the opposite, as it is controlled by security and surveillance forces.

Meanwhile, another group of culturally active youth in the neighbourhood are members of the Casal Popular La Resposta, located in an *‘okupado’* (occupied) facility in the Fort Pienc square. They are stigmatized by most neighbours, due to their age and ideological status. The Resposta is for them a place of conflict, due to the alleged use of hashish and noise they make during the night, even though its members deny their involvement in such activities. They highlight, as most respondents, *“the large number of homeless people who sleep and live in the square and do not know of any NGO working there.”*

#### ***2.2.4.b Individuals Involved in Described Phenomena, Potential Target Group for Social Intervention in order to Reduce and Prevent Violent Actions in Transit Areas.***

In this category, we include those individuals involved in the detected phenomena: youth groups, prostitutes, people experiencing homelessness, and urban informal recyclers who are mostly undocumented and avoid the station and crowds, as any conflict may entail serious problems to them.

For sex workers in the area, the station allows the arrival of *“people who come to sleep from the Estación del Norte station, they can be seen in the area... They come and do not know where to go.”* They look for ATM machines or parks to spend the night. These are homeless people in transit. Some of them complain about the increase of Barcelona police fines, following the *“public policy”* ordinance implemented by the municipal government, as well as about being affected by violent episodes during the night.

Of more interest to the objectives of the project are the views expressed by youth groups occupying empty spaces in the area to drink alcohol and consume hashish. They perform these activities out of boredom and *“take advantage where we are not seen.”* Indigenous young people report the presence of young Latino groups, occasionally resulting in clashes between rival groups, as happened during the month of October 2011. Latino groups try to occupy the territories and *“make them their own”*. Taking advantage of their threatening stigma, they are able to wipe out other youth groups, exerting a symbolic violence, which may potentially become physical.

Finally, the group of people experiencing homelessness, which was identified as the most numerous among the stigmatized people in the area, always stands out in the station building that has become a safe place to rest during the day. However, there they are victims of the station guards expelling them from the station, referring to the ambiguous rule about limited use of the facility according to the legal regulations. As Y says, being able to spend the day in the bus station does not depend on their attitude there, but on the individual decisions of station guards being on duty. He also noted the lack of attention paid by the municipal police to their problems and conflicts and violence against them. The need for personal hygiene space and a place to leave their things always appears in conversations. In this regard, most of them say that the station is a place to meet their excretion needs. The protection of personal belongings always depends on the good will of an employee of the railway or bus station who takes care of them until the end of the work day. Most of them

highlight that the high pedestrian traffic in the area and large number of travellers are an essential element to avoid their classification as homeless. Thus, being invisible during the day, when pedestrians start to disappear overnight, they become visible and vulnerable. That is the moment when *“I go home [referring to the ATM machine in the conversation] to sleep... because I don’t like to be standing all day in a bank, you get roots, you become a tree”*.

### 2.2.5 Conclusions

At this point, it seems necessary to recapitulate the information obtained in relation to the problems present in the investigated area to target some causes of the presence of such phenomena around the “Estació del Nord” station. However, we cannot ignore the structural situation which directly influences the appearance of such phenomena around the observed area. In this sense, as authors such as Ulrich Beck (2008) and Zygmunt Baumann (2011), among others, have noted, contemporary societies are characterized by a high degree of ambiguity, insecurity, and instability in most areas of social relations. Now nothing is forever. Any social subject – this trend has exponentially increased from the last five years – may be doomed to situations of social risk, marginalization, or stigmatization.

On the one hand, macroeconomics seems to become creation of a social dualism exacerbated by income differences that occur between the “successful professions” and the rest of jobs. This economic trend is part of a vision of society that “punishes the poor” and “provokes new forms of social marginalization in globalised cities” (Wacquant 2009). These consequences have been exacerbated in recent years by the financial crisis directly affecting people with low cultural capital and professionals mainly working in the informal economy, which is especially significant in Spain. Thus, there has been an increase in the population without financial resources to enable them to meet their basic needs. The consequences include homeless population growth and an increase in mental illnesses directly related to the uncertainties of the “liquid society”.

On the other hand, although global economic migration flows have been constant throughout the history of humanity, they have increased considerably since the late twentieth century as a result of globalization. Cheaper transport and ease of movement, despite the legislative rigidity and restrictive migration policies of developed countries, encourage the flow of goods and labour (Appadurai 1996). This situation has a direct influence on transport nodes where people come in search of jobs and to a greater or lesser extent, during the early stages of adaptation to the new situation, seek some stability near destination stations, in some cases even converting the station influence space into their family territory.

Thus, the phenomena identified in relation to certain deviant or conflicting behaviours in the area bounded by the influence of the “Estació del Nord” station, from the consumption of alcohol by youth groups to people experiencing homelessness, were mainly detected in so-called “empty lands or wastelands” (Estivill 2012). Therefore, due to a combination of different variables stigmatized populations at risk of exclusion or having deviant behaviour are forced to appropriate marginal areas in any contemporary city. As Jordi Estivill noted, *“under bridges, at road intersections, in informal markets, in abandoned installations and stations, in vacant or half-built buildings, in the narrow streets of the historic centres in degraded or unoccupied spaces of the suburbs, in the vicinity of charity centres where food and accommodation are provided, in certain subway stations or in poorly policed “empty land” (“terrains Vagues”)*”. As defined by José Luís García, these empty territories refer to areas, which apparently do not include exclusive positivity or negativity, as they have not been designed for any specific use. These territories do not belong, apparently, to their users, but at the same time no restrictions are imposed.

In this particular case, we can talk about five areas with these characteristics. Firstly, the territory of Marina Street Bridge: people meet, especially at night, on the stairs of the bridge to consume alcohol. From anywhere around, it is not possible to assess the

presence of young people there, and sometimes during the weekends there are more than fifty people, in several groups. Secondly, the urbanised spaces near the National Auditorium, which are usually empty, have been taken by a group of teenagers for their evening meetings and alcohol consumption. Thirdly, the areas under the bridges that cross the Park of the Estació del Nord station, in particular the one called the Pyramid by youth groups, which is used by Latin Kings for their meetings. Fourthly, a paradigmatic example of visible and invisible space during the day: the Ciutadella Park. During the day occupied by families, tourists, and all kinds of people performing the most varied activities – from tai-chi to running, through spiritual encounters – when its doors close it becomes a place for sexual contacts, sleeping and drinking alcohol away from the stares of passersby. In the same manner proposed, a fifth place is the territory in front of the bus station, as described above, which changes its uses a few times during the day. During the morning, it is an empty place, which changes with the arrival of a group of retirees who occupy the pétanque tracks every day. It is in the middle of the day and especially at night, when less visible places are occupied by homeless to eat, socialize, quarrel, for their physiological needs, or just to stay there.

Despite presenting different morphological characteristics, all these spaces share a fundamental quality in the context of Barcelona: make the actions performed by territorialised populations in them invisible. So, homeless people, sex workers, and other types of young people can, somehow, go unnoticed by the neighbourhood. As a Social Worker of the Municipal Social Inclusion Services said, *“we act only when we receive complaints from neighbours”*, in the case of people experiencing homelessness. Similarly, young Latinos who occupied the space under the Marina bridge passing through the Parc of the Estació del Nord, were repeatedly identified by the local police after receiving a notice from a neighbour. The kind of personal appreciation of urban space changes with the perception of visibility and invisibility to which people are exposed and this perception varies by time of day or night. With these considerations on urban space, its morphology and its changes in time, we can say that, given

the public order ordinance and the planning model proposed by various municipal authorities for some years, deviant behaviour of many young groups occur in “empty lands” that facilitate their invisibility and avoid conflicts with neighbours and authorities.

However, beyond the fact that these are or not particularly conflictive behaviours, the influence of public imagination established by hegemonic discourses turns stigmatized youth groups, due to both their appearance and their socio-economic situation, into the favourite subjects to exercise an apparent control of public space over them. Generally, the perception of citizens and technical managers of conflicting phenomena is directly influenced and mediated by their individual perceptions. It should not be forgotten that these, in turn, are often in part conditioned by the dominant stereotypes associated with the groups listed.

The station appeared as an ‘invisibilising’ agent of deviant phenomena diverted and as a destructuring element of the territory. As many neighbours have argued in the interviews, this facilitates the emergence of the phenomena described in its surroundings. First, the control procedure in the station building and in the adjacent area requires people in those situations to disguise their presence, as already noted, and forces them to find less “controlled”, less public spaces. Second, the station building can be understood as a symbolic border for populations living north and south of its location with little exchanges. A good example is that in the investigated area shops are concentrated around the Fort Pienc area, and their number is reduced in the south of “Parc de l’Estació del Nord” and to the east in the “Pont de la Marina”. The architectural design of the entrances to the building of the “Estació del Nord” station oriented toward Fort Pienc turns the other territories surrounding the multimodal exchanger – with the railway and metro stations “Arc de Triomf” – into spaces with little citizen appropriation. This breakdown, caused by the building of the “Estació del Nord” in conjunction with the difficulty of urban planning to complete the railways, the building of the “Parc de l’Estació del Nord”, and the slope area, has facilitated the

emergence of “empty lands”. In these “empty lands”, potentially conflicting actions often develop beyond the control of institutions responsible for controlling public space.

In short, the symbolic boundaries established by the station and the morphological breakdown it has caused in the area have covered the emergence of phenomena such as those detected in the vicinity since it became operational. The recent redevelopment of these destructured territories, as in the past, has not finished solving the described phenomena but it has simply shifted and hidden them and made them invisible.

### **2.2.6 Possible actions at local level for prevention and reduction of impact of these phenomena**

Once the different views of informants have been collected, crossed with field observations, and analyzed ethnographically to set some of the causes of the phenomena detected, there are sufficient tools to propose an approach to an intervention model in the area. Having followed this process in research to get to this point is important, because it is the only way to respect and recognize those individuals who are living or working in a committed way to try and alleviate social problems in the area, in many cases altruistically and enthusiastically. Thus, in addition to building specific criteria by applying appropriate research techniques, it was also possible to obtain relevant, meaningful, and valid ideas from the various informants about what to do in the area to improve, either around a specific problem or as a whole. This is one of the main subjects that direct the intervention model, i.e. taking advantage of the knowledge of the various stakeholders recognized for the intervention phase in the investigated territory. In that sense, it seems necessary, as a first step to create specific actions, to establish communication channels between these agents and public institutions considered as essential for intervention. At the same time, efforts will be made to involve members of the affected groups to implement a model of participatory action-intervention.

The intervention phase proposes raising awareness and social education. This is considered as critical and necessary to generate a process to allow a new approach to the reality of these groups, by overcoming the stereotypes that the dominant approach imposes on the general public through the media. The overall objective of the various activities is to build a new image beyond the existing stigma and foster new dynamics of social interaction between the stigmatized and the neighbourhood groups in the area.

With a certain critical thinking, the actions are intended to show the vulnerability to which we are all subjected and the various acts of structural violence in which these people are involved. The aim is to promote the exercise of social responsibility of citizenship by the need to rethink, refocus, and re-plan social policies of the recent years. These should converge with the needs of the selected groups and that is why the youth groups and people experiencing homelessness are understood as essential active agents in the intervention process. The designed proposals promote public awareness from giving visibility of the social problems of young people at risk of exclusion in general and youth homelessness specifically.

To begin, it is proposed to create a social gathering space for civil society in the neighborhood, which is a benchmark for participatory learning and reflective practice. This would create the synergies required to convert the current dispersed work into more effective and coordinated actions. This space should allow a better design of individual actions proposed here or other actions arising from the exchange between the different agents. The dialogue should allow imagining and implementing measures to develop intervention models that alleviate the detected phenomena. At the same time, these sessions will facilitate the need to expand the groups involved beyond the initial groups.

Meanwhile, in addition to the social meeting place, the ACAM APIP Foundation designs innovative inclusion activities for prioritized target populations: young people in situations of homeless and youth in general at risk of social exclusion.

Given its strong presence in the study area, specific activities have been designed for people experiencing homelessness. First it is proposed to hold a photography workshop to show the way they see the neighbourhood. It is also proposed to promote the participation of the group in maintaining the community garden in the area. All proposed activities are in the fundamental direction of working for the recognition of citizenship of people of this group. That means working to ensure that people in this transient situation find ways to exercise individual rights that are guaranteed by national and international declarations. This requires double duty: within the group itself and in the institutions that can facilitate access to citizenship rights.

For the group of young people at risk of exclusion, it is proposed first to recover a wall through street art techniques. Also, secondly, launch a radio station open to all populations in the research area, including target populations. Finally, third, a Videomatón or Videobox booth will be installed for youth in the area to express their views on issues that affect them and about the neighbourhood.

It is proposed to carry out an awareness-raising activity for the population of the district in general. A film Forum will be organised in the neighbourhood with documentaries and films and performances on youth exclusion, and a summary of Videomatón actions.

Finally, we need to be aware of the difficulties of working with marginalized groups or at risk of being marginalized. A selection of 'recoverable' individuals to become leaders of their groups or models for their peers is probably necessary. However, a small achievement in any of these designed objectives will be a step forward in the fight against insecurity, stigmatization, marginalization, and social violence.

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## 2.3 The (In)Visible station: Research-Action on Juvenile Delinquency and Social Exclusion in the Train Station of Pescara Centrale (Italy)

### Report of National Research – Italy

by Fabio Sorgoni - Antonello Salvatore



#### Introduction

This is a summary of the Italian National Research Report of the transnational investigation developed within the European project *Violence in Transit*, focused on the **problem of youth violence** in the Transit areas.

In the first part of the report, the **issue of youth violence** was addressed, trying to delimit its contours and investigate its cultural and epistemological construction. This section of the Report is in fact dedicated to the literature and scientific references that led to the appearance of “youth violence” as an explanatory category and subject of study. The Italian case was analyzed in particular, where since the early 1960’s, youth violence has often been used as an understanding/mystification element of important processes of social-cultural change in place. The current situation of young Italians was then addressed, highlighting the relationship between

economic crisis and the processes of empowerment and realization of the younger generations. Another factor taken into consideration was the theme of the links between the urban definition of territories and towns and the issue of urban security-insecurity, focusing on the transit areas. These considerations introduce the second part of the report, which presents the research carried out in the Railway Station of Pescara.

### **2.3.1 The Research: hypotheses, Objectives, Sample**

Research hypotheses, specific objectives

The pre-defined hypothesis of the research was the presence of phenomena of deviance and violence among youth in the area of Pescara Central Station and the existence of a specific relationship between their manifestation and the place of emergence (the station).

The specific objectives of the research were:

- Detect and analyze the presence of violent, aggressive, and anti-social behaviour in the Station of Pescara and in the surrounding urban area;
- Analyze the relationship between these phenomena and the space in which they occur;
- Study the causes of these phenomena and the possible relationship with other manifestations of social exclusion and urban deviance;
- Engage approached people in finding solutions/approaches/-activities, with the aim of improving the existing situation and identifying specific practices to be implemented in testing of social actions provided for by the project;
- Provide comparable results (knowledge) with the outputs of the research carried out in parallel with other transit areas involved in the project (Sao Bento Train Station - Portugal, North Bus Station in Barcelona - Spain).

#### **Space/time coordinates**

The reference area of the research was the Railway Station of Pescara and the activities were carried out in parallel with the

research done in Barcelona and Porto, between December 2011 and May 2012.

#### Research sample

The research staff has determined, as the subject of the initial observation activities, a target consisting of people involved in phenomena such as begging, homelessness, prostitution, and drug addiction.

Concerning the individuals to be contacted, through semi-structured interviews and informal meetings, three main categories were instead identified:

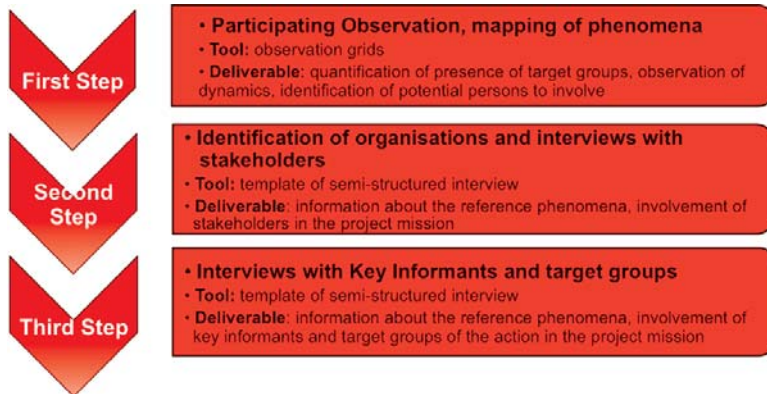
- Relevant stakeholders, i.e. people who play a responsibility role in designing and managing policies and practices related to safety in the station, education of young people, and social actions in the station;
- Key informants, i.e. people who have a privileged point of view for their activity in the area of the station for professional or functional reasons;
- People mainly, but not exclusively, in the age group 20-35, who live in situations of marginality, discomfort, and social exclusion.

### 2.3.2 Research Methodology

For the research in question it was chosen to use the method of the Action-Research, considering the following aspects:

- The organisation and social workers that implement the research, already work within the station in activities addressed to the target group of homeless people and prostitutes; therefore, they would not have been able to undertake an objective study because they are part of the system they study.
- The organisation, also through this project, carries out activities related to its Mission and Vision and therefore also the research action is part of a process of promoting the rights of marginalized people and their social reintegration.
- The technique of action-research is used to anticipate the social action provided for in the second part of the project.

Diagram 1 – Steps of the Research



### First Step: Participating Observation, Mapping of Phenomena

The first step of the research was to know the area of intervention through a Participating Observation activity. Researchers were asked to work on the field for mapping at different times of the day and on different days of the week, during which they would observe places, people, behaviours, and attitudes of people in the station and its neighbouring area. The result was the acquisition of quantitative knowledge of the presence of the target groups included in the scope of the action.

At the same time, the researchers could identify individuals to carry out semi-structured interviews in the next step of the research.

### Second Step: Identification of Organizations and Stakeholder Interviews

The organizations operating in the railway station and the neighbouring area and their managers, considered as significant stakeholders, were identified. It was agreed with them to hold a meeting to explain the nature and objectives of the project and propose a semi-structured interview.

The results obtained in this first step were the following:

- The organizations acting in the area were acquired and recorded, contacted and involved in the project;
- A **tool for analyzing the area** (maps) was created to place visually the manifestations of the phenomena under study and intervention;
- **Information** was collected **on the areas** in which there are episodes of youth violence;
- **Information and data** were collected **on the target** of the intervention.

### **Third step: Interviews with key informants and target groups**

**Methodology:** The operators met a sample of key informants and members of the target group and have them interviewed. The methodological indication provided to the staff of the research was to select subjects such as railway staff, law enforcement personnel, shopkeepers inside the station, taxi drivers, private security agents. Those target group interviewees had to belong mainly to the risk categories identified: groups of young people who regularly attend the station and acting with anti-social behaviours, prostitutes, homeless people, ethnic minorities, drug addicts, and young illegal immigrants.

Researchers were asked to focus on creating an atmosphere of informal conversation, trying to get information on three themes: a) The railway station as a public place and the presence of people with violent and/or anti-social behaviour; b) role of youth in these dynamics; c) Proposals to improve the situation

The results of this step of the research were:

- Collection of information on the manifestations of youth distress and violence from the point of view of the social actors who are closer to the phenomena and from the point of view of the target.
- Involvement of both the potential target of the action and the other social actors in the project, through the communication of the existence of the project and the willingness to propose actions in which they would have been involved.

### 2.3.3 The city of Pescara, the Central Station and areas of intervention

Pescara is the most populous city in the Abruzzo region and undoubtedly a *young* city. The current city was founded in 1927 by uniting two small towns: Castellammare Adriatico and Pescara. The city of Pescara is a modest city in terms of population (about 123,000 inhabitants for the last 2011 census), but in reality it is the terminal of a catchment area of about 400,000 people around it (metropolitan area of Pescara-Chieti). The history of Pescara and its social, economic, and urban development are inextricably linked to the history of its railway station.

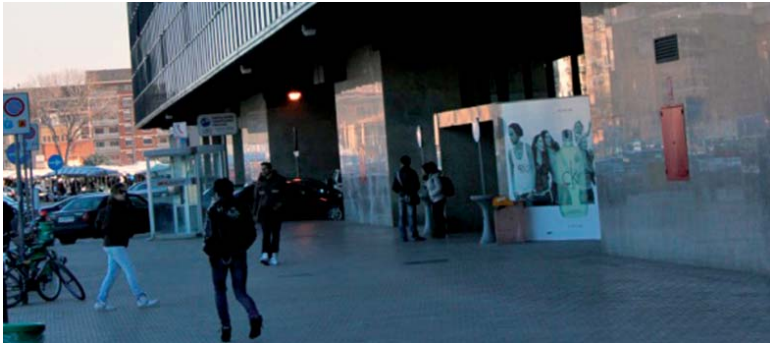
Pescara Central Station currently has a passenger traffic of about 3.5 million people a year (*data from Centostazioni*), and is one of the most important railway junctions along the Adriatic coastline.

The city is the most important marketplace for dealing of drugs in the Middle Adriatic area. Every day, hundreds of addicts come to Pescara to stock up on heroin and cocaine, and most of the crimes such as muggings and thefts committed in the area occur to obtain resources for this market. Family groups engaged in activities such as begging get into the city (e.g. Romanian Roma people), itinerant sale (young Senegalese and English-speaking African people), immigrants in search of precarious employment, homeless people engaged in an interregional nomadic movement based on rail routes.

The area covered by this research coincides with Pescara Central Station, completed in 1988, and with an urban space of 230,000 m<sup>2</sup>, called “area di risulta”, i.e. the area recovered following the work of reorganization of the rail system in Pescara. In 2004, the City Council promoted a Europe-wide competition called “Urban Design of former Pescara Central Station areas”, which ended with a winning project, however, remained at the conceptual stage, i.e. it has not been implemented. The idea was to create multipurpose cultural facilities (Media archives-Library), green areas in the city centre, with the creation of underground parking and a new and more functional Bus Terminal.

Areas of intervention

The project area was divided into three zones with different characteristics.



*Photo 1 – Main entrance*

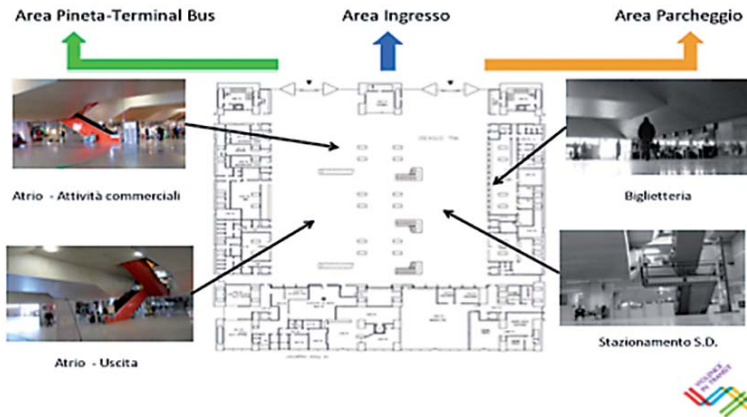


*Photo 2 – Former railway area – parking*



*Photo 3 – Pineta Bus Terminal*





The **Entrance Area** corresponds to the main entrance of the station, an extremely busy place. We include in this area a short walk in front of the station, a place with many benches, which in summer serve as makeshift beds for the homeless, and a meeting point in winter. We also include in this area the back entrance (back-station) corresponding to Via Enzo Ferrari. On this street, there are the facilities of On the Road Help Centre and prostitutes at night.

The former railway area **Area di Risulta-Parking** is characterized as a contact area of prostitutes with their clients (mostly male prostitution) and a place of drug use in the evening and at night, as during the day the area is a transit area of a large number of passersby and workers. The area includes two parking lots where prostitution is practiced. Of note is the presence of male prostitution of Romanian and in some cases Bulgarian and North-African boys who have replaced over time, here as elsewhere, the traditional Italian homosexual prostitution.

The **Area Pineta Bus Terminal** is close to one of the busiest and commercially vibrant streets of the city, Corso Vittorio Emanuele. The area is also a “historical” meeting place of Roma families with children, who start from here and go to the various pedestrian streets of the centre for begging activities.

### 2.3.4 Mapping and participating observation

The research team carried out the participating observation activities between mid January and the end of February 2012. In the period under review, 21 field mapping sessions were carried out. Every field session included “passages” in the three areas identified.

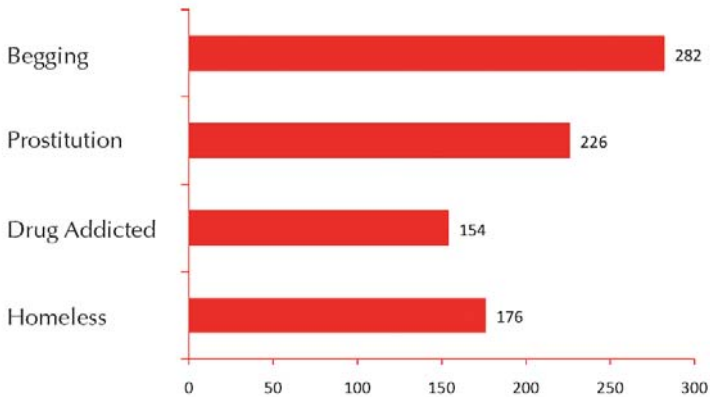
So a total of 63 observations were carried out in the three areas. The researchers observed that areas identified at different times and on different days of the week, and reported the presence of persons identifiable as belonging to the defined target groups in the survey instrument (the mapping grid).

#### Results of observation activities

During the period, 838 individual sightings were made. Of these, 282, i.e. 33.6%, concerned people involved in begging during daylight hours. 70% of these people were women. The prostitutes are the second category by number of sightings: 226 (i.e. 26.9% of the total), 53% women, 27% transgender, and 19.4% males, mostly young non-Italians. 176 sightings were made of homeless people (162 men and 14 women) and 154 of addicted individuals (146 men and 8 women).

**Table 1 - Total mapping of three areas**

	Field Sessions	Homeless		Drug addicted		Prostitutes			Beggars		Total
		M	F	M	F	M	F	T	M	F	
Morning	21	66	8	74	8	-	-	-	48	108	312
Afternoon	21	60	6	54	-	6	12	-	38	88	264
Night	21	36	-	18	-	38	108	62	-	-	262
Total by gender		163	14	146	8	44	120	62	86	196	
%		92	8	94	6	19.4	53	27.4	30.4	69.6	
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>176</b>		<b>154</b>		<b>226</b>			<b>282</b>		<b>838</b>
%		<b>21</b>		<b>18.3</b>		<b>26.9</b>			<b>33.6</b>		<b>100</b>

**Figure 2 – Observations by Type of Target**

The observations of people with an estimated age of less than 30 years account for 75% of the total, respectively 39.1% in the range 20-30, 21.2% in the range 15-20, and 14.8% in the range 0-15 years. The 0-15 range mainly concerns under-age males and females belonging to Roma ethnic groups (both Italian and foreigners, mainly Romanians) devoted to begging, either alone or with other members of their family. If we consider that the sightings of these individuals have been mainly during the day, we can calculate that on average about 10 children under 15 who practiced begging were spotted on every field session in daytime.

The second age cohort (15-20) is represented by 188 sightings (21.2% of the total), 72 of which related to minors and young people involved in prostitution. Of these 72 sightings, 44 concerned females, 18 males, and 10 young transsexuals.

The most represented age group is that of young people between 20 and 30 years of age, with 328 sightings in 21 field sessions. Of these 328 sightings, 80 (24.3%) concerned homeless people, with a clear predominance of men (66 vs. 14 women). Spotted drug addicts having alleged age between 20 and 30 years were 70, 21.3% of the total of this age group (68 males and 8 females).

Sightings of people involved in prostitution with an estimated age between 20 and 30 years were 128, i.e. 39% of the age cohort. Of

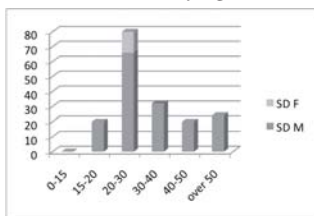
these, 22 are males, often foreigners who prostitute themselves with Italian male clients, 72 are women, and 34 are transsexuals. In the same age group, 50 sightings of people who practiced begging were performed, 80% women.

Between 30 and 40 years of age, 32 homeless and 46 drug addicts were spotted, all men. 18 cases of prostitution were observed (4 women and 9 transsexuals), and 34 women who practiced begging. In the last two age groups (40-50 and over 50) 78 sightings were made, the prevalence of which relates to homeless men (44) and women who practiced begging (12).

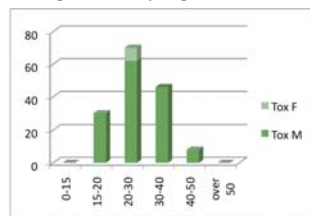
**Table 2 – Individuals detected in mapping by age (estimate), type, and sex**

Age	Homeless		Drug addicts		Prostitution			Begging		Total	%
	M	F	M	F	M	F	T	M	F		
0-15	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	62	58	124	14.8
15-20	20	-	30	-	18	44	10	14	42	188	21.2
20-30	66	14	62	8	22	72	34	10	40	328	39.1
30-40	32	-	46	-	-	4	14	-	34	130	15.5
40-50	20	-	8	-	-	-	4	-	14	46	5.4
over 50	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	32	3.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>100</b>

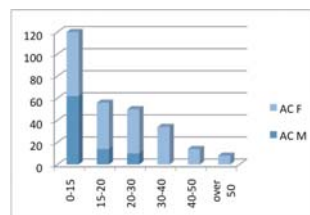
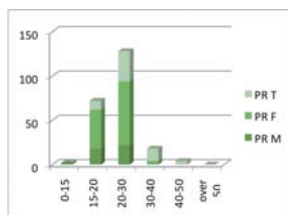
**Chart 3 – Homeless by age and sex**

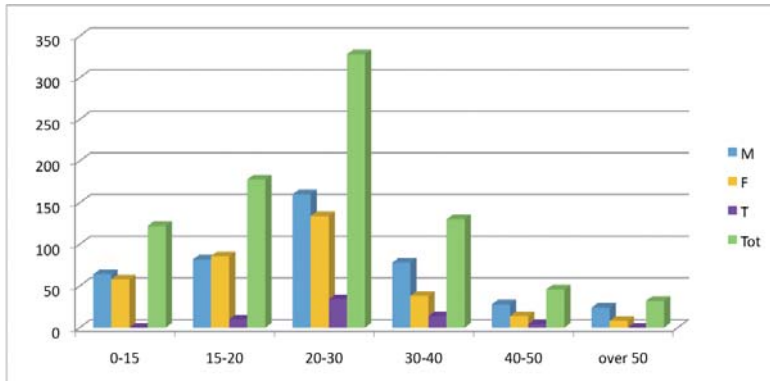


**4 – Drug users by age and sex**



**Figure 5 – Prostitution by age and sex**      **Figure 6 – Begging for age and sex**



**Figure 7 – Number of observations by age and gender**

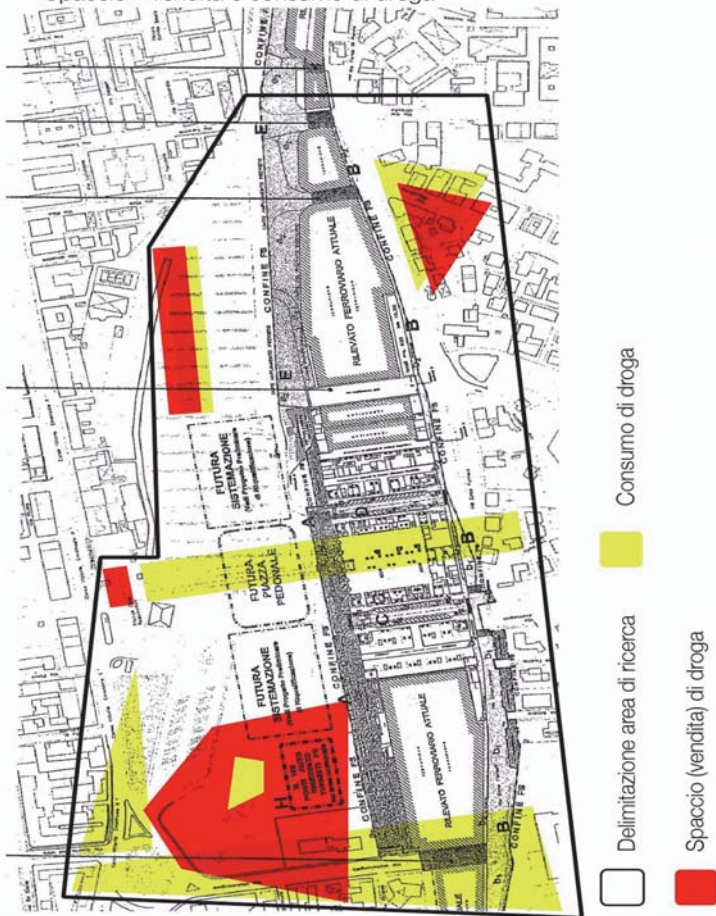
### Final comments on observations-mappings

One of the most significant set of data of this observation of distress and deviance phenomena in three adjacent areas to the station of Pescara is that 75% of people observed have an alleged age of less than 30 years, and 36% less than 20 years. The 124 observations of people aged under 15 years almost exclusively concerned begging activities, even if four observations concerned under-18 male minors in prostitution. The 188 observations of the 15-20 years age range are: homelessness (20 observations) and male drug addicts (30 observations); 72 relate to prostitute persons (44 females, 18 males, and 10 transsexuals); 56 sightings involved young people involved in begging.

So we can conclude that in the area of the station of Pescara most of the people involved in situations of distress, deviance, and lawlessness are young or very young. These people, many of them minors, are involved in dangerous and illegal activities, at high risk of exploitation (prostitution and begging). Many others are drug addicts or homeless who are looking for money for their needs (procuring it in various ways, including theft), or a shelter or a meeting point with other people in the area. The following maps show graphically the data obtained from the mappings in the outdoor areas and the entrance hall of the station. The first map shows in red and yellow the areas of drug dealing and consumption. The second map shows the areas where there is prostitution (green), begging (violet), and the homeless (blue). Other

indicators point to areas where violent incidents were reported, such as theft, muggings, brawls, and rapes. The areas highlighted in gray are reported as the most degraded areas (dirty, dimly lit).

CARTINA 2  
ESTERNO STAZIONE:  
Spaccio - Vendita e consumo di droga



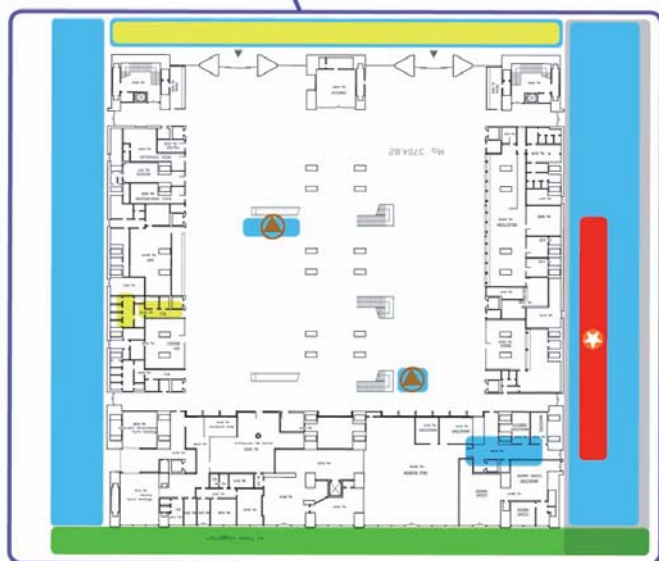
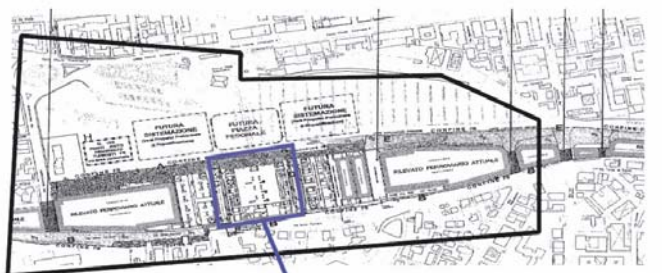
CARTINA 3

ESTERNO STAZIONE

prostituzione, stazionamento di senza dimora, accattonaggio, atti violenti.



CARTINA 4:  
INTERNO STAZIONE



- Delimitazione area di ricerca
- Spaccio (vendita) di droga
- Consumo di droga
- Stazionamento di senza dimora
- Aree contatto prostitute-cliente e consumo prostituzione
- Degrado urbano (poca illuminazione, sporco)
- ⚠ Furti (scippi, furti nei negozi, ...)
- ★ Risse, scontri, atti violenti
- ✕ Stupri

### 2.3.5 The Interviews

#### Interviews with stakeholders

The stakeholders in the table below were interviewed.

Stakeholders interviewed
1 Commander of the Railway Police – Polfer
2 Vice-Commander of the Police Station
3 Headmaster of the secondary school Istituto Tecnico Statale “Tito Acerbo”
4 Representative of the volunteer organization Comunità Sant’Egidio
5 Coordinator of the foundation Fondazione Romani
6 Representative of the volunteer organization Anawin
7 Representative of the Community of Senegalese street vendors

The following are some considerations about the outcomes of the interviews with the stakeholders contacted:

- There is a hyper-articulated framework of actors, contexts, groups, and life experiences in the station space: homeless people, drug addicts, persons engaged in heterosexual and homosexual prostitution, alcoholism, people with psychiatric problems, groups dedicated to begging (Romanian Roma);
- The offenses that are recorded are snatching, pickpocketing, and theft. Sexual assaults are also reported. It should be noted that in the past five years, there has been a general increase in various forms of marginality in the territory involved in the research;
- The dimension of violence is worrying; in terms of physical aggression, it seems to be a phenomenon that occurs mostly within the worlds of marginality: intra-target violence, “war between the poor” often turns upon a logic of ethnicity;
- An environment in which phenomena related to violence are mostly identified is the context of prostitution that occurs in its various forms: Italian and foreign females, transsexuals, and males. Significant conflicts between prostitutes and clients are reported;
- Our informants also highlight the vulnerability of women in conditions of extreme marginalization;
- The cyclic presence of youth/adolescent bullying on trains, or writers who draw on rail cars, is reported;

- A further element of analysis is related to the dimension of social representations: the station is perceived as an inherently dangerous place, as it is attended by highly stigmatized people and/or categories of people.

### Interviews with key informants and young people

Type of Key informants Interviewed	Sex	Age
1 City bus driver	male	43
2 City bus driver	male	47
3 Taxi Driver	male	56
4 Taxi Driver	male	45
5 Tobacconist	male	55
6 Pharmacy owner in the Station	female	34
7 Newsagent in the Station	male	59
8 Saleswoman of a bookstore in the Rail Station	female	26
9 Railway Police Officer – Polfer	female	44
10 Bartender (Bus Station Bar)	male	36
11 Bartenders (Bar adjacent to the Station)	male	34
12 State Railways Operator	male	57

Young people from Pescara - Students	Gender	Age
1 Living in the railway station area	male	20
2 Living in the railway station area	male	22
3 Living in the railway station area	female	21
4 Living in the railway station area	female	26
5 Student living in Pescara	male	17
6 Student living in Pescara	female	16
7 Student living in Pescara	male	17
8 Student living in Pescara	female	18
9 Student not living in town (arriving at the Station every morning)	female	16
10 Student not living in town (arriving at the Station every morning)	male	17
11 Student not living in town (arriving at the Station every morning)	female	18
12 Student not living in town (arriving at the Station every morning)	male	17

Some elements of consideration emerged from the interviews with key informants and students:

- Some key informants claim that the station area is the scene of worrying events: sometimes aggressive begging, some theft, and prostitution activities. For others, the situation is worrying, particularly in light of the increase in recent years of “disturbing presences”;
- The key informants who work in the station building (from shopkeepers to Railway Police agents as well as the railway personnel) are in contact with people in situations of great distress on a daily basis; they have a less simplistic and more complex idea about social problems; those who work in the external area (e.g. bus drivers) has more pre-concepts and generalized fears about the phenomena;
- For key informants that nourish structured forms of prejudice towards the target groups, “young Romanians” are the most “dangerous” category;
- The regular presence of youth groups engaged in recreational activities (e.g. hip-hop, break-dance) is reported; they are somehow stigmatized perhaps because of their unconventional and group-making nature;
- As concerns “what to do?” to improve the livability of the station environment and limit the negative effects of distress, many have pointed out the need to redesign the station space as a positive containers of meetings, events, and opportunities.

## Interviews with members of the target groups

Type	Country of Origin	Gender	Age
1 homeless	Italy	Female	24
2	Italy	Female	39
3	Italy	Female	45
4	Italy	Male	28
5	Italy	Male	45
6	Italy	Male	60
7	Italy	Male	52
8	Italy	Male	27
9	Italy	Male	30
10	Romania	Male	26
11	Romania	Male	32
12	Romania	Male	28
13	Romania	Male	25
14	Bulgaria	Male	42
15	Bulgaria	Male	27
16	Bulgaria	Male	27
17 female prostitution	Italy	Female	38
18	Romania	Female	22
19	Romania	Female	25
20	Brazil	Female	32
21 transsexual prostitution	Italy	Transsexual	46
22	Brazil	Transsexual	38
23	Brazil	Transsexual	28
24 male prostitution	Romania	Male	17
25	Romania	Male	21
26	Romania	Male	23
27 drug addiction	Italy	Male	18
28	Italy	Male	35
29	Italy	Male	32
30	Italy	Male	23

As concerns the indications from informants related to the context of the target groups, the following was found:

- At present, the label of homeless conceals a wide variety of life situations: Italian citizens strongly impoverished because of the crisis but, still, tenaciously active at work, although in a precarious manner; Italian citizens with problems of alcoholism

and expression of the “traditional” underclass; migrants under clandestine conditions, migrants in the midst of a dis-integration process as a result of the impoverishment caused by the crisis; and lives on the borderline affected by the Society of Risk<sup>6</sup>. The current issues also occur in the form, for example, of the New Addictions, such as Gambling (addiction to gambling), even in its most national-popular and accessible ways (scratch cards, betting, video-poker...).

- As seen in the analysis of contributions given by the stakeholders, violence is substantially violence implemented within the worlds of marginalisation. Ethnic lines help to define the social geography of the territory in question.
- Some informants report events such as riots and fights between marginal groups.
- The context of prostitution is one of the coveted “first choice” contexts of the phenomena of violence. Violence is a structural ingredient in the context of commodification of bodies, in individual biographies as well as in everyday lives.
- It seems important to us to report the indication, in particular by transsexuals, that young people are more and more aggressive and/or violent towards them, both clients and groups attacking them for misogynistic/homophobic reasons.
- The interviews with young students from Pescara, residents, or commuters, show the perception of the station area as an unsafe place, confirming the Representation of the Station in terms of dangerousness, marginality, and deviance.

### 2.3.6 Analysis of research results

#### **Violent youth or marginalised youth?**

The research results have partially confirmed the initial hypothesis about the presence of violent phenomena in the station of Pescara,

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6. Beck U. (2000), *La società del Rischio. Verso una seconda modernità*, Rome, Carocci Editore.

in which definable people are involved, by age group, as belonging to the world of youth.

The activities of participating observation have in fact provided evidence to define the presence of people of less than 30 years of age, belonging to different areas of social marginality, as predominant (75% of the total). 36% of these comments concerned under 20 year old people, and about 15% under 15 years of age). The respondents have confirmed the existence of violent incidents involving these categories and age groups.

However, these people can be characterized mainly for their being young, nor is it possible to trace their involvement in violent dynamics (either as victims or as perpetrators) typically experienced in youth, i.e. people in transition between a prolonged adolescent phase and the adult age (characterized, by definition, by financial, housing, and emotional independence) that is slow in appearing.

Instead, many of these people, who are “accidentally” young people, share their situation of strong exclusion from the circuits of social integration; the predominance of severe existential, financial, and social suffering; they belonging to pockets of marginality that are often defined as *deviant*, in relation to their difference with respect to more *normal* categories, i.e. more included within the society.

The basic problem that emerges is thus not the existence of a cause-effect relationship between being young and being violent or anti-social, but a clear relationship between being excluded—marginal-poor and living with situations of everyday oppression and denial of the most basic rights, immersed in a world of relationships and dynamics where violence - in the form of threat, extortion, blackmail, but also physical aggression - is endemic, structural, and non-episodic.

### **Real insecurity and perceived insecurity**

The research shows that there are few cases in which these behaviours include people not directly involved in situations of social exclusion.

Despite this, some key informants involved provide a picture of the train station as a particularly dangerous area. It is clear that in many cases people speak about perceived insecurity instead of real insecurity, which is not the result of direct experience, but of the

social and symbolic construction of station space, and its inhabitants most exposed to stigmatisation, developed through time, even on the basis of prejudice and misinformation. The station is perceived as a constitutively and implicitly dangerous place, as highly stigmatized people and/or categories of people are found there.

This aspect seems to be confirmed, for example, by the different assessment of the dangerousness of the station by several key informants: those who work inside the station (shop owners, police officers) have a better relationship with the members of the target group and see them more as people in need of help than as a danger, while those who work outside the station and have less chance of dealing directly with people in difficulty, are more concerned and hostile towards them.

Even some of the students interviewed showed a negative judgment and the demand for greater repression (*clear them out, expel those who threaten security...*) without being able to report specific incidents related to violence suffered by them or people they know.

### **Intra-target violence, struggle between the poor, and ethnic-identity characterization**

Completely different is the situation referred by both people working in contact with the target (railway police, social workers) and people who are directly involved in the processes of marginalization, interviewed by the researchers.

In fact, numerous incidents are reported as direct witnesses, or of which people have no knowledge due to the role plaid by the interviewee (e.g. by the Railway Police managers and officers), or experienced directly, which refers to situations of violence in which people, mainly of less than 30 years of age, in many cases below 20 or even lower, are involved.

### **Context of prostitution**

A context in which most violence phenomena were identified is prostitution that occurs in its various forms: Italian and foreign females, transsexuals, and males. Conflicts between prostitutes and clients are reported. During the last 6-8 years, the traditional phenomenon of *tricks* (Italian homosexual prostitution) was

replaced by another phenomenon occurring within the dynamics of migration of young men and young migrants, either from new EU countries (Romanian and Bulgarian nationals of Roma origin), or from non-EU countries. This complex phenomenon feeds sometimes violent and/or predated behaviours.

Cases of assaults, rapes, robberies, throwing of objects from speeding cars and insults against prostitutes are reported.

#### Intra-target and inter-ethnic violence

Evidence was collected about fights to grab a bit of food and a war between the poor also based on ethnicity. Italian people claim better treatment than foreigners as Italians, and among foreigners rivalry between Eastern Europe and Tunisians, and Moroccans. Italians perceive themselves as besieged, or more precisely *besieged in their home*. There is a strong process of mutual stigmatization among ethnic groups and between “categories” of exclusion (drug vs. alcohol addicts, Moroccans vs. Romanians, etc...). The dimension of violence is worrying; in terms of physical aggression, it seems to be a phenomenon that occurs mostly within the worlds of marginality: intra-target violence, “war between the poor” often turns upon a logic of ethnicity.

#### Conclusions and possible actions

In the first part of the research report, a non-exhaustive analysis was made of how the category of “youth violence” started and how it is often used to stigmatize behaviours that, at times, were primarily expressions of demands for change or symptoms of social crisis. In the mechanisms of production of the consent to confirm prerogatives, certainties, the power of the ruling class during periods of major changes, the use of young rebels and nonconformists, especially if involved in morally or legally reprehensible activities, was used as the incarnation of evil to be fought, as we are reminded by Stanley Cohen, in 1972, in *Folk devils and moral panic*<sup>7</sup>.

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7. Cohen S. (1972), *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, London, MacGibbon and Kee.

Then, we saw how often the elements that lead young people (more and more elusive and undefined category) to take anti-social behaviours may result from the lack of meaning and prospects of a company in perpetual identity crisis.

However, focusing on the Italian case and the contemporary social-financial situation of many young people, we stressed that the economic disadvantage, inequality of opportunities, can generate phenomena of exclusion and marginalization, whose result are lifestyles that involve also the presence of violence and abuse, both perpetrated and suffered.

This *fluid* society for many it is too *sticky*, impede movement, many young people remain trapped in forms of existential insecurity, which may become poverty, marginalization and can become chronic due to the sedimentation of different problems. Young people become adults persisting in situations of abandonment, accumulating delays, renouncing to decide, without the possibility to exploit their resources.

If it is decided to operate on this level and propose solutions that can trigger processes of change, and emancipation from abandonment, first the basic needs of individuals and groups must be met, however, also considering that finding a space of expression and self-assertion, even if symbolic and partial, is a basic need.

Field research shows elements that outline young people involved in difficult lives. Pigeonholing people into categories of problems (drug addicts, alcoholics, people involved in prostitution and exploitation, begging, homeless, etc...) is often misleading because there is more and more often **multiple problems** that can only be faced with a holistic undertaking, which is independent from a specific problem/symptom and focuses on the individual, the social group the individual is part of, and the environment where he/she lives.

Possible actions are then **harm reduction activities, and social and cultural mediation**. It is possible to create activities to trigger a reversal of roles (as in the *Commedia Dell'Arte* or in the carnival, where what is "up" becomes "down" and vice versa, and where the fool becomes King, and the King becomes the fool), which means change from problem to a resource, from a target individual to an

active citizen, through the involvement in activities with strong participatory and expressive characteristics. We need actions oriented to pedagogy of marginality<sup>8</sup> or inspired by Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed<sup>9</sup>. We need actions that help to break down, to de-construct a social representation of some phenomena in a criminological key and replace them in their natural dimension of a symptom of a systemic malaise. This would also help to decrease the *perception* of insecurity that many people have with respect to certain groups or places. We have seen that this perception of insecurity is higher in people who do not know closely these groups and these people, but who are affected by the story, their representation made by the media, taken by opinion leaders who spread the pre-reading and stigmatizing stereotypes.

Finally, the issue of **spatiality**: in the first part of the report, we focussed on the relationship between urban planning decisions and social degradation. Then, we analyzed a specific space: Pescara Centrale railway station. The observed space is inhabited by many people: people who live in the surrounding neighbourhoods, students and commuters, workers of the station, and, finally, the groups identified as producers of discomfort, degradation, and insecurity that are more exposed to suffer violence of many kinds. The station of Pescara is huge, oversized compared to its needs, full of dark areas, corridors, tunnels, and areas where people can be attacked without anyone noticing. But the station is also full of life, people who spend much of their day (or night) there. The station is a place where fears can be projected, but also where to look for answers to needs and desires, often outrageous and shameful with respect to current morality: in the station, tens, hundreds of people every day buy and sell drugs, in the surroundings of the station clients meet women, boys, and transgender sex workers.

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8. Izzo D., Mannucci A., Mancaniello M.R. (2003), *Manuale di pedagogia della marginalità e della devianza*, Pisa, ETS.

9. Freire P. (1971), *La pedagogia degli oppressi*, Milan, Mondadori.

Then, it is possible to propose an attempt to add more items of significance to this place: we propose that it is a space of creativity, expression, and encounter. And that the *outcasts*, *drop-outs*, potentially dangerous individuals, are part of this process. There is then a need for investment in the territory, understood as a cultural environment, as a place where existential paths meet, where everyone brings his/her experience and resources to improve the environment of all, developing mechanisms of organic solidarity. Overcome opposition by developing a shared focus on a space-environment that provides work, meeting places, services, and ultimately identity. This from clear examples, such as that reported by the head of the African street vendors, who protects his territory and media conflicts, preferring deterrence and direct involvement in violent and criminal dynamics. He is a bulwark of law on the territory, as are the associations who take action, partly to separate and partly proactive.

The station seems to be one of Calvino's *Invisible Cities*<sup>10</sup>: cities made of memories and desires, projections of fears and neuroses, mirror towns:

The ancients built **Valdrada** on the banks of a lake, with houses made of verandas one above the other, and high streets whose railed parapets looked out over the water.

Thus the traveller, arriving, sees two cities: one erected above the lake, and one reflected, upside down. Nothing exists or happens in the one Valdrada that the other Valdrada does not repeat, because the city was so constructed that every point of it would be reflected in its mirror, and Valdrada down in the water contains not only all the grooves and swings of the facades that rise above the lake but also the rooms' interiors with ceilings and floors, the perspective of the halls, the mirrors of the wardrobes.

The inhabitants of Valdrada know that all their actions are together that action and its mirror image, which possesses the special dignity of images, and their awareness prevents them from succumbing for a single moment to chance and forgetfulness. Even when lovers give

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10. Calvino I. (1972), *Le città invisibili*, Turin, Einaudi.

their naked bodies, skin against skin, seeking the position that will give each other more pleasure, even when murderers plunge the knife into the black veins of the neck and more clotted blood pours over the blade that slips between tendons, is not so much their copulating or murdering that matters as the copulating or murdering of the images clear and cold in the mirror.

The mirror increases the value of things, now denies it. Not everything that seems valuable above the mirror resists when mirrored. The twin cities are not equal, because nothing that exists or happens in Valdrada is symmetrical: every face and gesture is answered by an inverted face and gesture in the mirror, point by point. The two Valdradas live for each other, looking in their eyes all the time, but they do not love each other.

The city itself could also be the one who lives in its reflection: the city Pescara is reflected in its station (even physically, given the architectural shape of mirrors on the façade) and maybe we can also see its double-reverse, partly removed.

By making use this space as a producer of meaning, culture, meeting, and facilitating the leadership of its most stigmatized inhabitants, the city will also be helped to enter the mirror, to know each other better, to live with itself with less suffering and more serenity.



*Photo 4 – Pescara Railway Station*

### **Actions-social intervention to be implemented**

The theme of marginalization and major exclusion of important components of the youth population present in the area of the station, and their strangeness (except for access to basic services) in respect of existing services (both services for addicts, or Mental Health Centres, Drop-in for trafficked persons, or other social-health services or matching between demand and offer of jobs) strengthens the motivation to undertake **outreach activities, street work, first contact, and offer to listen and help** to people who otherwise would not seek for it.

The organization has handled this field research. The Associazione On the Road already operates a Help Centre in Pescara Station, where it offers primary care (meals, washing machines, showers), service orientation, and socio-cultural activities. It also manages, also close to the station, a local drop-in centre for victims of trafficking and exploitation. The action that On the Road is planning to develop in this project will integrate this offer, reaching the research target and offering to accompany the person to a takeover by both these services and others in the city. The people, as well as receiving help and listening, will find the opportunity to be accompanied in **micro-projects** to improve their situation, to support an even partial reintegration into society.

So the project staff will go out and meet these people trying to trigger processes of change, offering exit routes from the situations of suffering faced by the target. At the same time, the operators will offer to the people encountered the opportunity to participate or organize specific activities, such as **creative workshops** (at the premises of the centre "Train de Vie"), where it is possible to develop activities such as theatre or writing. The results of these processes will then be offered to other social actors of the station (and citizens) in **public events, exhibitions, poetry readings, recitals**.

With youth groups already active in spontaneous cultural activities in the station (break dancers, for example), it will be possible to develop **workshop projects** to create an event in the station itself. It will be possible to propose activities inspired to visual anthropology, i.e. **photo workshops** where contacted (aggregated)

people through outreach will portray *their* station and offer, at an exhibition, the result of the work done, as an element of consideration for those who live or walk through the station space. **Awareness-raising activities (seminars, meetings)** will be promoted with other social actors and managers of the organizations involved in the station, where the results of this research can be discussed and the possibility of acting together to address the problems identified can be investigated. Through the activities covered by Work Stream 2 of the project, attempts will be made to help those who are perceived as a source of insecurity, to become creators of culture and meaning, in a virtuous process that helps both them and the city which is reflected in the station. At the local systemic level (the station of Pescara), the continuity of these experimental actions could support greater participation of citizens in shaping the future planning of the area, on which the future organisation of the entire city centre largely depends. The proposed Media-library or Library already advanced in the development plans of the so-called “Area di risulta” may receive the collaboration of associations that directly involve people who wish to improve the station, as they try to improve their lives.

### Research staff

**Fabio Sorgoni**, Sociologist, Co-ordinator of the research activities of the project *Violence in Transit* at national (Italy) and transnational level (research in Spain and Portugal, comparative transnational research). Together with the other project staff, has developed the research protocol to which the three national surveys referred. He carries out research and project development activities, international relations, transnational, national, and local networks within On the Road Association. Has previously coordinated the On the Road’s Outreach Unit that carries out outreach and support activities for trafficked persons who prostitute themselves on the streets or in apartments.

**Antonello Salvatore**: Graduated in Philosophy, Junior Researcher in the project *Violence in Transit*, responsible for the activities of On the Road in Pescara, coordinator of the centre “Train de Vie” for the

Homeless, is responsible for the performance of socio-cultural animation activities carried out within the centre, working on projects focusing on dialogue between the different communities, is involved in cultural mediation projects-processes for the integration of the Romany population in Pescara.

**Massimo Ippoliti:** Professional Educator with degree in psychological sciences, Junior Researcher in the project *Violence in Transit*, social worker of the project “Train de Vie”, engaged in the support, guidance and listening and socio-cultural promotion activities of the centre, street operator of On the Road’s Mobile Unit that encounters prostitutes and victims of trafficking.

**Rosanna Pagliuca:** Social Worker, Junior Researcher in the project *Violence in Transit*, social worker in the project “Train de Vie”, engaged in the activities of support, guidance, listening and promotion of socio-cultural activities of the centre.

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### 3. Youth, Violence, and Transit. Comparative analysis of the railway stations of Barcelona (Spain), Pescara (Italy), and Porto (Portugal)

by Jordi Estivill<sup>11</sup>

#### Introduction

This comparative analysis is a work that is part of the project *Violence in Transit* within the framework of the European Programme DAFNE carried out by Associazione On the Road in Italy, APIP in Spain, and EAPN in Portugal, under the supervision of Europe consulting (Italy).

The main objective of the project is to investigate how youth violence is polarized around transport stations, especially railway stations, and experience and create social intervention models transferable to other areas and regions with similar characteristics. Therefore, the project has three basic dimensions: one that puts the emphasis on research, one that emphasizes interventions, and one that systematizes the lessons learned and tries to develop a transferable model.

This comparative analysis is in the middle of the first two dimensions and should be useful for the formulation of the model, which is one of final deliverables of the project. So it is based on the field studies that were conducted in the stations of Barcelona North (BNord), Sao Bento in Porto, and Pescara in Italy and their areas of influence. This comparative analysis just takes these studies into consideration and no comparison of the intervention is made. The analysis collects the key findings of these studies and attempts to contrast them, seeing not only their similarities and differences but also places them in their urban contexts to try and find some background explanations.

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11. Sociologist (APIP-ACAM Foundation).

The rigour and seriousness of the three field studies have facilitated the writing of this report. Although each of them highlighted specific aspects, the fact that there was a previous common scheme and that the methodological matrix was similar allowed progressing in this report. It is also worth mentioning that the three countries belong to the Latin area of Western Europe, which shares many anthropological, social, cultural, and political aspects. Part of its history is similar. And when leading indicators are published (public expenditure, social protection, poverty rates, underground economy, etc.) of the European Union, the position of the three countries is almost always close. Moreover, in the past and troubled time, all three countries have been subjected to the severe consequences of the economic crisis and their increase in unemployment rate, poverty, and inequality, with major political changes, with impositions from European and international organizations that show their relatively peripheral position with respect to the major centres of global decisions. They are not alone, but all three have a future filled more with dark clouds than clear skies. This characterization, this current worsening and uncertainty of their future are common denominators of the three countries, which also simplify comparative work.

Although the project's objective is not to examine the latest economic and social changes, it is undeniable that the growth of youth unemployment, growing precariousness and vulnerability of large segments of the population with its corollary of civil and labour insecurity, privatization and, in some cases, degradation of public services, have and will have an impact on violence and its escalation. It is not possible to mistreat or do economic, social, and political violence on citizens, without thinking that they are not going to react, either by way of self-incrimination with suicide and with family and personal attacks, either by way of civil and political disillusionment, or by the acts against public property or aggressive identity claims, or by way of indignation and collective manifestations.

The first intuitions of this comparative analysis were made for discussion with the Barcelona project and then they were evoked in Pescara during the joint meeting in October 2012. A first and more formalized presentation took place at a session of the project workshop organized by APIP, and held in Barcelona in April 2013 and received

some direct comments from Sergio Aires and Vincenzo Castelli, which have been provided. It is expected that this report will be sent to all teams; these make comments and a final version will be presented at the final seminar to be held in the month of October in Rome.

This report has several chapters. After this introduction, the first section explains the methodology used in the analysis of these micro-cosmos, i.e. the railway stations and their surroundings. The second section evokes the hypothesis, words, and concepts used. The third section tries to undo some stereotypes about violence and youth. The fourth section collects the objective data characterizing the cities, their stations, and urban functions, and the marginal world they attract. The fifth section tries to answer some key questions of the research and project. The last section provides some suggestions, by way of general conclusions about the visibility-transparency-opacity axis.

### **A common methodological matrix**

We can say that all three studies have used a common methodological matrix. They have chosen the ethnographic approach developed in different phases and used different analysis instruments: some more qualitative, others more quantitative. The same teams who performed these analyses, then were those who helped formulate the modes of intervention, thus approaching the perspective of research-action and participatory observation. Only in Porto, the teams that implemented the two types of tasks were differentiated. Also, they started and ended earlier. An important difference is that the Italian team had a shelter installed at the station and therefore had prior knowledge of the phenomena and the people passing through it. By this, they did not have to carry out the phase called 'previous clandestine observation'. Instead, this had to be done by the teams of Barcelona and Porto who arrived in the area without prior information other than the information obtained from the citizens who use the stations.

All three teams identified the boundaries and mapped the area, trying to understand the location and function in space of each station and urban space, as claimed by the Portuguese report. They inventoried and interviewed: 1) the main public (municipal officials, public centres, ...) and private stakeholders in the area (members of associations, shopkeepers, taxi drivers, ...); 2) those

who are most directly involved in the life of the station (authorities, security services, internal shopkeepers, cleaners ...); and 3) more or less excluded people swarming in and out of the stations. All this information in addition to their own observations made throughout the day and night reflected in field notes constitute a triangulation that allows making a diagnosis of the situation and the range of different viewpoints. The three reports end with some concluding remarks and directions for future social interventions.

The difficulties encountered in carrying out this field work were: the short observation period available; the disappearance of the anonymity of researchers; the reluctance of some people to answer due to irregular immigration situations or underground economy; and the problems to objectify answers of people with specific interests or mental health impairment. Despite these difficulties, there are a number of guarantees to ensure that these studies reflect reality, as three coloured and in-depth photographs were taken, which allow understanding the social life in the stations and the surrounding areas.

### **Hypothesis, words, and concepts**

The initial hypothesis of this project was that the railway stations focused youth violence phenomena. This concern came from the Italian experience and it did not seem to be appropriate for the two Iberian organizations participating in the project. This forced to a greater sensitivity in the case of Porto and prior exploration in Barcelona with interviews to six agencies and analysis of five neighbourhoods, where there could be a relationship between transit points and potential areas of youth violence. Neither in Porto or Barcelona this relationship was clear. Therefore, in Porto, the main railway where these phenomena could concentrate was chosen, and in Barcelona it was decided to focus on the “estació del Nord”, a bus station, for several reasons: use of transport by transnational travellers, many of them young people with limited resources, unstructured area with meeting areas of different youth groups, surrounding neighbourhoods with residents from different ethnic groups, and proximity to the metro station, which connects the suburbs. In Pescara, there was no problem: it was evident that it was just necessary to observe what happened in the central railway station.

Across the three studies, a set of unusual words is appearing. It seems that the authors have the need to create a specific vocabulary of correspondences between words of Latin origin, a kind of dictionary of margin. Thus, words emerge such as “esquemas” (schemes), “capítulos” (chapters), “troleys” (trolleys), “bugiganga” (shlock), “vigaristas” (con men), “oportunistas” (opportunists), “engate” (engagement), “botellón” (nighttime Spanish activity when people congregate in public areas to socialize while drinking alcohol), “scippi” (snatching), “barboni” (tramps), “truffe” (frauds), “capelloni” (longhairs), “consigna” (order), “mochileros” (backpackers), “chatarra” (scrap metal), “manghel” (begging)... Many words used to describe objects, people, and functions to which normally little attention is dedicated!

It is curious and surprising that one of the most widely used interpretative concepts in the three reports is ‘deviation’. A priori, none of them knew that this concept would be used by others. It is likely that this use arises from the conceptual apparatus of ethnography and studies made in Chicago during the 1920s. It may also appear from functional sociology, which is rooted in Durkheim, Merton, and others. Goffman and other authors of the so-called school of symbolic interaction have shown that, by applying the concept of deviation in research on marginalization, this tends to stigmatize groups that are identified as deviant. Placed in this situation, they will hardly come out of it. Moreover, using the label of ‘deviated’ can lead to the extreme adjectives of ‘aberrant’ or ‘abnormal’, where the condition of citizen and person may disappear. Deviation is a relatively versatile, ambiguous, and arbitrary concept. It is used in statistics to refer to the groups that are far from the centre, in biogenetic medicine, and in psychology. Its antonym is ‘righteousness’ that has a huge moral burden and is awarded to those who have a “good” behaviour. Therefore, this concept refers to those who have the power to define behaviour as good, righteous, and wicked, deviant. It is also referred to standard and dominant moral and the forms and processes by which consensus is formed around it. A deviated person is anyone who does not obey, does not fit, or violates this moral, which may be more or less open, tolerant, or have strict rules that appeal to sanctions of all kinds (hygienic, social, political, criminal...) for those who do not obey. There are societies and orders that exercise violence

in defining rules and sanctions on times and places and people, and these sometimes respond violently.

After having reported some implicit limits and risks of this conceptual approach used, in which the three reports do not fall, it may be useful to undo a stereotype that identifies youth with violence.

### **Undo stereotypes: youth and violence**

The project assumed a direct relationship between youth and violence. Thus, it is not surprising that one of the first results that appear in the research is to address this relationship. The three reports clearly state that violence is a structural phenomenon whose origin is in poverty, exclusion, and inequality. This structural violence would be added, according to the Portuguese report, normalized violence and a third symbolic violence, which is internalized in control structures and stigmatization. This suggests that no one has a monopoly of violence that can be exercised by many different institutions and groups and in very different circumstances. Based on these circumstances, a person or a peaceful group may change their behaviour and adopt aggressive conducts. One might also think that these behaviours are more common as more people and groups are marginalised or are more opposed. Some of the internal and external stakeholders of the three stations cast their stigmas and stereotypes about the marginal world and in doing so they generate violence.

From this point of view and as stated in the document on the previous intuitions, we tend to refer young people to a greater frequency and intensity of violent behaviours. It is interesting to note that “each generation and especially “its right-minded people” tend to over-allocate some of the more negative aspects to the generation that follows. Thus, one of the concerns of the adults during the early 1960s was the alleged assault of thugs and “teddy boys”. After that, concerns were for youth demonstrations and riots of 1968 in Paris, Prague, Berkeley, and Mexico. In the 1970s, the stereotypes were projected on dissent and turmoil of young hippies, despite their apparent pacifism...” Similarly, both the Italian report and the report of the previous intuitions show that the youth category tends to become liquid, to stretch up and down in terms of age, as well as in terms of a job, which is increasingly precarious for youth, more difficult to obtain and that

does not last a lifetime, and no longer marks the passage from adolescence to youth and maturity. Finally, certain behaviours before being more typical of young people are assigned to the adults who are asked to be active, to do sports, to volunteer, to retire as late as possible. Demographic (lower infant mortality, delayed family formation age, aging...) and socioeconomic changes have substantially altered both the images and the practices that were associated with a particular age. Therefore, the so-called 'youth' is no longer a characteristic of young people, whose identity is increasingly blurred. The Italian report devotes a considerable part of its introduction to make an overview of literature on youth violence in Italy, concluding that young people as a group are becoming less identifiable and behaviours that were assigned to them are now diluted in other age groups.

The Portuguese report clearly explains that youth is a not relevant indicator to explain the phenomena of violence and even proposes to consider the age and gender as subjects and objects of this mosaic.

The direction of the research is to test the validity and significance of the previous hypotheses. In this case, the above considerations highlight how uncertain and even inappropriate it is to use the category of young people and identify them with violence and locate this relationship in the stations.

### **The stations, their cities, and their marginal world**

If the comparison passes through the cities and their stations, the first thing to note is the different demographic weight of each of them. Barcelona has 1,600,000 inhabitants and is the capital of a metropolitan area of about four million people in a country of seven and a half million people, while Porto polarizes an area of 1.6 million inhabitants. Something in common with Porto is that it is the second city of their States and that the two have played a historical role as an economic, industrial, and port centre with important social, political, and cultural movements. Furthermore, Porto is the city that polarizes one of the areas where the famous wine that takes its name is produced and marketed. However, its role has been decreasing, as well as the size of its population, from 327,000 to 237,000 inhabitants in the last thirty years. Recently, its tourist vocation has been developing. However, it is far from

the attraction of Barcelona which, after the Olympics, has become a tourist Mecca visited by over 7 million people every year.

If the first two have a long history behind reflected in their historic centres and monuments, this is not the case of Pescara, which is a new city of 123,000 inhabitants, born about 1923 and developed after the Second World War with the shoreward migration movements of population born in the centre of the Italian peninsula. It is the most important hub of the Abruzzo region and plays a commercial, academic, and somewhat industrial role with a potential of about 400,000 inhabitants. Pescara attracts investments from the neighbouring areas, being a knot of relations between the South and the North of Italy. Porto also plays a key node role on the coast, between Lisbon and Northern Portugal and Galicia and also Barcelona is one of the most important cities along the Mediterranean corridor extending from Algeciras to Marseilles and reaches the northern Italian cities.

This means that the three cities are a structural migratory attraction pole of native and foreign populations, generating a commuter movement every day of several thousand people who come and go for work, birth, death, and healing, sell and buy, do business, study, visit, have fun, meet relatives and friends, establish relationships. All these three cities are by the sea and are exchange urban areas of their fixed and floating population. On weekends, a part of the floating population is filled with young people who come to participate in sports and recreational activities offered by the three cities.

These movements have a clear influence on transports leaving and entering the cities. Airports, ports, railway, and bus stations become their incoming and outgoing doors. They are witnesses, to some extent passive and mute, of this constant human bustle. If they could talk, they would tell thousands, millions of stories of this ongoing back and forth, this never-ending nomadic movement. It is very likely that they would start by narrating the vicissitudes of those who historically have chosen them as momentary residence. Paradoxically, the passersby, those who are homeless, are those who opt for these spaces as scenarios of their daily life. For them, in their wandering, the stations and surrounding areas are a place with amenities (bars, toilets, lockers to store their stuff...), where goods and people arrive, many people pass who eventually they can ask or "sneak", where they can do

business through underground economy used to them, poorly controlled spaces to sleep and some opacity and indifference,...

This reciprocal and imagined love between the stations and their most permanent inhabitants has been modified. As said in the first intuitions: “on the one hand, research conducted in the Spanish state shows that passers are increasingly younger, women, and international. On the other hand, large stations have been invaded by the market, by private profit initiatives and are highly guarded. They are suspicious and often various security guards check and expel people dressed differently, with different skin colour, who speak other languages, whose behaviour is not “normal”, and live marginalised”. The three investigations agree that the station buildings tend to be increasingly “standardized” traffic spaces. In Sao Bento, just one homeless-beggar is known and accepted and “lives” in the station; in BNord, various types of groups are found during the day; and in the station of Pescara small groups of “barboni” rest and walk. This type of “classic” marginalization is relatively small, although sometimes it is very visible, and is forced to spend the night in the vicinity of the stations, just like the rest of the marginal world including other groups, who live or hang around the areas surrounding the stations.

The stations and their surroundings continue to attract the marginal world. However, each of them has its own history that is worth summarizing.

**The station of Porto** began operation in 1896, although its official opening was made twenty years later. Its building has a high asset value with its magnificent tile panels. Inside, as in Barcelona and Pescara, there are small shops (coffee shops, selling of newspapers and candies...). Sao Bento is located in the city centre, on the border between the medieval and the modern parts. There begins the historic centre recognized by UNESCO as world heritage since 1996. Composed of four parishes, sub-municipal administrative political and residential units, they are inhabited by populations living in public housing units, many of which are degraded and with a gentrification process. In 1981, the population was of 28,000 inhabitants, whereas in 2001 it had dropped to 13,000 and it is estimated that their number continues to decrease despite various urban renewal programs. The station located on a rocky promontory has two side streets. One is

residential and has a long tradition of trade with low price appliance stores and smuggled and imitation goods. Recently, on the streets, citizens of Indian origin have opened a number of “bugigangas” low price clothing and product stores. In the second street, caterers are like those in front of the station, where there are other establishments for tourism that has the visit of the station and its surroundings included in its itineraries. In them there are no empty spaces as in the other two stations, except a parking lot and the back of the station. Pensions and brothels complete a daytime landscape with lots of cars and people. The opinions about Sao Bento station and its surrounding areas range from the definition of “heavy atmosphere”, “end of the world”, “a pittance” that inspires suspicion, and those who believe that “nothing happens”, it is a “safe place”, even “nice”. On the side streets, stands the female sex work including the old surviving professionals alongside young girls who prostitute themselves to pay for the drugs they consume. Drug consumption and dealing is abundant. Also young gay men make their living inside and outside the station, while alcohol consumption is more closely linked to youth during the weekends. Similarly, we note the existence of an underground and illegal economy with the “schemes” (smuggled goods, pickpockets, “opportunists”, “skills”, “vigaristas”(con men),...), conflicts between clients and prostitutes, some thefts from occasional petty crime and vandalism damage.

**The station of Pescara** and its rail system was rebuilt in 1945, when World War II ended. Somehow, it became one of the axes of articulation of the city. The rail line marks a demarcation line between the inside of the city, which is a compact rectangular grid from the sea to the suburbs formed by a zone of diffuse urban development. Thus, the station is a central element of its identity. After many years of work, the new, extended, and huge station building was reopened in 1988, the first reinforced concrete station of the Italian Railway Company. However, this restructuring bequeathed a large space, the “area di risulta”: 23 hectares occupied by car parks, bus stations, small shops, and bars that is the subject to continuous unfulfilled urban reorganisation.

The station area of Pescara and its “area di risulta” is “the stage where exclusion, marginalization, and socio-cultural issues of the region appear.” For many of its young people, the station is the point of entry to transgression and play. It is the same for hundreds of drug addicts who

come to procure heroin and cocaine, for beggars (a majority of Romanian Gypsies), itinerant vendors (young Senegalese and people from English-speaking African countries), and for immigrants in search of a precarious job. At the same time, all students commuting to Pescara pass through the station. In its “area di risulta”, this whole world is mixed with rail users, male and female prostitution, drug addicts and dealers, those who consume too much alcohol, homeless people, sometimes creating an overlap of situations. No wonder that the observatory on crime in the region indicates higher levels of crime and thefts, of various types.

**The Barcelona Nord station** is a former railway station that now works for bus lines going to Costa Brava, Girona airport, and long distance (Eastern Europe, North Africa, and other parts of the Spanish State). It forms multimodal exchanger with the nearby station Arc de Triomf, which connects it with the metro, with three commuter lines, and a regional railway line. The North Station was built in 1861 and has undergone several later modifications. In 1941, two years after the end of the civil war was integrated into the new Spanish National Railways (RENFE). After more than a century of service, in 1972 it was closed, falling into disuse. In 1983, the Municipality bought the land from RENFE with the intent to convert it into a terminal for long-distance buses and build a museum that never saw the light and different equipment. Once constructed, they have become a destructuring element, “without resolving the physical boundary of the Meridiana Avenue”. It was used as bus terminal but the whole site was degraded until the Organising Committee of the Olympic Games of 1992 announced that it would host the table tennis events. This is what happened and city police headquarters and a park were also built. Later, the National Theatre of Catalonia (1996) and the Auditorium of Barcelona (1999) were inaugurated in the land that belonged to the station.

The North Station is located on one side of the map of Barcelona, next to Plaza de las Glorias on one side and the Paseo de San Juan on the other side, in the neighbourhood of Fort Pienc in the Eixample district that has 16.4% of the population of Barcelona, of which 17.7% are foreigners from 143 nationalities. In Fort Pienc, this percentage rises to 18.8% and 16.5% of them are Chinese who occupy houses and shops in a closed circuit with limited relationships with the other citizens. There are also Pakistanis and members of the Latin American and

European countries. These communities have few relationships between them, some conflicting, and with the native population. This neighbourhood does not have the same associative density and cultural life of other districts in Barcelona. 1.19% of the shops in Barcelona are located in Fort Pienc; 1.34% of industrial activities reflect ancient tradition of this sector in the neighbouring district of Poble Nou; and 2.05% are hotel establishments, 1.2% for accommodation. This reflects an economic activity that is below the weight of its population.

In fact, the location of the station morphologically influenced by the footprint of the old rail network is at an intersection of several neighbourhoods, where “disengaged” spaces have been crated that impede the continuity and create more or less real or symbolic borders between the neighbourhoods surrounding the station. In the whole of this disengaged system, of these empty spaces, marginalized groups live their different life. Barcelona’s report detects five of them. The image that the authorities want to give of Barcelona for tourist, clean and safe, is against the concentrations and visibility of these marginalized groups. Passersby use the station and its services but at night they are expelled and sleep on benches and boxes in front of and close to the station. During the day, this area is occupied by retirees and people playing bowls. The second area is the Marina Street Bridge, a night meeting place for consumption of alcohol by young people. They also use the space adjacent to the Auditorium, and the bridges that cross the park from the station and particularly the area of the pyramid preferred by various youth gangs such the Latin Kings. The fifth space, not too far, is the Citadel Park. This space changes during the day, as it is used by families, tourists, old people performing the most varied activities from tai-chi, walking with children, walking and running, sunbathing, eating, and even spiritual encounters. As the Barcelona report says “when it closes its doors, it becomes a place for sexual encounters, sleeping, alcohol and drugs consumption, out of sight of pedestrians”. In these areas, there is a circulating population that lives and sometimes assaults and is assaulted: conflicts between clients and prostitutes, young people against prostitutes and against passersby, aggressions among youth gangs, thefts, and disputes because of excessive “botellones”. Finally, reference shall be made to the group of urban scavengers and recyclers from Sub Saharan Africa,

the Maghreb, and Romania that cross the area carrying their belongings and moving toward the shopping and deposit centres. Each station has its complex and intimate history and its relationship with urban space, which share general traits and specific features, which explain the modes of production and expression of the attracted marginal world. Violence, when it occurs, does not seem so dependent on what happens inside the stations, but more on the outside of the empty spaces that are less controlled.

### Three answers to key questions

The main objective of the project was to see how far the stations concentrate phenomena of violence and especially the youth. In a previous chapter, it has already been discussed that juvenile behaviours are merely the expression of a society that is violent, exclusionary, unequal and how wrong it is to assign a monopoly of violence, which is structural. In general, there tend not to be more violent than the society around them.

We should now move forward and ask a few strategic questions, which can largely help to clarify some aspects of the relationships between stations and violent behaviours.

- **The first question** is to what extent different urban locations and functions of the stations influence violent behaviours.

The answers and observations obtained indicate that stations are places where violence is exercised only indirectly and that this is more in the surrounding area than inside. The three studied cases give a value of central urban structuring in Pescara, tourist attraction in Porto, and node between neighbourhoods in Barcelona. It does not seem that stations with such urban functions cause violent behaviours. Only to the extent that they are a place of accumulation and transit of many and often very different people, who can produce acts involving institutional and individual violence.

All indications show that external spaces tend to concentrate more or less violent behaviours, around the stations, when they are empty, undefined, "no man's land", non-places, and opaque. In the "area di risulta" of Pescara, in the five areas identified in Barcelona, in the adjacent streets of Porto, conditions exist to exploit conflicts

that can lead to violence. It is interesting to note that, as stated in the Italian report, these conflicts occur between groups that belong to the marginal world, inside (“guerra tra poveri” - war of the poor) and sometimes against them.

- **The second question** is to what extent the stations attract, focus, and polarize violence.

To answer this question, a strictly qualitative and quantitative radiography of the number and intensity of violence inside and outside the stations should be made. As this study has not been made, and will not fall into the repeated request for a new investigation, which used to be one of the conclusions of nearly all analyses, we need to start from the work already done.

What are their contributions?

They provide a lot of knowledge about the real and imagined multiple functions of the stations. The Barcelona report invites to make a triple distinction between what is perceived about space, what is represented and conceived about it, and what lives in it. The various actors and people who travel, work, and live in the stations have expressed their views about the functions of the stations. So these are a place of:

- Transit, mobility, and encounters and clashes, arrivals and departures
- Boundary between normality and deviance
- Opportunities to earn a living, “live life. Like all other people”. Living and memory
- Relationship between formal and informal economy. Small legal and illegal businesses
- The process that privatized public spaces
- “Breath of fresh air”, daily solidarities
- Shelter of marginality
- Invisibilizing agent
- Transgression and artistic and cultural creation.

This list shows that the stations play many roles. Some of them can lead to some activities bordering on some form of violence; others are away from them. In the exercise of authority in the “culture” of certain groups (youth gangs, Romanian gypsies, drug addicts,...),

there are more usual violent behaviours that may occur in the stations. The stereotypes that are projected onto these groups also have an influence generating justifications of violence.

Despite greater security control, found in all the three cases, the stations continue to generate some suspicion, uncertainty, an imagined danger insofar as they are frequented by strongly stigmatized people and groups. These perceptions are noted in the Italian and Portuguese reports, and apparently belong more to the realm of the subjective representation of reality. However, it is well known that often collective images, when they are forged, remain for a long time... and it is not easy to change them.

- **The third question** can be formulated as follows: Do the stations tend to fix and make violence become chronic?

According to the previous comments, the answer to this question is rather negative. The activities in the stations that generate violence are occasional, sporadic. Remember that they are transit points and the number of people who are constantly in them is reduced and that there is complicity and even solidarity with them. Rather, violence-generating activities, some of them criminal activities, take place outside the stations in the external non-places, where opacity is greater. On the other hand, both in Porto and Barcelona and Pescara cases of assault are mentioned (bullying aimed primarily at teenagers), and order disturbances, when trains run, but they have been reduced, due to increased vigilance.

Another issue arising from fieldwork is time. The timeline of the clock has different meanings for the marginal world. The schedules are not the same for those who work or those who do not. For those who work time is a scarce resource that is sought; for those who do not work, time is more abundant and they have to fill it, although being poor involves a lot of work to survive. A homeless in Barcelona says he does not want to be like a tree planted in his bench and taking root. He must and wants to move and the station is a place that offers certain amenities and can be an entertainment area and some business during the day, and if allowed to remain it would be a shelter overnight to protect themselves from violence and external attacks. In this case, the function of the station would change

through the hours. This is also reflected in the Portuguese report description that makes a difference between awakening, during the morning, afternoon, the end of the day, and night of Sao Bento.

It is said that at night all cats are gray, indicating that people are similar during this time and evening activities homogenise the behaviours. During these hours, and to some extent, the social and institutional systems of control relax, insecurity and mainly the feeling of existence grow. All surveys of what is called “victimization” show that the feeling is always greater than the reality. It is true that there are fewer people on the street and that the night helps to pass unnoticed. And therefore, it is easier that certain types of violence increase, due to alcohol, drugs, and gratuitous and robbery attacks. Some vandalism also chooses the higher opacity of the night. It appears that, at least in Barcelona, young people painting graffiti on trains remain to sleep in them and so they escape surveillance. It is interesting that they choose trains as mobile and highly visible items to display their art and their narcissism.

### **Opacity and transparency. An interpretation axis**

One of the objectives of comparative work is to find an axis on which this interpretation can turn. It has been seen that visibility/invisibility are categories that have emerged in the various sections of this report. It is time to test them and see if it is possible to apply them, generalizing them, to give some sense of this comparison.

First, it can be suggested that every society needs to project their fears, their insecurities and therefore it has to have groups and symbolic and real places where to locate them. The cemeteries, for example, have been increasingly distant places and neutralized by societies who do not want to see death. It was not the case of medieval cities. Also the buildings that were intended to charity and health at that time (hospitals, hospices, asylums,...) have been decentralized, gradually transformed and located on the outskirts.

No one likes to confront poverty, misery, and madness. They annoy a society that wants to believe in social cohesion and material welfare. In a way, they also delegitimize policymakers. And so they are away and secluded. There may be multiple arguments: hygiene, health, public policy, cultural, political,... But, in any case, the intent is

similar. They have to be located outside, and make them opaque. And in so doing, violence is exerted upon them. So one of the first steps in the fight against poverty is to make this visible, which is present on the agenda of economic, social, and political stakeholders. And so they begin to overcome the traditional individual measures of the charity model of care and confinement.

At the same time, the presence of marginalized groups acts as a differential stimulus for those who are not marginalized. Eiximenis, a fourteenth-century Catalan bishop, already wrote: "seeing the miseries that happen to the poor, the other study, work, and want to keep their properties to avoid falling into these circumstances." In this sense, we need adequate visibility of marginalization and poverty enough to energize those who are in the middle.

To what extent the stations become modern places where to locate those fears and insecurities? To what extent the stations become the place of the double game between the opacity hiding marginality, and visibility necessary to stimulate the rest? Or the apprehensive relationship with stations and parking areas of trains, is a throwback to the old panics and unknowns in the nineteenth century, generated by the first train machines, which were stoned by farmers? They were the symbol of unacceptable modernity. This is not the case now, but does the function of the station remain as "éxutoire" - deposit of fears of an increasingly insecure society?

Secondly, the three reports, at one time or another, have referred to stations as scenarios, as stage boxes which represent citizens' theatre plays. Every day, thousands of anonymous plays are performed, full of unknown actors between transit and permanence. Thousands of encounters and clashes are celebrated between citizens who know each other or not, who look at and do not see each other. The users of large stations appear as fleeting shadows in search of a distant destination. They are also opaque. Those who are more visible are the different groups, more or less mobile, more or less stable. The next otherness is what fixes public attention, a contemplative vision, like a "voyeur", repressive, of complicity.

Thirdly, in the stage play of transparency and opacity, each actor develops and implements a strategy. Security forces range from a visible presence that justifies them and showing that they are present and some

more subtle opacity that allows them to carry out checks without being seen too much. Shopkeepers must be visible in order to sell their products. The informal sector of the economy rather uses invisibility in its dissimulation. And the more illicit, the more it will use invisibility. For this reason, sometimes it is also called underground economy, even black economy, as the colour identifying darkness, the least visible.

And the marginal world? Its pragmatic strategy is not homogeneous. Not all lines are parallel as the slogan of Porto says, which presides over all its planned activities. Also, a large part of its position is not so much dependent on them, but on the existing powers. However, certain groups of young people try to blend in and not be seen. For this reason, the night and empty land are more convenient to them. Facing the gaze of power, they seek and find invisibility. This can be interpreted as a survival strategy or as a way to ensure that marginalized groups disappear. Begging needs to be strongly present. The scrap collectors seek opacity, which is also useful to prostitution, drug addiction, all those whose behaviours are condemned by the dominant moral and punitive rules. Likewise, those who are homeless try to go unnoticed for not being expelled from the places where they sleep and not to be attacked.

Fourthly, the stations are like mirrors, which reflect the city, its limits, contradictions, and potentials, its control systems, its manifestations of violence, its mechanisms of representation, its social capital, its expressions of popular culture and margin. In this regard, it is worth rereading Italo Calvino when he wrote about the invisible city where wishes, dreams, fears, smiles, and memories come together... A mirror city that "ora accresce il valore delle cose, ora lo nega. Non tutto quel che sembra valere sopra lo specchio resiste se specchiato. Le due città gemelle non sono uguali. Perché nulla di ciò che esiste o avviene è simmetrico" (now increases the value of things, now denies it. Not everything that seems valuable above the mirror resists when mirrored. The two twin cities are not equal. Because nothing that exists or happens is symmetrical).

The stations would be like asymmetric mirrors that enlarge and make smaller, can distort what is happening in the city, but can not avoid reflecting their images and reality, and therefore, their violent behaviour and civil conducts.

## 4. Conclusions

by Vincenzo Castelli

It is not always easy to find the right words to close reasoning, thoughts, events, social constructions, or possible working solutions.

These possible working solutions rely on research-action to capture, analyze, and explore complex phenomena and disjointed areas (between ease and discomfort, normality and deviance, departing and arriving, places and non-places).

The work carried out (research-action, experiments, modelling, dissemination, and mainstreaming) at the railway stations in Pescara (Italy), Barcelona (Spain), and Porto (Portugal), within the project *Violence in Transit*, highlighted many variables of great interest to anyone involved in building social inclusion policies for the groups in the areas of transit and flow within or in the vicinity of which sometimes or often people gather, mostly youth, locals, and legal and illegal immigrants, with more or less problems. Ultimately, a diversified world, increasingly kaleidoscopic tribes, hardly identifiable and reconcilable within the local context.

The train station (within other places of scrolling and flows such as airports, ports, metros, and bus terminals) is the “topos” by excellence today to understand urban decay, to give hospitality to homeless people, attract situations, stories, experiences of the new urban marginality, assembly of increasingly diversified ethnic groups, including more and more indigenous people (increasingly deprived Italian, Spanish, Portuguese nationals).

Together with the “trade fair of so much humanity” situations of violence and conflict among the inhabitants of the station sometimes or often lurk in these spaces.

The research carried out in the railway stations of Pescara, Barcelona, and Porto have pointed to elements of great importance, which are certainly useful for structuring public policies in our cities, with particular attention to the so-called scrolling and flow areas.

After viewing the maps drawn on the area of the railway station, in fact, after reading of the findings on situations of youth violence in these spaces and life stories of people gravitating within and/or

around the station, after entering the trials put in place in these settings, some horizons remain from which to start for sound reasoning on the welfare of our cities.

First, the work developed in *Violence in Transit* provides us with common words (space, territory, control, stigmatization, non-places, etc.), which need to be declined, aggregated, and dissociated to build up a harmonious process.

It lets us understand the central role played by the station as the stage of daily life on the one hand and as a symbolic place to build up the fear; on the other hand, a space of collective representation to increase the collective imagination of which stations can be symbolic spaces and not only.

The station presented and represented as an invisible space (where all pass and no one stops, where there are no people, but travellers) and at the same an ob-scene area where impoverished, humiliated, and chronic lives are shown.

The work on the railway station crucially highlights the need to address the aporia (for too long forgotten) of the assumption of space and time in building inclusive and welcoming policies for citizens (who use the station) and marginal groups (who live there). The space above all, for too long designed by architects and surveyors, shall return to have the genetic codes of sociality, shall be able to unite and not to divide, to aggregate and not to disperse, to create conviviality and not barriers. The railway station has to be some sort of prototype of spatial welfare able to offer meetings, relations, and reciprocity.

Time is also an integral part of a new structuring of welfare, which should be closer to people's needs: time of children, women, youth, and the elderly. Everything today unfortunately turns around a time built away from people's lives and governed only by the rhythms of Ford's efficiency and fear of wasting time (an action considered as obscene and immoral). The life of groups living in the railway stations of Pescara, Barcelona, and Porto (met by our researchers several times) goes to a different direction and shows us new relationships (less schizophrenic) with time. They teach us to "waste time", a great value of our time...

We are taught to respect the time of all and therefore our time; we are taught to give us a somewhat different and better quality of life.

The actions in the station have taught us the great value of our target groups, also called “producers of insecurity.” We refer to the homeless, young drug users, people with irregular position, the Roma in the area of the station. The research and the work of the operators of On The Road, APIP, and EAPN Portugal in the stations show us a group of people with great sensitivity, emotions, passion, love of life. The poetry readings, performances of theatre of the oppressed represented, and animation actions showed poets, actors, artists, animators who may live in the street, but who have shown great cultural and artistic ability.

The performances produced show very clearly the more and more significant emergence of a culture of marginality, artistic expressions that come from the bottom, which clarify the messages that the world of the abandoned launch to the so-called ‘planet of normality’. This performance or “spettacolazione” ability (to use a language of Franco Passatore, a great promoter of cultural events of the 1970s) shows us, in the iconic space of the station, an example of public and urban art that reverberates on the urban area that contains it. In this sense, the repeated architectural requalification and restyling activities that are taking place on many railway stations in Europe (for example the one just completed of the Tiburtina station in Rome, Italy) are combined with “human” regeneration that the research brings to our attention.

So I think we can speak, in the project *Violence in Transit* of social aesthetics, a big bet on the beautiful and pleasant in places (such as stations) that seem to offer degradation and marginalization at a first superficial glance.

Ultimately, the research outlines a way: if we want to lower the forms of violence among young people (as reference is made to them for the most part), often marginalized and living in the areas of transit and flow such as railway stations, it is necessary to re-create spaces and times in their own image and likeness, making them protagonists of their future, offer them tools to express their voice and their emotions. All this should be done through social work, by operators, made of great care, sensitivity and respect. Street work, in its forms of entertainment and education in the contact and empathic engagement with these young people, allowed entering the dark and often hardly penetrable worlds and build, along with the so-called “producers of insecurity”, clusters of shared security.

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European Commission -  
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Daphne III programme  
Project code: JUST/2010/DAP3/AG/1231

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