

# Transnational criminal networks in social exclusion contexts

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## THE PHENOMENA

**Social exclusion** is a complex process that implies the disconnection of individuals from their community, socially and economically, causing them an inability to be settled in their social environment.

Criminality refers to activities with a strong social impact that are committed by some people against the rules that govern a certain space at a specific time. This deviations of conduct includes those actions executed by organised groups of people. This is the case of **criminal networks**, when these groups are structured, exist for a certain time and act in concert with the purpose of committing one or more serious crimes.

### Why to focus on this particular crime typology?

The negative side of the networks studied in this project is their criminal component. Some criminal networks carry out a function of social and economic support. This support should not be destroyed; therefore, this function implies that we could transform the network, not disrupt it.

## USING A SYSTEMIC PERSPECTIVE

Social exclusion and criminal networks are being studied together using a systemic perspective. According to the data collected so far, both phenomena are linked in some contexts. It is necessary to propose interventions that, in addition to taking both realities into account, take advantage of the existence of the criminal network to promote changes that will eliminate or reduce criminal behaviour.

Attending to a broader spectrum of the reality of the individuals affected by these phenomena, their support network can be exploited to promote changes in group dynamics.

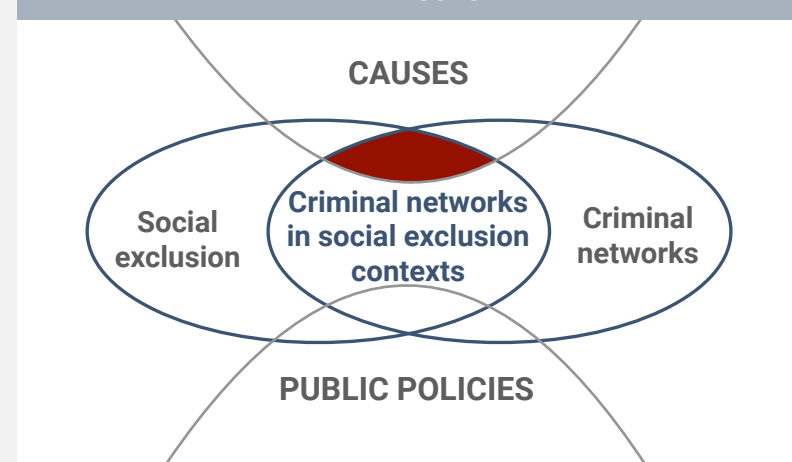
## METHODOLOGY

A multidisciplinary bibliographic review of studies on social exclusion and criminal networks has been done. This review includes areas such as psychology, sociology, criminology, physics and economics.

The data collected to build the network that appears on the right side, as an illustrative case of the phenomena being studied, proceed from a documentary film (Poveda, 2008). This study case is a first and exploratory step.

Secondary sources are mainly being used to apply social network analysis in this research. Some specialist research journalists, like Christian Poveda (2008), have collected data from criminal networks that allow to illustrate the social reality of the individuals which compose them.

## THE PROJECT



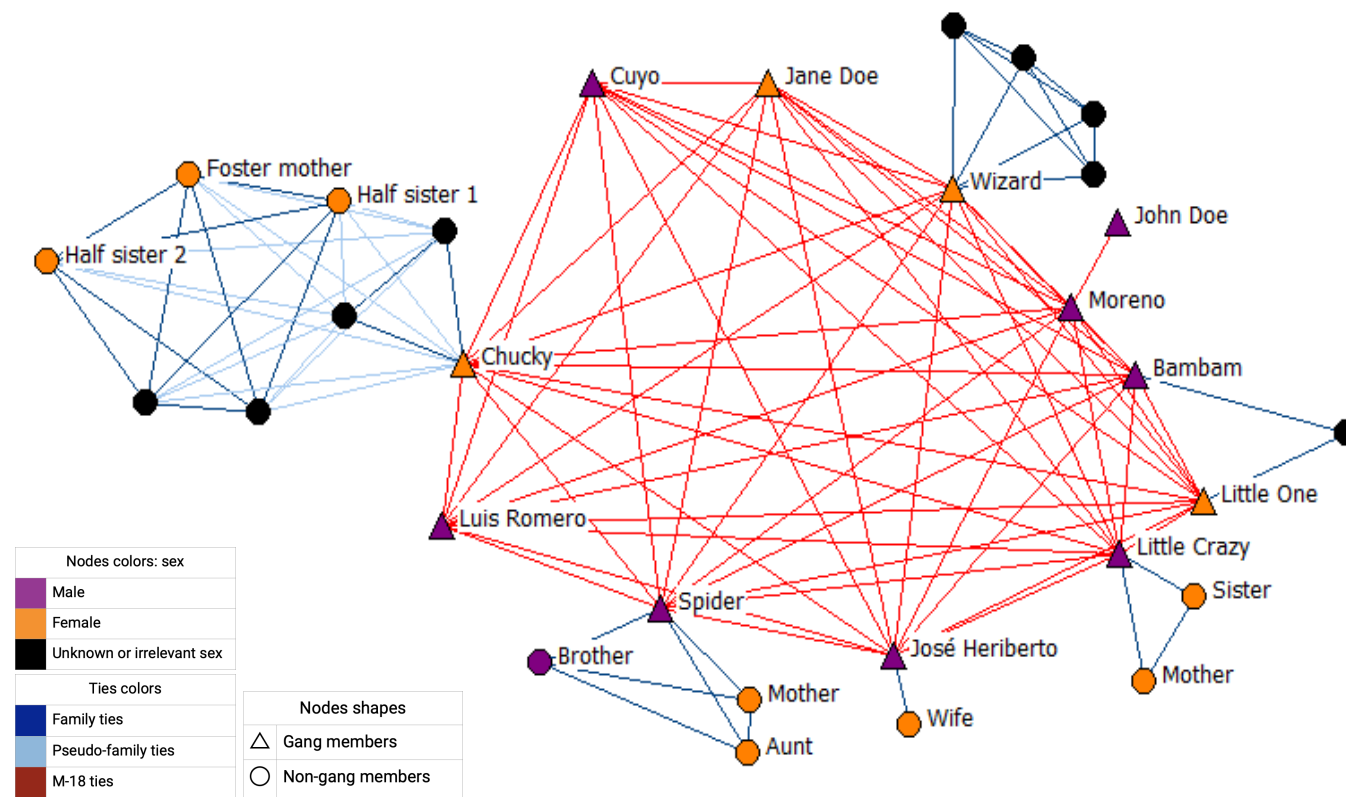
### COMMON CAUSES

Surrounding environment	Harmful family dynamics	
	Type of social fabric and quality of relationships	
	Contagiousness	
General context	Public policies to manage the phenomena	
	Local conflict	
Individual	Mental health problems	Psychiatric problems
		Neuronal lesions
		Consumption of narcotic substances
	Position in labour market	Weak position
		Low level of education
	Low economic resources - poverty	
	Criminal record	
Community uprooting		
Lack of personal skills		

### OBJECTIVE

To analyse the features common to social exclusion and criminal networks. In that way we will have a deep knowledge about the social reality of the people facing these processes. The results from this analysis would help in the design of social interventions to rebuild or restructure the networks.

## A CASE STUDY - A GROUP FROM 'MARA-18' (EL SALVADOR)\*



**This network represents** one of this sub-groups from Mara 18. It shows the diverse social influence that a particular group of Mara 18 members has.

Public institutions have not been included in this network even if all gang members have had dealings with the police and courts. This bond could be used to introduce changes in the group dynamics when designing social interventions.

### What do the ties represent?

The dark blue ties of family relationships exist when a non-gang member takes part in the life of a gang member and, in addition, there is a consanguinity tie.

Light blue ties of pseudo-family relationships are linking actors that replace the biological family.

Red ties are linking nodes that take part in the same sub-group of Mara-18. Almost all gang members are related to the others. This is because the documentary film on which the network is based is about one specific group of Mara 18.

#### CHUCKY (18 years old)

- Her biological mother abandoned her at birth.
- Unknown biological father.
- She reports that has been in all kind of prisons.
- Two daughters. Without family support.

#### BAMBAM (26 years old)

- He has one son with the gang member Little One.
- During the shooting of the documentary he is arrested several times.
- No work occupation recorded.

#### SPIDER (16 years old)

- He is being prosecuted for carrying firearms.
- He does not attend school.
- He lives with his mother, brother and aunt. The judge considers that there is not family support.
- Unemployed mother.

#### MORENO (25 years old)

- He is a drug user.
- Criminal record.

He seems to be the informal leader: has connections with gang members of other sub-groups. He is present in some initiation test of young boys.

#### WIZARD (24 years old)

- Four children on charge. She does not receive support from public institutions or the children's father.
- Her only source of income is occasional street vending.

## CONCLUSIONS

This piece of research is focused on the confluence of two social processes on some individuals. These processes are social exclusion and belonging to a criminal network. The individuals in the case study have characteristics identified as common causes of both phenomena. These causes, as has already been explained, require a multidisciplinary analysis.

Most common features of the individuals appearing in the network are related to social exclusion. For that reason it seems reasonable to analyse the motivation of being involved in a criminal network. Some actors reported that the main motivation they had to enrol in the network was the need of having social and emotional support. When these allegations are compared with the reality of the network it can be concluded that the lack of family and of public and economic support acts as attractors for this kind of groups.

The identified commonalities among gang members can be used by public institutions to transform the network and to design new public policies.

### About Mara 18

The Maras are criminal networks currently active all around the world. Their origin is in the United States of America during the decade of 1970.

These gangs have a specifically structure in and out El Salvador. In San Salvador the two main Maras (Mara 18 and Mara Salvatrucha) have distributed the territory according to the neighbourhoods. Each neighbourhood is controlled by a sub-group of one of the two main Maras. These sub-groups are connected between them and make up a big group.

\*Note: the nodes represented with a black circle are children. They have been pointed out on the network to note family responsibilities and those who take care of them.