Social mobilization or street crimes:
Two strategies among young urban outcasts
in contemporary Sweden

Philip Lalander & Ove Sernhede

This article deals with processes of marginalization and patterns of segregation in contemporary Sweden, which have transformed the former welfare state towards increased segregation and inequality between different social groups. Two ethnographic studies on young men living in stigmatized metropolitan areas are used in discussion and analysis. During the 1990s we could see the birth and growth of new forms of poverty in multi-ethnic suburbs of the metropolitan districts of Sweden. During the last two decades, youth subcultures oriented towards Reggae and Hip hop have grown and attracted many young people in these metropolitan areas. This article focuses on how two youth collectives in two metropolitan areas developed different strategies to cope with discrimination, second class citizenship and territorial stigmatization. In both these collectives it is possible so see how informal learning processes, embedded in cultural praxis of the youth groups and empowered by a connection to African-American music cultures, enable these groups and individuals to express themselves. The youth collective in one suburbs articulates a social and political criticism that could be compared to the cultural aspirations of the labour movement in the early part of the last century. The youth from the other neighbourhood have a strong fascination with criminal out-law culture and do not articulate themselves in the same way as members of the other group. Still their cultural expressions must be understood as ways to deal with their positions as marginalized, immigrant youth.

Ove Sernhede, professor, Centre for Urban Studies, University of Gothenburg
ove.sernhede@urban.gu.se

Philip Lalander, professor, Social work, Malmo University
philip.lalander@mah.se

From welfare state to new patterns of poverty

During the 1980s and 1990s, many societies in Western Europe underwent a series of crucial transformation processes. Changes were made to central aspects of the "social contract". This contract had been the very foundation for the Fordist regimes, having grown out of the Keynesian consensus model that dominated the political climate in the decades after the Second World War (Harvey, 2006; Leitner et al, 2007). During the 80s and 90s, neo-liberalism became the new banner under which politics was conceptualized.[1] Even the Swedish welfare state has shed its skin, and a number of Swedish researchers and debaters are prepared to consider these changes an "epoch shift" (Bengtsson & Wirtén, 1996). Some of the negative aspects of this shift are clearly discernable in the multiethnic suburbs of metropolitan areas in Sweden. Societal institutions have difficulties in counteracting stigmatiza-tion and the schools no longer appear to be the obvious passageway into Swedish society.

Schools in territorial stigmatized districts of these cities have difficulties being arenas of self articulation, where young people from the surrounding area can develop self-respect, knowledge and understanding of the time in which they live. Instead, some research suggests, the schools reinforce young people's experiences of alienation, of not belonging to Swedish socie-ty (Bunar 2001, 2004; Runfors, 2003; Molina, 2006; Lalander, 2009; Sern-hede, 2010). As a partial response to this, young people in some of these suburban areas create their own cultures and communities and develop strat-egies to search for respect, understanding and knowledge, which society and schools have not been able to provide (Sernhede, 2002/2007; Lalander 2009). Yet, these cultures are not only expressions of a search for belonging, security, intimacy, meaning and identity. They also represent young people's need for a different understanding of the surrounding world and for cognitive maps other than those provided by the schools and other authorities.

In much the same way as we have seen in the rest of western Europe, Swedish society also segregates and separates immigrant-dense housing areas from the rest of the inhabitants. These areas are included in what the

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[1] "Neo-liberalism is not simply a set of economic policies; it is not only about facilitating free trade, maximizing corporate profits, and challenging welfareism. Rather, neo-liberalism carries a social analysis which, when deployed as a form of governmentality, reaches from the soul of the citizen-subject to education policy to practices of empire. Neo-liberal rationality, … / /…involves extending and dissemi-nating market values to all institutions and social action, even as the market itself remains a distinctive player". (Brown, 2003)

French-American sociologist *Loïc* Wacquant (1999, 2008) describes as "territorial stigmatization processes". The Metropolitan committee (Storstadskommittén), established by the Swedish Parliament in the 1990s to study big-city neighbourhoods, delivered several reports about the living conditions in these areas. The researchers, participating in the committee, characterized the areas as "socially vulnerable" (see, e.g., SOU 1997:61; SOU 1997:118). The patterns of marginalization and discrimination that are prominent in this context also have a direct effect both on school activities and on the communities established by young people outside school space and hours.

Many young people in these areas say that they live with a feeling of alienation and "non-belonging" (Sernhede, 2002/2007; Molina, 2006) in relation to the world outside their own city neighbourhood. Using the words of Pierre Bourdieu, *habitus*, as an incorporated structuring principle (see for example Bourdieu, 1977), has been constructed and shaped out of these experiences of marginalization. Habitus, thus, is made up by incorporated memories, by experiences of one's position in the socio economic structure in society. According to Bourdieu, habitus contains a capacity to flexibly and easily interpret the situations and environments at hand and to know how to act (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). If you spend a lot of time with people from street culture contexts you will become affected. You will also be able to master street culture environments better than people whose habitus did not grow out of a life with a street focus.

In some social networks in territorially stigmatized areas we can see a rather desolated and hopeless attitude, quite often related to the extensive use of different types of drugs. However, if you take a closer look into those networks celebrating drugs and criminal activity, you may discover a form of offensive resistance. The young people engaged in these outsider activities are often interpreted as troublesome youth rather than political agents by established society (see Bourgois, 2003; Lalander, 2009). Thus, in a highly individualized society, their resistance is not interpreted as resistance related to social and economic structures, but rather as individual failures (see Bourgois, 2003). In other networks in stigmatized areas we can see patterns of a more "legible" and overt offensive resistance not emphasizing criminal activity, often in a complex combination of youth cultural expressions and fairly homemade political analysis. Both these coping strategies have their arenas for self expression in common. To a large extent they are acted out in the street and are therefore sometimes conceptualized in research as street

culture. With the term street culture we refer to the thoughts of Philippe Bourgois:

> … a complex and conflictual web of beliefs, symbols, modes of inter-action, values and ideologies that have emerged in opposition to ex-clusion from mainstream society. Street culture offers an alternative forum for autonomous personal dignity. (…) This "street culture of re-sistance" is not a coherent, conscious universe of political opposition but, rather, a spontaneous set of rebellious practices that in the long term have emerged as an oppositional style. (Bourgois, 2003)

When we use terms such as "living on the street", "living in a street culture" etcetera, we do not mean that they are homeless. Rather, we suggest that they have experienced being seen as inferior, living in a stigmatized area, and that they, in order to solve the problem of not gaining "autonomous per-sonal dignity" and respect, have created a symbolical and social universe in which the street, and their dealings with various situations in the street (see also Anderson 1999 and Bourgois, 2003), are central symbols.

Two cases: Olleryd and Svenheaven

In this article we present two cases from two different ethnographic research projects. Ove Sernhede has conducted a study in a residential area, Olleryd, on the outskirts of Grandhaven (a city with approximately 500.000 inhabi-tants). [2] The research concentrated on the street culture of a group of approx-imately twenty young male hip-hoppers who use their music as a means to understand their own residential situation and its connection, and disconnec-tion, to both Swedish and global society. Rap music becomes a creative and expressive force in this type of identity politics.

The field work was carried out between 2006 and 2008 involving partici-pant observations during different important group activities, such as prepa-

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[2] The empirical data that is used in this article comes from a project financed by the Swedish Research Council: Schools and their Surroundings: An interdisciplinary project on young people's learning and on the encounter between local culture and the schools in multicultural suburban areas (VR Reg. no. 2005-3440). The project, as well as this article, takes its departure in an ethnographic study of schools as well as of youth culture in two multi-ethnic suburbs on the outskirts of one of Sweden's larger municipalities. The focus in this article is on the youth culture rather than on the school environment. For a discussion of the relationship between learning processes at school and in the youth culture (see Sernhede, 2010).

rations and realizations of public performances, rap concerts, music recordings and various education projects which the hip-hoppers were involved in such as lectures and seminars. It also consisted of individual and group interviews, with almost all of them, addressing how they viewed themselves, their mission, future and history. Sernhede also used artefacts such as rap poems in order to better understand what the young men saw as important in life. He established rapport with this group with the aid of contacts from earlier research projects in the same living area, thus not through official authorities such as social workers.

The second project, conducted by Philip Lalander, focused on a group of young men with Chilean backgrounds, living in a suburb, Svenhaven, outside the centre of a middle sized town, Halestone (approximately 130.000 inhabitants).[3] These young men have created a street culture with a strong emphasis on drugs and street violence, but they have also been using different ingredients from hip-hop culture, for example graffiti and rap music, as ways to express themselves and their position in society.

Lalander visited these young men, who in the beginning of the research project were in their twenties, from 2003 up until now, participating in different environments and activities, in the streets, at home, at music festivals and in prison. He also conducted interviews over time in order to see how their view on different issues changed with time, as they turned older. Lalander too, gained rapport from earlier studies (see Lalander, 2003). One of the main informants and informal leaders in the group, Lorenzo (will be presented later), was a "brother in crime" with Salle, who Philip got to know in a prior study of the heroin market in the same city. When Salle asked Lorenzo if he wanted to be in the project he answered without hesitation that he would. Thus, both of the projects use social capital from earlier projects which has been of importance since we did not want to be seen as representatives of official authorities.

From one angle, the two cases mentioned are quite different, but from another point of view it is easy to see the common ground and similarities between the two groups. One matter that brings the groups together is their strong emphasis on cultural expressions and symbols. For both groups the street is as an arena where construction of identity and striving for respect take place. The article discusses how different strategies and styles are re-

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[3] The project is mainly financed by Mobilisering mot narkotika, The National Drug Policy Coordinator, and has had the ambition to better understand why some young people in stigmatized living used drugs, put in relation to their life histories, economic and social structures and stigmatization. In addition, MiV (Citizen Participation and Social Inclusion) has founded part of the project.

flecting the same triggering conditions: territorial stigmatization and poverty. First we turn to the Olleryd case and thereafter to Svenhaven.

Hip-hop as a global tribe community and a response to social degradation

Olleryd is the name of one of the suburbs where we have done fieldwork in the current research project. In Olleryd there is a strong tradition of hip hop activities. Filthy Dozen Inc. (F.D.INC.) is a hip-hop collective that has its roots in this neighbourhood, and this formation has emerged partly as a reaction to the stereotypical notions of immigrant-dense suburban areas. The core of F.D.INC. consists of some twenty young men aged between 18-28. Most of them are just over 20 years old, and their family backgrounds represent many continents of the globe. While together they form a collective, each member participates in some form of creative, artistic project, either as solo artists or in small groups of two or three. None of them can support themselves through their artistry, although it may periodically provide an extra income. Encircling these core members is a "buddy structure" comprising of a theatre group as well as activities such as Olleryd's Centre for Digital Story Telling.

Since its emergence on the North American east coast in the mid-1970s, hip-hop has been defined in terms of its well-known four "elements" – rap, breakdance, DJing and graffiti[4]. According to hip-hop veteran Africa Bambaataa, who worked in the Bronx as early as in the 1970s, today's hip-hop also includes a fifth element that has emerged from the need to keep the hip-hop movement's development dynamic and progressive (Chang, 2006). This fifth element consists of knowledge and teaching. Bambaataa also took part in establishing what is now the worldwide hip-hop movement, "The Universal Zulu Nation". Filthy Dozen Inc. regard themselves as part of this movement. When lecturing about their activities, they make a point of drawing a clear demarcation line between the predominating MTV hip-hop, which they

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[4] At present there is a great variety of literature about the emergence and development of the hip-hop culture. For a more complete presentation of the four elements – rap, graffiti, DJing and breakdance – see Sernhede (2002/2007) and Söderman (2007). Among international standard works, special attention can be called to Chang (2006) and Toop (2000), not only because these works are well-informed historical writings, but also because they place hip-hop in a social context and take a critical and thoughtful approach.

regard as superficial and commercialized, and the subversive underground hip-hop culture, of which they consider themselves to be exponents.

One of the main informants in the research project is Enrico. When interviewed he was in his late twenties. Enrico was born in a Latin American country and came to Sweden as a very small child in the early 80s. Enrico did not care that much about working hard in school and he did not become successful as far as it comes to high marks. Yet, he knows that he has a lot of good qualities, he knows that he is competent and well orientated in different subjects and tasks. From his parents he has "inherited" a cultural capital that might not be fully valued in Sweden, but it still gives him self-confidence, incorporated in his habitus. His parents have encouraged him to read and express himself and they have always discussed books, films and TV-programs in the family. His father was a lecturer in philosophy at university and his mother was a teacher at a primary school back in their hometown in Latin America. His father's political activities forced him to flee the country, otherwise the military dictatorship would have put him in prison or he might even have been killed by paramilitary forces. The urgency meant he had to leave his family behind.

After some years in exile Enrico came to Sweden in 1981 and he got the status of a political refugee. The following year Enrico, just a couple of weeks old, came to Sweden with his mother. After some three, four years in different refugee camps located in small towns in southern Sweden, they got an apartment in Olleryd. Although they were very grateful for having a haven in this new country, they were also victims of harassments towards immigrants. Olleryd is not a camp, but it is a part of town where a lot of immigrants and political refugees live. Since there were a lot of activities in the neighbourhood and Enrico's father became one of the front figures in the mobilization of the immigrant population in this part of the city, Enrico, who hung out with his father, got socialized in to his father's kind of thinking. And he linked the youth culture of his own generation to the experiences that his father talked about. Enrico:

> When I was like 14 or so I became interested in hip hop, there were a
> couple of guys doing that and talking about the ghetto and black cul-
> ture, I liked everything about it. The style of clothing, the music, the
> dance and the way they talked. But I also felt that it was a way of con-
> tinuing doing what my father has done, it was our way to carry on
> with politics even though we were not political in the same way as my
> father was back in Latin America, I felt that we were the blacks of this

country, we were not really accepted and we had to do something that was similar to what black people in the US had done and that was basically the same thing that my father and his comrades did in Latin America, fighting to make the voices of the repressed heard.

Enrico became one of the main inspirational figures for the strong and acclaimed hip hop culture that grow out of Olleryd in the 90s, and he is one of the reasons why F.D.INC. looks at itself as part of a bigger youth movement wanting to get out of the urban margin and to be a social force that can be heard around Sweden (Söderman, 2007). This movement is, in turn, part of a global mobilization. The same pattern can be seen in Brazilian favelas, American ghettos, African shantytowns, Middle Eastern Kasbahs and French banlieus. Hip-hop brings young people together and creates a cultural identity that also has scope for knowledge and teaching, that is it works as a social capital, creating bridges between people, thereby giving rise to feelings of empowerment and belongingness (see Öhlund, 2011). This version of hip-hop provides starting points for "analyses" and "messages" that in many ways problematize the social reality which young people with immigrant backgrounds are faced with in stigmatized housing areas (Chang, 2006; Holmes, 2006).

Hip-hop can be regarded as a response to processes of social degradation (Rose, 1994; Toop, 2000; Chang, 2006). It emerged from various street cultures in the late 1960s and before long, in the second half of the 1970s, it had developed into a consistent subculture in New York's de-industrialized and marginalized suburban areas. Hip-hop does not only constitute symbolic or ritualized resistance against the prevailing order, as implied by a classic definition of a subculture (Hall & Jefferson, 1976; Hebdige, 1979), but in its original form, it also contains a programmatic, political dimension that actively relates to the development of its own specific neighbourhood. Hip-hop's focus on local belonging and its commitment to the importance of place is directly connected to its attempts to deal with the social, economic and cultural devaluation of its own city neighbourhood (Toop, 2000; Chang, 2006).

Hip-hop culture also contains a strategy for winning self-respect and solving conflicts. The Zulu Nation emphasizes that the knowledge required by young ghetto inhabitants must also be sought outside the institutional context of the schools. The schools teach "His-story", i.e. white man's history. They take no interest in the discrimination that has relegated blacks and third-world minorities to the dark side of society. Based on its "conscious-

raising practices", the hip-hop movement replaces brutal and violent gang rivalry with competitions or "battles" to determine which neighbourhood has the best rappers or break-dancers. Having style, skills and a message, daring to reveal who you are, "battling" and representing your block – that is what hip-hop is all about.

The members of Filthy Dozen Inc. have a vision of recreating these aspects of the roots of hip-hop culture. That is why they, in addition to participating in artistic activities, devote themselves to lecturing in schools, youth recreation centres, libraries and community centres. The starting point for these lectures and seminars are Filthy Dozen's ambitions to elevate the suburban areas and combat the poisonous media debate about their bad reputation. Laslo, a young man with a background similar to Enrico's, only that he comes from Iran, is one of the young men that together with Enrico are role models for young hip hoppers in the neighbourhood.

> What we're doing is a kind of adult education for our time. We try to get people we meet to develop personally, so they can grow as people and begin to think and develop intellectually, too. Of course, we can't give them any credits or grades or anything, but we can give hope and visions, we can give people a goal, something to work towards. What we do is give belonging, people need belonging, you know, you can't just be an immigrant kid from this place, then you're a nobody, that's what the criminal gangs build on, too, you gotta be something and we give opportunities for another kind of belonging.

Many young people in suburban areas feel the need to upgrade both the physical environment and the local spirit of community. This is one reason why primarily young men have developed a romantic attitude towards the concrete architecture of the Million Programme[5]. To an outsider, this idealization seems odd and contradictory. However, it is part of a feeling of communion that is also based on the need to have a "liberated sphere" – a place where you do not constantly have to face a Sweden, regarding you a second-class citizen.

The young men and women who were interviewed describe the relationship between Olleryd and the rest of the city as, in our interpretation, neo-colonial. Segregation is a continuation of colonialism. These immigrant-

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[5] The term Million Program is used to describe the suburban mass housing constructions built in Sweden during the period 1965-1974.

dense suburban areas are modern reservations in which the third world makes itself present in the middle of the first world (cf. SOU 2005:69).[6] Filthy Dozen Inc. constitutes a new generation of hip-hoppers who have given up their predecessors' strict city neighbourhood nationalism. Now it is a matter of breaking the isolation of the suburban areas and of coming out and meeting all parts of the city, hence their ambition to "spread the message" at youth recreation centres, to participate in debates, and to arrange lectures and workshops in libraries, etc. The confrontational image has been replaced by a yearning for dialogue, a desire to be treated as equals and viewed as partners in discussions rather than as "aliens". Filthy Dozen Inc.'s ambition is to make their way into society through their outgoing artistry and message making. Here is how one member of the collective stated his view: "The schools and the ordinary ways of becoming members of society, or whatever that's called, seemed to be closed to us. But when we make music and perform, we get in through the side or by the back door, so you see, we find our own way in".

Hip-hop as a strategy for education and integration

Instead of just picking up knowledge that has already been produced by others (e.g., by teachers or in textbooks and curricula), a group such as Filthy Dozen Inc. carries out a more open search for knowledge in its specific contemporary, postcolonial living conditions in New Sweden. Through mutual support, the group members can create understanding and acquire knowledge. Moreover, in the collective tools for navigating and developing strategies are created, that will enable group survival on its own terms. The group does not only provide security, community and opportunities to express feelings. It is also an arena for different ways of responding to and commenting on its social conditions, such as exclusion from genuine citizenship, "othering" and poverty. Based on its creative capabilities, the members of Filthy Dozen Inc. can also connect to currents that can bring them closer to the centre of the city. As a collective, they can, in such a way, identify *career paths* by exploiting the new post-industrial economy's interest in cultural

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[6] We are aware of the problems linked to post colonial conditions and narration, in which the world is divided into a hierarchical structure by the use of numerals. Yet, deconstructing such concepts is not within the scope of this article and the terms will remain unproblematized in this particular text.

manifestations and expressions of the "exoticized other" and in streetwise, innovative, ghetto-infused creativity.

A discussion has recently arisen about the relationship between hip-hop culture and the tradition of adult education. In his doctoral dissertation, music pedagogue Johan Söderman emphasizes a number of important observations from the hip-hop scene in Malmö and New York. According to him, hip-hop can by no means be placed in a given popular music genre or be marked with an unequivocal label. Just as participants of F.D.INC. refer to hip-hop as being both underground and mainstream, Söderman also believes that the hip-hop sphere is characterized by this tension between the two. He holds that there are important and interesting qualities within today's hip-hop that have few opportunities to emerge.

If we enter the environments in which hip-hop is practiced, we can discern the contours of a suburban culture that is not only striving for recognition; the culture also embraces the desire to analyze and develop strategies for social change. Hip-hop's aesthetic, almost programmatic starting point in the encounter between people with different ethnic backgrounds plays an important role in this context. With a starting-point in his music-pedagogical discipline, Söderman believes that, on the one hand, hip-hop can be seen as a strategy for teaching musical craftsmanship; on the other hand, it provides an instrument for staging liberating pedagogical processes. Moreover, it can serve as a tool for political activism (Söderman, 2007 s. 115).

Söderman's empirical material has been collected in Malmö as well as in the United States. It is obvious that the context studied in the fieldwork among the young men in Olleryd also has the potential to promote liberating pedagogical processes. Söderman describes the hip-hop settings he has studied as marked by the intention to "set people free from marginalization and alienation". He believes that hip-hop "may become a means of communication for reaching people who are difficult to reach by traditional means; for example, people who do not read the daily newspapers /…/. By seizing power over the cultural means of production, some of the rappers, too, display strategies similar to those employed by the Labor Movement when they started their cooperative associations at the beginning of the 20th century" (Söderman, 2007 s. 116).

Thinking of hip-hop and F.D.INC. as part of a project for adult education is not foreign to some of the members of the collective. They have attended courses and training days arranged by educational associations, thus gaining

insights into the historical context in which the classic adult education movement emerged.

"We could see the whole barrio, it was beautiful"

Svenhaven is the name of a suburb in Halestone and also the home of a group of young men with Chilean background whose parents had decided to leave Chile during the second half of the 1980s, set on living their lives in Sweden. Unlike the Chilean refugees who arrived in Sweden in the 70s, or the early 80s, those who arrived in the late 80s and the early 90s did not have a political struggle to wage. The Swedish society in which the early Chilean refugees arrived was a different country to that which had developed during the 80s and 90s. Hailed as heroes, fighting against the Chilean dictator General Augusto Pinochet, they received a warm welcome from Sweden's socialist solidarity movement.

Those immigrants whose children are described in this article, landed in a social vacuum in a society which had transformed into a nation deeply influenced by neo-liberal standards, including increased income gaps between different groups and a growing segregation of the housing market. They did not, as was the case in Olleryd, organize themselves in joint activities and they did not engage in political discussions and strategies in their homes (compare to the interview with Enrique in the Olleryd case). Before they came to Sweden they where workers or suffered from unemployment. None of the parents had entered university or any other form of higher education. Therefore, there was not much cultural capital to fall back on for the young people in Svenhaven.

Through repeated interviews and observations with 15 young men aged between 18 and 25, during a period of six years (2003-2008), Lalander tried to understand their thoughts and action and how these were related to social and economic structures and to intersections of class, ethnicity, gender and age.[7] In jargon or slang and on other occasions in their everyday lives the street was a central symbol reflecting issues concerning intersections of ethnicity, class and gender. One of the young men said that they saw themselves as *callejeros*, which is the Spanish word for street kid. They used influences

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[7] Their network did not just consist of people with Chilean background, as they also spent time with people from other parts of the world such as Swedes, people from Lebanon, former Yugoslavia, all being young people who identified themselves as people living on the street.

from rap and reggae music and from street cultures in the US and Latin America, including their country of origin, in constructing style and identity, giving street culture a transnational profile. Through this mixture they invented their own struggle and area of resistance. Below we will describe and comment on the influences they used in their composition of street culture and also what this culture meant to them.

Primo was three years old when he arrived to Sweden together with his older brother, his mother and father. However, when Primo was 14 his mother and father separated because his mother longed so much for Chile that she decided to move back. Thus, she brought Primo with her. In the local village in Chile, Primo experienced what he calls a "cultural chock", especially in school where he was expected to wear a school uniform, which is quite different from Swedish standards, and to adapt to certain norms of conduct. He explains how he reacted: "I took my stuff when it came around twelve o'clock. I took my stuff and left with some friends. We went somewhere to hang out." Instead of being in school he stayed with a group of Chilean hip-hoppers who used marijuana and were engaged in street crimes. He learnt their street slang and soon became a member of the group, incorporating a sense of solidarity and belonging.

As a group symbol the Chilean street gang used the billiard ball number two, which Primo after some months had tattooed on his leg. In Spanish the phrase ball number two is expressed as Bola Dos which, if pronounced without a pause between the words, constitute the word *Volados*. A volado is a "drifter" who does not live up to mainstream society's norms of employment and duty, but instead regularly smokes marijuana or takes other drugs. Thus, Bola Dos can be seen as symbolizing a state of being in the margins of society and an act of defining yourself rather than being defined and marginalized by others.

After a year and a half Primo and his mother returned to Sweden since Primo's delinquency was escalating. Back on the streets in Svenhaven in Sweden, he was seen as an experienced guy among his friends and he told them about the tattoo, the history behind it and about street life in Chile. A while later one could see the Bola 2 symbols painted as graffiti or tattooed on the skin of some of the young men. By using the symbol this way they could feel a similarity, a type of communion with a street culture in Chile, thus contributing to a sense of being real street kids. This is one example of how symbols from Chile were imported from the lower classes in Chile into the

Swedish suburb, adding to the creation of self-respect in relation to living a street life.

The reggae music they preferred was mostly root reggae with artists such as *Israel Vibrations, Sizzla, Burning Spears* and *Culture,* all thematizing life on the street and the importance of fighting the corrupted capitalist system of Babylon, creating inequality and poverty for the majority of people on earth. Lorenzo, the older brother of Primo, expressed how he learnt more *patua* dialect (the language of the lower classes in Jamaica) through reggae artists than he ever learnt English during classes at school. Dick Hebdige (1976 s. 6) claims that Patua is a spoken language built to oppose assimilation insisted on by society's dominant groups. For Lorenzo the learning environment was found in the street and among friends and the knowledge he gained was highly related to identity. He felt solidarity vis-à-vis the Rastafarian style and the symbolic war against Babylon.

A highly popular movie in the group was *Blood in Blood out*, directed by Taylor Hackford and produced as early as 1992. The movie portrays three cousins with Chicano background living in a poor area in East L.A. during the seventies. The cousins are members of a street gang called *Vatos Locos* (signifying the crazy friends - or brothers). Managing the street and being aware of the importance of a keeping up tough front at all times, are important themes in the movie, just as are strong relational ties between young men in the margins of society. When the young men saw the movie they could decode it as a comment on, or description of, their own lives, even if the film takes place in another part of the world. Primo and David, two of the young men, reflect on the movie:

> You think that you wanna stick together. You are like a family out on the street sort of (silence, thinking) … Even if you don't have the same blood, between friends. (Primo)

> When that movie came, it made us feel a (searching for a word, interrupting himself) … a sim (starting the word similarity) … a togetherness to Latin Americans. (David)

They began to dress like *Vatos Locos* and to fight in similar ways, using fighting strategies from the film. Thus, the movie presented solutions for them. The movie, *Blood in, Blood out*, offered a frame for understanding the world they were living in. It supplied them with a repertoire to use together with other frames in constructing a street culture in which you were directed

towards certain masculinity standards, certain constructions of ethnical origin (as Latinos) and to the opportunity to feel real pride in being marginalized. In that sense, the movie offered an alternative phenomenological understanding of their stigmatized living area. Miguel explains:

> We always said "this is our barrio" (Spanish for residential area or housing block). It was here that we had the command according to us (laughs). Svenhaven belonged to us. When we stood up there (a hill in the local area) we were also influenced by the movie *Blood in Blood out* when they did the same in the film, and it was beautiful. During night time one could see the lights, you could see the whole barrio, it was beautiful.

Through the use of movies, certain rap and reggae music as well as symbols from a local street culture in Chile, were communicated among the group of friends and incorporated in their habitus. Svenhaven became something more and bigger than a local place in the Swedish town Halestone. It became a transnational place, connected to other satellites in the world such as East L.A., East Harlem, New York, Jones Town, Trench Town and Ghost Town/Kingston, Jamaica and street culture in Chile. Thus, it was a matter of charging the street with high value and self respect in opposition to the exclusion from mainstream society (Lalander; 2009; see also Sernhede, 2002/2007 and Bourgois 2003).

Street crimes as a solution and strategy for adult hood

> There's a friend who is one or two years older than I am. I saw him as a big brother instead of my dad, I learned a lot from him, I looked up to him, I wanted to be like him. He had respect, he had contacts. (Miguel about Lorenzo, Lalander, 2009)

In Sernhede's study about rap artists in Olleryd the overt political dimension of street culture is described and emphasized. Through music and different performances in public the young men work to emancipate other people and to draw their attention towards different conditions in society. It is possible to see the investment in hip-hop culture as a form of education. In Halestone too, music was created and rap texts were written about life on the street, marginalization and stigmatization, but the young men also invested a lot of

energy in a criminal street culture including excessive intake of illegal drugs, drug dealing and violence of the street. Today about half of the young men in the study have spent time in prison, mostly as a result of street violence and in some cases due to drug dealing. The violence they participated in was almost exclusively directed towards other young men who lived a street life similar to theirs. This can be understood as a symbolic economy on the street, an economy where respect and money (also a sign of respect) are predominant benefits (see Bourgois, 2003 and Sandberg and Pedersen, 2006).

The quote above represents Miguel's reflections concerning one of the informal leaders and mentors of the street culture, Primos brother Lorenzo, who had a great deal of street capital and was seen as a person with experience. Lorenzo was one of the teachers of street knowledge who could assist in creating a sense of maturity for the young boys in the area who felt that they did not succeed in the formal school system. There were many stories about Lorenzo. This is one: A guy with African background stole a mobile phone from Lorenzo's younger brother. Lorenzo heard about this and went looking for the guy. When he found him he abused him physically and severely, "I sent him to the hospital" as Lorenzo expressed it with a tone of pride. However the African guy reported ("snitched", as Lorenzo and his friends expressed it) Lorenzo to the police. A few weeks after the abuse the police arrested Lorenzo and after trial he was sent to prison for a year and a half. His reputation and respect on the street grew even more after this incident and after spending time in prison. All of his friends said that beating him up was the right thing to do.

Thus, Lorenzo's way of solving the problem was correct according to the logic of the street where you are supposed to deal with those kinds of problems without involving the police or other official authorities. Lorenzo had a strong commitment to street life and criminal affairs. He hated the police and the official authorities and expressed that: "They see me as an immigrant with a criminal life style, so I don't like them either". Lorenzo is seen as charismatic and socially competent while on the street. Probably Miguel and other guys admired Lorenzo since he carried his alienation or marginalization with such pride and dignity. Even though he is at the bottom of the social and economic ladder he walks with a straight back not allowing anybody to stigmatize him or assault him.

Like violence, illegal drugs were regarded a street matter. As in many movies about marginalized living areas they were contributing to charging

the street with respect and symbolic street capital (compare with Sandberg and Pedersen 2006). Hugo, who started dealing with heroin at the age of fourteen, said that it gave him an enormous feeling of self respect; freedom and power when he could feel the cash in the pocket. He also said that as young as at the age of 13 he managed to get control over a supply of hashish. Hugo said that his involvement in drug dealing gave him a certain kind of confirmation:

> I was somebody, you get it? Cause in the beginning, when you started, you were nobody, cause I was so little, I was smaller than all the others. Everybody treated me like shit. Not like shit, but I WAS (emphasis) nobody. I couldn't help anyone with anything, so I was nobody. But then I started to work myself up, getting some contacts, started dealing, than I became more important you know. I started to get a higher status and then I started to like it. People looked up to you, they needed your help and without that help they didn't manage.

It is quite evident that his involvement in the drug business was a way for Hugo to feel more important and powerful and, in addition, that it is related to a maturity based on criminal activities on the street and alternative rites of passages other than those found in official society (see also Lalander, 2003). Thus, street crimes may be interpreted as ways to dissolve the feeling of being a nobody. Yet, it is charged with symbolical influences and meaning from a specific type of popular culture, framing it with a sense of fighting against subordination in a neo-liberal and highly segregated society.

Discussion

During the last decade Europe has witnessed rioting youth in territorially stigmatized residential areas in France, Germany, Holland, Denmark and, most recently, in Sweden. From late summer of 2009 and during all of 2010 a series of outbreaks took place in the urban peripheries of some of the metropolitan areas: Stockholm, Malmö, Uppsala, Göteborg, Södertälje etc. On television one could see youth throwing Molotov cocktails and stones at the police, the burning of cars and schools, attacks on busses and trams etc. In media these riots were interpreted as outbursts of frustration, primarily from male, suburban youth groups.

These events were spontaneous and unorganized. Although not a part of any traditional form of social movement, these riots could perhaps be interpreted in the same way that the French geographer Mustafa Dikec (2007) does in his study of the French revolts in the autumn of 2005. These French riots could, according to Dikec, be understood as an unarticulated justice movement. While in one sense being very articulate at the physical level, they did not evolve together with the articulated rhetoric normally used in social movements. They appeared as relatively unorganized actions mirroring high levels of frustration. Interviews with young people from different cities and broadcasted on Swedish television, indicate that this might also be the case in Sweden. At a market place and in front of the television cameras, a group of young men in Backa, Gothenburg, collectively wrote a message from the youth in this area. They demanded a stop to police harassments, more jobs to the suburb and an end to the stigmatisation of their suburb etc. When we discussed these violent confrontations with some young men in Olleryd they said this was "our kind of intifada".

The welfare states of Scandinavia have long been spared the European developments that have divided big-city urban landscapes for decades. Today however, several areas in the metropolitan districts of Sweden can be added to Clichy-sous-Bois and other ghetto-like neighbourhoods throughout Europe. Wacquant holds that these stigmatized areas are caught up in societal and mass-media discourses that demonize living conditions in a way that gives rise to fear and uncertainty, both inside and outside these areas. Territorial stigmatization penetrates and poisons every corner of life in these areas – the schools, the social welfare office, associations, and relations between people as well as individuals' self-images. No one can escape. Stigmatization contributes to forming stereotypical notions of crime as well as cultural and religious antagonisms, which in turn give rise to fear and moral panic. These demonizing processes are particularly apparent to young men from these areas.

This article takes as its point of departure two research projects concerned with street culture in two suburbs in two Metropolitan areas in Sweden. We have had the ambition to go underneath the surface and provide a better understanding of the living conditions in these areas and to present a picture of the cultures that develop in this part of the city. To those who are familiar with the conditions in suburban areas within metropolitan districts, this Swedish "intifada" might not be at all surprising. The pictures presented in this article, from two different settings, suggest that both of them reflect

strategies to deal with feelings of being subordinated. Both of them reflect a society in which a territorial stigmatization works through excluding people from opportunities and from developing themselves, while neglecting their hopes of being accepted as respected citizens in mainstream society. These conditions have forced them to collectively create alternatives. The young people in our studies act through the creation of different types of street cultures. Both in a sense cry out: "Look at us, here we are, we are human beings, we are worthy of respect". The concept respect is a key term closely related to social and economic structures of subordination. Also, what we see in both these cases is the connection to other groups in other parts of the world also living with poverty and stigmatization, such as black people in the US, Rastafarians in Jamaica or Chicanos in East L.A.. These are cultures having been invented and developed as a response to stigmatization and as identity based solutions, which include social codes and knowledge of global inequality and poverty.

Thus, charging local street culture with global influences is a way of transforming the local street into something different, something connected to resistance, something that carries dreams and hopes of another future. Through this process the identity of the individual is given a feeling of self-respect and is transformed into something beautiful, something to be proud, rather than ashamed, of. In this way we can speak about a *romanticism of the ghetto* as a counter-strategy against territorial stigmatization.

There are also important differences between the cases. The youngsters in Olleryd create something that might be seen as a social mobilization. They have an idea in which education and mobilization could solve their situation through legal means. Public performances and verbal discussions are crucial constituents from this perspective. In this way the street culture of Olleryd is directed towards the future, attempting to create better possibilities, self-understanding and new forms of life. The young men in Svenhaven create a kind of resistance that is not directed towards the future or involve acts and symbols which are criminalized in Swedish society. It has the function of creating feelings of security and self-respect in the present. Naturally, one way to understand this is to recognize the different living conditions within these two social networks. As addressed earlier, one network is partly constructed out of experiences of being political refugees with a high level of cultural capital which dominates the local public sphere. The other social network is dominated by uneducated working class people arriving in Swe-

den for the sake of making money and in search of a better individual, social and economic future.

It is also appropriate to introduce the concept of charisma in the discussion. In order to attract young people to participate at street culture level, charismatic leaders are of major importance. Both in Olleryd and Svenhaven a few of the young men radiated a strong charisma in relation to other young men. These were young men who acted in a relaxed way, moved themselves with dignity and self-respect reflecting an attitude of powerfulness, thereby projecting a self-presentation which goes far beyond the image of being subordinated and marginalized. In Svenhaven some of the drug dealers were seen as charismatic since they reflected a way out of poverty and despair while in the Olleryd, the rap artists that had the right street credibility became the role models for other young people. Also important in this context is the possibility of self identification, that one interprets and bodily experiences the charismatic person as a person who understands the world in about the same way as oneself and who has experienced a similar life history, thus sharing a habitus.

By relating to charismatic persons one may create a feeling of security, strength and self-respect. However, the way a person's charisma is interpreted is related to the habitus of the person doing the charismatic interpretation. Habitus is made up by incorporated memories, by experiences of one's position in the socio economic structure in society. Thus, charisma cannot be understood without understanding the society - as a whole as well as the local context - which the individual is a part of. In our cases habitus is linked to experiences of poverty and subordination. It is in a complex way incorporated with, and related to, the emotional lives of individuals. The charismatic leaders with a big amount of street capital, having been gathered through rough or political experiences, may function as role models and identification objects for young people at the margins of society. Our studies show that these categories of youngsters, being occupied with their identity and different kinds of existential issues, are likely to use these figures with street credibility rather than their parents or teachers in school.

While participating in a street culture profiling itself on criminal activities the young men in Svenhaven became active in using illegal drugs and participating in criminal affairs. This was their search for the creation of an alternative structure of dignity. In fact, in order to gain self-respect and to solve the situation of being subordinated they subordinated themselves even more. However, it is plausible to believe that some of these young men, if

they had lived close to other ideals and visions like the ones exposed by the charismatic rap leaders in Olleryd, could have developed their lives in other ways. The line between the illegal street culture and the more politically radical street culture is in reality rather thin and it is obvious that there are traits of both life forms in both cultures that we have been in contact with. In this article we have made a clear distinction between the two. Yet, both forms of street culture are articulated from the same source; global and local inequality, segregation, stigmatization and discrimination. Both cultures may provide the individual with feelings of self-respect, reflecting a crucial aspect of the human existence, "the desire to be desired." (Crossley, 2001) [8]

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