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Gangland Online: Performing the Real Imaginary World of Gangstas and Ghettos in Brussels — [Source link](#)

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EUROGANG – X WORKSHOP
Herz-Jezu Kloster, Neustadt an der Weinstrasse
June 14 – June 17, 2010

MONDAY, JUNE 14, 2010

Dinner at the Cloister followed by social gathering in the Bier Keller (basement of the Cloister)

TUESDAY, JUNE 15, 2010

8:30 – 10:00: INTRODUCTION

Welcome and workshop overview - Finn Esbensen

Eurogang Overview – Mac Klein

BREAK 10:00 – 10:15

10:15 – 12:00: EUROGANG METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Definitions

Gang Member: Who Says? The Process of Defining Gang Membership

Hannah Smithson

The findings presented in this paper are taken from a study carried out in 2009 in a city in the North West of England (North City). The purpose of the research was to answer a number of broad ranging questions surrounding youth violence including: an exploration of young people's motivations to join a 'gang' and become involved in the use of weapons including firearms. The risk factors and significant influences that draw young people into gang culture in the research city were also explored. Formal interviews were undertaken with 45 'gang' members, their associates and key informants such as senior and operational police officers working in the city's specialist gang and firearm response unit. The purpose of this paper is to provide a discussion of the structure and formation of 'gangs' in four areas of North City from the point of view of the young people identified as 'gang' members and those responsible for this identification i.e. police officers and multi-agency panels. Findings demonstrated that few of the young people viewed themselves as belonging to a 'gang', indeed many were scathing of such an attribution, contesting its applicability. A more accurate description of these young people is of a rather loose and fluid interlinked but informal social network of friends and associates. There was evidence that the authorities labelling of some young people as 'gang members' and adoption and use of gang names attributed coherence and identity to what was often only fluid and transitional youth group formations. This may have created the very circumstances it sought to challenge.

Distinguishing Gangs in Research City from other Youth Group Formations: An Omnibus of Definitional Issues

Judith Aldridge, Juanjo Medina-Ariz, Rob Ralphs

This paper discusses findings from the Youth Gangs in an English City (YOGEC) study, incorporating in depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation over 26 months from 2005 to 2008 in Research City, an anonymous English city. We found that it was a reputation for a willingness to resort to violence – even if rarely enacted – that set these groups apart from other street-oriented youth formations (e.g. groups of young people with a street presence for whom cannabis smoking was a key activity). Our data suggest that this reputation – promoted by members and recognised in the community – is a key defining characteristic of gangs, and one that resolves some of the problems we identify with use of the Eurogang definition alone (in our ethnographic research: over identification). Participants in our study clearly distinguished between gangs and other antisocial or offending youth groups using this criterion, as did the police (although for the latter, access to firearms was operationally the most salient, if not defining, characteristic of these groups). Another definitional issue we raise is in relation the 'street orientation' requirement in the definition of youth gangs. Although some youth formations in Research City do have a street presence, the youth gangs we observed did not typically. Aside from features characteristic of the UK (unappealing weather, fewer accessible indoor locations for young people), we identified a number of developments that mitigate against this street presence: (1) the existence of 'residential outsiders' who do not reside in the gang neighbourhood; (2) hassle from police (perceived by young people themselves and reported by the police as a policing strategy); (3) many young people on curfew or electronic 'tag', requiring considerable time spent indoors; and (4) the increasing tendency for young people to spend more time indoors and online, with some gang-related conflict being played particularly on social networking sites.

Putting the “Gang” in “Eurogang”: Characteristics of Delinquent Youth Groups by Different Definitional Approaches

Kristy Matsuda, Finn Esbensen, and Dena Carson

American gang research often uses the self-nomination approach (i.e., Are you a member of a gang?) to define gang membership. While this method has been found to be robust in the United States, the term “gang” has been purported to be too bias-laden to be used in international settings. In response to this methodological concern, researchers created the Eurogang definition (i.e., an objective measure of youth group characteristics) to determine if a youth group was a gang. Despite the fact the two definitions have co-existed for some time, very little research has compared the characteristics of delinquent youth groups captured by the two definitional approaches in the same sample. This research uses national, longitudinal data from the current evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training program to compare different definitional approaches to gang membership. This study compares the self-nomination approach, the Eurogang definition, and youth whose friends are gang members on a number of attitudinal and behavioral characteristics. The stability of relationships across time is also presented and discussed. This research concludes that all three approaches to defining gang membership clearly capture a group more delinquent than youth that do not report any associations. However, there is notably less than perfect consistency and overlap between the three gang definitions. The results of this study suggest that the three gang definitions may be capturing different types of gang members or associations. Implications for future research will be discussed.

LUNCH 12:00 – 1:00

1:00 – 1:45: EUROGANG METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Methods

Investigating Gang Organization: Dimensionality and Validity across Multiple Data Sources

David C. Pyrooz, Andrew M. Fox, Charles M. Katz, and Scott H. Decker

Group processes unique to gangs have been described as making gangs qualitatively different from other types of criminal and delinquent groups. Gang organization is a type of group process-one that is not well understood empirically. This study seeks to remedy this stance in the gang literature by providing a quantitative analysis of the effect of gang organization on patterns of gang member delinquency and victimization. Two questions are to be answered: (1) does gang organization, as operationalized in the literature, exhibit the properties of a SINGLE latent construct? (2) does the organization of a gang exert an influence on the delinquent and victimization patterns of gang members? Using three unique sources of data-Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (AZ ADAM), Trinidad and Tobago Youth Study (TTYS), and Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT)-we answer the above questions in a comparative manner. This study concludes by discussing the implication of these findings and providing suggestions for future research.

BREAK 1:45 – 2:00

2:00 – 5:00: GIRLS IN GANGS

Troublesome Youth Groups and Delinquency among Girls and Boys in the Netherlands: Is the Gang Effect Gender Specific?

Frank Weerman

In this study, data from the NSCR School Study are used to explore the relationship between gang membership (or being part of a troublesome youth group) and delinquent behavior among girls and boys in the Netherlands. We will try to answer the following research questions: 1. to what extent do boys and girls differ in membership of gangs (in varying degrees of seriousness)? 2. is the relationship between gang membership and delinquent behavior different for boys and girls? 3. to what extent do boys and girls differ in the independent effects of gang membership, apart from other criminogenic variables? 4. to what extent is there an effect of gender composition of gangs on delinquent behavior of boys and girls? These questions will be answered with survey data collected among more than 1,000 secondary school students (14-17 years old, 45% girls, 55% boys), in which the core Eurogang questions were used, together with a large number of variables that are based on the leading criminological theories. Preliminary results showed that there is a strong association between gang membership for girls as well as for boys, with girls in gangs being more delinquent than boys that are not in a gang. This study will explore in more depth whether this is due to criminogenic factors that lead to

offending as well as gang membership for girls, or whether there is also a substantial extra effect of being in a gang for girls, and whether these effects are comparable to effect found for boys. The study also explores whether gender composition has an additional effect on delinquency.

Inner West Side Story: Tales of Love, Deceit, Betrayal, Gang Conflict, and Violence

Robert Ralphs

In recent years the extent to which young females are involved in violence has been the focus of much debate in the UK. In specific relation to gangs, this discourse has begun to focus on whether young females are involved in youth gangs or if exclusively 'girl gangs' exist. This paper draws on data from the three year ESRC funded Youth Gangs in an English City (YOGEC) ethnographic research study in highlighting the gendered assumptions that exist within both police and multi-agency interventions aimed at tackling gun and gang problems. These dedicated agencies are shown to have a stereotypical view of gang members and their motives for acts of serious violence. In contrast, it is illustrated how female associates of 'gang members' are much more likely to be pivotal to the causes of violent incidents than disputes over turf yet females rarely receive the type of surveillance, diversionary interventions and support afforded to male associates of gangs. It is argued that misinformed gendered views of gang conflict leads to inappropriate responses.

Involving Youth Gangs in France: Group Processes and Genders Dynamics

Youra Petrova

In this presentation, *the primary focus* is on questions illuminating *group processes* and specific characteristics that make gangs. Young people forming gangs (*bandes*) come mostly from suburban areas (*la banlieue* in French) and in most cases, they have multi-ethnic origins, having backgrounds, cultural references and significant relationships within immigrant community. For some this means an Islamic cultural package. By definition a French gang typically involves: a pre-eminent leader, obedience to that leader, the absence of democratic decision-making and initiation tests to enter the gang. It has a strong social and ethnic unity / identity. In its external activities, the gangs shows a strong identity, a closed-type, exclusive sociability, territorial appropriation and a defense of its territory and resources (*Dubet 1987*).

Secondly, what are these *dynamics* that make gangs different from other youth violent youth groups and / or youth subcultures? - Providing examples from my data and major empirical research findings and looking at French sociological literature on youth and violence.

Thirdly, regarding group dynamics, some *gender related aspects* will be emphasized as well, which make effect on group or individual behaviour. Gender is a prominent point in youth gangs by difference of other youth groupings. It may structure their violent behaviour, for instance in the person of a charismatic male leader who rules the group of boys. Part of his power in this case is based on the misogynous and sexist language which he uses. There are also *female gangs*, who follow female leaders and which are increasingly present in the suburbs. Which are the forms of violent and group offending behaviour they develop and how does gender relate to characteristics and behaviour inside the gangs?

Sex Composition of Gangs and Youth Gang Member Delinquency: An Examination of Selection and Social Facilitation Using the Eurogang Definition

Dana Peterson, Dean Carson and Finn-Aage Esbensen

Prior work has demonstrated the relationship of sex composition of the gang to female and male gang members' delinquent involvement. It has been found, for example, that females and males in majority male gangs engage in delinquency and violence at similar rates, while in sex-balanced gangs, females' and males' delinquency differs significantly. These results suggest that gender dynamics of the gang operate to suppress females' delinquency in sex-balanced gangs, while females in male-dominated gangs are "free to deviate." A question remains, however, about the extent to which the apparent effects of group composition are due, in fact, to selection of youth gang members into particular gangs. This paper uses data from a multi-site, longitudinal study of 3,820 youths in the USA to explore this possibility and help to answer the question of whether "certain kinds" of girls and boys join certain kinds of gangs or whether the gang's sex composition and resulting gender dynamics facilitate or inhibit certain members' delinquent activities. The study employs the "core" Eurogang questions in the youth survey instrument, as well as some of the "recommended" questions about youths' peer groups. Recent work on this issue by Peterson and Esbensen, presented at the 2009 American Society of Criminology meeting, showed greater support for the facilitation than for the selection explanation. For example, gang members' patterns of delinquency differed in the year they joined the gang than in the year prior to gang joining, suggesting that gang gender dynamics may play a role in shaping delinquency within the gang. The proposed paper extends that work in at least two ways: First, in that work, "gang member" was defined using the self-nomination approach (i.e., affirmative answer to "are you now in a gang?"); the proposed paper would utilize the Eurogang definition to identify gang members, comparing findings obtained by both definitions and exploring reasons for any discrepancies. Second, the gang member sample would be increased in the proposed paper by the addition of another wave of data, allowing more robust analyses.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16

8:30 – 10:00: NEWS FROM ONGOING EUROPEAN PROJECTS

Danish Ministry of Justice

Jonas Markus Lindstad - a youth survey using the Eurogang instrument.

Maria Libak Pedersen - an expert survey using the Eurogang instrument.

Britta Kyvsgaard - supervise the gang project plus a register based gang project.

Sweden

Amir Rostami – The Stockholm Gang Intervention and Prevention Project (SGIP)

Germany

Testing the Eurogang School Survey in a Sample of School Pupils: First results of a German Study.

Kerstin Reich and Hans Kerner

More than 1,000 pupils in different kinds of schools filled out the Eurogang school survey. All of them were in grades 7 to 9, with an age range between 14 and 17 years.

Roughly 8 per cent of the respondents could be identified as belonging to a troublesome youth group, when Eurogang definitional criteria of duration, street orientation and acceptance of or involvement in illegal activities were taken into consideration.

A look at the respondents on the group level revealed that those in troublesome groups showed only small differences compared to those in non troublesome groups, with regard to group structure or group characteristics.

A look at the respondents on the individual level showed that the best discriminating variable was the reason why juveniles decided to join a group. For those who were in troublesome groups the reason of satisfying social needs was primordial. This may indicate that in Germany members of troublesome youth groups are probably less integrated in social institutions than juveniles who are not involved in deviant cliques.

Apart from this result there is some evidence in our data that some of the “classical” criminological risk factors like low parental supervision or disengagement in school are being conducive to joining troublesome groups. Those factors are in our view related to the higher dimension of “social inclusion vs. exclusion”.

BREAK 10:00 – 10:15

10:15 – 12:00: GROUP PROCESSES - I

The Spark that Ignited the Fire: How cocaine dealing transformed the structure & priorities of an informal friendship network: a qualitative analysis.

Mike Salinas-Edwards

This paper utilizes data obtained from an overt participant-observation conducted in 2006, and data currently being collected (2009-10) using an ethnographic approach on an informal network of young males now aged between 21 and 24. I examine how the introduction of cocaine, but primarily its distribution, altered this group’s structure, values and ethos, by transforming it from a friendship based gang centred on delinquent behaviour and petty criminal acts, into a semi-structured, hierarchical, criminal network centred on earning capital and indulging in excessive hedonistic pleasures.

I illustrate systemic changes, how individuals who once occupied little more than friendship roles within this network became integral to the sequence which resulted in the monthly distribution of 2kg of cocaine, with each individual occupying a distinctive role at varying levels to one another. I examine the process by which ‘legitimate’ individuals altered their behaviour, attitudes and beliefs, who eventually aided their drug dealing peers in the distribution of cocaine. Finally I question whether the group transformed from a ‘delinquent gang’ into a capitalist enterprise, or whether the group evolved from peer group centred on deviancy into financially motivated ‘criminal gang’.

Gang Development: Psychological and Behavioural Characteristics of Core Members, Peripheral Members and Non-gang Youth

Emma Alleyne and Jane Wood

Research has noted the existence of a loose and dynamic gang structure. However, the psychological processes that underpin gang membership have only begun to be addressed. This study examined gang members, peripheral youth, and non-gang youth across measures of criminal activity, the importance they attach to status, their levels of moral disengagement, their perceptions of out-group threat, and their attitudes toward authority. Of the seven hundred and ninety eight high school students who participated in this study, 59 were identified as gang members, 75 as peripheral youth and 664 as non-gang youth. Peripheral youth were found to commit more violent crime than non-gang youth, while gang members did not differ from either peripheral youth or non-gang youth. Gang members, not peripheral youth, had more anti-authority attitudes and perceived social status as more important than non-gang youth. Gang members, again, not peripheral youth, were also more likely to use euphemisms to sanitize their behavior than non-gang youth. These findings are discussed as they highlight the importance of examining individual differences in the cognitive processes that relate to gang involvement.

Influence of Youth Peer Group Processes on Youth Delinquency, Cooperation with Local Police, and Displaced Retribution by Gang and Nongang Affiliated Youth

Karen Hennigan, Marija Spanovic, Liz Trawick, and Caroline Holmes

From a social identity perspective an individual's self concept is not unidimensional. Self concepts include personal concerns but also focus on social concerns. Youth that identify strongly with a peer social group are influenced by the norms and entitativity of that group. Youth that identify with a street gang for example are influenced by the group's antisocial norms and also by dynamic aspects that define the group such as common enemies, disaffection with conventional society and sporadic participation in high risk activities.

Just how focused a person is on their group has broad implications for behavior, especially if personal goals and aspirations are at odds with the group's goals and actions which can often be the case for street gang members. At any given time a person can be more or less focused on concerns of the social group or personal concerns. For a person who identifies strongly with a street gang, antisocial norms and definitional aspects of the gang are salient. A strongly identified individual is therefore influenced by gang norms and concerns much of the time. In contrast, a person whose identification with a street gang is weak is more frequently influenced by personal concerns or the concerns of another social identity.

Here we use this framework to explain actions taken by gang and nongang respondents in terms of their self-reported involvement in violent criminal activities, cooperation with the police, and retribution toward a rival group or group member. The findings reported are based on interviews with a community sample of 416 males between the ages of 14 and 21 that live in gang neighborhoods in the city of Los Angeles. Twenty-seven percent of the respondents report various levels of involvement with a street gang in their neighborhood. In each analysis, one of the strongest predictors of the behaviors studied is the gang member's level of identification with his gang after controlling for key explanatory variables confirmed in past research.

Overall these analyses highlight the usefulness of a social identity framework for understanding the behavior of gang-involved youth.

LUNCH 12:00 – 1:00

1:00 – 4:30: GROUP PROCESSES - II

The Effect of Gang Membership on Attitudes, Emotions, and Behavior: A Test of the Enhancement Model of Gang Member Delinquency

Chris Melde and Finn Esbensen

Gang-involved youth are disproportionately involved in criminal behavior. The causes of this heightened illegal activity, however, remain speculative. Employing a life-course perspective we hypothesize that the onset of gang membership is associated with changes in attitudes, emotions, and routine activities associated with delinquency, which help to explain this documented increase in illegal activity. Using prospective data from a multi-site sample of over 1,400 youth, we examine the impact of onset of Eurogang defined gang membership on attitudes, emotions, routine activities, and delinquency. We also examine the extent to which these attitudes, emotions, and routine activities mediate the relationship between onset of gang membership and delinquency.

Identity and Respect in Gang Relations: The Case of Central America

Wim Savenije

This paper has three objectives: first, it seeks to illuminate the use of violence in the intra- and intergroup relations of the Mara Salvatrucha and 18th Street gang in Central America. Second, more theoretically, it argues that although the conceptual frame of the Social Identity Theory [SIT] is useful for the analysis of group processes of these gangs, it needs to be enriched with concepts that allude to the emotional qualities and satisfactions that accompany gang membership and much of their violent actions. The paper explores the usefulness of the concept of 'respect' - which conveys a strong emotionally rewarding and expressive aspect of membership and action - for the understanding of the attractiveness of the gangs for some youths of marginal urban areas and the group processes that give rise to violent behaviour. Thirdly, it argues that because of the importance of 'respect' for the individual members and the group, this concept can connect interpersonal, intra and intergroup levels of explanation; and together with related concepts as belonging and solidarity it can help to elucidate how in the adverse conditions of poverty, marginalization, stigmatization and social rejection these gangs have become functioning groups, even capable of withstanding repressive government anti gang policies.

Gangland Online: Living in a Real Imaginary World of Gangsta's and Ghetto's in Brussels

Elke Van Hellefont

In recent years Brussels, the Belgian capital, has witnessed the rise of several troublesome youth gangs, among which Black African youth gangs are those that have attracted most attention. Made up of migrants predominantly coming from the African Great Lake Region, the Belgian police estimate that at least 13 Black African gangs are active in Brussels, with approximately 30-90 members each. Although members are held responsible for extortion, drug trafficking (mainly marijuana) and violent robberies, the groups' foremost distinctive feature is their involvement in public black-to-black fights with excessive violence, stabbings, and occasionally collective rapes and homicides. These black-to-black conflicts are explicitly motivated by turf defence, retaliation for an insult and the defence or restoration of honour. In fact, the victims of

violence are often Black African boys or girls associated with a “rival gang.” The Black African gangs do have another particular feature. They design weblogs on which they present themselves and their group. In other words, gang members nowadays take advantage of the new possibilities offered by technological innovation, such as internet and more specifically weblogs, to communicate gang-ness.

Key Research questions:

1. What is the function of these weblogs to the members and to the gang as such?
2. Are there general features characterizing these weblogs?

The impact of Globalization and Migration on Neo-Nazi Youth Gangs

Revital Sela-Shayovitz

Since the beginning of the 20th century, considerable knowledge has been accumulated regarding the impact of migration on the formation of youth gangs. However, there is a dearth of research that illuminates the role of the globalization process and the impact of the Internet on gang identity, ideology, and culture. In an attempt to address this important issue, the proposed paper will present an ethnographic study that examined the influence of the Internet on the formation of neo-Nazi youth gang by immigrants from the Former USSR in Israel. Furthermore, the examination focused on the characteristics and dynamics of the gang. The study combined two methods: depth, semi-structured interviews with gang members and other key informants, and content analysis of minutes of court decisions. Based on the Eurogang approach, three levels of individual variables were examined (demographic variables, family background, and personal networks beyond the gang), as well as three levels of group characteristics (formation of gangs, structure and cultural characteristics of gangs, and interaction with other gangs).

The findings revealed that initially, the formation of neo-Nazi gangs derives from an intense interest in history and rock music, which leads immigrant youth to associate with neo-Nazi rock groups and other neo-Nazi gangs through the Internet. The facilitating conditions of migration and marginalization were found to have a strong impact on the adoption of the neo-Nazi ideology. Furthermore, the Internet played a key role in shaping the identity and culture of the gangs, as well as in enhancing illegal activity aimed at impressing other neo-Nazi gangs. The analysis provides evidence that these gangs have a highly organized structure, which intensifies the level of involvement in neo-Nazi ideology and violent activity. Based on the *enhancement model*, it can be concluded that the gang members had already been involved in delinquency before they joined the gang (selection). However, their delinquency significantly increased when they became members of the gang (facilitation).

A Prototype of Exit-strategies: Trajectories and Conditions that Help Wild Youth and Gang-members to Move Beyond the Criminal Communities and Activities

Anne-Mette Palm, Camilla Sys Møller-Andersen, and Line Lerche Mørck

The paper is our preliminary development of a prototype of exit-strategies, constructing a theoretical and empirical informed analysis of trajectories and conditions that help gang-members and other ‘wild’ youth to move beyond the criminal communities and activities. The EG definition of gangs will be discussed and contextualized in relation to Danish bikers and street socialized wild youth, and in consideration to the ongoing gang conflict in Denmark. Our co-researchers in this project are ex-gang members, social workers and professors, from Denmark and England, some of the social workers also have personal experiences as part of criminal and “wild youth” communities, and some as ex-gang-members. They have all

contributed to develop the prototype about conditions of importance for moving beyond a gang/criminal position. The conditions of importance consists of: Work, education, social network, economy, conditions in prison, a relationship, new social network, living quarters. The dilemmas and possibilities connected to the condition of importance are empirically and theoretically unfolded in our cooperation with the co-researchers.

Applying Danish/German critical psychology and social practice theory we explore the subject 'exit-strategies' and diverse subjects perspectives on how to exit/move beyond a criminal position. We analyse questions of how to get access to meaningful positions as well as actual historical and local changes in (il)legitimacy of diverse societal and personal trajectories. The interviewed subjects are thus being involved as co-researchers, by implementing their perspectives in the process of working out a prototype of exit- strategies, which hopefully can help expanding possibilities for exit in Denmark.

DINNER IN RHODT - bus leaves at 4:45pm.

THURSDAY, JUNE 17

9:00 – 10:00: RESULTS FROM COMPARATIVE STUDIES

Gangs in China: Results from Xen Dong

Scott Decker and David Pyrooz

The Eurogang instruments and framework have been applied in a variety of different countries, translated into different languages and used in a number of different settings. The recent use of a number of the items from the EG instrument in the ISRD represents perhaps its broadest application. This panel will present results from three different settings: a working class school in a large urban area in China and nine schools in a large prosperous city in the east coast of China. The surveys in China are both school based, the former in a technical school the latter in an academic school for college bound students. Both school settings have considerable variation in student characteristics . Basic prevalence rates of gang membership will be presented, as well as demographic correlates of gang membership. Particular attention will be paid to different definitions of gang membership and their utility with these three different populations. In addition, the panel will review the challenges associated with the use of self-reported methodology in these countries.

A Strategy for Developing Evidence-based Gang Intervention Programs

Terry Thornberry

Developing effective, evidence-based programs for gang prevention and intervention is a pressing need if we are to make headway in reducing serious delinquency and youth violence. Longitudinal studies have amply demonstrated the strong facilitative effect that gang membership has on these behaviors. Unfortunately, there are no programs for gang prevention or intervention that meet stringent evidence-based standards such as those used in the Blueprints for

Violence Prevention project. The present paper describes a strategy currently being implemented for developing gang prevention programs that is based on the success of the original Blueprints approach. The first objective of this project is to develop gang-specific versions of several Blueprint Model programs that appear to have the highest probability of success for intervening with youth at risk for gang membership and/or with youth who are active gang members. The second objective is to implement these newly developed programs and evaluate their success using randomized clinical trials. The present paper summarizes this overall strategy, its progress to date, and its future plans.

BREAK 10:00 – 10:15

10:15 – 12:00: Where do we go from here and what's next?

LUNCH 12:00 – 12:45

DEPARTURE