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Deconstructing Gangsterism in South African Legislation and Policy: Reframing Anti-Gang Strategies by Utilising At-Risk Definitions

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ABSTRACT

The issue of gangs, and ensuing gang violence, predates democracy in South Africa. While the dawn of democracy promised a new beginning, the lingering effects of Apartheid re-mained, particularly the spatial con-figuration of cities and legacies of fractured communi-ties. Cape Town, the country's second largest city and metropole of the Western Cape prov-ince, exemplifies this more starkly than elsewhere, as apartheid spatial planning relegated the historically disadvantaged to the limits and out-skirts of society, where they remain, but the City of Cape Town perpetu-ated the relegation of the poor and working class to the verg-es. The nas-cent democratic government and newly recalibrated police forces have struggled to address gang violence effectively amidst the backdrop of widespread organised crime and corruption, social inequality, a sluggish economy, and poor service delivery. The National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (2017), the country's latest strategy framework, requires policy implementation at provincial level. This paper will assess the Western Cape policy content and deconstruct the concept of gangsterism so as to discuss the measures best suited to bring about change in society. WPR, theorised by Carol Bacchi (1996), is utilised to decon-struct texts or dis-courses to understand how 'meaning is made'. It allows for uncovering the contradictions between what is said and how it is said, question truths, false binaries, and dichotomies. WPR is a form of discourse analysis, which acknowledges that policy signifi-cantly impact lives and is not merely a paper that solves a political issue. It will be argued that sustained anti-gang strategies and interventions demand that structural obstacles and inequality in lieu of the spill over from the Apartheid era are addressed. Finally, the long-term benefits of reframing the problem of gangsterism in the Western Cape as 'a youth-at-risk-crisis' as such policy responses contribute to local peace, including the view to allow-ing youth(s) to exert agency and become empowered in pursuit of individual and communi-ty resilience and active citizenry.

1. Introduction

South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994 ushered in a new dispensation based on democ-racy, equality, and the rule of law. It represented a break from Apartheid governance, which was based on racial segregation. The country's constitution encompasses a range of civil and political rights, such as human dignity (s10) and freedom and security of person (s12) (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996) (hereafter 'the Constitution'). The South

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African Police Service (SAPS), previously known for human rights abuses during the Apartheid era, underwent major reforms to align itself with democratic and human rights principles including basic needs provision, as enshrined in the Constitution.

The issue of gangs, and ensuing gang violence, predates democracy in South Africa. However, after 25 years of democracy, gang violence continues to affect safety and security of many communities in South Africa, and the ways of Cape Town and the Western Cape are not an exception. The nascent democratic government and newly recalibrated police forces have, in other words, struggled to address gangs and gang violence effectively amidst the backdrop of widespread organised crime and corruption, social inequality, a sluggish economy, and poor service delivery.

Despite the constitutional human rights framework, including policing as a preventative as well as an investigative and public security institution, the state's response to gang violence has primarily relied on criminal justice approaches, characterised by forceful policing tactics. This approach ranges from the periodic deployment of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) into the areas of the so-called Cape Flats - The Cape Flats (or the Flats) refers to the areas southeast of the central part of city of Cape Town. During the Apartheid regime, Black, Coloured, and Indians were forcibly removed from the inner-city residence out onto the Flats under the infamous Group Areas Act of 1950 (Act No 41 of 1950) - as well as the (re-)creation of an Anti-Gang Unit which consists of (Stemmet 2006):

> 'Members from specialised units in the police services and whose focus is to weaken the capacity of gangs and to disable the criminal economy linked to gangsterism and drug and firearm supply lines (Dougan 2018).'

South Africa is not unique in this regard; several countries are struggling with gang violence disproportionately centred in the urban environments. Nor is it the only developing country struggling to provide or uphold basic needs to socioeconomically disadvantaged citizens. Globally, gangs are present in both the global South and the global North, and in developed and developing countries alike. Gangsterism is further affiliated with other societal problems, such as dysfunctional families, disorganised communities, drug, and substance abuse as well as the deficient provision of basic needs (The Constitution, 1996; Alexander 2010) often linked to the inability to access prosocial opportunities, including employment. Informal social structures and perilous livelihoods are both conditions of and amplified in areas marked by relative poverty and high inequality (Ikejiaku 2009). Coupled with the fact that areas with little or no social cohesion are more vulnerable to intergroup conflict, it is no surprise that such areas tend to experience higher levels of direct/physical violence (Seedat et al. 2009).

The government is obliged to commit to equality despite origin, gender, ethnicity, and/or socioeconomic status or other inalienable characteristics. Yet, 20 years after the abolition of Apartheid, gangs in the Western Cape disproportionately impact livelihoods of people on the Cape Flats. This article, therefore, aims at assessing the assumptions within the document *'Strategic roadmap towards implementation of the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy in the Western Cape – Provincial Response to the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (NAGS) 2019'* (hereafter NAGSWC) written by Don Pinnock and Romany Pinnock (2019) for the Western Cape Department of Community Safety (DoCS) with a specific focus on what 'gangsterism' is represented to be. This will be done by employing Carol Bacchi's (2009) 'What's the Problem Represented to Be?' approach (WRP). The deconstruction of gangsterism through the WPR approach will therefore answer the overarching research question:

- What is the problem of gangsterism in the Western Cape represented to be in NAGSWC?

including the following sub-questions:

- What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the 'problem'?
- How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?
- What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?
- What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?
- How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated, and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted, and replaced?

On 2 June 2016, the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster (JCPS) approved the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (NAGS) as ratified by the JCPS Cabinet Committee. The strategy was adopted by Provincial Cabinet in 2017. The details of NAGS, the national strategy framework, is still to be made public. What is known about it is that it aligns with the National Development Plan to ensure that *all* South Africans feel safe and their community live free of fear (emphasis added). Based on a four-pillar foundation, invention is directed through the areas of Human Development, Social Partnerships, Spatial Design, and Criminal Justice Process (Payne 2017). NAGS further calls for a holistic approach to address issues that feed gangsterism at community level and additionally, a national interdepartmental anti-gang strategy that addresses both current impacts of gangsterism as well as prevention efforts (more details on NAGS to be presented later in the material section) (Pinnock and Pinnock 2019).

In April 2018, DoCS began to develop its own provincial response to the NAGS, named *'Strategic roadmap towards implementation of the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy in the Western Cape – Provincial Response to the National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (NAGS) 2019'* (hereafter NAGSWC) (Ibid. pp. 7-8). The Western Cape policy was concluded after five workshops held during 2018/19, facilitated by Don Pinnock on behalf of DoCS. A task team consisting of 'high-level input' from government and civil society members contributed with their knowledge and experiences in addressing gangsterism from their respective fields (Ibid. pp 57-66). Evidence-based policymaking, such as the NAGSWC policy formulation, is increasingly used in preventative approaches to criminality and is more commonly viewed as a best practice model for interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder public policy (Esbensen et al. 2013). But what exactly does that mean? Generally, the research on gangs in South Africa include critical definitions, identification of risk factors, definitions, and criminological/ sociological explanations for gang behaviour. However, little attention has been given the effectiveness of approaches and interventions' reel impact on gang crime and violence reduction, including formulation processes. Given that we know a lot about gangs but has less evidence-based knowledge about how the impact of gang prevention and disruption effectively address the related issues, this article aims at contributing to the generation of such information by exploring means and ends in NAGSWC. Over the past years, gang violence has spiked upwards and generated challenges in different spheres and on different societal levels in South Africa - and the Western Cape. As the literature reveals, multiple risk factors are involved: anti-social behaviour, substance abuse, mental health problems, victimisation, and negative live events as well as safety and violence issues in or in relation to family, education, peer group and community (Pinnock and Pinnock 2019). Thus, in contemporary South Africa, the realisation community engagement in tandem with police enforcement is essential in curbing gang violence (Portfolio Committee on Police 2018).

The lack of public engagement with NAGSWC has provoked criticism. The militarised approach to gangsterism as portrayed in the previous section in the Western Cape was criticised by the South African Drug Policy Initiative in Autumn 2019, as the government was called out for, 'sitting on its own report that calls for the demilitarisation of the police and the legislation

of all drugs to help tackle the drug-related crime.' (Staff Reporter, unnamed 2019). The debate has led to accusations of the lack of willingness to advance and publicly engage with the issue but also puts into question the value of a national strategy relying on a provincial implementation. Subsequently and crucially, it prompted other questions: what is NAGSWC suggesting? What aspects of the broad issue of gangsterism are included in it and which are not? As the term gangsterism (as well as anti-gangsterism) lacks a common definition, it is valuable to assess the problem representations within the strategy as they impact the way in which gangsterism is governed provincially, since each province must develop an implementation of NAGS that account for localised and tailored responses. But what exactly does that entail in Western Cape?

The interest in deconstructing gangsterism in NAGSWC further stems from the author's involvement in the provincial strategy formulation from May 2018 to February 2019. The selection was thus done by a non-random case election procedure (Yin 2003). In the South African literature, there has, among other things, been a focus on crime prevalence and lack of social cohesion in former township areas as well as criminal justice and policing approaches to reduce crime and violence (Barolsky 2016). As NAGS requires each the province to develop individual strategies to better cope with the distinctive or localised issues of gangsterism, the case selection allows for engaging with the problem of gangsterism in NAGSWC to really understand how the phenomenon is problematised in the Western Cape and further, how that has formed the proposed strategies outlined in the policy. Finally, I familiarised myself with the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth guidelines (ASA UK guidelines 2011). Ethics clearance was obtained on 10 August 2018 for a period of 12 months covering the period that I participated in the formulation of the NAGSWC. Anonymity and confidentiality are agreement with the requirements of the DoCS in the Western Cape and Dr. Pinnock.

2. Materials and methods

Carol Lee Bacchi's 'What's the Problem Represented to Be?' (2009) approach (WPR) is concerned with the role of those formulating policy in shaping certain problems and how the characters of these problems are constructed.

The WPR theory is grounded in the idea that policy generally claim to solve problems that needs to be addressed (Bacchi 2009, p. xi). Hence, issues in policy are problematised in specific ways; they are presented to us in a certain way and put forward as 'problems' in a certain way. This is Bacchi's motivation for studying how issues are thought as problems and in what way they reduce complexity or divert from reality (Osborne 1997). Bacchi draws on feminist traditions in questioning power relations and truths and so, WPR as a method has been used in social sciences' critical tradition since the 1990s, especially within postmodern and social constructionist research. From early on, Bacchi compared affirmative action in policies in different Western countries and concluded that affirmative action had different meanings depending on which 'time and space' was examined. For example, it was noted that the same problem was problematised as 'special treatment' for 'disadvantaged groups' in some places but as 'social justice' in others (Bacchi 1996). Her methodology differs from traditional policy theory and draws on discourse theory by acknowledging the historical development of conceptual logics that forms a specific understanding of a problem (Bacchi 2012 in Bletsas & Beasley).

WPR can therefore with benefit be utilised when one wishes to deconstruct texts or discourses to understand how 'meaning is made'. To do so, it makes visible the contradictions between what is said and how it is said, question truths, false binaries, and dichotomies. WPR is therefore also a form of discourse analysis, which acknowledges that policy significantly impact

lives and is not merely a paper that solves a political issue. Bacchi's method is now well-established and widely used to understand the effects of politics and how, and to what extent, policy addresses the problem it claims to solve. To capture the different meanings of the affirmative action, she developed the term 'contested concept' (Bacchi 1999). How 'affirmative action is represented' – how it is conceptualised, that is, – has significance for its implementation and thus affect individuals it governs.

To understand how WPR presumes agency as part of its' outlook, Bacchi makes use of the poststructuralist and feminist argument on self-reflection stating that, 'the viewer must catch themselves in the act of seeing in particular ways.' (Bacchi 1999, pp. 45-6). This article will therefore not uncover an objective truth or knowledge, as the application of WPR rather is about questioning how we are governed and not propose alternative solutions (referred to as 'governmentality') (Ibid. pp. 46-55): 'The overall intent is to reflect on how we are governed, it opens up the possibility to think about how we could be governed differently' (Ibid. p. 46).

This aligns very well with Carol Smart's (1996 pp. 424-425) Foucauldian critique of law – what she calls 'the power of law' – as a superior discourse that holds the power to exclude certain groups of people. It happens when the 'truth of law' is not contested and 'generates claims about social life' (Ibid. p. 425). This separate discourse, then, creates, 'the truth'. Or, at minimum, the legal discourse is likely to become the superior discourse in establishing the truth, for example a court ruling will be viewed as having found the most accurate or objective account of a given case. Smart states that, 'the transformation of power conflicts into the language of rights and enables law to exercise power rather than abdicating control' (Ibid. 429-30).

Bacchi's WPR has been used in a variety of different discourse analyses of policy but has not yet been applied to the topic of gangs or gangs in South Africa. However, Goddard has recently applied the theory to the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, Goddard reiterate that,

> 'Policy formulation is often viewed as a neutral, technical process, with policies developed by those considered experts in a particular field. Within the evidence-based paradigm, research and "scientific knowledge" are seen as providing rational grounds for policy development and analysis' (Goddard 2018).

Significantly, Goddard concluded that disability inclusion is assumed to be 'good' and 'necessary' and the responsibility of the government. However, it was uncovered that policy did not necessarily give enough attention to the recognition of the individual identities and developmental needs of children with disabilities, which is problematic as their needs change rapidly both mentally and physically during their upbringing (Ibid. pp. 15-7). This article also found socioeconomic factors were influenced by a spill over from Apartheid and persuaded the policy formulation from the transition to democracy and onwards. In sum, the WPR approach to policy analysis is a very concrete methodological toolbox that addresses a set of questions, where the objective of the analysis is to figure out how language and problem representations shape meaning and knowledge (Bacchi 1996). However, the interrelatedness of the questions still allows for a flexible application to fit the chosen material and thus does not have to be applied sequentially.

Azar (1986) developed the theory of Protracted Social Conflict (PSC) to highlight the fact that root causes for conflicts in 'multi-communal' societies are to be found within and across, as opposed to between, nation states. PSC advances the definition of conflict by identifying it as a phenomenon that has an invisible, latent character rooted in basic and developmental needs. These characteristics can explain why direct violence may appear random and why it is more

prevalent in societies with multi-ethnic composition. It sheds light on the dynamics that affect populations in different ways and explain why it increases hostility and spiral into overt conflict. To build his theory, Azar makes use of four different categories of factors as preconditions for PSC and the escalation of intensity into overt conflict or violence: 'communal content', 'deprivation of human needs', 'governance', and 'international linkages' (Ibid.).

Though PSC has generally been studied in the context of armed conflict, it seems relevant for this article as situations of protracted social conflict are marked by hostile contact between communal groups rooted in one or more factors, such as race, ethnicity, religion, or culture. In PSC as per Azar, arguably the most useful unit of analysis in this article is viewing gangs as not just a non-state actor but as both communal and identity groups as well (Ibid. 62-5). By affording attention to the individual and group levels of analysis, the impact non-state actor(s) can have on the continuation of violence is recognised and examined. This makes PSC applicable to gang violence since it relates to intergang conflict, to conflict between state and gangs and between gangs and civil society groupings as well as the impact these conflicts have on communities and individuals – some affiliated with gangs themselves, some not. This aspect is captured in the part of the theory and is referred to as 'communal content'. It is argued that the disarticulation between state and society is the central issue, which is intractable from the phenomenon that the individual's societal needs (e.g., security, identity, and recognition and basic needs) are increasingly - if not only - articulated through membership of a group. Thus, PSC acknowledges that gang conflict and violence affect general intergroup conflict at local level.

As gangsterism still shapes safety and security in the Western Cape, it is moreover deeply intertwined with the absence of needs provision, which negatively impact individuals and society. It renders certain population groups affected by or affiliated with gangsterism stuck in a situation where competition for (human) needs continuously shift among communal groups as a means of shaping economic, social, cultural, and political structures that become conducive to both social and violent conflict. By applying PSC, it will be possible to identify the needs of the different identity groups as well as communal groups and the disarticulation with the state. In this way, it is possible to understand which conditions needs changing as opposed to merely describing who is criminal and what crime they commit. Even though the theory has previously been used in countries marked by ethnic conflict, the fact that the spill over from Apartheid has shaped the current demographic division and social geography makes a strong case for its applicability. Moreover, the conceptual framework of PSC is not restricted to focus on merely ethnicity, as Azar also highlights other factors for social conflict, such as socioeconomic status or needs deprivation. In this way, the PSC is used as a complimentary tool to structure the contextual aspects WPR, in accordance key thematic of the literature review, which highlighted the micro- to macro-dynamics of gangsterism across societal spheres. Where the PSC affords attention to the root causes of a context that is marked by ongoing conflict and fluctuations in violence, the WPR approach is concerned with the role of those formulating policy in shaping certain problems and following, constructing the character is these problems (Bacchi 2012 in Bletsas and Beasley pp. 1-2).

3. Results

It has so far been identified that the dominant representation of the problem of gangsterism is youth at risk and that the main solution lies in building individual and collective resilience at community level by reducing neighbourhood violence. The central strategies to achieve this are understood to lie in the creation of both responsibility and accountability firstly managed by a Provincial Hub but decentralised into Neighbourhood Safety Hubs to secure localised

responses (WPR question one). At present, however, it is apparent that the conceptual foundation for strategy has not managed to include proper channels for the commitment to coordinated violence prevention and social transformation, as envisioned in both the applicable law and the previous strategic framework (WRP question two). This is further rooted in the historical, social, and cultural governance and policing context, which has maintained a militarised discourse, where political will and adequately, sustained efforts have not been present (WPR question three). The previous part has attempted to address what has been said, how, and why (WPR questions one to three). Now, the article will turn its gaze to what has not been said (WPR question four) and what effects this might bring about (WPR question five), and how we might think about the problem differently and whether there are other apparent nuances or solutions to consider (WPR question six).

Through the lens of PSC (WPR question six), it became clear those who most disadvantaged are those most at highest risk of being affected or affiliated with gang crime and violence. Notably, this was noted in relation to youth. Moreover, it became apparent that a negative labelling discourse perpetuating the coverage of gangsterism as an unintended effect, which further result in the legitimisation of hard solutions (WPR question 5). A silence in the report occurred in the absence of a representation of solutions for women and girls as separate from men in NAGSWC could result in gender insensitivity during implementation stages, if the report reaches this far (WPR question four).

Specifically, the presence of gang violence and the fear and risk of gang violence can be said to fuel and be fuelled by intergroup conflict. In this sense, gangs can be viewed as groups of (young) people with the same socioeconomic status who live in the same neighbouring areas but are experiencing similar differential opportunity to attain safety and security and livelihood needs. In addition, structural violence in the form of unequal access to basic needs further widens the gap between people of different socioeconomic status and further, fuels intergroup conflict and violence, especially in former township areas between other groups than gangs as well (Misango 2011; Buthelezi & Mofokeng 2015). As have been mentioned several times, gangsterism in the Western Cape is usually associated with the Cape Flats coloured South Africans - groups and communities in areas with primarily Black and Coloured residents, who often which led lives under severe strain.

Second, the lack of basic needs is reflected in the cumulative impact of basic needs access and insecure livelihood, hitting hardest among the urban periphery, notably marginalised and underprivileged population groups on the Cape Flats. These groups were shown to be trapped in an intergenerational poverty cycle, which severely harms the resilience of individuals and communities, born out of Apartheid's discriminatory policy and protracted by capacity challenges, politicised, and scattered anti-gang strategies.

Moreover, the lack of (human) needs provision can amplify hostile and violent behaviour among young people in communal groups and in gangs that compete for the same real or perceived means. The literature on gangs in South Africa showed that a key factor for gangs to maintain territorial control is that they can provide access to basic needs, for example as modes of income generation or in the form of protection from violence perpetrated by other gangs (Adhikari 2008; Petrus 2014). Azar's PSC theory highlighted those basic needs do not merely encompass food and water, clothing, and shelter but also security, fair access to political institutions and economic participation (Fisher 2001, pp. 307-26).

Protracted gang violence has involved immediate and almost uninterrupted suffering for non-gang population groups. Often people with the same socioeconomic status in the Western Cape on the Flats experience murder, violent attacks, and deprivation due to inaccessibility to basic and human needs are all rights that are enshrined in the Constitution. Additionally, a threat to

solving gangsterism is parallel society development including layers of both anti-social and deviant behaviour and informal economies generating and perpetuating conditions prune to organised crime – i.e., the presence of alcohol and drugs dealing at high and low levels magnify inability to pursue life chances. As the fact that young people's needs cut across sectors and have been shown to extend over multiple years' bids both urgent and long-term solutions, encompassing more than merely criminal justice agency involvement and must therefore include resilience building among individuals, especially youth, and at community level in general. NAGSWC emphasis the power of building youth and community resilience (Pinnock and Pinnock 2019, pp 21-33). Yet, it afforded less attention to the gendered aspect of agency and empowerment, even though local conflict and gang violence does not only severely impact male youth in disadvantaged areas but has devastating consequences for women and girls as well. Particularly so, as the toxic hypermasculinity has been deemed intractable from gang culture and violence translate into high levels of sexual and interpersonal violence. This finally brings about a more general question, what role of youth is when working towards reduction and eradication of gang violence in the Western Cape? When wishing to establish Neighbourhood Hubs to address local issues. If the youth is at the centre of the issue of gangsterism, surely, they should be engaged more explicitly than they are now; agency and capacity building mechanisms – which NAGSWC also acknowledges as key – towards empowerment and influence as an aspect of community engagement and local knowledge is therefore a foundational principle in the Western Cape policy.

4. Conclusions

Gangs and gang violence have been a persistent feature of contemporary South Africa. Perhaps no city has been affected more by gangs than Western Cape and Cape Town. Despite a legal framework promoting human rights and multiple on-going interventions by law enforcement, gangs and gangsterism have generated and continue to generate crime and localised conflicts that disproportionately affect many of the region's residents, especially those in high unemployment and low-income areas, such as the Cape Flats.

The National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy requires provincial implementation and in 2018, the Western Cape Government developed their response under the direction of Department of Community Safety through a collaborative policy formulation process and developed the Western Cape Policy response, referred to as NAGSWC throughout this article. This strategy is aimed at to reducing gang violence and preventing youth from joining criminal gangs.

This article has sought to understand how gangsterism have been problematised and represented in the development of the NAGSWC through utilising Carol Bacchi's 'What's the Problem Represented to Be' approach to policy analysis to discover how the problem is understood and represented and thus, analyse which discourses and material responses are generated, and which are not.

When applied to NAGSWC, the six interrelated WPR questions brought about the following findings. Firstly, gangsterism was represented as a 'wicked' problem with many problem feeders, rendering disadvantaged youth most vulnerable to join gangs or at risk of gang activity or violence. Significantly, the presumptions policy makers have made about the problem of gangsterism and interventions to curb gang violence and youth joining gangs. Secondly, the ambitious goals within NAGSWC might not be new or impossible to implement but they do require long-term commitment and political will to be allocated needed resources and capacity. Thirdly, the gap between creating an action plan and implementing it posed significant challenges, as those involved in the collaborative formulation process had no possibility to control over the adoption or implementation once the process was finished. Fourth, it is not possible

to say for certain why NAGSWC has not been utilised yet. The fact that DoCS and the Western Cape Government have not begun adoption and implementation suggest that the problem of gangsterism produces a political pressure to 'show action' – hence the lack of public engagement regarding NAGSWC stands in stark contrast to recent (and not new) deployment of military into gang-ridden areas alongside the re-launch of Anti-Gang Unit, which represent the militarised, 'tough-on-crime' approach to gangsterism. This should be questioned in lieu the evidence from the empirical research on gangs in South Africa and the applicable law and policy, notably NAGS, that requires 'a holistic approach, which includes diverse issues rooted in communities which feed the gang problem' (Pinnock and Pinnock 2019, p. 7) and 'national interdepartmental anti-gang strategy requires not only the phenomenon and impact of gangsterism to be addressed, but also prevention of gangsterism' (Ibid. p. 8). Fifth, although NAGSWC does mention the high impact of violence and the vulnerability of women and girls, it is surprising that the progressive report does not only employ more gender sensitivity in lieu of gender inequality and extreme rates of sexual abuse. Moreover, although the guiding principles for the section 'peer groups' does outline principles for working effectively with youth, NAGSWC has not explicitly created a forum for youth engagement and inclusion in the development of the anti-gang interventions, for example in the suggested Neighbourhood Hub. Sixth, even though the action steps are carefully thought out and most likely would create meaningful results, the evidence-based model did arguably prompt the idea that this strategy would (or will) succeed where previous policies have not – despite the acknowledgement of the impact of (transnational) organised crime on gangs and subsequently, illicit drugs. Issues that require solutions beyond both provincial and national levels. Additionally, the protracted social conflict lens as well as the previous research on gangsterism highlighted that the socioeconomic inequality, shaped by Apartheid legislation, still poses one of the greatest challenges with regards to youth at risk of joining gangs.

The article has argued that there is a discrepancy between what is articulated in policy and what is carried out in practice. It has been suggested that lack of public engagement with NAGS and a lack of political commitment to utilising the report aids the discourse and practice of militarised, short-term responses as adequate solutions despite research and evidence suggesting otherwise. Namely, that to effectively address the conditions that foster gangsterism, more attention should be given to structural conditions, especially inequality, to effect transformation through sustained anti-gang interventions. Considering these findings, the article concludes that more attention should be given to transforming conflict conditions in areas with high levels of gang violence as opposed to focusing on how these areas can adapt to society, just as NAGSWC proposes in devising a two-tiered model with neighbourhood level intervention. Such an approach would allow room for both groups and individuals, affording attention to youth, to gain or maintain agency and realise more active and participatory forms of citizenship though building resilience.

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