Narrative writing and knowledge production within the gang *Los Ñetas*

In March 1981, Carlos La Sombra, a prisoner at the Federal prison in San Juan, was killed by other inmates. His death marked the beginning of *Los Ñetas*, alias *La Asociación*, a prison-based group fighting against inhumane conditions in the prison system and promoting the independence of the Island. However, in the 1990’s, following different waves of immigration, the group circulated and developed as a street-gang in New York (US), Guayaquil (Ecuador) and Barcelona (Spain). To understand *Los Ñeta* trajectories, I conducted as a PhD student a multi-sited ethnography between these three cities over a four-year period of fieldwork. My post-doctoral research aimed at deepening one of the themes of my dissertation on the role of writing within the gang. Indeed, since the mid-1990’s, *Los Ñetas* wrote a book, *El Liderato*, about the life of their mythical founder, Carlos.

This project aims to explore the history of Carlos and the way it has been written and portrayed as a figure of *Gangster Saint* by *Los Ñetas*. How did Ñetas conduct their historical investigation on Carlos’ life? What constituted for them a historical fact? A truth? Finally, how is Carlos’ history connected to the broader context of anti-colonialist and independence struggle, and how is he perceived by non-Ñetas in Puerto Rico? This story is, in part, about the relation between fact, reality and power in the context of the Independence movement and colonialism. The France-Stanford Visiting Junior Scholar Fellowship will allow me to prepare my past fieldwork research for publication of a book.