X MARKS THE SPOT
COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO TIK AND GANGSTERISM ON THE CAPE FLATS

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Gangsterism and drug abuse have become one of the latest ‘nightmares’ or ‘scourges’ to taint South Africa’s dream of an inclusive democracy. Bolstered by dogmatic images of decrepit buildings, knife-wielding youngsters and smoke-filled enclaves, reports have drawn on visceral fears of crime and its contagion. These narratives contribute to the often sweeping construction of poverty, violence, and exclusion. In so doing, generic and stereotypical ‘bogey men’ – young, coloured, tattooed mEN – have been created and condemned, and scorn and hate are frequently poured on them in both the general media and private discussion. Little thought has been given, however, to how these images and euphemisms have created specific understandings of gangsterism and drug use within communities themselves. Little thought, moreover, has been given to just why so many young people find sanctuary in the arms of gangs and illegal substance use. Perhaps symptomatically, even less thought has been given to how these understandings have paradoxically created and sustained the very environments in which drug addiction and gangsterism can thrive. It is to these topics that this piece speaks, and is based on research conducted in the ‘Cape Flats’.

Indeed, as I shall explore below, perhaps the articulation of the problem as a problem is the problem. In other words, when we assume that gangsterism and drug use are a problem, we create a need for an immediate solution in a context in which the problem is derivative of many decades of decay. In creating these problems, furthermore, we assume that gangsterism and drug use are both something external to, and different from, the communities in which they occur. However, the gangs and perhaps even drug use are intricately interwoven into the very fabric of these communities, both historically and pragmatically – they may be endemic, but they are not an epidemic. In creating this difference – between good wholesome society and the deviant ‘other’ – two forms of response become both visible and justified. Firstly, if the problems can be constructed as external to the communities in which they occur then those who are defined as problematic can be singled out through juridical or military intervention – this strategy has already been deployed in the past, with little success. Secondly, if the gangs and drug use are the ‘other’, then this creates the possibility for understandings of ‘plague’ and ‘contagion’ to justify the distinction, a distinction which only serves to further pathologise and exclude the very people who have been excluded. The resulting discourses of distrust and antagonism, as highlighted by the Khayelitsha Commission of Inquiry’s final report,¹ create and sustain cycles of violence and fear – between the communities, the gangs, and the state – which directly contribute to the creation of an environment in which gangsterism and drug use become meaningful both to those who exclude, and ironically, those who are excluded.

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In South Africa, this ‘war’ is articulated as a product of a ‘fight’ between the gangs and the police, in which guns and batons become the order of the day, at the loss of creative, sustainable and localised responses by the communities in which the phenomena occur. Indeed, it is the purpose of this paper to highlight some of these responses, driven by communities, while giving voice – however brief – to community members themselves. As I hope to show, it is only through a reestablishment of trust and mutual understanding that any response by the state, in its attempts to deal with these social phenomena, can hope to be effective.

There is already a significant example. In 2013, community members and the police descended on the homes of known drug dealers and gangsters in Delft, a settlement on the Cape Flats. The walls of the houses were marked – by the police – with large red ‘Xs’, a sign which served as a warning to both the occupants and community. Indeed, the ‘X’ is a potent symbol, and one that provides the starting point for this piece – it at once proclaims a warning and yet also signifies, in the crossing of the lines: an enmeshment. Community members have condemned the drugs and gangs, and yet the difference between ‘the community’ and ‘the gangs’ is tentative, local, and fragile. These are, after all, the sons and daughters of the very community members that condemn them. In the same manner, the difference between the state – represented by the police – and the communities that they are mandated to serve is complex and contextual. They too are drawn from these communities, and are at times put in the position where they are mandated to arrest and detain their own family members, old class mates, and friends. The call for objectivity of policing is so very muddled in the practice of police work.

Consequently, drawing a sharp distinction between functionally isolated social groups – ‘the police’, ‘the community’, ‘the gangs’ – is both unrepresentative and analytically ineffective. The archaic homogenisation of these relationships, furthermore, may actually create the very environment in which the gangs and drug use not only proliferate, but become needed. The gangs, in short, have become a means of creating and sustaining an identity beyond the state, as a function of the state’s failure to provide an environment in which people can learn, grow, and provide for themselves. Many houses have been built, yet few communities have been developed. Equally, the use of drugs has become endemic in the very same communities that continue to be economically marginalised and politically disenfranchised. Bolstered by the growing dissonance between South African citizens’ lived realities and the promises of an inclusive constitution hereto unmet, the perfect environment for sustaining gangsterism and drug use has been born. While correlation cannot be seen as causation, there are patterns that have emerged the world over between disenfranchisement, poverty, gangsterism, and drug use.

In an environment shorn of the symbols typically used to indicate position and status - the car, home, and smart phone – gangsterism provides structure and place, as do the relationships forged around the rituals attendant with the consumption of illegal drugs.

Some have argued that the inherent instability of these relationships and areas – the constant flux of changing urban landscapes, gang dynamics, and drug usage patterns – make meaningful interventions very difficult and invariably short-lived. However, it is because of this constant change that the possibility exists for effective intervention. South Africa, in short, stands at a crossroad: the established prescriptions, policies, and practices frequently used in the ‘fight’ against drugs and gangs have proven to be ineffective. Indeed, they may have, paradoxically, created the very conditions in which the drugs and gangs have flourished, as evidenced by recent research. Consequently, new understandings and new directions are needed, and they need to be owned by those who are most affected – external impositions are just that, and lack the legitimacy of community responses developed by, and for, the people who live with these concerns on a daily basis. The development of self-regulating community practices and policing measures have, furthermore, been positioned antagonistically and competitively in relation to the state, when in fact they may offer the very strategies with which to regulate the social phenomena that occur in them.

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5 Monge, N. and Brook, J. 2006. ‘Substance use and multiple victimisation among adolescents in South Africa.’ Addictive Behaviours 31 (7): 1165-1176.
In exploring these relationships, in telling this story, there are three key [and interconnected] actors – the gangs, the police, and the communities. Here, I will focus on the relationship between the community and the police, as it is they who wish to respond to the gangs. By conducting qualitative interviews with community members from some of the affected areas in the Cape Flats, specifically in Mitchells Plain, this article attempts to bring to light some of their perspectives, highlighting how they view their own and others’ positions and responsibilities. It is on this basis that the article will suggest, in the final analysis, that the emergence of self-regulating community policing practices and groups may offer new understandings, techniques, and practices in the regulation of the gangs and drugs.

THE STATE’S POSITION

The transformation of South Africa from apartheid to a constitutional democracy has frequently been referred to as ‘miracle’ or ‘dream’. There is however an increasing realisation that this ‘miracle’ was, at best, very brief. As has been shown in numerous and diverse fields, there is a growing dissonance between the promises of the extremely inclusive Constitution, and the lived realities of many of the country’s citizens. This dissonance is felt in a number of ways – the continuing (and indeed, expanding) income disparities between different groups, the increasing differences in how the state interacts with (often racially defined) citizens, and the continuing political disenfranchisement of the impoverished, to name but three. While many of these problems have their roots in apartheid, the ‘new’ South African government has shown itself unable – and perhaps at times unwilling – to initiate and sustain substantive changes to the political, economic, and societal differences that defined the apartheid system. Substantive freedom, a right to dignity, and a right to the freedom of movement are not possible if one is unemployed and living in what can only be described as ‘extreme poverty’. Indeed, with reference to the ‘dream’ of democracy, Sharlene Swartz has argued that for many of South Africa’s youth, it is now a ‘dream deferred’.

It is in impoverished communities that gangsterism and drug use are most prolific, especially amongst the younger or ‘born free’ generation. Drugs and gangsterism, as a result, are both a product of, and contribute to, these continuing disparities and structural inequalities. This results in self-replicating and self-supporting cycles of violence. The laws that the South African state relies on in order to police and prevent the illegal production, distribution, and use of drugs, and those that target gangsterism, are symptomatic and frequently inadequate. This has led, in part, to a simple yet sobering fact – the production, distribution, and use of methamphetamine (or ‘tik’ as it is known colloquially)
has never decreased since it first came to public attention in 1998. Clearly, new understandings, procedures, and policies are desperately needed. Such undertakings cannot, however, occur in isolation from the broader structural problems facing the country.

In tandem with the increases in illegal drugs, so too have the street gangs now developed into far more organised and far-reaching entities. Drawing on the century old mythology of the ‘Number’ prison gang system, the street gangs have used the wealth accrued from the production and distribution of tik and other illegal drugs as a means of creating and entrenching a competing understanding of citizenship. Particularly attractive to the youth, for whose contemporary lives do not reflect the promises of the new South Africa, the street gangs provide a network of relationships, support structures, and understandings of (typically masculine) forms of identity. What makes them so dangerous, however, is that the government has not been able to provide a legitimate space and the services with which a number of the poor and disenfranchised youth might identify, a competing narrative of citizenship – the schooling and education system is in shambles, a preserve of the relatively rich elite, while social support services and alternative venues (such as stadia and recreational facilities) are in disrepair or have fallen victim to inattention that is often the result of the frequent squabbling between government departments. The gangs, in short, have filled the void left by ineffective governance and broken dreams, preying on the fragility of a youth torn between the promises of a consumerist society and the stark reality of their continued impoverishment. It is for this reason that the South African Police Service’s Major General Jeremy Veary has stated that the ‘Youth are in Awe of Gang Leaders’ (April 1, 2014). The belonging the gangs offer is their most potent weapon.

The communities which find themselves at the epicentre of Cape Town’s gangland – those on the Cape Flats – experience life infiltrated by gangs. The gangs have begun to self-regulate and police their members, streets, and perimeters in the spaces left by the state. Some have argued that these communities have ‘taken the law into their own hands’ in responding to this. While at times their actions can be interpreted as a form of vigilantism, if there is one emotion that consistently featured in the interviews that were conducted, it was of frustration. The police and communities are often antagonistic towards one another. Many community members have fallen prey to corrupt police officers and unjustified searches, while legitimate police efforts are hampered by bureaucratic rivalries and miscommunication. It is in this tense space – between the violence of the gangs and that of the police – that community action has arisen. In order to make sense of this space, it needs to be defined both historically and structurally. With this in place, it is to some of the voices of the different parties that this paper will now turn.

THE COMMUNITY’S POSITION

Historical and Structural Antecedents

The Cape Flats area, in which the community of Mitchell’s Plain is found, was first developed in the 1950s. Frequently described as apartheid’s ‘dumping ground’, it became home to a number of communities, such as those from District Six, which were forcibly removed from the city centre of Cape Town. These communities, who were often bound by long and intricate histories, were torn apart by the forced removals, being deposited on wind-swept land that had neither basic services nor any infrastructure. In the process, the familial and community bonds that had structured and provided meaning in many people’s lives were also broken. Moreover, with little access to the city, many people’s livelihoods were taken away from them. Into this void, like in so many other parts of the world, drug use and gangsterism arose. The forced removals not only displaced people, but also broke apart the informal support and regulatory

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structures which had evolved and come to define the communities. As has been documented, extended kin networks, familial matrices, and self-regulating disciplinary structures not only provided support for individuals, but also provided them with a cosmology in which their unique place was defined and regulated. With specific regard to the youth, for instance, networks of patronage cemented their own positions within the communities, while also providing networks of discipline. This is not to glorify these structures – there were instances of gangsterism, drug use, and violent crime here as well – but it was through these structures that a communitarian spirit arose, something that was vital to the survival of people who were faced with the systematic violence of apartheid in their daily lives.

With these structures no longer in place, many young people attempted to create a new sense of identity and belonging by organically forming small groups and associations. Many of these, structured around a specific individual or activity such as football, provided a positive influence in their lives. However, because the removals had also undermined many of their parents’ livelihoods and access to employment, poverty became an endemic feature of many of the communities. With this poverty came need, which was often the spur for their criminal activities.

The production, distribution, and use of drugs arose at the very same time, with many of the larger gangs tracing their lineage back to the late 1950s or early 1960s. Drugs began to provide economic capital in a place that had been built with the specific intention of forcing those who lived there to the very outskirts of the legitimate economy. With the features and structures that had helped create peoples’ identities also removed, faced with the violence of apartheid, poverty, unemployment, and the realisation that one’s life prospects were extremely limited, the normal arguments and reasons for not using drugs became null and void. Drugs also became easily accessible to a population of bored, disenfranchised youngsters whose sense of identity had been undermined, increasing their propensity to engage in risky activities. The result was a sharp increase in drug use, and levels of addiction soared. With this, in turn, came higher levels of crime with the youth groups, driven by profits and demand, becoming increasingly antagonistic towards one another. Territory became economically important as it came to signify arenas of financial control, the result of which were spiralling turf battles. The cyclical nature of this violence, driven by the apartheid state, further tore apart the communities, which spawned yet more violence.

It is in this ‘nightmare’ that the gangs of today emerged, gained power and allegiance, and it is here that the use of drugs first became prevalent. Indeed, it is perhaps because the contemporary problems faced by these communities are embedded in their very structure that symptomatic responses by the police and state have been ineffective – the gangs are interwoven into their very fabric. While this history is not a moral or normative justification for the continued prevalence of gangs and illegal drugs in these communities, it does provide the reason.

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COMMUNITY ACTION

The net result of these historical and (continuing) structural problems is violence. Today, the communities in Mitchells Plain have extremely high levels of domestic, sexual, and interpersonal violence. There are also very high levels of drug abuse and addiction, and, as already noted, gangsterism is endemic. Police operations and actions are frequently ineffective. Indeed, in conducting the interviews, the police were often described as ‘naaiers’ (fuckers), ‘boere’ (which directly translates as white farmer, but is a reference to the apartheid police), or ‘varke’ (pigs). The gangs’ various claims to different areas and territories, driven by the profits accrued from the trade in drugs, can make moving about the community difficult. This is especially true for young women, who can become seen as the ‘property’ of different gangs. Caught then between the warring gangs, and beyond the help of the state, a number of communities have been devastated by their activities. It is all too easy to focus on the destruction however. Indeed, it is in these crucibles that some communities have come together in an attempt to provide support and protection for their members. They have formed committees, task teams, and patrols. Those who have become important role-players in these structures were specifically engaged with in the interviews.

It became apparent that the resulting community groups play two primary roles. The first is surveillance. Community members will keep an eye on their streets and the public parks and places, with the aim of limiting the gangs’ activities, reporting on their movements and presence to each other and law enforcement officials, while providing the police with information (through for instance, reporting on drug deals in the area). This is done, ultimately, because: ‘Ons wil nie daai gemorse hier he nie’ [‘We do not want that rubbish here’]. Community members also look out for each other’s children and relatives. As such, they will inform family members should it be suspected that a child or young person is being drawn into the gangs, is using drugs, or is engaging in criminal activity. As one member noted: Ons kyk uit vir mekaar; vir ons vriende en familie. As ek ‘n vriend se kind sien saam met mense wat by bendes betrokke is, sal ek hom in kennis stel. Dis die enigste manier. Ten minste kan die pa dan sy kind waarsku, of hom paksleer gee. [We look out for each other, for our friends and family. If I see a friend’s child with people I know who are affiliated to the gangs], then I will tell him. It’s the only way. At least then the father can warn the child, [or] give him a hiding.

In this guise, the communities operate in a manner similar to traditional neighbourhood watch systems. These strategies have had some success, primarily at preventing the gangs from carrying out drug deals in specific areas, such as public parks or close to schools. This, in the eyes of the gangs, decreases the area’s value by making it a riskier and less profitable place to do business, and as a result, making the spaces less likely to become contested. The draw of the gangs is, still, very powerful, and youngsters may walk or spend time in areas in which they are not known, preventing familial and kin-based forms of surveillance. Community members will still phone the police should they witness gang activity, or drug use/dealing. However, many seemed exasperated by the ineffectiveness and slow responses of the police – ‘Hulle (die polisie) neem te lank man, as hulle kom. Dit is beter om self op hulle te gaan skree’ [They [the police] take too long, if they come. It’s better to go shout at them yourself].

The second role the community plays, and a natural consequence of the first, is the actual policing of their homes, areas, and the streets in which they live. As noted above, one community took to supporting the police in painting a large red ‘X’ on known drug dealer’s and gangster’s houses and abodes, but there are many other instances. The role that members of the community play in the policing of the area is often much more subtle, however. For instance, community members will disturb groups of youngsters, or visually pace around a park or area in which people are attempting to deal drugs. One member, whose house overlooks a small park, has taken to shouting from their window every time a drug deal is attempted. These more covert attempts at policing, while not direct, serve to draw attention to the gangs, their members and activities, in the hope that the police will then be drawn to, and/or act on, the commotion – ‘Ons sien hulle, ons maak seker dat dit vir hulle kak is om daar rond te fok’ [We see them, we make sure that it is shit for them to fuck around there]. The intention,
ultimately, is to reoccupy the spaces used by the gangs.

Much has been made of impoverished communities ‘taking the law into their own hands’. Forms of reprisal vary in both their intent and violence. For instance, some interviewees had participated in confrontations with gang members. In an attempt to displace the gangsters from the area, community members have physically confronted them, again with the hope of drawing attention to their activities. As one community member explained: *Ons het hulle benader... ons het gesê hulle moet op 'n ander straat gaan staan ... Daar was missien tien van ons ... Ons het vir hulle gesê ons wil nie baklei nie, ons wil net seker maak ons kinders kan veilig op die strate speel... Hulle het gelaat, maar toe kom hulle die volgende dag terug. Ons was te bang om weer aksie te neem... Ons het die polisie gebei, maar niks het gebeur nie. [We went to them... We told them to go stand on another street... There was perhaps ten of us ... We told them that we do not want to fight, we just want to ensure that the street is safe for our children to play on ... They went, but they were back the following day. We were too scared to take action again ... We phoned the police but nothing happened].*

Other communities have taken more direct forms of action, the result of which is often violence. The community interviewed here, however, was far too small, and felt too intimidated by the gang members, to take further action. Indeed, the community’s position was summarised by the above participant – ‘Ons is bang’ [We are scared]. Still, these are extremely tense moments, and the possibility exists for violence to break out at any point.

**NERVOUS CONDITIONS**

The community’s position is clear – hemmed in by gang activity on the one hand, and inaction by the state on the other – fear characterises many people’s lives. There is also an undercurrent of anger – anger at the community’s continuing poverty, continuing political disenfranchisement and economic exclusion, and the seeming inaction and inability of the police to safeguard them. In real terms for instance, a person who works five days a week in the city will need a bus ticket that costs R440 a month. This may constitute up to a quarter of a person’s monthly earnings. Keeping on the ‘straight and narrow’ in the face of such difficulties is made all the more difficult when friends and family members have chosen a path less difficult, in which the use of and dealing in illegal drugs has become rampant. As has been shown in a number of studies, tik is a powerful stimulant, the abuse of which increases risk-taking behaviours, and may contribute to violent and anti-social behaviour in some users. The gangs and tik are intricately enmeshed – the drug’s production and and distribution is a primary income source for the gangs, while its use plays a role in increasing and maintaining allegiance (especially with regard to the very young). Moreover, its distribution often contributes to the turf wars. As a

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consequence, children as young as nine have been targeted by the gangs as future members, with tik playing a prominent role in the recruitment process. In some communities, it may be argued that a ‘perfect storm’ of political, economic, social, and historical conditions have intertwined to make these areas highly susceptible to drug use and gangsterism. Providing meaning in the face of broken dreams, the gangs have become a means by which young men can find belonging. Tik too, as a powerful stimulant with euphoric effects, has found prominent use in communities which are disconnected and where members face daily struggles. One interviewee had this to say: *Hoe kan ons so lewe? Hoe kan ons reg kom? Ons het nie geld nie, ons moet werk. Ons kan nie 24/7 by die huis wees nie, ons kan nie heeldag die kinders in die huis toesluit nie. En nou? Kyk wat gebeur. Dit maak my so fokken kwaad … maar daar is niks wat ek kan doen nie.* [How can we live like this? How do we get right? We don’t have money, we must work. We cannot be at home 24/7, we cannot lock the kids in the house for the entire day. And then? Look what happens. It makes me so fucking angry … but there is nothing I can do].

A phrase repeated by a number of the participants was that they were ‘gatvol’ – they ‘have had enough’: tired of the gangs, tired of living in fear, and increasingly angry that the state has failed to provide any remedy to the salient problems which plague the community. In some areas, as a result, violent reprisals and forms of vigilantism have occurred. Whether these actions are justified is a question beyond this analysis, but in conducting the interviews, there seems to be very good reasons for why they occur. Indeed, perhaps they are to be expected.

**FIGHTING BACK**

**Prioritising Relationships**

While it is the gang actors in this story that frequently provide fodder for media articles, it is their relationships with the community that should be considered. These relationships have served to mediate the interactions between community members, the gangs, and the police. They are informed by historical, political, economic, and social factors that are unique to the South African context. The application of archetypal policies, especially against the gangs and the production, distribution and use of drugs, has not worked. Both the gangs and the use of drugs are steadfastly increasing. What is needed, therefore, are creative, sustainable, and effective measures, procedures, and legislative procedures that take into account both the vulnerability of the communities and resilience of these factors. Indeed, the Khayelitsha Commission has now formerly found these self-same problems exist elsewhere. It is the need to not just build houses but develop communities that is becoming increasingly important, and are needed to substantively redevelop Cape Town, and indeed the country as a whole. The development of communities is grounded in the creation of positive and generative relationships, however, and these needed to be carefully fostered.

What has occurred, however, is precisely the opposite, a lived reality experienced by many of the people that live in the Cape Flats is one dominated by a fear of violence, a fear of a lack of possibilities, and a fear of the state. Furthermore, symptomatic or reactive legislature is not only ineffective; it may actually contribute to the environment in which fear, and thus violence, is cyclically sustained. Considering this, what concrete and actionable measures can be taken in attempting to break these cycles of violence, while reaffirming the relationships of trust between the communities and police? Interestingly there is always documentation in place to spur on action – in this case, the Western Cape Community Safety Act and the Khayelitsha Commission of Inquiry’s final report. Both have suggested new relationships need to be established, and that the police need to show their dedication to the communities they serve by increasing their response times, by providing feedback, and by initiating new forms of transparency. What is needed now is the pragmatic realisation of such documents.

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22 See, for example, the latest crime statistics, available on the SAPS website: [www.saps.gov.za](http://www.saps.gov.za)

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LEGISLATING FOR, RATHER THAN AGAINST, COMMUNITIES

There is not only an increasing dissonance between the state and the communities that have been affected by gangsterism and endemic drug use, but a conflicting legal framework. The symptomatic legislative framework has proven ineffective. It must be remembered that the production and distribution of drugs rely on complex and self-surveying networks that are fluid and dynamic. Simple and reactionary laws and statutes, therefore, will necessarily be doomed to failure. Moreover, there are also substantive conflicts between the various laws, Acts, and indeed the policy framework. For instance, and with regards to drugs, the primary law used by the police is the Drugs and Drugs Trafficking Act 140 of 1992. This uses traditional measures such as arrests and searches in an attempt to be effective. However, the guiding policy document is the National Drug Master Plan 2013-2017. This document downplays traditional policing measures in an attempt to propel reduction- and rehabilitation-orientated measures. This framework and the Act are in conflict, which may inadvertently lead to inaction and ineffective policing measures. Minimal, the conflict has led to confusion. Consequently, if the state wishes to take seriously these problems, it will have to harmonize the broader policy mandates – mandates that speak the language of inclusivity and rehabilitation – and the actual. Acts used in policing and criminal justice cases – Acts which frequently speak the language of arrest and detainment.

Making claims to ‘liberation’ and ‘democracy’, as is so often done, ring hollow in the face of the endemic poverty that characterises the majority of the country’s citizens’ lives. Illegal drugs, such as tik, are highly addictive. Blaming drug use on addiction is, however, to surreptitiously disguise the real question that needs to be asked: why is there such a strong correlation between those communities that continue to be economically excluded and politically disenfranchised and the use of drugs? The question, of course, answers itself. Gangsterism has, equally, flourished in this vacuum. While these gangs are criminal, and they are violent, they provide something the state has failed to: belonging and identity in a sea of poverty. People are as gatvol of the state as they are of the gangs. Consequently, the following steps need to be undertaken:

- Four areas need to be addressed: (i) the social context in which the gangs operate, (ii) the historical antecedents which played a role in their rise, (iii) individual psychology, and (iv) the legislative framework mandated with controlling the gangs.

- To really undermine the draw of the gangs, effective alternatives need to be provided, to give potential candidates options. These need to be borne out of discussions with community members, rather than being imposed by managerial bodies concerned more with ticking boxes than understanding the nuances and dynamics of the communities most affected. To find out what an effective alternative might look like, it is the very people that these programmes will target that need to be asked – the youth. The youth in South Africa are especially powerless. Indeed, in just asking them what they might like, we already begin to show a caring and understanding attitude.

- Punitive measures are still needed in the short-term, but simply increasing the prison population will not be effective (indeed, precisely the opposite). As such, alternative forms of reform need to be sought. To do this, the experience of community-led initiatives should once again be drawn on. This will also serve to re-establish relationships and trust.
COMMUNITY AND POLICE COOPERATION

Communities that have felt the real effects of gangsterism and drugs have, in spite of the state, taken action in an attempt to create safe spaces in which to live. Unfortunately, and even though the police have attempted to bolster their efforts, they have often ended up in conflict with these communities. The resulting climate of antagonism, itself perhaps having its roots in apartheid, has created an environment of fear in which community members are scared of the gangs, but equally, scared or mistrustful of the police.

There are two primary documents that can be used in advancing practical and implementable strategies that can begin, albeit slowly, to repair the relationships between the communities, gangs, and police. These may not solve the problems highlighted above, but they may begin a conversation that may lead to more sustainable forms of action. The documents, the Western Cape Community Safety Act 2013 and the final report of the Khayelitsha Commission, both make similar recommendations. The first, and primary, concerns respect – it is in the police’s power to begin to repair their relationships with the communities in which they operate. With respect may come more effective dialogue, and thus more effective policing strategies and measures. Indeed, it is respect that is so important to both the police and the gangs, and if correctly positioned, could be the common ground needed to begin rebuilding relationships. With the above in mind, in attempting to situate these ideas pragmatically, the following steps need to be taken in addressing the violence that seems almost endemic to some communities: (see opposite)

SPEAKING TO THE CAUSE AND NOT THE SYMPTOMS

Informing this article has been one central concern – that the South African state, through the police, legislature, and law, is reactive. The rising jail population speaks to this. However, these are complex problems, problems that are psycho-systemic and speak to the very core of what constitutes the ‘new’ South Africa. Consequently, while there have been numerous ‘interventions’, by both the state and private institutions, what is needed are sustained, substantive, and proactive policies and measures. A life in South Africa, in short, needs to be a viable alternative to a life of gangsterism and drug use. These solutions need to be creative, sustainable, and most importantly, need to be developed in conjunction with the communities they are intended to help. Initiatives need to be owned by the communities, and not be seen as external impositions. Much can be said of security itself. Deploying the military – as we have recently seen in Manenberg – however violent,
however much it alerts the national government to the province’s problems, is the worst thing that can be done. Stern regulation, effective legislation, and an efficient judiciary all have their place in this conversation. However, the state also needs to have an honest conversation with itself – political rhetoric is one thing, but sustainable action another. Ultimately, this is a story of relationships. To repair those relationships requires trust. Trust is however earned, rather than ‘deployed’.

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