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**International Guide on the  
methodology of street work  
throughout the world**

**Document drawn up by:**

- **The International Network of Social Street workers**

**With the support of:**

- **The PROGRESS programme, European Commission**
- **The General Management of the Belgian Development Cooperation**

## Thanks:

We would like to thank all those who participated in drawing up and designing this guide, in particular the members<sup>1</sup> of the international network of social street work, who rose to the challenge, through their national workshops as well as with all the individuals and groups<sup>2</sup>. Their good advice and testimonies from the field have enriched the content of this document.

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*This guide is dedicated to Humberto Duran Campoamor, former coordinator of the Mexican workshop and professor in the Psychology Faculty at the Autonomous University of Etat de Morelos (UAEM), Cuernavaca, Mexico, who sadly passed away on June 27th 2008.*

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 Members of the international network of street workers

<sup>2</sup> Colleagues from GPAS, Pessac, the translators and proofreaders...

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## Foreword

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Street workers can give (back) to people in difficulties the power to act in their own lives and to move towards improved well-being, using the values of justice, equality, human dignity and solidarity.

Through their proximity or their integration into the living areas of these vulnerable people, the street worker remains the first link in the chain of support and state aid.

As the Secretary of State for the Fight against Poverty I have many similar prerogatives to street workers, as we deal with problems encompassing many issues that affect all fundamental rights of peoples: accommodation, employment, state aid, health...

Street work means addressing the human being above all and taking into account their own story: whether they are young people who have dropped out of school, homeless people, illegal immigrants or other people suffering from social exclusion.

Street work means continually adapting the methods of work and evaluation which arise from it. Sometimes it means being contented with actions without a future. But above all it means the need to share different things experienced in the four corners of the world...

Therefore I am extremely glad to see the publication of this work, which purports to be a practical training tool for street workers.

Allow me to reiterate my whole-hearted support and to offer you encouragement in your work.

Jean-Marc Delizée  
Secretary of State for the Fight against Poverty

## *CITIES, EVERYONE ALLOWED.*

### The gardeners of a different future for humanity

Thinking, thinking about the world and its future, thinking about oneself while thinking of others and in doing so, telling the world, the story, dreams, plans, is vital for every person, family, social group, community, business, State...It is at the basis of our capacity to transform society.

There is, then, a profession – professions – of the street, just like there is the street, a street, some streets...to tell of. The streets where we live, but also the streets where we never go because they are foreign to us, as well as being far away.

There are streets without children, without human beings, deserted, namely desertified. There are streets of violence, mean, dead, dead ends, where people suffer. There are also lively, peaceful, ‘beautiful’ streets where *joie de vivre* prevails. The *street workers*’ professions exist so that the streets where they ‘work’ become routes to a different future for humans and society. Basically, it is the inhabitants of said streets who can transform their streets and mark out new paths. Street workers are only one part of these gardeners of the future, of a different future for the Earth’s peoples.

Therefore, street workers’ tools are essentially listening, respect, participation and cooperation. Their training activity is not an act of imposing their thoughts, visions, objectives and methods which come from elsewhere, from above or alongside people participating in the training, but rather the practice of sharing experiences and the shared reading and interpretation of these. The ‘lessons’ that are drawn from these experiences are drawn together, which leads to shared actions, for which everyone is, and must be responsible.

The experiences laid down here highlight the sharing of identity and solidarity. Indeed, we are not ‘citizens’ in a context of standardisation and homogenisation of people. In this case, there are only ‘individuals’ who can be reproduced, formalised, standardised. In the same vein, solidarity (from the Latin *in solido*) does not mean compassion and charity of the rich ‘haves’ towards the ‘have-nots’, but rather everyone’s responsibility to the members of their community and among communities, vis-à-vis other communities which inhabit this planet, in the framework of rules on ‘living together’ based on everybody’s right to life and to a safe existence.

In recent years, the deterioration and destruction of towns – at all levels – and of the working world have become more marked. The UN ‘Habitat’ agency also announced that in 2025/30, over 2.4 billion people will be living in shanty towns, that is, the places where the rich caste would not let their pet dogs live. We can also expect the number of unemployed people to exceed two billion in the next decade. Young people, women and children will be the main victims of this unacceptable future.

Street workers have a huge task in front of them. Eventually, in 20-30-40 years time we would hope that their job will be radically transformed because we should no longer need them, having finally eradicated the processes of generalised impoverishment of peoples, exclusion and violence among human beings within our societies. Therefore, we should no longer need state aid, simply social security. We should no longer need to support and love the excluded but rather to promote and strengthen mutual solidarity. As we say tritely but rightly, current curative action – vital as it is – must give way to prevention and the achievement of rights, all rights, for everyone as quickly as possible.

Is it a case then, of coming up with an appearance of good intentions, of rhetoric? No. History shows us that real innovation in society (cultural, political, social, economic and technical...)

can move mountains, starting at the bottom, at the grassroots level of structures, achieving objectives which were previously considered impossible. We know that what is impossible is the area drawn out and imposed by the dominant social groups. The *'forbidden city'* is a potential living area that the dominant forces of the oligarchies have made and continue to make impossible, inaccessible, to the dominated subjects. Today, in Europe as well, this is what the mayors of the big cities and our governments do, chasing away the poor from our urban centres and 'collecting them' like rubbish, in suburbs which over the last century have become *'places for the banished'*. In democracy however, the city is a free open space, where people live together. The aim is for nobody on Earth to be treated illegally. The XXI century must be the century where the 'city, everyone allowed' becomes a reality, by giving real meaning to the 'cosmopolitan city', a place where humanity lives and practices 'la Res Publica'..

Riccardo Petrella

Doctor in Political and Social Sciences,  
Founder and Secretary General of the  
International Committee for the World Water  
Contract

## Introduction

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Since their first meetings in 2000 and 2002, those <sup>3</sup> involved in the international network of street workers have been concerned with sharing thoughts on the methodology of their practices. So, following the production of the training guide in 2005 “Social street work and communication with the media” <sup>4</sup>, the members of the network have decided to tackle an international group project on the methodology of street work. <sup>5</sup>

The challenge is a significant one. Such a guide is designed to be a practical training tool to help street workers improve their own practices on the ground. But it also purports to be a political tool to help improve recognition of this line of work and better comprehension of the situations faced by street workers and the people they interact with on the streets, almost everywhere in the world

Above all, this tool must remain faithful to local specificities and diversities<sup>6</sup>. More specifically, it consists of valuing a “**particular way of thinking**” characteristic of street workers’ action in an international context, which favours a healthy, safe instrumental approach. Discussion of social street workers’ practices throughout the world means investigating the main directions of our societies’ development.

The production of this guide once again underlines street workers’ attachment to **strong ethical values**, consisting of respect and tolerance for the most marginalised populations.

Giving priority to a social and educational presence in living areas is not just one methodological option among many others. It proves the real desire to be a ‘**stakeholder**’ and shows **commitment** in the face of the causes of exclusion and ill-treatment. It is a question of being as **easily** and **simply accessible** as possible to people when they encounter difficult situations. But it also means ensuring respect for and protection of individuals, as laid down in the Human Rights Declaration<sup>7</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. <sup>8</sup>

Whilst we work in different environments far from one another, with different people and circumstances, when we stop to think about this unique profession we realise that street workers are actually faced with similar problems and challenges, both locally and internationally.

Thankfully, there is no universal theoretical framework on the methodology of street work. That would be too simplistic and disrespectful to the creativity and diversity of approaches. Therefore the points laid down in this guide should not be viewed as a standard or “ready-to-wear” model, but rather as help for the reader on the ground, irrespective of location, country, or reality, **in inventing and reinventing his own practices**.

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<sup>3</sup> The use of the masculine form in this document is intended to lighten the text and is in no way discriminatory against women, for whom this guide is just as relevant.

<sup>4</sup> Editions l’Harmattan, May 2005 and website [http://www.travail-de-rue.net/fr/outils\\_guides\\_01\\_fr\\_00.htm](http://www.travail-de-rue.net/fr/outils_guides_01_fr_00.htm)

<sup>5</sup> As explained in section 3.1.2., many terms are used to discuss the practice outlined in this guide. In order to facilitate the reader’s task, the notion of ‘street work’ is used throughout this text.

<sup>6</sup> We should point out here that the variations in style of writing throughout this guide reflect this diversity, as the writing team chose to respect the many different means of expression of the authors involved, instead of standardising the writing style.

<sup>7</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, declared by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10th 1948

<sup>8</sup> Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 20th 1989



Written by street workers, this guide reflects and summarises multiple realities from the four corners of the world. Using this guide as a basis, further publications on more specific and diverse themes may come to light, such as; the different people on the streets, minorities, addictions, etc.

Incidentally, street worker training will be the subject of our next publication within the international street workers network.

What is street work? Why do we need street work? What is its use? Who are the people targeted by street work? Where, When, How is it practiced and by whom? This guide aims to answer all of these questions.

### **The international network of social street workers<sup>9</sup>.**

The production of this guide falls under the framework of activities of the international network of social street workers.<sup>10</sup>

Made up of field workers from about thirty countries (from both the South and the North), the network has two priority work areas:

- On the one hand, activities which aim to increase the **efficiency** and **quality** of practices on the ground through **training, best practice exchanges** and the production of **educational tools**.
- On the other hand, international mobilisation aiming to build **structural and sustainable responses** to problems encountered by people on the streets throughout the world.

Here, we are talking about the construction of a real **international solidarity** strategy in the face of discrimination and poverty, moulded “**with a proud and strong proclamation of shared identity**”<sup>11</sup> that resonates throughout the international network of social street workers.

### **The guide, a group process.**

This guide is the result of a vast **process of exchange of practices** between the street worker members of the international network.

In practical terms, the first step began with a questionnaire containing four questions (see appendices).

These questions, available on the website<sup>12</sup>, were sent to every national platform in the network.

In some cases, several days were spent working as a group, addressing these questions and exchanging practices between social street workers at a local level.

While answering said questions, some platforms went further by producing extended analyses.

Around thirty countries were involved in this way.

In addition to the written answers, a number of testimonies were heard during meetings and supplemented this particularly rich process of data collection.

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<sup>9</sup> Appendix 2: Charter of the International Network of Social Street Workers

<sup>10</sup> Website [www.travail-de-rue.net](http://www.travail-de-rue.net)

<sup>11</sup> In proceedings of the international forum of key actors in childhood and street work November 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Idem<sup>5</sup>

The second stage came about by means of two participative seminars conducted by the **LUK Federation**<sup>13</sup> and the **Centre of Competencies**<sup>14</sup> in Norway, late 2007 and April 2008. Based on the answers received, but also taking into account the different publications available on street work and the writing experience of some street workers, the meetings' participants laid the groundwork for the future guide.

A table of contents was proposed and enabled the creation of a writing group which wrote a first draft, and of a reading group which followed up on the writing process.

This draft was sent to the different national platforms to allow for corrections to be proposed. This work constituted a second level of exchanges.

The recently produced guide on media communications concisely addresses the issue of "social street work as a unique profession". It was therefore logical to pursue and expand this idea by means of a second publication.

### **How to use this guide?**

This guide is not only written for street workers. Many other actors, whether they are on the ground, in management roles, in the spheres of education or politics, will draw inspiration from it.

Different topics are covered at both methodological and practical levels but also at social, cultural, and political levels.

Nevertheless a warning should be given on the limitations of such an exercise. Indeed, despite significant international mobilisation, this guide does not intend to exhaustively discuss street work around the world.

Situations on the ground will always remain more complex and diversified than they appear in written form. Even if this guide, as we hope, will allow for optimisation of efficient practices or improvement in their transparency and comprehension thereof, it is important not to consider this guide as a unique, unquestionable reference.

This guide is a stepping stone, a "snap shot", and most of all, an invitation to pursue reflection and action.

*"In flying the flag for the protection of Children's rights, wherever in the world they may be, we need to learn how to advance meticulously and intelligently, never using any supposedly more advanced national culture to squash another."*

*Workshop of street workers in Senegal*

Finally, it is important to underline the humility with which the international network submits this reflection document, made available to the public as an ever-changing work in progress. The reader is also encouraged to really use this guide as a tool. Indeed, this guide does not need to be read in linear form, it may be used in different ways. Depending on their interests

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<sup>13</sup> Landsforeningen for utekontakter (LUK), Norwegian Federation of Street Workers [www.utekontaktene.no](http://www.utekontaktene.no)

<sup>14</sup> Kompetansesenteret [www.rusinfo.no](http://www.rusinfo.no)

and needs, readers may choose their own way of consulting it, either by reading from beginning to end or by dipping in and out at the relevant points, according to their needs.

### **International cooperation and the fight against poverty and social exclusion throughout the world.**

This cooperative process was made possible thanks to much support from different spheres. In every country, local actors and institutions took ownership of the project. Particularly so in Norway, but equally during international meetings of street workers organised in Thiès (Senegal) in April 2005 by the organisation **Avenir de l'Enfant**, in Kinshasa (DRC) in April 2006 by the **Street Work Support Committee**, in Mexico City (Mexico) in November 2007 through the **El Caracol** organisation, and in Lisbon (Portugal) in November 2008 through the **Conversas de Rua Association**.

The **European Commission** and more specifically **the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities** have also lent their support through the **Progress Programme**.<sup>15</sup>

This programme aims to encourage cooperation and exchange, both in precise areas of action and in defining institutional solutions that support social inclusion and social protection policies in Europe.

This promotion of mutual understanding of good practices and policies aims to facilitate implementation of **the open method of coordination in the field of social protection and inclusion**.<sup>16</sup>

It is in this light that national platforms of street workers continue to think and exchange with the local authorities.

The **Belgian Development cooperation**<sup>17</sup> also supports the international dimension of this process, thus enabling developing countries in particular to participate.

And this is probably one of the greatest assets of this guidebook, which is the result of the involvement of various actors, committed to building concrete links of international solidarity.

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<sup>15</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/progress/index\\_fr.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_fr.htm)

<sup>16</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/progress/soc\\_prot\\_fr.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/soc_prot_fr.htm)

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.dgdc.be/>

# 1. Street work, a global approach

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More than a systematic methodology, here we discuss features present in all stories told by street educators from many countries. These include the key points that make street work unique and difficult, yet nonetheless a vital practice which always involves being on the frontline, constantly calling for revision and self-evaluation. One has to take into account the fact that there are street education programmes for children and teenagers, others for adults, some develop in marginal and peripheral areas while others are in more central and wealthy places, that some focus on offering basic needs to people on the streets while others concentrate on building relationships: everything depends on an analysis of the space and time at stake. But in all cases, the actions that we discuss here are clearly developing in a mixture of contexts and traditions.<sup>18</sup> This is what captures our attention.

Before introducing the more practical aspects linked to street work methodology, we wish to highlight the values and motivations on which this practice and its ethics are based.

## 1.1. Principles of street work

There is no real universal theoretical framework on this matter, but we can say that here and there social actors have, at a given point in time, favoured an **‘extra muros’ approach, with a strong ethical drive formed of respect and tolerance for the most excluded populations.**

For these people the challenge is **to be as easily accessible as possible** to children, young people and to adults who live in precarious conditions and who suffer multiple forms of exclusion.

Through their proximity and integration in the most excluded areas, **street workers are the first and last link in the chain of education and social assistance**, when all else has failed.

Social street work favours an **innovative proximity** approach where the people play a predominant role in any action undertaken, from its beginnings (the request) throughout its development (accompaniment). It is this trust-based relationship, built up with the subject, which will help break the silence and enable support to be given to the person.

The underlying idea in social street work is not to take a person away from the streets or their surroundings “at all costs”, especially if it consists of compartmentalising them in a new social context where they will feel uncomfortable. Whatever the context, be it a child, a young person or an adult, the work of accompaniment means building **self-esteem**, developing **personal skills**, independently from the degree of exclusion, and enabling **participation in social life**.

In respecting people’s fundamental rights, street work aims to protect the most vulnerable people and to give them the means to protect themselves.

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<sup>18</sup> We should warn the reader about the testimonies which illustrate this guide. They are individual remarks and some extracts may appear contradictory. However they all reflect an experience, a feeling or a real situation encountered.

*“Institutionalisation of children “at all costs” in shelters without the necessary knowledge... consequentially means it is difficult for the child to adapt to the shelter. This comes from the idea that “the child will always be better off in a shelter than on the streets or in detention, and that this will offer the child a better chance.”*

*Sometimes this works, but the child will not have expressed a deliberate choice through an internal process of reflection and awareness of the cause. In such circumstances the risk of failure is significant.”*

*Street workers’ workshop in the Philippines*

*“Children from broken homes and children who run away in particular, are protesting about a reality that has become unbearable. They try to flee an environment where they feel ignored. The street is all well and good only as a means to move closer to others. But when men settle on the streets, this sociality is called into question, turned on its head and evidently, only results in suffering. In that sense the social worker is healing, as he tries to repair the broken links.*

*But in his efforts, he often comes across specific cases in the face of which he feels helpless. When runaway children re-offend, when they persistently appear absent-minded, when anxiety and violent behaviour is almost always displayed, it seems useful to ask oneself whether seeking help from a specialised therapist is not the only solution.”*

*Street workers’ workshop in Senegal*

Priority is given to **general prevention**, to **informal and non-formal education**, to the **reduction of risks** and to **remediation out of concern for social wellbeing**.<sup>19</sup> Wellbeing is not the absence of problems and conflicts; on the contrary it is their acceptance and the ability to overcome them.

*“What you hope for is that some young people you meet on the streets will end up looking back one day on the past and on their youth, thinking “In the end, all things considered, I think it all went well”. I don’t think that an entire life can be determined by ONE single factor. I think that there are many elements that make up a complex system which can, in the end, lead to a positive outcome. Every puzzle is made up of numerous pieces. I hope that in my work as a street worker, I manage to strengthen the capabilities of young people and that I might be a small piece in someone’s puzzle.”*

*Street workers’ workshop in Sweden*

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<sup>19</sup> In Training Guide : Street work and communication with the media. – p.8 - 2004 -

## 1.2. Objectives of street work<sup>20</sup>

**The relationship uniting street workers with their public is the result of a very fine balance between formal intentions and informal appearances**

**To reach the unreachable** – The objective of street work is to talk to individuals, groups of children, young people or adults who need support or help but who seem out of reach, or who cannot be reached by existing organisations and institutions.

**Motivation and accompaniment** – Working together with the target audience to help it make choices and possibly to undertake alternative activities (school, work, hobbies) and when necessary, to seek other forms of support or treatment.

**Social Education** – Teaching a target audience to use the established remedial system and being predisposed to making sure that the resources of the area supply said audience with the most appropriate services and tools.

**A ‘bottom-up’ approach** – To improve the difficult adaptation process and reduce exclusion, which certain bodies subscribe to, whether indirectly through action on people’s environments, or directly by working within groups of children, young people or adults.

**Political and Social Awareness** – The street worker must bear witness to the living conditions of children and young people, in order to call for the implementation of measures that can bring about some improvement. He must systematically hold the political authorities accountable regarding the situation and needs of people on the streets.

The margins for manoeuvrability in this field of work and in achieving the objectives mentioned here vary from one country to another. These variations depend on whether street workers are linked to a public or a private organisation, a local association (secular or religious), the degree of recognition of street work and whether it features in legal texts.

In truth, people from broken homes or in difficult situations, for whom the mechanisms organised to deal with social problems and their symptoms do not present a viable alternative, need **relationship-based support which allows them to grow personally, as well as offering integration and participation in social life.**

- Going to meet your target audience at the times and places they can be found;
- Offering these young people an adult relationship based on assistance and help, that they can freely accept over time and in trust;
- Gaining an overall understanding of the individual, without limiting yourself to symptoms such as violence, delinquency and other addictions;
- Proposing different actions at both the individual and group levels;
- Developing negotiations between target audiences and their environment, and between different partners and institutions.
- These objectives are all shared by street workers throughout the world

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<sup>20</sup> This part is inspired by the document “Outreach social work aimed at young people” by Børge Erdal, Oslo City, Norway

### 1.3. *Prevention is better than cure!*

The concept of **prevention** is used in very different fields of activity, and therefore can be interpreted in many ways, often resulting in confusion.

For example police prevention of criminal behaviour has nothing to do with socio-educational prevention work on the streets. Too often used as a *floating message*<sup>21</sup>, the term ‘prevention’ is adapted to all kinds of contexts. It is therefore unsurprising to find real confusion, and a difficulty in grasping a proper understanding of the work of street workers.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the fact that there has been a certain loss<sup>23</sup> in the way social workers present themselves, there is nevertheless a relatively clear concept of the link between street work and prevention, which can be observed on the ground.

Starting from a sociological standpoint<sup>24</sup>, prevention is conceptualised around the distinction between three types of violence, made by Pierre Bourdieu. We can therefore distinguish between:

- **Structural violence**, economical and/or social produced by dominant trends such as unemployment, poverty, exploitation, etc.
- **Micro-violence**, often resulting from structural violence, occurring on a daily basis, almost **unseen**. Racism, stigmatisation, violence within the family, violation of rights, ‘facial discrimination’ and rejection, none of which are easily detected and therefore also go unpunished.

Such violence does not need to be inflicted voluntarily and this makes it even more **insidious**. Stigmatisation for example is rendered more violent and insidious by virtue of the fact that people believe that they should belong to the “order of things”. For the individual who suffers from this, starting with an objective characteristic, an entire series of additional unfounded characteristics are attributed to him by society and eventually lead to his **dehumanisation**. It is the idea of the individual that actually becomes reality.

- **Visible violence** (delinquency, vandalism, aggression...) are often responses to the first two types of violence.

*“Many research findings demonstrate that there is a strong chance of those who are affected early on or intensively by forms of violence and exclusion, (that can be of very different natures,) becoming violent themselves, inflicting self-harm (addictions to illegal drugs, suicide) or harm to others.”*<sup>25</sup>

This is the law of “reproduction of violence” that street workers try to eradicate by remaining close to and aware of the problems that people on the streets can be confronted with.

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<sup>21</sup> Handicap et politique – Emile Servais - Eléments d’analyse sociologique des pratiques d’accompagnement – Bruxelles Equipage Editions 1993 – P. 250

<sup>22</sup> Training Guide : Street work and communication with the media. – Street work, a unique but poorly explained profession. – P.11

<sup>23</sup> La prévention, un concept en déperdition. – Editions Luc Pire – Jacqueline Fastrès et Jean Blairon – 2002

<sup>24</sup> Méditations pascaliennes – Pierre Bourdieu – Paris, Seuil – 1997 – P. 275 – 276.

<sup>25</sup> La prévention, un concept en déperdition. – Editions Luc Pire – Jacqueline Fastrès et Jean Blairon – 2002

Hence the importance of **prevention in the living area** where the most excluded populations are located. There are two objectives to the prevention work carried out by social street workers:

- **To reduce the overall level of violence and inequality** while remaining particularly concerned with forms of exclusion that are less visible, such as poverty or stigmatisation.
- **To avoid reactions to such violence and exclusion becoming inappropriate**, turning on the perpetrators, who are often young individuals and the most excluded.

Such a concept of prevention establishes street work as a permanent informal and/or non-formal educational approach.

An educational undertaking that also emancipates:

*“It is so important that teenagers are able to live elsewhere, in places where they can escape both family constraints and those of the systematic learning of rationale (school)...” “...in truth, it is this participation in social life within frameworks that are relatively free from the family and school sphere that guarantees the gradual emergence of autonomy in adolescence.”<sup>26</sup>*

Prevention work therefore makes sense only as long as it concerns the **relationship with the individual**. This is at the core of the debate defining the street workers’ mission.

Thus in Belgium for example, some street workers take a well-educated guess that young people experiencing difficulties will be inclined to speak more easily and readily about their concerns with a social worker that they already know, that they meet easily and with whom they have a trust-based relationship. It is therefore sometimes possible to avoid a relatively harmless problem from becoming a great difficulty that will require much more serious assistance.

*“On many occasions a young person has come to me to tell me that he has stopped attending school two or three days ago. Almost every time, a child in that situation has trouble finding someone he can have the courage to talk to about this. Most of them do not dare to return to school simply because they will be unable to justify their absence. And of course, the more they wait, the less they dare return to school. In such situations our intervention can be extremely helpful and preventive because it is of course easier to help them return to school early on, rather than after a long unjustified period. Without the possibility of talking to a street worker, a young person will often wait until the situation becomes inextricable before talking to someone...”*

*Street workers’ workshop in Belgium*

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<sup>26</sup> Le Ligneur - Mais comment peut on être adolescent ? – Philippe Meirieu – 21st October 1992.



## 1.4. Relationship with the individual: the person rather than the symptoms

In street work, the relationship with the individual or group of individuals as “people” is fundamental. Indeed, street work aims to help everybody to recognise and be recognised in terms of their value as a singular being and as controller of their own life.

Therefore, as a counterbalance to the pressure which reduces individuals and groups to the status of ‘object’, (symptoms, stigmatisation, statistics etc.), street workers endeavour to re-establish the primacy of human beings.

*“It is the act of rejecting, of resisting, that creates the individual.” “It is the limited capacity to put some distance between a person and their social role, the fact of not belonging and the need to rebel, which makes us individuals... The individual is formed both through fighting against the machinery and through respecting others as individuals.”<sup>27</sup>*

Street work and the path that it leads to aim to give the target audience (back) their place as an individual, who can act in his situation, his future, and his environment. The individual should be **empowered to take back control of his own life**.

*“Street educators have a general perspective, hence no matter what the request, what counts is how to listen to it, how one builds from it and formalises it: the individual is the true meaning of the intervention, and it is he who must decide the pace, the theme and take the steps that are necessary to change his situation. Our help is only a support for people’s capacities to transform their reality and the world.”*

*Street workers’ workshop in Spain and the Basque Country*

Nevertheless, to state that the individual is at the centre does not suffice and is not always obvious. Indeed, sometimes “the individual is rare or difficult” and the socio-educational temptation to “do the job for the other person” and predefine other people’s life scenarios is a real one. Furthermore, political and institutional contexts do not always allow the individual to return.

It is quite common to meet street workers that are stuck between one activity programme that is coming to an end, and another one that is more of a “top down” command and therefore not a desire expressed by the individuals directly concerned.

*“The social worker who commits himself to this kind of intervention has only one outcome to hope for: to convince and seduce young people to slot themselves into a specific framework, which unmistakably means that they are more or less passive consumers.”<sup>28</sup>*

The relationship offered by the street educator requires **visibility and involvement, sharing experiences, proposals and mediation...** Generating the will to create something is a prerequisite for any undertaking involving a young person or an adult.

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<sup>27</sup> Alain Touraine - Critique de la modernité, Paris, Editions Fayard – 1993 – p.318-331

<sup>28</sup> Edwin de Boevé and Pierre Van den Bril in “Côté cours – Côté rue” – Analyse des pratiques et politiques de formation à l’ordre du jour. – June 1995.

*“In truth, the difficulty lies in not mistaking the notion of help with that of offering advice or assistance.*

*We help by listening carefully.*

*We help by showing respect for the battle that somebody is fighting against his difficulties and in recognising on the other hand the successes he can achieve.*

*We help by displaying acceptance and understanding for the feelings experienced by the other person no matter how foreign they might be to us, nor how strong.*

*We help by offering a warm and non-possessive relationship.*

*We also help by recognising and defending the capacities of the other person and his right to find solutions to problems in agreement with one’s own set of values, one’s own wishes and one’s own cultural traditions.”*

*Street workers’ workshop in Senegal*

## 1.5. *Street work, an education from outside*<sup>29</sup>

“Through their direct involvement in the young peoples’ social environments, street workers are both privileged witnesses to the specific problems of youth, and mediators who accompany young people along their social and existential path.”<sup>30</sup>

For children and young people from broken homes, far from or entirely excluded from primary socialisation and social inclusion spheres such as the family, school, and later work, the street becomes a substitute form of socialisation. Different adults also occupy this space as a living or survival area<sup>31</sup>. It is a public place that everyone can adapt according to their situation and needs and which takes on meaning in the expectations of those who meet there, especially at specific times of life.

A place that is socially devoted to movement and the circulation of people and goods, the street becomes a hotbed of negotiation between individuals who were previously convinced that they were settled there for life or survival, while others want to maximise the socio-economic efficiency and the security restrictions. Thus, by means of often strained social relations, the street becomes the object of a struggle between different methods of possession. On the one hand there is a move towards liberal privatisation of this public place which becomes ever more controlled by the idea of private property and on the other, there is the approach of marginalised socialisation, mobilising the public area as a private place of existence and of identity-stamping.

Slotting into this area of negotiation, the street worker mainly aims to discover how people and groups at odds with society take over the street. Getting involved in the places where deals are made and that belong to those who roam or live on the streets is one of the most significant challenges facing the street worker. Informed and aware of the prescriptive reference points which surround the public area and which clash with the way of life of those who are marginally involved, the street worker takes care to understand how some people adopt this place as an area to flee to, a place of protection, transition and risk taking, as a place of expression and demands, as a place of learning and work, of pleasure and suffering.

In this way of thinking, the street is not only concrete but is also public gardens, squares, pavements, shopping centres, furniture halls, stair wells, as well as, and perhaps above all, friends that meet there. With them, when possible, people are ‘protected’ against a world perceived as frightening and inaccessible, in apathy or a worrying impulsiveness. Unfortunately, taking into account the different pressures, friends become rare or the fight for survival pits them against each other (e.g. trade, begging) or they disappear (e.g. for legal reasons or death) whereas perhaps otherwise they may have helped each other...

In such a context, where the street worker’s interest is to penetrate and strengthen social links between individuals, the relationship supply must precede demand; this need being fundamental to street work. This prerogative also implies that when establishing the intervention, the street worker must firstly be sensitive to the culture and way of life of those who he is rubbing shoulders with in this area of ‘the street’.

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<sup>29</sup> Extract from a text by Bernard Monnier, specialist educator. Informations sociales N°60.

<sup>30</sup> Pector, Jacques (1999) *Le travail de rue et l’action-recherche réflexive. Projet de recherche*. Montréal : Québec.

<sup>31</sup> It is important to point out here that this section has been mainly drawn up on the basis of contributions from authors who work with young people, which means that the representation of the context and the intervention particularly refers to this population. We would invite readers who work mainly with adults to make the relevant links between this content and the realities of those they accompany. Chapter 3 also contains some ways of broadening this vision.

The approach is made in a place that young people have taken ownership of in a certain way, and where the social educator must be accepted as an adult capable of establishing a relationship. **An observation period** allows for a thorough knowledge of the neighbourhood, of its institutions, of how it is spontaneously taken over by young people, of the times when it is empty or crowded, of the times when groups come together or scatter; the social educator will learn the spots where and the time when he will be more easily accepted. This knowledge will be complemented by information brought in by other individuals or institutions, but **field observation** will remain essential. The visibility to the young people will increase gradually; so that they do not feel that the presence of an adult is dangerous or strange, allowing for the sharing and a relationship to begin.

**Adhering freely to the relationship and educational company offered by the educator** will be built on the freedom given to a young person to discover himself through the **trust he builds in the social educator**.

Along the way, the street educator develops an **overall understanding and awareness of the young person's personality**, that favours his capacities and strengths rather than focussing on his complicated background of failures and difficulties.

The shared experiences and the “doing together” can be multiple and diverse, from the most spontaneous and informal situation, individually or in groups, to the most organised activity.

These shared moments have two purposes:

- **A visible one:** to reach an objective or a particular need: a hobby, a sport, a job, a shelter, an evening out, an administrative purpose, to win a specific right...
- **A hidden one:** to begin to build and live with meaningful relationships that will help a young person to discover and internalise sets of values and references as well as what is fundamentally forbidden, to change their self image, to encourage behavioural change and performance and to experiment with social relationships.

### ***Why street work?***

- The desire to support groups that have a reputation of being antisocial, through **the provision of a helping hand** and a **purely educational approach**.

### **Street work, for whom?**

- Street work is directed at individuals:
  - Groups of children, young people and adults who need some form of help or support
  - who are far from or excluded from the primary socialisation and social inclusion spheres
  - who are suffering from the breakdown of their society, materially, symbolically or in terms of relationships, because they actively reject norms or are rejected by them
  - Who are out of reach (or cannot be reached by existing organisations and institutions).

Whatever the difficulty, the educational process rests on the resources of each of those individuals.

### **Street work is a means, not an end.**

- It is a **socio-educational action carried out within a long-term perspective** starting from the needs, demands and aspirations of target audiences and which strives to **strengthen their capacities and empower them to take ownership of and build their own lives**.
- This relationship of assistance requires **the community's trust and the respect of its integrity and its own will**. Contacts with street workers always have to be **voluntary**.
- Beyond contributing to one's personal development, the street worker contributes to the reduction of harm by working with **people (young and adults) subjected to numerous forms of exclusion, marginalisation and social breakdown**.

## 2. Practices, methods and tools of street work

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Bearing in mind that street work is **not a pre-determined model** waiting to be applied, we need to point out the ingredients that allow street workers on the ground to **invent and reinvent their own practices**.

### 2.1. The stages

There are many similarities in all of the examples received from different countries. We can truly identify a sequence of working stages, which is characteristic of a methodology. Before we think about the central theme which many street workers throughout the world use to implement their practices, we must insist on the non-linear nature of this process. Indeed, although there is some logic to the way these stages are laid out here, the reader will understand that they fit together, overlapping and that they make most sense when used in circular conjunction with each other.

Having made this warning, it is useful to establish the important stages in implementing street work so that when setting up the intervention, the quality of integration into the surroundings allows the workers to offer significant individual and group support. Thus the time and energy spent in the early stages constitute an investment for the following stages and a regular, cyclical return to these sequences allows the anchorage of the practice to be constantly renewed.

- The **first step** consists of **studying the setting** both **theoretically** (historical, social and cultural context) and **practically** (meeting people in the neighbourhood.)
- The **second step** requires a **presence** on the ground belonging to the young people; it is the “zoning” or the “neighbourhood round”. It requires **direct observation** without necessarily intervening. This stage allows for absorption of the culture of the area, as well as encouraging the pinpointing of spots to be investigated. This has to be done regularly so as to become a familiar face to the target audience, and to be identified as a natural part of the landscape.

*The question may arise: But how do you identify the young people?*

*The team had to carry out the task of specific locating/pinpointing when it arrived in the Town Centre. They needed to locate the faces, the ‘looks’, the ‘characters’, the dogs that they may see again or irregularly, most often in frequently-occupied spots; in the gardens, in front of shops, at the SNCF station, etc...*

*Once this first pinpointing exercise was complete, the team paid close attention to the young people or groups in touch with these first people. Given the ever-changing location of these young people, the team must constantly train their visual memory and add to it meticulously. This professional attitude is only possible thanks to frequent and regular trips, to a strong team to pass it on and the sharing of the observations collected.*

*Extract « Etat des lieux Centre ville » codase France<sup>32</sup>*

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<sup>32</sup> [www.codase.org](http://www.codase.org) or [preventionspecialisee@codase.org](mailto:preventionspecialisee@codase.org)

- The **third step** is that of **identification**: it requires saying who you are and why you are there. This passing moment is a chance for the street worker to begin to build their role by negotiating the place they will hold among the people in the neighbourhood concerned.

*'The day before Blaise had agreed that he would be home by 6pm. I waited until 10pm before I went to check but to my great surprise he wasn't there. I then returned to the marketplace where I found his mates. I stayed with them for a while, chatting and playing and it was quite a long time later that they finally agreed to show me the shelter where he was sleeping...in a well hidden corner behind the public toilets in the railway station, where nobody would have dreamed of looking for him'.*

*Street workers' Workshop in Togo*

- The **fourth step** involves forming a relationship with the target audience; it involves establishing contacts with people and offering company and guidance.

*We made daily and nightly trips out. The observation phase helped us to note that the children living in the street are existing in terrible conditions, hardly managing to feed themselves, suffering serious threats, insults and repression from the local residents.*

*They are impressive, very solid and have their own code of life. For example greetings are made with their fists, their language is very different, and the signs are conventional. We now face the challenge of gaining their trust.*

*Street workers' workshop in Burkina Faso*

From the first contact established with an individual through to the exchange of more or less confidential ideas, the process is a gradual one, moving from suspicion to a relationship based on trust

When he is well known in the community, contacts flow easily and the street worker can go towards young people more easily. But in many cases, the street worker waits until he reaches a certain "threshold" to make his first moves: some form of feedback from the community or one individual that proves the start of a trust-based relationship.

- The **fifth step is that of support and intervention**. This may occur through the creation of a place to interact with young people and that can lead to the development of activities (also helping to meet more young people) or it can be limited to individual interactions. It may also gradually result in bigger group or community activities, involving negotiation between the people being helped and other people in the area (traders, local authorities, etc).

*'The street work teams offer an informal education service to children of Kathmandu who live and work on the street. The children that our street workers meet have the chance to get involved in lessons on socialisation and educational activities ; games, sports, basic education, general culture, awareness-raising on the risks of life in the street, health, AIDS, drugs, basic hygiene and medical care.*

*In each area there are 'permanent' children that the street workers recognise and with whom they try to establish the most solid links possible. Some of them continue to prefer life on the street as they have developed a certain taste for the freedom there. For these children, the workers organise awareness-raising sessions, giving them professional advice.*

*Another important role of the mobile teams is to improve relationships with local traders, landlords, the police and other organisations which help street children. We want to get them involved in our activities and to help them to understand that street children are a part of society.*

*The police have been informed about the lives of street children so that their relationship with these children can improve. The teams also put up posters of missing children in different police services. The relationships with local traders and scrap merchant landlords continue to improve. Many now know the children who live around them and they treat them with respect. Conversely, the children respect the traders and the scrap merchant landlords and their property.'*

*Street workers' workshop in Nepal*

As mentioned at the beginning, these different steps are not static or linear but may overlap each other and be continuously renewed.

An essential element is that the passive and active presence of the street worker allows him **'to be recognised as a fact'** which means that they can effectively become a sort of landmark or reference point for the person in need of help. These steps form a loop because the street worker is required to start over again on the same path, to go elsewhere, to meet other young people, to discover new dynamics. But on every step of the way there is a qualitative leap taking place, even if the street worker doesn't ever fully reach a perfect knowledge concerning a specific situation, a community, and the solutions he should propose.<sup>33</sup>

Some people insist on the idea that an extra step should be added to those already put forward; the **closure** and **sustainability** of the action on the ground. Indeed, considering the importance of links set up with individuals and the role played by a street worker during the relevant period, many people believe it important that they take the time to close the links before leaving a particular job or sector. This procedure partly contributes to avoiding another social breakdown, which is often a problem for the people who need the street worker's help, and on the other hand it may facilitate the introduction of another worker on the ground. To this end, when resources allow, some people would encourage the old street worker to take the time to introduce the new one, in order to ensure continuity in the area. This **sponsorship** system is vital. As well as direct links between the new street worker and their future audience, it is primarily a transfer of the trust link and the transmission of the symbolic and cultural capital which will be made through this accompaniment. The sponsorship may take several months if necessary.

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<sup>33</sup> Le travail de rue en Communauté française de Belgique. Nature et enjeux. Christine Schaut and Luc Van Campenhout, FRB, 1994



## 2.2 First things first: where and when to do street work?

Before initiating anything, it is preferable to benefit from the experience of previous street workers or at least to learn the background in order to understand the reactions in the area.

*'Dave feels that the good job done by his predecessors has facilitated his inclusion in the neighbourhood. Nevertheless his new colleagues have let him wander around on his own for a while at the beginning, actually letting him wonder why he was there, because they know how useful it is to spend time observing your surroundings. During that time you see a lot of things but you are also seen a lot. This integration period allows for a "word of mouth" process to start in the neighbourhood.'*

*Street workers' workshop in Québec*

Of course, institutional factors mean that one rarely benefits from great freedom of action during the groundwork.

It is necessary to initiate a dialogue with local authorities to explain the needs and aspirations of the target population.

Such aspirations and needs are actually often much more conceivable and attainable than previously thought.

To this end, it would be harmful for local authorities to oppose street workers. The political sphere is often the number one ally of street work, in trying to find structural and sustainable solutions.

Whatever the framework within which an institution employs a street worker, what matters on the one hand is the importance granted to the **relationship with the individual**, their **capacity to empower** and **to be respected** along the way.

On the other hand it is also essential to give the street worker a clear deontological framework for his work, which respects the **principles of confidentiality**, in particular through respect for **professional secrecy**.

Passing on and spreading information to third parties could severely compromise the **trust** placed in the street worker, which has taken so much time to build.

### 2.2.1. Negotiating investment in the areas and pace of the street

Street work works through being **geographically close** to your audience, and has a fundamental "extra muros" character. This implies moving towards other people, embracing their own lifestyles rather than forcing them to comply with institutionalised frameworks.

The street worker follows the ways of those he wishes to meet, evolving in the same surroundings and trying to fit in and play a role there. In sharing spaces and times, street work rests on a gradual and non-intrusive inclusion process.

*“Employed as a street worker in Villeray, Stephanie started by going to the metro and schools at different times of the day. Villeray is a buffer zone between the Ext Park and St Michel, young people move around a lot between these two neighbourhoods.*

*Even if she then had ‘access’ to her target audience, she took the time to stroll around and read in the park to let people see her often and wonder why she was there”*

*Street workers’ Workshop in Québec*

Every “street area” has different characteristics and requires a tailored “infiltration” method. A park where young prostitutes walk around freely does not resemble a “dangerous” street neighbourhood where you feel unsafe, or a night bar where young people spend the night on the floor or dirty sofas. Intervening in such environments requires respect for the codes of conduct that go with them.

*“When I want to infiltrate a new environment, I prepare myself both physically and mentally, and that involves working on my behaviour and my state of mind. I try to control my internal stress. Before going out in the field I pay attention to the way I am dressed. I try to check every aspect of the way I look, and the way I express myself in order not to create too big a gap between myself and the young people.”*

*Street workers’ Workshop in Vietnam*

From the beaches in some countries, to the shopping malls elsewhere, from the bars to young people’s homes, from markets to cabins in the forest, from train stations to small alleys, from ghettos to town centres, street workers work in a never-ending variety of places, according to the region of the world they are in and the audience they are targeting.

Considering the time spent at the beginning doing nothing with others other than observing them, the feeling of inefficiency in the integration phase may turn to anxiety; we feel guilty for being paid for doing almost nothing, we feel the need to be busy, to produce results in order to feel we are controlling the process we are involved in. The methodology of street work requires a certain length of time, a long timeframe; the time to know the area, its people, its comfortable and uncomfortable areas, its corridors - this is vital for the street worker to prepare himself for the context and to establish his plan of action so as to maximise the potential of the people and resources of the area. The knowledge of the surroundings always comes in handy later on, when we take the time to stay long enough.

Integration into the area to be worked in is not limited to geographical integration but also includes **cultural adaptation** to the codes, language, values, dynamics and conflicts etc. The street worker must be capable of non-judgement, not to be confused with a lack of judgement.

*‘In Africa for example, the family’s honour and dignity often come before the child’s welfare. Understanding this means trying to reconcile the need to safeguard the rights of the child and the invention of strategies allowing for progress without treading on any toes. Furthermore, in Africa like elsewhere, the*

*family is not only an element of the problem but also of the solution. Within this, we should recreate the space for words and dialogue, so that the violence perceived in their sharp expressions does not rear its ugly head...'*

*Street workers' Workshop in Senegal*

This adaptation does not involve **mimicry**, rather the opposite. We cannot insist enough on the importance of a street worker showing **solidarity with** yet at the same time a **difference from** the people they meet. Too many young workers mortgage their integration into the street by trying to imitate the habits, customs and behavioural patterns of the target audience.

It is essential to **remain who you are**. It is in facing differences that real mutual enrichment is possible.

Such closeness does not only involve observing what is happening in the area but also taking into account the background of the situation as well as the cultural, social, political and economic context in which the events unfold.

*'When we talk about different cultures, we are not only referring to different original cultures but also street cultures, young people's cultures, urban cultures which are forged in towns and suburbs. Street work should consider these people as generators of culture and must establish dialogue by following this rule of recognition.'*

*Street workers' Workshop in Spain and the Basque Country*

This awareness of the evolution of an area, its past and its future, is vital to anchoring an approach focussing on the resources and aspirations of the target audience. It allows for an action strategy to be developed, rooted in the cultural observations made by people, rather than artificially imposing one according to external rules.

*'The following experience concerns children associated with the armed forces and groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In the framework of socio-cultural activities, I use the method of free choice, by asking each child soldier to sing a song from their own village and to show us some dance steps. Drawing is also used.'*

*It is through these activities that the children begin to give us traditional observations on their villages. It is from these observations that we then try to find the families of the former combatants, demobilised for reunification.'*

*Street workers' Workshop in the Democratic Republic of Congo*

By maintaining their own identity and 'otherness', i.e. their belongings and difference to the others, the **street worker must then get to know the area in order to establish his place and role**. Through a regular presence, he shares the daily struggle with people and gets involved in certain routines. This is how he builds a pool of experiences with them, as well as shared references, based on which they can build projects and open up paths for the future together.

*'After having been visible in the area, having explained that I am an educator, my mandate and institutional framework, the framework of the relationship, having asked and listened to stories, felt the blanks and the contempt, having walked without being recognised, having dared to approach a group, after this very long process to get to know the area both physically and emotionally, the first requests appear. Somebody seeks me out or waits for me to walk by them so they can approach me.'*

*Street workers' Workshop in Spain and the Basque Country*

*We are convinced that sharing the realities of life with young people plays an important role in our integration into their area. Participation in daily activities, at times of joy or pain with a struggling young person or their limited group, forms part of our practices.*

*The fact that we experience certain things with them such as eating a 'meal of food scraps', playing football with them, taking part in a group discussion...prompts an affectionate link of solidarity and trust. These moments allow us to understand some of their thoughts, their feeling of rebellion or resistance.*

*These experiences will guide our intuition and will help us to have appropriate reactions to the context, which are adapted for these young people.*

*Street workers' Workshop in Vietnam*

### **2.2.2. Cycles and pace of street work**

The relationship between space and time in street work is a matter of constant balance between stability and the sudden changes that occur in the timetables and lifestyles of the people in the target environments. We must adapt if we want to play a dynamic part.

**The timetable of a street worker**<sup>34</sup> is very difficult to forecast, and this has to be constantly revised. The street worker has to be in a certain number of places at a certain time and therefore needs a regular timetable. But at the same time, his strategic presence at a number of special occasions or the flexibility of his actions in certain situations means that he needs to extend or rearrange his plans several times. Examples that follow illustrate the 'daily reality' rather well, together with 'the exceptions'.

*A working week typically includes 25-30 hours of street work, including weekends, since on those days the child population is considerably increased. Two teams (each team has two people, one who speaks Greek and one Albanian speaking) work daily in two different areas.*

<sup>34</sup> We will have the opportunity to address this topic in the section below dedicated to management.

*The teams try to be on the road for as long as possible and at varying hours, so as to observe the phenomenon of child exploitation throughout the day and night. An important detail is that we see different age groups at different times, with the younger children begging and selling things during the daytime and older children working nights selling flowers or playing music outside the night clubs and restaurants.*

*For the children who are accompanied by families, we try to be a firm point of reference. This is why, apart from the two teams working daily, a group of professional street workers and volunteers go to the more frequented areas and stage an event that includes painting and handicraft with the children. Using the slogan “playing in the streets” we approach the children working or begging in the streets as well as informing the general public about the phenomenon and our activities.*

*Street workers’ workshop in Greece*

#### ***A typical weekday (winter)***

**10:00** *Meeting at the benefits office for disabled people. The young person wasn’t there. I left a message on his answer phone.*

**11:00** *At the « Pic-Nic » tea room: group of four young people. One of them is getting married in four months and is looking to find out information about training to become a social worker. Before getting started he needs to finish his compulsory work in Jette.*

*One older person sits with us. He is a social worker and works in the centre I want to build more contacts with, so we exchange some information. The young person I was meant to meet at 10:00 calls to apologise and we set up another meeting.*

*Lunch; send an email regarding an artistic project in the Brunfaut neighbourhood.*

**14:00** *Tea room in rue Brunfaut. I write a letter to a guy in prison. A young person comes to sit next to me: “It’s been a while, how are you...” the town council has started building on their sports field. He wanted to know what they will do next. We go to the town hall to find out the plans. I get a phone call from a young person who needs proof he is registered on a training course.*

*The plans at the town hall. Apparently they had already developed that area 7 years ago. At first there was a car park and a basketball pitch. They are going to build council housing and get rid of the basketball pitch.*

*Etang noir: I meet a young person who had an accident at work two years ago. He is undergoing a process to try and get 25% disability benefits. We leave together to find an internet café to look for information. There we meet another two young people.*

*The guy who had called earlier comes to pick up his traineeship certificate.*

*Street Workers’ Workshop in Belgium*

*Gary, a 13 year old, belongs to a gang located in the heart of the most important square of the city, maybe of the entire 'Champs de mars' region. He was one of the most regular attendants of our institution, every morning he came to participate in our activities tailored for children at the Popular Education Centre. After three days of him not showing up and no news, we went to see his gang, as we normally do, to find out what has happened..*

***10:15 AM** I arrived at the cartel and found Gary on his own with his left foot crushed and smelling terrible. Another kid from his gang threw a block of concrete on it following a "dare". This "dare" is part of a wild, cruel game called "sleeping war". When playing that game you can't fall asleep, if you fall asleep you risk being forced to do all kinds of things and have all kinds of things inflicted on you, sometimes even leading to death.*

***10:30 AM** I went with Gary and another kid from the gang to the University of Haiti's hospital by a taxi that accepted to take us.*

***10:45 AM** We arrive at the emergency ward of the hospital.*

***2:00 PM** After all the hospital staff have left, a doctor finally sees us.*

***3:00 PM** After begging him, he eventually agrees to prepare a prescription. After having bought everything I take it all to him. He asks me to wait.*

***4:30 PM** While we wait for the doctor to come back, I leave Gary and the other kid at the entrance of the little doctors' consultation room*

***4:55 PM** I am back. The kids have gone. I return to the gang but I don't find them there.*

*The following day **7:00 AM** Back at the gang, Gary is there, I bring him to the hospital once again, this time carrying all the medicines with me.*

***10:00 AM** A doctor takes care of Gary.*

*For a week and a half I went to Gary's gang to bring him his medicines. Today we are glad that Gary is alive, with both his feet and in great shape.*

*Street workers' workshop in Haiti*

In order not to lose touch with what is happening in the field and not to run out of steam, the street worker must regularly reassess the working hours he spends in the field.

- The street worker constantly has to revise his itinerary and working hours to meet different people and to follow the changes in their lifestyles.
  - Planning moments (seasons, day, night....regularly and variations in terms of times and itinerary)
  - Choosing places (socio-educational facilities, shopping centres, streets, public gardens, lobbies, cellars, bars...)
  - Observation and Analysis tools (written work, synthesis, collective thinking...)
  - Quality of the team's information and of its links to various partners
  
- Also, while walking around and spotting where his target audience is located, he has to find strategies to reach those people who are detached and isolated from such places.

However, we have observed that over time, after a few years, less time is spent on the streets. This is because with progress in one's work, one becomes overwhelmed with demands and planned meetings, meaning that being available on the streets becomes increasingly difficult.

- We have to find a **balance between the demands and a permanent presence on the street: we must block off some days in our diaries for the STREET.**
- **This presence on the ground is very important**, notably to **meet teenagers** who generally **show a tendency to come and meet street workers on the street to talk to them when they need to.**

We have to **maintain:**

- **Enough time on the streets to go to people who don't come to you** and who are the primary target of street work.
- **Focus on the availability of the street worker (which is a main characteristic of their work).**
- **It is ideal to ensure a regular street presence, with a precise indication of days, places and times and to stick to it. Precise places and times help the street worker know when and where they can find specific people again and again.**

### 2.2.3. Loitering : one of the main keys of street workers

The sometimes lengthy immersion process constitutes one of the keys to this approach since it gives the opportunity to understand and better adapt to the street map and the pace of the streets. Knowing a place, its use and the type of relationships that unfurl in it becomes an important tool in finding your place in a given environment. So taking the time "to do nothing" is a vital point in street work in order to feel the atmosphere and the street codes while subtly building a role for yourself without troubling the target audiences or imposing your mandate.

*'I met a street kid, Rocky<sup>35</sup> 8 years old, who was begging on the terraces of MATONGE, a neighbourhood of the KALAMU district in Kinshasa. At first I didn't think I would manage to reunite him with his family.*

*I approached Rocky by offering him a bottle of sugary drink and some food because he was really hungry. After a few meetings he ended up talking to me very sincerely about his situation. His mother had left for Angola when he was four years old, after the death of his father. There was no one to see to his needs (school, clothing, food...). But before going to the street he was living with his grandfather.*

*After obtaining from him some of his family contact details, I carried out a survey with the grandfather who admitted that his grandson had disappeared 13 months ago. A single meeting between Rocky and his grandfather was enough to get the two happily back together. Today Rocky has a normal life once again.'*

*Street Workers' Workshop in the Democratic Republic of Congo*

<sup>35</sup> For confidentiality reasons, the names of the people have been changed.

Loitering, or strolling around, is a technique valued by many street workers in order to immerse themselves in the lives of a target audience and to live at the same pace, and thus to become more accessible. As our Basque colleagues reminded us when we met in Oslo in 2007, learning the art of “knowing how to do nothing” can become a key to street work. (See Appendices.)

*“One of the tricks to being comfortable in the places frequented by your target audience: arrive a bit early and keep busy doing something else (reading the paper for example): you can learn a lot from street work!”*

*Street Workers’ Workshop in Québec*

Specifically, if there are some “predefined, ready to wear” street work programmes, you should remember that it is not so easy to predict history. Firstly, because events occur rather randomly, - and there are many events that occur on the streets – and also because a number of important elements that are necessary to carry out your work effectively are rarely predictable.

Rather than modelling an action, it is better to conceive projects as they unfurl and as different events and encounters occur. This approach is very interesting because it allows for **creativity** and **progression**.

At this stage, the ability to observe and analyse is essential.

Not planning everything a priori ~~from the outset~~ does not take away the need to work in an **appropriate** and **efficient** manner, and to be **prepared** to act and work hand in hand with others.

The **quality** of the process is more important than the visible results; this approach requires no less **attention**, **involvement**, or **commitment** from the street worker who will have to be receptive to everything the situation will lead to, thanks to or in spite of him.

*She was begging and washing car-windows on the streets together with her children. At the first contact that we had with her she was a little bit hesitant about talking with “strangers”. She was asking about our profession, what we were doing. We introduced ourselves as teachers who were trying to integrate children into the school. Talking with her, opening a friendly conversation, asking about the health of her children, especially of her youngest child (7 months old at that time,), made the communication possible. After meeting her in the streets for more than 4 months, the street work team managed to build a good relationship with her and to involve her and her children in every activity that has been organised. It is very important to clarify that information has not been taken from every contact that we have had with this family. Being a good listener assists the team in the establishment of a stable and permanent contact with the target group in general. In our case the mother started confessing feelings about her situation, worries about her children and she was stating that she was ready to start any life away from the streets.*

*Street Workers’ Workshop in Albania*



#### **2.2.4. Being known on the ground, consolidating contacts**

In trying to be as accessible and available as possible, the street worker ends up being part of the furniture. Part of the social fabric, through different networks of relationships with significant actors from the area, ‘relays’ or ‘go-betweens’ the street worker becomes able to animate a certain sense of solidarity and to contribute to social well-being in the neighbourhood, by activating and restoring a basic sense of solidarity.

*“She was quickly included because she knew a lot of young people already. She got back in touch with some young people she had met in the ‘Young People’s Home’ and this helped her to get in touch with gangs.*

*Even if she then had ‘access’ to her target audience, she took the time to stroll around and read in the park to let people see her often and wonder why she was there.*

*In schools, she had spent time with wardens and employees responsible for conducting spare time activities to facilitate her access to people on the ground. She has also participated in a council for the establishment of a multi-purpose centre.”*

*Street Workers’ Workshop in Québec*

The first people we meet are often important for networking and help us to gain more contacts.

In Quebec the “*Poteau*” concept is used to mean people with whom the street worker maintains a strong relationship, which can help him integrate into certain environments, to help him to understand such environments or even use him to convey certain messages in those environments. In different countries different names are given to such people: relays, contacts, partners...

*‘One has to establish links with third parties who share the same space or who are in the vicinity of young people on the streets (for example the owner of a popular hotel or bar, the person who sells cigarettes in the neighbourhood, and various groups in contact with young people... )*

*From the moment the local cigarette seller starts telling me that this young person has started asking questions about my presence (What’s this guy doing here? He isn’t bad, is he?) I know a leap has been made.”*

*Street Workers’ Workshop in Vietnam*

Effectively being in the sphere of partnership requires you to be clear about your mission and to let everyone understand the practices that it implies.

You have to think of what you will answer to someone who asks you, “*What do you do?*” because the question comes up a lot.

- **The answer often varies**, notably according to **the age of the person asking the question**.
- **Insist on confidentiality** as a central value of this job.
- **Explain why you build contacts with young people and adults, mention what kind of relationship you develop** and give some examples.
- Feel ready to **explain your relationship with the organisation employing you and your relationship with other organisations and institutions**, for example: the police.

Too often, street workers are asked to maintain or repair a lost sense of safety and environmental sociability. The politicians also tend to confuse some types of activities and think that they are interchangeable: they sometimes ask the police to conduct social activity, or ask social workers to re-establish public order

Young people and other people experiencing difficulties need points of reference in order to build a constructive relationship with the law. The respective roles of the police and the educational teams must be clarified, and everyone’s practices need to be coherent and distinctive.

The street educator is often the only law-abiding agent with whom young people can establish and experience a free and stable relationship.

- **Young people** often put street workers to the **test** in order to check their reactions. It is up to the street workers to find, despite the difficulty, the path and conduct that will establish him as a **credible** adult and a point of **reference**.

*‘One kind of test in the park was to watch the reaction of the street worker to someone who had a knife discreetly sticking out of his clothes’.*

*Street Workers’ Workshop in Québec*

Social street work is a socio-educational practice with people that suffer from social exclusion in their environment. Stating that means placing the street worker in a challenging network from the outset, that contains a number of issues, actors and partners:

- The young people and adults concerned by the action;
- The inhabitants of the neighbourhood;
- The professionals who work in the social sphere;
- Local politicians

The team of street workers will therefore have to negotiate its place. This implies carefully stating the characteristics of this educational and informal work, of which street work is a fundamental aspect. Street work is often defined by a number of terms “education in the

living area”, “social presence”, “outreach work”...., that do not necessarily convey its particular character.

Some authorities and institutions sometimes wish to designate a team of street workers as a partner for a particular job even before starting to become familiar with the target audience. It is therefore essential to recall from the outset that the first step in street work is to establish a relationship with the target audience.

## 2.3 The faces of street work

**Non formal and informal education and action centred on the environment** in which children, young people and adults live, favours **3 forms of action**:

- **Working with the individual**
- **Group actions**
- **Community actions**

It is interesting to take account of examples encountered, and the fact that street work is often experienced as a **process** that has few predefined models. It is also important to point out that this process develops by **making use of the potential** in a given situation, and in that context the **aims and objectives** play a secondary role.

If indeed, a method is based on the **potential** (of a young person for example), the street worker should refrain from implementing **his own** solution, and simply wait for some elements to come together and finally to **accompany** a process that has become inevitable.

The **context** and **environment** cannot be separated from this accompaniment; street work **rests** on what is undergone by people on a daily basis. **Calculating, accompanying, and consolidating** outcomes that have been achieved constitute the framework of street work. As we will see in the section on evaluation, this way of tackling the intervention by counting on the potential and circumstances of the situation rather than on the application of a predefined solution falls under the umbrella of propensity which is different from the **instrumental** way of doing things.

Varying according to the target audience and the missions around which the singular mandate of each street worker is formed, some workers sometimes use material ‘carrots on sticks’ which correspond to the culture and needs of the people reached. A meal ticket, something to chew on, a ball or other sports equipment, show tickets, a transport ticket, a room and technical kit to set up a radio station or musical or video recording, or even condoms and syringes are all examples of tools used as a way of undertaking an educational relationship with the people being supported. It goes without saying that these tools take on even more relevance when they are given as a token of support for a more meaningful relationship, whereas they lose their reach if they represent the end of something.

### *Ethical code of street workers*

- *The educational process involves a participative horizontal relationship.*
- *The link to be set up with the inhabitant of the street must translate to a relationship based on an educational approach.*
- *The intention of our involvement must be clear, as should everything we suggest.*
- *Every activity as an educator will aim to guarantee the integrity of people on the street and of the educator himself.*
- *We will aim to be coherent in what we say, do and think (be and do).*
- *The educational process of the person living on the street will always take priority over our personal interest.*
- *As a professional it is important to recognise what affects us from an emotional point of view when we carry out a job.*

- *Following our professional activity, it will be necessary to have a listening area which will allow us to discuss our concerns or things threatening the work, from an emotional point of view.*
- *Our educational work will be based on a theoretical and methodological framework guaranteeing the reference points of our action.*
- *The complexity of our work means we need permanent training.*

*Street Workers' Workshop in Mexico*

Starting from the overall concept of intervention taking advantage of the area's resources, in collaboration with the resources invested by the street worker, we doubt whether the different levels of action, individual, group and community, often overlap. That said; let us take the time to better understand these supplementary aspects of intervention, by returning to the definitions made by the members of the International Network of Social Street Workers in the Training guide on media communication drawn up in 2005.

### **2.3.1. Individual support**

*"In response to the requests made by the target public, support may unfold. It may only develop through an overall approach, not separate from the daily reality. This support is envisaged as a participatory approach, of an educational nature, aiming to empower and improve the independence of the target audience.*

*This participatory approach aims to give the target audience (back) the entire role of actor-subject, being able to act concerning their situation, their future and their environment. The intervention is often general and multi-faceted. It varies from listening to mediation, from survival to personal development. The possibilities and situations are endless."*

By means of the "neighbourhood rounds", the street worker may be requested to support people in different situations, both in the short and long term, in little problems and greater difficulties.

The street worker offers participatory help that requires adhering to respect for individual rights, confidentiality and recognition of an individual's need to be emancipated.

#### ***Listening and negotiating in individual support.***

When a contact has been made, the next phase of the relationship develops: talking to someone about what interests him, about important and trivial things, spending time together, showing an interest in and assessing each other. When entering that phase, demands begin to be made and one can put names to fears and needs.

From then on, using different techniques and tools, the street worker and his audience will share a common assessment, becoming aware of the importance of demands made and envisaging a plan of action. This phase can be more or less structured, but it is important to have an action plan, to let both parties know where this educational relationship is leading.

In particular one should sum up the situation, the goals to be met; the means and tactics to be implemented. The plan will also be revised regularly with the people concerned and the street workers' team in order to evaluate the process. In such a way, patronising and other counterproductive attitudes will be avoided, and the individual will be placed at the core of the situation as an agent of change.

*“Does it need to be repeated? The street worker is often forced to work over a long period of time: the vulnerability and complexity of the people he takes care of require a great deal of patience, and a lot of ingenuity.*

*Restoring self-esteem also means readjusting to the environment. In other words, one can only accept himself if he feels accepted by others, that he has a place among them, that he is not stigmatised or disapproved of.”*

*Street Workers' Workshop in Senegal*

### ***The process within the relationship of assistance***

The street educator is available and prepared to be contacted by people who wish to seek his help. This work is quite intense because it is not easy to be a part of the landscape, to break down barriers before a stranger and to let the conversation flow freely. That moment is the most important one, it is when a relationship is built, which is fundamental even if it is a fragile one, when to start pulling a thread and open up some space to listen to the other person.

This takes a long time, because very often the first request hides the real one. We may be faced with material demands (food, shelter, health...), to requests linked to illegal drug-taking, the need for work, emotionally charged situations, the need to open up new educational channels in a shattered and fragile family context... There are as many demands as there are different kinds of people.

*‘The interviews are a key phase of support. The frequency of the meetings changes according to the objectives and problems. The difficulty is evaluating the capacities and the motivation of the young person, in order to respect their pace of progression. This means permanent adjustments are needed in the proposals and in the educational responses. Indeed, the analysis that we carry out at the first interview serves as the basis for the accompaniment. As we gradually progress, other elements appear, and force us to readjust our assistance.*

*The situation chosen, describes the journey of Anis, 18 years old, over a period of six months.*

*This youngster was not on the team's radar, but his imprisonment, following an act of vandalism in the area, caught the team's attention. It was only when he had left prison and following a placement in a home, that we had the opportunity to meet him.*

*We met Anis in the neighbourhood. The “Point Information Jeunesse” coordinator introduced us. He asked for help, he'd been sleeping in a car for a month as his mother had thrown him out because of his violent behaviour.*

*The first meeting happened locally. Anis' only request was for us to help him find some accommodation. For him the most difficult thing about this situation is that he cannot wash regularly. We tell him about the Water Point (public shower) where he can shower, wash his clothes for free, and have a postal address. He is already aware of the entire Grenoble network for homeless people and/or people without financial means.*

*Anis explains that he slept at the Town Shelter a couple of times, at the other end of town, but he found the entry conditions too restrictive. You have to be there at 5pm to reserve a place, and entry is refused if the person is under the effects of drink or drugs. So on the evenings when he 'gets smashed' with his mates, he sleeps in a car.*

*In this first part of our conversation several signs alert us to the fact that this boy is hiding great suffering: his heavy, regular consumption of alcohol, cannabis, and his state of bodily hygiene indicate the state he is in.*

*We are also surprised that Anis accepts his status of Homeless and does not see himself as a victim. As a general rule, when we help a young person who has been excluded from the family home, there are not many who would accept sleeping in the Town Shelter or going to the special places for the homeless. Identifying oneself with the latter is very drastic.*

*After having heard his request, we try to introduce an idea of the reality. Finding accommodation may take several days or even months. The current context makes access to temporary accommodation very difficult. Anis therefore needs to use his own network (family, friends).*

*He tells us of his relationship with his mother, using very harsh words. The paradox comes at the end of the conversation when we suggest that he attend an educational camp; he asks us to contact her so that he can stay with her for the three weeks when he'll be working. Even if we do not insist on this subject in our questions, we are aware that therein lies the key to Anis' problems.*

*Anis has never worked and has a poor level of education. His dream is to be a removal man. He briefly tells us his story and says that today he still has an educational referee. He doesn't hang around with him and never sees him. We ask for his permission to contact him to inform him of the steps we are going to take together. He accepts.*

*This interview has allowed us to analyse the situation of this young lad and to evaluate the different areas to be worked on:*

- First area: Accommodation, food, bodily hygiene*
- Second area: His suffering (the incident, his relationship with his mother) and his self-esteem.*
- Third area: The consequences of this suffering; (His consumption of alcohol and cannabis, his violent and delinquent behaviour.)'*

*Extract from the activity report 2007 from the Eybens team, France*

This is support which rests on a methodology that takes into account the variety of contexts and topics and the different nuances that exist. The more difficulties your audience is having, the more important the relationship factor is over time.

The street educator will accompany a person as far as the point where he wishes to go, in the desire to find a better outcome, up to the limits of what is possible, without judging, moralising, and keeping focus only on the individual and his capacities and the possibilities of a given situation.

*We are in December 2003, it is two AM. Michèle leaves Laurence's parlour, with her faithful companion: Fiffille, her dog. She then stops in front of another parlour belonging to another lady whom Michèle doesn't know, and that lady smiles at her. Michèle enters the parlour and meets her.*

*Her working name is Isabelle, her real name is Denise. She is approaching fifty. She seems to have drunk a lot. Both of them start a long conversation, first about their dogs and then about her, but she doesn't seem saddened by her fate.*

*She has been a prostitute for 20 years (since she was 30). She is married, her husband is violent and together they have a 20 year old son who is schizophrenic. They talk for about an hour but they will meet again a number of times.*

*Michèle will learn many more things about that woman on whom fortune does not seem to smile. Her life's path seems very difficult: as a child her father committed suicide by throwing himself into the water with her little sister. Not long after, her mother killed herself too. She is then taken care of by a number of families and those who are close to her disappear one after the other.*

*In 1984, her daughter dies in a tragic event. She was tortured and raped by a couple, a horrible and unbearable story. The couple that did this will soon finish their detention period (and Isabelle finds that very hard to bear). She talks about herself a lot to Michèle and tells her that she finds it very hard to accept the fact that she is a prostitute and that she can no longer deal with her husband who is isolating her from everything (he also takes all the money she earns). She doesn't want to go home anymore. Michèle therefore puts her in touch with a night shelter that agrees to take her, but Isabelle gets scared and runs away one night. She seeks refuge with one of her customers: Joseph. Isabelle, who knows his intentions and that he has an alcohol problem, decides to leave his place. She thinks that things are not going well and leaves because she is a bit wary.*

*Michèle puts her in touch with another association that finds her a place to live. Isabelle stops working. She has always lived off prostitution but this time, with the help of CPAS, she had taken a firm decision to stop. Today Denise is about to get divorced and, at 50, is slowly starting to enjoy life. This story has a rather happy ending because today Denise is forming a couple with Joseph, and both of them seem to be happy and in love'.*

*Street Workers' Workshop in Belgium*



### 2.3.2. Group action

*“Group action can be a door opener, a gateway, enduring over time, or as a result of overall action. Sporting or cultural activities for example allow the socio-educational objectives you have set to be achieved. Concretely, street work relies on activities that build shared experiences and increase trust. Your audience will often be surprised by the playful dimension of street work. In truth, that part of street work contributes to the creation of what we call “double bait”, one of the most subtle aspects of the methodology of social street work. This concept is associated with the propensity of doing things that we will describe further on.*

At first, your intervention through actions and encounters in the street does not seem to matter very much. However, when social problems subsequently appear, the quality of such interventions will determine how successful you are in overcoming difficulties. This approach is based on anticipation: everything is put into place in advance, so as to be efficient when the time comes.”<sup>36</sup>

*“In order to build contacts with a target audience, it is sometimes helpful to use what we call “excuses to meet”. For street workers who target children or young people, an excellent means of doing so is to propose various group and spontaneous activities in the street (capoeira, drumming, juggling, football...). It is vital to let your audience know the purpose of such activities so that they understand what they are and why you are there: we are social workers; we have skills; time to spend and an obligation to keep a secret; if any of you have any kind of problem we are available; if no one has a problem or if some of you have problems but don’t want to talk about them,... then we play football”. For street workers who target adults, very different pretexts can be used: distributing condoms or syringes, offering a bowl of soup or a coffee... Some pretexts can sometimes be quite surprising, like the example of this street worker from Liège who sometimes goes to neighbourhoods where you find prostitutes. She systematically goes there with her dog called “Fifille” and that dog is very often a pretext to start talking with people.”*

*Street Workers’ Workshop in Belgium*

*In many other parts of the world, circus activities are performed with young people from the streets. ‘World Circus’, a project set up by the Cirque du Soleil in Montreal, operates activities in several countries. In Quebec, many towns welcome the ‘World Circus’ project, which allows young people to participate in a learning process which is both fun and disciplined, enabling them to gain confidence and skills, as well as participating in group projects leading to social recognition and sometimes even professional accomplishment.*

*Street Workers’ Workshop in Québec*

<sup>36</sup> From the training guide ‘Social street work and communication with the media.’ Edwin de Boevé & Philippe Gosseries, 2005.

### **Group Perspective:**

This way of operating is more common in Mediterranean and Southern countries than in Northern countries. In such societies it is difficult to address any topic outside of a group, and it is hard to be on the streets. This is why we need groups to reach the individuals, and also if we do a good job with groups they will be a support for the individuals and the street workers' prevention work. We also focus here on the objectives of groups and the timescale; and we organise leisure and spare time activities with young people and teenagers, or activities that lead to employment, the promotion of culture, training workshops, associations' initiatives, such as the promotion of healthy living, etc

*'In Belo Horizonte, we use Capoeira and drums as a way of getting closer and hanging around with young people. In the long term, this group coordination has other educational advantages.*

*Historically, Capoeira was used by the African slaves to train in self-defence. Subsequently, this fight became an art which allows young people to be emancipated and sometimes to find a job. This is also a chance for them to find skills they have lost, such as a certain level of discipline and the respect for a hierarchy based on acrobatic performances and the beginning of a journey. Furthermore, the young capoeirista plays an important educational role in turn, by becoming an example to his favela of origin.'*

*Street Workers' Workshop in Brazil*

### **2.3.3. Community action**

*'The street worker cannot separate his interventions from the context in which he operates. For that reason he takes into account the entire span of local actors who can interact with him. Thus he participates in different processes created by - and with - the community while at the same time keeping his individual status.*

*The street worker will be particularly keen on keeping and/or prioritising the emergence of social solidarity networks.*

*Through his actions, the street worker integrates into the environment in which he is based. In such a way all the local players end up recognising the street worker as a credible person, likely to help meet the needs of the community and provide the tools that are needed for it to function.*

*Thanks to the individual help he gives, the street worker is confronted by multiple problems that fall under the scope of the individual and their private life. Community work precisely tries to 'reduce' such problems to public matters.*

*Recurring problems that hit the individual should be conveyed as societal matters, which should be the real concerns of society, and transferred to the politicians' agendas.'<sup>37</sup>*

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<sup>37</sup> From the training guide 'Social street work and communication with the media'. Edwin de Boevé & Philippe Gosseries, 2005.

### **Community Perspective:**

In addition to allowing for overall analysis be made and to identify the problems that street workers systematically face in a given context, this perspective opens up the possibility for local people already working with street workers to reach what has been put in place, and to create what is not yet in place so that the rest of the population can reach it.

*'In Colomiers in the South of France, one of the aspects of street work considers the living areas in the neighbourhood, bringing together the different age groups, wanting to mix social and cultural backgrounds.*

*The aim: asking the people met to reveal their passions, their desires, their wants and to transform these into project proposals, activity for the neighbourhood. Each time, they are invited to discuss the idea/project in front of a camera if they find it difficult to write it down.*

*The fruit of this harvest is then displayed at group meals in the central square where all the inhabitants are invited, and they all participate in the creation of a real citizen analysis, based on the ideas and projects revealed and the discussion that they generate. Prospective workshops are then implemented.'*

*ACSE Colomiers<sup>38</sup>*

Here we operate by empowering target audiences, through their participation and creativity, and their feelings of social usefulness. The individual problems, the difficulties and conflicts must be more broadly expressed. At the same time, street work has to support the work of local associations so that people can use the channels that are already in place, social support or the possibility of participating in city life.

*"When a trust-based relationship is built between an individual and a street worker, the street worker is often identified as the person who holds the key of solutions to all the problems. I experienced that, on January 12<sup>th</sup> 2007, when I met 37 kids from MALUEKA, a difficult neighbourhood in the NGALIEMA town council, in KINSHASA. These kids and some of their parents were brought together at one of the neighbourhood resident's homes. The aim of that meeting was to discuss the opening of a training centre, to train kids to become "peace messengers" in MALUEKA (west KINSHASA).*

*During that group meeting, the kids asked me questions about different problems (school, the lack of electricity in the neighbourhood, the lack of supplies for school...) and were asking me to find solutions. Some mothers also asked me to promote the MALUEKA children's cause with the government and some United Nations institutions such as UNICEF. All this despite my explanations regarding the reason why I was there that day: to train children to become messengers of a precise programme.*

*In the end I asked myself: Who am I? A street worker or Father Christmas?*

*Street Workers' Workshop in the Democratic Republic of Congo*

<sup>38</sup> [www.acse.info](http://www.acse.info)

The field analysis made by street workers is complementary to that of other partners. Street work falls under the mediation umbrella, facilitating eventual access to existing institutional mechanisms that are in place for young people experiencing difficulties.

But the education teams in the street should not get involved in the different mechanisms from which the young people experiencing difficulties are excluded. In fact their mission is to re-establish links between the youth and their environment and to help them to benefit from these mechanisms. But the street worker should avoid being associated with them.

On the other hand, the social worker has to bring to the different partners his specific knowledge regarding the young people experiencing difficulties and the social problems.

### 2.3.4. The different ideas of street work<sup>39</sup>

Method of approach	Technical aspects of street work	Political aspects of street work	Interaction between the different concepts
Community Perception	Street work is a method of approach with an objective to reach, through young people, adults and all local people.	Street work gradually 'disappears' and becomes community work.	Street work is a precursor to community work.
Activities	Street work allows us to take into account young people's demands and to suggest activities that meet their expectations.	Street work helps install a certain sense of responsibility among the people who receive help, through the implementation of projects that they can gradually take ownership of.	Often, carrying out activities (such as leisure activities) is a precursor to street education. But they do not necessarily fit within the same institution. In a number of cases we observe "specialisation" in one or the other.
Education	Street work is an approach that precedes individual support (social support and/or therapy).	Street work helps to rebuild the individual as a social actor, to rebuild the social fabric. Street work therefore tries to eradicate social exclusion.	Activities (such as leisure activities) most often precede education rather than the opposite. With some people it is hard to propose activities. Community work is difficult because the environments within which it is carried out are deprived of collective awareness. It is an environment one wants to get away from.

<sup>39</sup> Le Travail de rue en communauté française, Research Report for the Roi Baudouin Foundation, Brussels, 1994

### 2.3.5. Attitudes and stances

*“The most important thing to think about is not the nature of the activities or interventions but the trust-based relationship. This depends a lot on the attitude that the youth worker has towards children...They need attention, they need someone to listen to them before giving them advice, one shouldn’t lie, but should believe in their abilities and give them value, one should not make promises that cannot be kept. These rules can be more or less implicit; they stem from good sense but are nonetheless professional qualities that youth workers acquire through experience.*

*Street Workers’ Workshop in the Philippines*

Backstage witnesses to the everyday situation of these people, street workers have privileged access to aspects of people’s intimate and social lives. Meeting people more often during their daily activities rather than during formal intervention, street workers can go further than a symptomatic reading of the situation. They can note their living conditions and lifestyle, their dynamics and social networks as well as the highs and lows of their reality far more profoundly.

One of the most customary practices of youth street workers is **active listening**, which unlike other mechanisms is carried out in the individual’s natural environment. They decide when and where they talk, to make a request or a proposal, to speak of a problem. Be it on the stairs of a house, a car, a bar or a curb. Sitting or standing, or while kicking a ball around, communication is established and will then have to be organised, but at this stage it is extremely important. When we speak of stigmatised populations or those with serious social participation deficits, it is very interesting to set up direct listening channels, which are confidential, voluntary and neutral.

For this listening exercise to be a success there are techniques and attitudes to be adopted, and every educator develops their own style. The most important thing is to have a clear position and working framework. In such a free context, it is easy to get mixed up and to confuse the individual that we want to accompany. The street worker goes *in* and *out* of the individual’s environment; he is a messenger, a bridge, a first contact person, the missing link who consoles and supports. But he is not a resident, nor a neighbour, nor a member of the family, nor a friend.

Working in the neighbourhood and living there at the same time is neither the most appropriate nor the simplest situation.

*‘[...] the youth worker, as an intermediary between two worlds, also has to explain in the street the dominating social logic, its paths, its drive and its ways’.*

*Street Workers’ Workshop in Spain and the Basque Country*

*Street workers (after being accepted and approved by kids, after gaining the trust of these young people) are expected to be different from the adults these young people know in their everyday lives. Kids consider us as a medium that creates the opportunity to connect with the reality that exists outside the social ghetto.*

*Also in geographical terms it is easier while the street worker doesn’t live in the area of the ghetto. Our profession usually is really absorbing and quite often stressful. Flexible hours of work, unexpected, unpredictable situations, need to*

*come at different times, with intervention in crisis on the one hand, and on the other often aggressive and the vulgar, difficult behaviour of our youngsters, the brutality and misery of the ghetto that we face every day might already be a great challenge.*

*We had a problem with street workers doing a great job, but living just a few streets away from the area where the kids lived, when kids started to come and knock on the doors of their private apartment... Sometimes there are moments when you don't want to be at work, and the lack of this possibility might be a great problem.*

*Polish street workers' workshop*

This presence does not only see interventions outside walls, but this presence on *the other person's* territory is conditional to several characteristics of street work. Concerning this adaptability and discretion imposed by this position, this calls to mind the methodological reflection and ethics of this job.

*“Social street work is a job that requires patience, because often the young people with whom we work are temperamental and aggressive. The street worker must adopt a certain attitude so that they are listened to: Be attentive and don't complain about their behaviour, be brave and open.*

*Sometimes consider the accomplices of youths on the street, social workers have to adopt an attitude that will help passers-by understand that these young people have a place in society and deserve a dignified life.”*

*Democratic Republic of Congo street workers' workshop*

There are disparities between the different examples concerning the need to classify the action taken in the framework of an **individual** and **emotional** approach and/or with an **institutional focus**. The issue of commitment nevertheless seems to be a determining factor.

The absence of judgement of the situations encountered is striking however, and the importance of respecting a certain level of discretion, confidentiality and **professional secrecy** seem to be another determining factor.

It is also interesting to note that the **efficiency mode sought** in the action is **indirect**.

The ability to **adapt constantly** to the process, its place **in time** and the **effects** produced by the situation are predominant elements.

This approach emphasises the importance of not getting bogged down in **planning** and accepting that **during** the process there are **times which seem hollow or inefficient**.

Being in the field and feeling inefficient seems to be a recurring fear for street workers but it is also sometimes part of the method.

This is where the question of **complexity** arises.

In general, street workers feel more at ease, but also more doubtful, when they have a broad mandate not centred on one issue such as illegal substance abuse or delinquency for example.

Tackling diverse issues in a more **global** and **general** way allows street workers to put them in a more comparative context.

Achieving results with the current process can only be done over **time, gradually, slowly** and in a **continuous** manner.

It is interesting to compare **individual assistance, community action** and **group action** (activities) because it is through the interaction of these three factors that the “**double bait**” and real **anticipation** are possible.

Double bait consists of acting in several stages, considered independently, which highlight the more informal dimensions, rather than the formal aspects of the action.

Firstly, intervention by means of activities and meetings in the street seems not to have great content and to be unimportant. In fact, talking about everything and nothing or taking part in a game or sport with no specific aim may seem superfluous.

However, in the second stage when the problematic situation becomes apparent, the quality of the first stage will prove decisive in overcoming the difficulty. This approach demands real **anticipation** to be **efficient at the right moment**. In fact, this notion of double bait shows that the time spent in ‘doing nothing together’ at a meeting in the street for example where we ‘shared an activity together’ such as a football match, gives the chance to weave a world of shared experiences and a trust-based relationship is formed, on which we can later draw when a situation requires the help of a street worker, whether it be individually, in a group or in the community.

It is basically a question of working on the conditions which will later make the street workers’ job more efficient, when the link created will make it possible to draw support from the situation, to come up with an action plan which is strongly anchored and adapted to the needs, hopes and culture of the people concerned.

In methodological terms, everything revolves around the choices the street worker will make out of a multitude of possible choices. It will be interesting to explore this dimension and the idea that a street worker always keeps “**an open door**” and real **flexibility** in his or her action.

*“Kamel often came to my sporting activities. I could see he was going through a difficult time; he sometimes had bruises, but never spoke about them. One day his arm was broken by his father. I met him first in the street and he explained his problem to me. Further down the street I met his father, who talked about the incident. We agreed that the three of us would meet to take stock and allow each of them to have a say. Regular support was thus organised. Kamel would never have come to talk to me if we had not got to know each other through these activities. Little by little, a relationship based on trust was set up which allowed me to be efficient at the most important moment. After this support his father never hit him again”*

*Street Workers’ Workshop in Belgium*



## ***Humour***

This may seem futile, but the use of humour cannot be separated from street work, as it goes along with intelligence and insight. Humour can considerably lighten often difficult situations.

Humour should not be confused with irony which can sometimes hurt others.

*While working with children try to be inventive, funny, and dynamic. Try to vary daily activities taking heed of the children's requests. This way the children should hopefully remain attentive and not get bored.*

*Street Workers' Workshop in Nepal*

## ***Connect the people with the system***

These connections are also useful so that the mechanisms are connected and constitute social pathways. Youth workers accompany young people to the general systems that they do not know or do not dare to use (youth housing, sports facilities, cultural equipment) or adults at risk of social exclusion to public social services (legal advice, the health system, social institutions, ...). The worker supports and brings security to the youth, to individuals, and provides the link to other professionals. These practices, which often address people with social difficulties, improve cooperation between services.

*The methodology of street work is also followed by family visits, services and activities offered at the premises of the association. Our office in Tirana is located in the centre of the city where the children can drop in and participate actively in the operation of the centre. The location is an advantage for us, because in the centre of the city there are no other organisations that offer the same services as we do. Due to the fact that the majority of the children have been detected in the centre of the city, the existence of a structure available to them during their "working" hours was considered of vital necessity.*

*The target group as already mentioned belongs to Roma and Egyptian minorities. It is people with very strong cultural characteristics who at the same time face social and racial discrimination on a daily basis. They travel a lot within Albania but often cross the borders without any legal documents.*

*Partnerships are the key point for a holistic and successful intervention. A network of different governmental and non governmental structures operates where a referral's mechanism is established to provide services to children and their parents.*

*Street workers' Workshop in Albania*

## ***Directing and opening new services***

Many requests we receive are outside our capacity, and we must then redirect the people concerned towards more specialised professionals. The most common practice is to accompany and set up a support framework with the relevant professional. However, there sometimes is no specialised service and this is where street work becomes a pioneer and founder. It often happens that a street education programme sets up a pilot to respond to strong demand. Following an evaluation process, the local authority contributes the adequate resources to turn this pilot into an autonomous programme. The street programme can thus

continue its work. In many neighbourhoods there are no toy libraries, sanitary care services in the street, youth services, or information centres for foreigners... The street workers set up numerous initiatives of this kind. They compare and validate them, and in this way develop new resources for the community. Thus, street workers often invade other educational sectors for a given time; they do so in a temporary manner to increase the response to demands and to institutionalise them. Street workers are a barometer which adjusts new services to people's everyday lives. Going further than on-the-spot aid, this intervention has a notable impact on the community and improved rights.

### ***Encourage the participation of the most vulnerable people:***

In the individual or group projects, the street worker try to give people access to public services, and insofar as it is possible, give them access to political life. The projects also aim to give a voice to the people on the street, so that authorities hear them, and so that they can influence new policies. This is not an easy task, and it surely deserves discussion, but it is fundamental in all methodological construction not to forget that this political dimension has enormous repercussions on individuals and communities.

### ***Broadening people's perspectives***

We are referring to discovery activities, be they services, structures or places. It is important for these people to leave the neighbourhood, to open up, to conquer new territories, to become autonomous, to meet stranger's eyes, and to watch. They need to know that they are anonymous and capable. Street work offers support in these "opening up" processes, giving them the shape that the subject or the situation requires.

### ***Carrying out actions with natural groups***

Especially in the Southern countries, street workers work with natural groups, which are the best vehicle for approaching group and individual dynamics. We propose activities and conflicts or requests, and from there begins a process in which the group questions itself and then consolidates. For individualists their group is everything and henceforth strengthening its ties is the best method of prevention.

### ***Caring for and supporting the resource-persons in the community***

Although it is important to work with people making concrete demands, it is equally important to support the people of reference who give direction naturally, who inform, take over, and organise community life. Street worker's work would serve no purpose if there was no natural support substrata, which is integrated into every-day life: waiters, shop-owners, police men, mechanic, itinerant salesmen, leaders... Time should be taken, and efforts should be made to speak to these "landmarks", to listen to them, direct them, to provide them with support and discuss the changes in the neighbourhood.

### ***Being part of community life***

Along the same lines, we can say that street work, despite the fact that it addresses individuals, also builds on groups and takes its place in the community. That must be heard and recognised to become an accomplice of integration work. Additionally, there is no point in managing to make changes in a person's actual situation if there isn't a more profound and

collective change. This is why the street worker lives the life of the neighbourhood, and does his best so that the population with whom he works participates in the activities. In this way distances and lack of trust are reduced, and a confidential and solidarity space can be set up.

### *Act as a mediator in this community*

The mediation work carried out by street workers in certain neighbourhoods where residents, traders and young people and adults live in close quarters, may help to dissolve tensions and may even sometimes improve certain aspects of the quality of life of people who mix and invest in the street, by creating opportunities for solidarity among people who would otherwise continue to harm each other.

*For example in the Mont-Royal neighbourhood in Montréal, the street work body has been offering a mediation service for some years now, between the traders and the people of the street, in order to contribute to smoother co-existence and even integration.*

*Street workers' Workshop in Québec*

*Having previously rejected street children who surrounded her restaurant and bothered her customers to get their leftovers, the owner-chef was made aware of the needs of these children when a street worker invited them to have a meal with her. The change in their image which had caught the street worker's consideration for them, helped the woman to change her opinion about these young people, who are no longer simply barriers to her business but also people in their own right, moreover they are needy young people. Since then, instead of throwing food away, she offers them the food that her customers have left on their plates. Not only does this gesture mark her own change of view, but it also saves the young people from disdainful looks as they had to go through the bins to get to the food.*

*Street workers' Workshop in Senegal*



Strategies	Tactics	Key words
<p>Be visible and available</p> <p>Do not judge people. Limit yourself to observing acts and situations.</p> <p>Be a resource for the community. Be interested in people and their backgrounds</p> <p>Work in a political and community perspective; do not only work with the individual as a symptom but as an agent of change. This is an intervention based on relationships and affection. This does not mean that results cannot be measured, that we can never communicate the work we do and that there are no concrete, immediate and efficient assistance measures</p> <p>Bring to the community alternative discourses than the stigmatised ones they have been exposed to. Connect people, groups, and existing social mechanisms. Create “neutral” space to meet people and promote activities.</p>	<p>Be known in the neighbourhood.</p> <p>Be discreet and respectful.</p> <p>Have varied and useful information: first aid, Internet sites, risk mitigation, news about the neighbourhood, provide kinship and friendship...</p> <p>Learn to understand the demands.</p> <p>Use your body as a form of language and substance which people can relate their sorrows or joys to. Move on the border of authority and the neighbourhood, of the institutions and the people. Do not sink into either of those two environments</p> <p>Put into practice training, leisure, adventure, recreational activities, etc. with populations for whom you work to open-up new horizons for, to promote participation and positive experiences, to create a sense of trust and situations in which demands can be made and people can be heard.</p>	<p>Availability and nearness.</p> <p>Regular and solid presence.</p> <p>Discretion, respecting life rhythms and cultures.</p> <p>Understanding the landscape.</p> <p>Understanding the times.</p> <p>Making contacts.</p> <p>References for the community.</p> <p>Methodological flexibility: adaptation, to any situation.</p> <p>Knowledge of and recognition for different professionals on the ground.</p> <p>Own tools and resources.</p> <p>A team that provides support.</p>

## **2.4 Street work Management**

### **Organising the work and managing human resources**

Team work, in partnerships and tandems, should be promoted. Too many professionals run out of steam because they are alone and feel left on their own. According to the cultural contexts and the mandates, some teams constantly mobilize partners in a team on the ground while others invest alone in certain sectors, with different ways of sharing and exchanging. This way they avoid slipping into isolation (reciprocal visits on the ground, regular meetings, regular telephone contact, etc.)

The management approach is based on a planned team, service and sector. We are talking about an educational project for which operational and overall objectives and how they will work and be delivered, should be written down. Actions will be scheduled in the short and medium term.

Even if that seems to be a constraint, it guarantees a strong institutional context, ready to mobilise teams. Also, the more a certain framework is defined, the easier newcomers will find it to become integrated.

This process of objectives allows for the introduction of a work basis, a central theme. Indeed, some teams have difficulties when confronted with professional problems and disagreements based on:

- A lack of teamwork (distributing tasks, attributing different people in the community to different workers, working alone),
- A loss of audience and in quality of action,

Other teams cannot always resist the pressures and demands made by some institutions, when they did not set clear priorities.

Any rigid standardisation should be banned, out of respect for the field differences and the different practices of educational teams. However some compulsory elements should be put in place.

Many propositions should be taken in to consideration:

- Clearly defined hierarchy within your institution and people's roles
- Attention should be given to educational activities and technical help for educational teams
- Internal information exchange practices should be developed

Team meetings should also be regulated. There should be a distinction for:

- Specific matter of the day,
- Minutes for the meetings,
- Respect for working hours,
- Participants' involvement,
- Conditions allowing everybody to speak

## Tools and liaison methods

Mastery and definition of these tools is essential. Different reporting methods include: project sheets; activity reports; workers' sheets for individual follow-up; annual study on the targeted audiences and the duty book.

Planning working hours is one of the best and most efficient reporting tools. Qualitative analysis of this should also be carried out on a regular basis in order to get a better understanding of different activities and their diversity.

These tools are all the written documents and a real guidance for the team. Regular assessments, monitoring neighbourhoods, and carrying out evaluations will indicate whether there is a necessity to replicate an activity, if an activity needs to be extended or redeployed to another area.

## Training and supporting educational teams

Even if they are part of a team, street workers are often **alone while in contact with young people** and in many educational situations. A team is needed to take some distance in evaluating and analysing situations and actions. Street teams cannot do everything, together with their administration board they have to have a clear awareness of what their mission and competencies are.

*A manager with experience of detached youth work made a regular commitment to accompany their new and novice staff in their street work. This provided valuable 'on the street' coaching to the workers, reduced their sense of isolation and bolstered their confidence in working with some challenging young people. Being close to the street also gave the manager a better understanding of the issues and problems affecting the area. This enabled them to speak with greater authority at meetings with the representatives of other organisations and gain greater recognition of the value of detached youth work.*

*Street workers' workshop in the United Kingdom*

In the framework of this mission, a team has to be able to take the initiatives and risks that are needed. This is only possible if the administration board is responsible and available, and if the team on the ground benefits from a real manoeuvring margin and if both structures trust each other.

The administrative framework is responsible for offering support, supervision and the conditions that allow for a good working pace.

## Inter-institutional relationships and partnerships

Presence in the field and sharing experiences with young people allows for the building and maintenance of a "trust capital" and "companionship" that are needed when putting a mission into action.

The fact that the street workers' team is regularly sought in different places of interaction and exchange should be negotiated internally, so as not to harm the visibility to the audience. However we want to draw the attention to two symptoms of having too many internal meetings:

- Time on the ground and time for your audience disappears;
- The most efficient times for this visibility also tend to disappear (evenings, weekends...)

Partnerships with other institutions (drawing up and discussing activities) can be assured by people other than those on the ground; people who work in administration and people who are higher up the ladder have a role to play in that matter.

*In an area of high crime, detached youth workers joined a multi-agency team designed to prevent and deter young people from involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour. Whilst recognising the positive aspects of this work, the workers had concerns about confidentiality, sharing information with the police and retaining their status as educators. They negotiated a joint induction period in which the values and roles of each partner agency were discussed and clarified. This enabled a series of protocols to be agreed upon, which gave the detached youth workers greater confidence and ensured a wider respect for their work.*

*Street Workers' Workshop in the United Kingdom*

The organisation employing street workers is responsible for the team work carried out on the ground. The existence of a third party between the representative and the actor in the field, (an administration board, a director) is essential.

### **Qualification and supervision**

It is essential to display qualifications through continuous training or putting in place supervision techniques to monitor:

- Professional development and progress
- The environmental analysis and drawing up integration strategies
- The analysis of certain situations and drawing up intervention strategies
- Critical reflection and questioning the challenges
- Introspection and distance between oneself and the environment
- Management of stress and tensions
- Management of « Burn-out » risks
- Personal development
- Team work (sharing information, reflecting on certain situations, interviews conducted with a young person and the establishment of oral contracts with him or her together with a colleague)

Establishing trust is essential for street workers to question their practices. To be better directed, street workers have a lot to win when they have support in their search for resources adapted to their personal profile and specific needs, be it on the basis of companionship with a senior colleague, psychological assistance offered by the employer, private consultations with specialised professionals, or within the framework of a collective supervision process.



### **Some favourable conditions for street work<sup>40</sup>**

- A support team
- External supervision
- Coaching by someone from the street work sphere
- Companionship or sponsorship during the integration phase
- A manoeuvring margin and enough support to take the time needed to negotiate the integration phase
- The provision of a framework, and coordination by a professional who understands street work and has a mandate to do street work.
- Knowledge of street work practices and the ethical dimension through coordination work and the provision of a framework.
- Mutual recognition of other work sectors in the field
- A budget for street work including tools, materials needed for the environment in which one works (condoms, information, games...)
- Access to training

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<sup>40</sup> ATTRueQ Montréal region. Also see in the bibliography the work carried out under the direction of Annie Fontaine with Médecins du Monde as well as work carried out with Michelle Duval from the École de travail social of UQAM on the issues of relationships between street workers and other workers.

## 2.5 Evaluation of street work

From the beginning one should make a distinction between **checks** and **evaluation**. Checks consist of verifying that actions are implemented efficiently, or the use of human and financial resources, which all falls within the project management sphere.

Both internally and externally, this check is important and necessary in order to make street work professional. It would be deceptive and counterproductive to think that a street worker has nobody to report to.

On the contrary, it is more than ever a real “**public service**”, a third party who is available to those who are experiencing various difficulties and who require a helping hand that other public or private services cannot, or do not want to offer.

The issue of evaluation is more complex. It questions our way of **thinking about efficiency**. François Jullien, philosopher and sociologist, demonstrates in his “Treaty on efficiency”<sup>41</sup>, “*the difficulty that European thinking has always encountered in building a theory of efficiency. In the face of that difficulty, he opposes the Chinese strategy approach that starts with ancient texts from the V/VI century before our era*”<sup>42</sup>.

Two ways of thinking about efficiency can therefore be proposed as can be seen in the table below.

The **propensity model** shows the conditions for success of a social intervention. Let us try to provide a sketch of it<sup>43</sup>:

	<b>Instrumental Model</b>	<b>Propensity Model</b>
<b>Concept framework Domain of the action</b>	Building a Model for action Application	Registration in the process Operation
<b>Areas of action</b>	Target, objectives, sponsor, implementation	Estimation, support, consolidation
<b>Relationship with the environment</b>	Breakdown of the fabric	Support on the setup
<b>Effective method sought</b>	Direct	Indirect
<b>Implementation method</b>	Early planning Commitment /action	No early plan Unfolding / adaptation
<b>Priority Attitude</b>	Will	Implication
<b>Place specifications Timeframe</b>	Specific Attributions Short, intensive, manageable	No own place Long, slow, gradual
<b>Decisive Act</b>	Anticipative action	Double bait
<b>Energy mode</b>	Power relationship	Flexibility
<b>Coherence Criteria Quality of the result</b>	Respect for the guidelines Visibility	Interactive polarisation Discretion

If at first glance the institutional model seems clearer, and not only to westerners, its comparison to street work demonstrates its lack of relevance in the framework of real evaluation.

<sup>41</sup> Traité de l'efficacité. François Jullien, Paris, Grasset, 1996.

<sup>42</sup> La prévention, un concept en déperdition, Jacqueline Fastrès, Jean Blairon, Luc Pire, 2002.

<sup>43</sup> J. Fastès - Jean Blairon - *La prévention dans l'aide à la jeunesse. Un concept en perdition* - R.T.A. Asbl 1997.

### **Concept framework and domain of the action.**

In street work, starting with a predefined intervention model often goes against the reality on the ground, which is unpredictable.

Counting on the process underway and using the potential of the situation means not getting bogged down in problems stemming from predefined solutions which must be employed at any price.

The quality of such a process is much more interesting as it allows for evolution and creativity.

### **Areas of action and relationship with the environment.**

Every situation brings with it the solution to the problem; the street worker will continuously re-evaluate the situation in terms of its evolution. While ensuring specific support, he will try to consolidate the results obtained. In order to do this, he will focus on the potential, on what is undergone and what exists on a daily basis.

Street workers must take care not to implement their own solution, and to wait until certain conditions are favourable, to finally accompany the person along their own path.

### **Effective method sought and Implementation method.**

The effectiveness of street work cannot be summed up with a direct, unequivocal result. A dominant element should be the capacity for constant adaptation of the process, its relevance in time and the effects produced by the situation.

### **Priority Attitude.**

With hindsight, the lack of planning takes nothing away from the need for the street worker to work in a relevant, efficient way and to be prepared for this type of intervention. The propensity mode, as with its characteristics, requires no less attention, involvement and investment from the street worker. He must be receptive to everything that the situation may bring, thanks to or in spite of him.

### **Place specifications and timeframe.**

This particular area goes hand in hand with the constant concern of not being bogged down in a specific problem. This would overshadow the many faces and complexity of every situation.

Tackling the different problems in a more global way allows them to be better placed.

Banking on the process underway should only be done over time, gradually, slowly and continually.

### **Decisive Act.**

It is the combination of the long term and the background which make street work relevant. Street workers often refer to the vital link between individual assistance, community action and group action because it is through interaction with these three sections that the 'double bait' comes into play and real progress is possible.

## **3. Contexts and challenges of street work**

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### **3.1 A multi-faceted practice**

Street work is characterised by its many sources of influence and names as well as by its adaptation to different people and social situations. Today it is present in the majority of countries, as a result of initiatives aiming to tackle the various social problems. The profession shares many issues despite the different contexts in which it operates. This final section of the guide aims to reflect this multi-faceted nature of street work, as well as some of the challenges encountered by those putting it into practice.

#### **3.1.1. Many different influences**

The history of street work brings with it many sources of influence. Swayed by charitable waves just as much as political currents, in service of technocratic social managers as well as social movements, over time street work became a way for social classes to moralise, as well as being a means of emancipation for downtrodden people.

Basically, tensions which now mark the direction of street work are rooted in a long history where different people and institutions targeted this practice as a way of regulating the social classes, as a balm for the flaws of society or even as a tool to mobilise the marginalised social groups.

In such a context, and especially considering the international reach of this guide, it appears difficult to sum up the background to this practice. Indeed, from North America to Western Europe, from South America to Asia going via the African, Scandinavian and Eastern European countries, many histories of street work unfold, intermingle and diverge. Here it was begun by religious missionaries, there by social activists, sometimes flanked by sociologists, other times by social workers or educators, supported in some places by political authorities yet considered subversive in other national contexts, street work was built by many partly converging, partly contradictory people.

Now today, while the forms of street work continue to vary, we may note that these different influences feed the practice at the same time as feeding the tensions which mark its direction. Thus, observers of the evolution of street work will note that the growing interest in this practice in recent years reflects the mobilisation efforts made by civil society, working towards better collective well-being, just as much as the use made of tools for local reinvestment in the social fabric, with the prospect of more effective and less expensive checks.

Additionally, even if some political powers do seem seduced by the apparent congruence of street work, we lament the fact that they do not absorb the importance of all its aspects. In fact, in some countries in the North, financial resources appear, accompanied by a framework establishing short term targets, focussing on security options or targeting specific socio-sanitary objectives. Therefore, while one form of street work is seen to be highly promoted, the rest remains ignored and is replaced by new goals. Likewise in the South, there is interest, but the financial support does not always appear, or if it does it is accompanied by restrictive instructions.

In such a context, every local and national history of street work must be closely examined in order to understand the reasons behind its present colour. That said, despite all the differences marking the evolution of street work in the north, south, east and west, many street workers who come together in the same network today hope to benefit from this practice. In this way they will counter the dehumanisation of the methods of managing social and educational

structures, either because of negligence on the part of public authorities for marginalised people or on the contrary, because they have taken over in an overly-institutionalised way.

All in all, at the crossroads of the many paths of street work, sharing experiences from different countries allows us to underline the relevance of this practice in order to overcome the widening gulf which traps certain fringes of society and their quality of life in a downward spiral. Allowing us to get close to people and their problems, this extra-muros practice does seem to be a way of developing social action that is capable of adapting to the changing social realities. In other words, this convergence of different stories allows us to rebuild a shared perception of more humane and more realistic social action, where the individual becomes a priority once more and not the means.

Today, however the institutional or political context linked to street work varies from one country to another, this practice is mainly distinguished by the questions and issues that it raises. Indeed, considering that this type of action cannot be reduced to a purely technical or even methodological level, it is important to recognise that its interest revolves around its ethical and political level, in constant interaction with its environment and the changing society.

It is in this emerging context that the international network of street workers was born. The construction of a group of social street workers is no small feat even in the history of this practice. Indeed, the scarcity of means that street work projects generally suffer from does not really facilitate group investment of this type. Street workers are also far too busy with their own tasks and problems which are characteristic of this kind of social work, and they are forced to dedicate massive amounts of energy to fundraising in order to keep their project alive.

Despite everything, the network was created primarily because a stance needed to be taken in the face of certain current issues and many needs that were not being met. Noting that they are confronted with similar issues and problems, street workers judged that their alliance could help them to pursue their objectives of improving collective wellbeing. To this end, the commitment of street workers in the Democratic Republic of Congo to see the creation of a new child protection law is exemplary in terms of the potential of this national and international mobilisation and shows the symbolic strength which this sharing represents.

### 3.1.2. *One profession, different names.*

There are many different names for the work of these professionals who operate in public places such as streets, parks, schools, etc.

Indeed, each country and context has its own particular background which leads to its own categorisation; categorisation and names which end up not making sense outside the specific contexts.

If the common denominator for all street workers consists in *taking responsibility for the people where they are*, the strategies of distinction vary according to proximity, people, problems, etc.

Local traditions and cultures also influence the concepts.

It is no less true that everywhere, **the street becomes a new centre of gravity.**

The term '**street work**', translated into most languages, still remains the most used term to indicate the fact of working in the street.

In some countries such as Belgium, the word '**social**' is added to this name. A distinction is therefore to be made between:

- **Street education** which encourages socio-educational support and community action.
- **Street activities** which encourage the organisation of group, cultural and sporting activities as well as support for people carrying out their projects.

The predominance of education also comes to light in terms such as **street pedagogue** (Poland), **street educator** (French speaking countries and Spanish-speaking countries) and **street teacher** (Italy).

In Quebec for example, alongside street work which particularly targets the so-called marginalised social spaces such as bars, 'piqueries', squats and apartments,...we also talk about **travail de milieu** which targets institutional social areas such as schools, establishments, etc.

English-speakers also use the term, '**Outreach work**' which indicates street work that encourages the redirection or a move towards specific services adapted to people's problems. On the other hand, '**Detached work**' does not target this kind of direction but focuses its action in all the living areas of the target public.

'**Street-based work**' is different from the latter because it is work that is only done in the street.

These few terms used throughout the world will never be exhaustive while so many different realities exist. Therefore according to local cultures, institutional contexts and different issues linked to the organisation of social services in each of the countries, differing terminology characterises the different practices associated with 'street work'. It is almost impossible to discuss the many nuances which mark their similarities and differences in such a short guide. We must reiterate the point that words do not say everything and that it is important to place each definition in its context.

*I saw these kinds of kids in the area where I had worked before, but they would not come to us, to the place where we worked. So I decided to join the people who wanted to help this kind of neglected and marginalized children. These kids are marginalized to such an extent that even helpful institutions like youth clubs, etc, would not be able to help them. So the only way is to reach them in a different way, and street-work is just it.*

*Every day is a new challenge, and it is never routine. I simply like it.*

*I also learn a lot of things that are very useful in my private life and lots of things about myself. And I have plans for the future to extend street-work activity, support new organizations, because this is good and also a cheap way of helping people in need.*

*Street workers' workshop in Poland*

*In the street and the neighbourhoods, parents are used to calling me 'the kids' lawyer'. I don't know why because I mainly work on professional training projects for young people. But, based on that, we often talk about many other things which young people are concerned about. We very quickly become general practitioners for young people.*

*Street workers' workshop in Tunisia*

### **3.1.3. Different people**

No one can escape the risk of impoverishment and disaffiliation. Therefore it is logical to find all sorts of age brackets in the street and greatly diverse situations (street children, working children, the exploited, prostitutes, homeless, marginal adults, drug addicts...).

Even if in this work, there is often the issue of children and youngsters as target groups, it is a fact that many adults are involved and accompanied by street workers. More and more often, entire families are living in the street. This diversity implies methodological adaptations.

Although the street bring with it risks and dangers, it is also a place for socialisation and resistance. The complex and demanding problem of street children is improving and being recognised for what it is, as is the way we see the young people using the street. For certain professionals, living on the street is not only the negative and alienating result of a disaffiliation process; but it also represents, for many children, positive strategies of immediate survival, of rebuilding structural social and transitional links in order to better control their future.

Understanding the phenomenon in its various lights enables us to adopt intervention approaches which have greater respect for the real issues. For example, we can overcome the charitable and pessimistic vision (the street is bad in itself) which compels us to take corrective measures first (take the child out of the street). In this way we can see the street as a producer of sense and enrichments, and use it as a framework for action to help the child build a future as a responsible adult.

Particular attention must be paid to the issue of gender and the importance of properly considering the differences between the situations of teenagers, girls and boys, women and men.

Undergoing the same type of exclusion, not everybody always has the same tools to resist and to survive. A young girl in the street is often exposed to greater danger. On the other hand, one cannot ignore the crucial part played by women as development actors. This is why it is important to take as a basis the resources of the environment, such as certain groups of women.

### **Girls and women in the street: double stigmatisation**

The situation of girls and women who live on the street is doubly complex, as the fact that they are women and the fact that they live on the street combine to place them in a situation of greater exclusion and vulnerability, in the face of the machismo which dominates in contemporary society.

Like many other women in the world, one of the greatest violations of their human rights lies in the refusal to allow them to decide what happens to their bodies and the denial of their sexual and reproductive rights, which in its crudest form results in pregnancy. Although girls and women often find themselves pregnant following unprotected sex, or abuse and rape, the decision regarding the future of the pregnancy is often taken by the institutions and women's aid programmes: their pregnancy only counts in a few places where they receive professional care and must face an immediate refusal of their wish to be a mother in the street. This social exclusion because they are women runs so deep that the problem becomes invisible, and we do not have reliable information on its true size.

In cases where teenagers and young women live alone with their children in the street, the predominant tendency is that of prioritising a situation where the baby is vulnerable, taking him from his mother by force to place him in an institution (either public or private). The moral conflict doubtlessly permits this violation of certain rights. Indeed, as it is difficult to accept the way of life of teenage girls and their children in the street, or of a pregnant woman, there is a social survival network which protects them from risks and/or the most urgent needs. Unfortunately, the voice and needs of the young mother are not often heard, which is strange in a rights-based approach, in order to guarantee the young mother and baby the best conditions to live together. What we see on a daily basis is the use of force to take her children away and to hold her publicly accountable for her way of life.

#### **3.1.4. Different social situations**

The globalisation of a dominant market model is generating a political, economical, social and cultural crisis, seen both in the North and in the South. The intensity of the competition to conquer new markets, debt, the austerity and structural adjustment policies laid down by the international financial institutions, are producing various degrees of increasing inequalities and social exclusion.

The standardization of development policies and behaviours tends to reduce individuals to a status of consumer and to crush cultural identities. Furthermore, these phenomena of impoverishment, exclusion and attacks on identity go hand in hand with a process of



individualisation of society, which leads to a lack of citizen participation in public affairs. Moreover, given the increase in poverty and exclusion throughout the world, dialogue between political and economical leaders and the people crumbles. The former see the latter as responsible for and guilty of their situation and so place the weight of social delinquency firmly on the shoulders of the individuals.

For a long time we considered the “excluded” to be someone who does not benefit from the effects of growth. Notwithstanding the considerable increase of the world’s wealth, an important margin of the population remains in situations of great destitution. We must not forget that today more than half of the world’s population lives on less than 1 Euro per day and that 83% of the world’s wealth belongs to only 20% of the population.

Thus, while the frontiers of development are crossing every society and metropolis in the North and South, there are unfortunately people who profit from the production and accumulation of wealth and those who will never profit from an equal share of the world’s wealth. Youngsters who are unemployed, homeless, with low incomes, youngsters of foreign origin, those who live in the most destitute areas... The gulf increases between them.

On the one hand (the ‘haves’) those who get by and profit more or less from the growth, but who constantly fear passing to the other side, are suspicious of the others (the have-nots.) On the other hand, those excluded from growth are subject to severe stigmatisation. Where virtual social identity replaces real social identity, the image that one has of the other becomes reality, thus increasing the gap between them.

This evolution of the concept of the excluded shows how much people threatened by scarcity of material resources are made vulnerable by the crumbling of their relationship fabric. *Thus these people find themselves not only en route to poverty but also to disaffiliation,*<sup>44</sup> that is, breakdown of social links. Economic instability becomes destitution and fragile relationships become isolation.

It is in this context that in the eyes of the well-to-do, the “dangerous figures” of growth, the drug addicts, delinquents, the marginalized, etc. appear.

In Africa, as with everywhere else in the world, the street represents the greatest danger of social destabilisation of the efforts made in children’s education. It constitutes a significant challenge for the political actors and techniques of social work. The street child, or better expressed, the child at odds with society is the unacceptable victim of an evil which is increasing throughout the whole of society

*Most of the social workers in the Democratic Republic of Congo have developed socio-educational strategies with great feeling, courage and intelligence in circumstances that are always difficult. They started by meeting the children and have endeavoured to meet their primary needs (food, clothes, health care, temporary accommodation for the night) hoping to encourage them to leave the street of their own free will and most of all to obtain their support for various projects at first, and if possible to encourage their family integration or their placement in adapted and specialised institutions (hostels, youth centres or training workshops...). A no less important number manage to get through and to integrate into society. But others do not.*

*When evaluating their strategies and approaches, most of the educators question their first choice more and more.*

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<sup>44</sup> In *Magazine littéraire*. - July - August 1995 - p.21 - L'avènement d'un individualisme négatif. Robert Castel

*They abandon the option of heavy strategies (hostels, boarding centres) and choose a process of a mainly socio-educational nature. The reasons for this change are many and varied:*

- The increasing number of children and youngsters in the street, be it living or working in it,*
- The will to help the child enter into an educational partnership,*
- The community and interactive choice, in other words to get the local community involved.*

*Democratic Republic of Congo street workers' workshop*

Consequently this is the end of a system where the individual "is taken charge of". Rather it is the introduction of a diversified partnership, solidly located in neighbourhoods where the youngsters live and work. In short, it is more the educator who has to radically change his strategies, his approaches and his methods of social intervention

**From the moment he recognises the child as a subject of its development, his entire approach is called into question.**

## **3.2. The facets of social exclusion**

Different paradigms are mobilised to tackle issues concerning social exclusion. It goes without saying that this guide does not intend to tackle all theoretical points of view on the issue. Nevertheless, it is worth highlighting how rubbing shoulders with so-called excluded people, directly in the public eye, helps to envisage their situation from a perspective which primarily views them as people in their own right and thus resists pessimistic, security-focussed or technocratic interpretations.

### **3.2.1. Living in the street: an emerging social phenomenon in the face of social exclusion**

Talking about people for whom being on the street has become a way of life is already a global phenomenon; in most countries, groups of people for whom the street is a place of survival can be found.

It is important to mention that coming to live on the street is the result of different social exclusion processes, which mean that because of a given social situation these people are deprived of or isolated from the possibility of having personal and human development.

Through different periods of human history, women, children, and youth have been denied participation in matters that affect them because they were considered inferior and incapable of having a say on matters that concern their lives or society. This reality hasn't changed for numerous groups of human beings; some societal and structural conditions that keep groups of the population separated from opportunities to develop are persisting.

Groups of people who are surviving on the streets do not only exist in less developed countries or countries where there are great disparities in wealth distribution. The most widespread idea is that such groups exist only in large cities of Latin America or Africa where one can find children, girls and boys, young people, women, families and adults on the streets. However this is also the case in Europe, North America and Asia. This helps us to understand that the category of social analysis known as "social exclusion" is not only a matter related to economic poverty, but that other elements also play a role, like cultural, environmental, educational and political factors. For example, an illegal immigrant in Europe experiences social exclusion because he has no access to social welfare or solidarity networks, and struggles to understand a different language and new culture; this puts him or her in a disadvantageous situation when seeking employment that would enable him to earn enough money to find a decent place to live, to access health services, or leisure activities. This is how his condition as an illegal immigrant will keep him socially excluded despite personal efforts, and there is a high probability that he will live and develop a new identity centred around survival on the streets.

People who are socially excluded are also a hidden population, a group whose social existence is denied. Such people are totally deprived of rights, because they are generally invisible and hidden away from decision makers. We are unaware of how they live, and sometimes they seek to remain hidden to protect themselves from discrimination and social violence perpetuated against them.

In the face of such ignorance and an individualised approach, relationships between men and women who live on the street and the government and institutions are commonly reduced to an "irregular doctrine" that punishes those who are "abnormal or socially deviant" and denies them recognition as individuals with legal rights. From then on, social policy, institutional models, and educational methods are only of limited use in changing their lifestyles, and they even become factors for discrimination and sustained living on the streets because they set up

an instrumental relationship based on the use of services without bringing about transformation in people's future lifestyle expectations.

In this last decade, an educational street workers' group has reflected on its own educational practice, and has suggested an analysis category that allows us to better understand the relationship between social exclusion and life on the streets. **The populations that live on the streets** are composed of diverse groups that are the results of historical social exclusion factors within large segments of the population. They are composed of boys, girls, young people, women, families, adults and elderly people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds who, through surviving on the streets for generations, learn to live in groups and share knowledge, social networks, and spaces. Even if the academic literature in that field has noticed the presence of children and adults living on the streets since the colonisation of Latin America, or the Middle Ages in Europe, it is only over recent decades that this phenomenon has taken on an international and massive scale. Furthermore, over different generations of children born on the street, generational changes have in some cases favoured the existence of a "street culture"; highly efficient for survival in that environment, but which is an obstacle to institutional interventions that do not recognise the knowledge inherent in street people.

The concept of "street children" is the most global and visible one, in part thanks to the attention given to it by some international organisations and governments which reduce it to the problems of children abandoned by their family and the shortcomings of the educational system. However this notion hides the complex social interactions of the street, denying the recognition of citizenship and individual rights, by considering it a topic regarding the "protection" of individuals. This is how the initiatives of governments and institutions that try to help generally have no impact as they do not use participatory processes or social apprenticeship. Instead they limit the situation to the notion of "non-adapted individuals" and tend only to think about institutional detentions or social cleansing. In most countries there are no public policies or budgets specifically dedicated to this social group

While day by day through science we learn more about the human universe or genetics, social sciences have remained distant from the people who live on the street. Even after more than 50 years of having people on the street, we still only talk about "street children" or "people in need". Research articles quote each other but do not contribute any new knowledge to help understand the complexity of the phenomenon. Departing from the notions of "street children" or "homeless people", it is no longer possible to create new knowledge about the street phenomenon, and it renders difficult the application of an approach based on legal rights within institutional practices. Beyond the different initiatives – some with interesting results and others that have disappeared because of their inconsistency – there is a lack of organised structures with which to encourage dialogue and recognition of the social actors involved: people who live on the streets, street workers, institutions and governments. In general, public actions lack a global vision of the street phenomenon, give priority to assistance interventions and are far from the processes of citizen participation.

Other strategic actors whose knowledge is seldom heeded are the social educators working on the streets. It is through their work that institutions and programmes directly reach populations in the shared spaces or hideouts where they survive. Unfortunately, most social street educators inherit a traditional institutional outlook and lack the methodological tools and the concepts needed to carry out their educational work on the streets, and this often results in failures during interventions. The profession is poorly recognised, given that in most countries, even if that work has been carried out for over 20 years, there is a lack of specialisation centres, and very little public investment in providing training for those who wish to work in the field. All of this means that training in that line of work can only be

acquired empirically: on the job day by day, by being close to children and young people in the heart of their environment.

Contributing new ideas in order to understand the street phenomenon, i.e. to stop talking about “street children”, and to embrace a broader vision in talking about “street populations”, allows us to give people who live on the streets a new dimension as “historical change agents”. But it also allows us to use the human rights declaration as a guiding element for educational work with this group of people made up of socially excluded boys, girls, young people, women, families and adults who find a place for survival and social existence on the street.

The paradigms of “street populations”, “street cultures” and “human rights” favour the creation of an innovative thought process and a new social practice for governments, institutions and street workers. Such a thought process, together with a horizontal exchange of thoughts, methodologies and intervention programmes will have an impact on the emergence of new knowledge, that will help adjust governments’ and institutions’ social practices to bring about a rights-based approach for social educators and street work.

### **3.2.2. *What do we do with those who will not leave the streets?***

Throughout the world and for over three decades, different public and private programmes have been developed to offer alternatives for life away from the streets, and some of these programmes have received significant public funding, while others have been supported by social organisations. However, a significant number of people continue to adopt the street as a way of life. The decision to stay on the public highway and to make the street a viable alternative for life can only be understood through the construction of a street culture (Pérez Garcia, 2002), in comprehending how an ensemble of ways of life, customs, knowledge and degree of development allow people living in the street to build a value judgement and to decide to stay in street groups, which in turn represent a process of socialisation among the excluded people.

In the majority of public and private initiatives there has always been a vision of assistance which is based on viewing people as ‘objects to be protected’ and ‘needing care’. The social image of this population is basically a lot of false beliefs which prevent broader reflection on the complexity of this social group, instead of reducing the subject to the family/private domain by considering them as inadaptable, dangerous victims, agents of all evil.

Supervisory discrimination is one of the greatest violations of the human rights of people living in the street. They are automatically likened to the ‘minority and incompetent’, without having their opinion heard on subjects affecting them, by having their status as subjects with rights denied, because a supervisory vision does not recognise the citizenship of those who are excluded from social life. The conceptual definition itself that was used to indicate these people, leads us to an interesting debate on the intrinsic difficulty of recognising them as social actors in a town; without shelter, with no fixed abode, vagabonds, drug addicts, minors in particularly difficult situations, street children, are just some of the expressions which contribute to their not being recognised as valuable citizens or representatives.

Supervisory discrimination is a subtle, disguised extension of traditional discrimination, distinguishing between those who find themselves outside ‘the norm’. This type of discrimination rests on two factual principles: being a minor or incompetent, whatever the person’s age or cognitive capacity. This means that all the protection activities are not ‘affirmative actions with a rights-based approach’ to facilitate the exercising of human rights, because basically it is used as a way of justifying authoritarian action. In the case of street

children, this takes on a complex curious aspect, given that from ‘speeches on rights’ a traditional view is imposed based on the vision of needs which superimposes a vision based on rights. It therefore seems simple to reach the conclusion that it is possible to violate a right by putting other rights under supervision. For example, ‘saving their life’ seems to contradict the respect for the right to freedom and to give their opinion on subjects affecting them, whereas a thorough picture of human rights may establish a hierarchy among rights, as all rights must be respected in the same way.

### **3.2.3. Substance consumption as a cause of the onset of exclusion and denial of rights**

Different studies (Lucchini, 1993; Medina, 2000) maintain that drug consumption among people on the street is a strong component of their identity and socialisation among groups of peers. This is why girls, boys, young people and men and women living in the street frequently suffer from problematic usage of illegal substances. This is why the integration process in alternative centres other than the street becomes more and more difficult for them. The lack of positive social networks and the social stigma that goes along with this prevents them from finding formal employment which supports the inclusion process. The image of a downward spiral of negative events would best portray the idea that the drug-takers call ‘hitting bottom’.

Once again supervisory discrimination, conveying a traditional approach, bases its intervention on the denial of rights for those who live in social exclusion. The voices of street people are ignored because they are considered to be harmful to themselves, lacking the necessary faculties to be able to take care of themselves. This is why priority is given to the decisions of the authorities on the lives of children and young people in the street.

### **3.2.4. Criminalisation and repression**

The other extreme side of the coin lies in the criminalisation of poverty, as a frequent response of the authorities as regards the street phenomenon.

Throughout the world, the social phenomenon of people living in the streets has grown and become more complex. The official response has tended towards control and repression of its development through different strategies. Perhaps one of the most discussed, due to its flagrant violations of the human rights of street people is the model called the ‘Giuliani Syndrome’. This was applied in New York City and came to light on the world stage. It basically consisted of what we call ‘zero tolerance’ and the implementation of subsidised assistance mechanisms, for people living outside the ‘American lifestyle’. There were many complaints of police brutality and of the deterioration of living standards in the streets of New York.

Rudolph Giuliani’s way of viewing the public places and the inhabitants of the street includes the aforementioned supervisory discrimination; basically because he reduces poverty to the responsibility of people who ‘pose a problem for the inhabitants of the city’, thereby reversing the relationship of inequality by denying that it is society which has excluded these young, unemployed people who are limited to doing informal jobs. On the same level, it denies the existence of street people, in particular children, by associating them with poverty, unstable work, the lack of social policies on redistribution of income etc., directly placing those living in the street into the melting pot of potential delinquents.

### **3.3. The challenges to the stance of street work**

The previous chapters brought to light the aims of and reasons behind street work, the way to go about and to implement this practice, as well as the many different forms that it takes and the realities it aims to respond to. In this home stretch of the journey on the methodology of street work, this last section aims to highlight the challenges to the stance of this field of work in the current social context.

#### **3.3.1. Street work, a social response to a social problem.**

In the context we have just described, we may note that we live in an **increasingly fragmented society**. The groups we belong to or which feel different reject each other more and more systematically. Everything makes a difference: skin colour, where you live, school and religion. The gulfs between youngsters and elders, between men and women, between youngsters from difficult areas, etc. are growing.

In such a climate of division, for the people who are criticised, the place of delinquent or drug addict is often more enviable than no place at all. As we saw earlier, this labelling falls under the umbrella of **stigmatisation**, by which a **virtual identity gradually replaces the real identity of the weakest people**. It is therefore what we think of others, the images and prejudices, which take precedence over the reality.

**Now, we need to be aware to what extent the daily experience of being stigmatised** is loaded with consequences for the individual and for those who are close to him. The phenomenon stems from a generally objective and real element so as to deduce all sorts of more subjective and very often wrong characteristics. Therefore a youngster living in a difficult neighbourhood for instance, very promptly risks being considered as dangerous. Gradually and based on what we noted at the beginning, stigmatisation will result in all sorts of considerations such as:

- A devaluation of his own capacities and potentialities (“if he lives in this neighbourhood, he will find it harder to learn”);
- A dehumanisation and the impression of a risk of danger from the stigmatised person. “There is a lot of violence in that area... what about him?”
- An internalisation of the stigma and of its unfortunate characteristics. The place of the delinquent is easier than to have no place at all
- The construction of a virtual identity substituting the real identity.
- A feeling of constant unrest and insecurity by the stigmatised person.
- The feeling of permanently playing a part. The stigmatised person loses his right to a private life.

One of the main issues for street work is to restore **the social relationship to the real social identities**. It is precisely a question of contributing to make the real image of the people encountered **visible**.

*They are what people call "Khate", a word, which originally described the plastic takers only but that is now used for calling all those children who work, live and sleep on the street.*

*"Khate" is a very negative term and children refuse to be called that. Anyway this word well describes the negative public opinion towards street children. They are considered as social parasites, small criminals, drugs abusers and thieves. The fact that they use bad words, wear dirty clothes and refuse any social constraints makes the general public think that the street children are basically and internally unsocial persons.*

*Street workers' Workshop in Nepal*

### **3.3.2. The street worker; a privileged witness**

Street workers obviously occupy a privileged position to report on the catastrophic effects of a system dominated by the laws of the market. Likewise, the worsening of economic problems and their consequences on impoverishment invite us to thoroughly reflect and to feel solidarity with the most excluded populations.

*In the spirit of street workers, "it is really a question of helping an individual who is losing their reference points, coming 'unstuck' while trying to build a future, linking up with the social services while being an independent, responsible person in a long-term process of emancipation. To this end, the pole of subjectivity is a priority, the dimension of social checks becomes auxiliary, pushed down the list to an indirect effect of a positive socialisation process, which is thought out according to the person and not the danger or potential guilt that said person represents."*<sup>45</sup>

*Through his proximity and integration into the most excluded environments, the social street worker remains the last link in the educational chain link in many situations, trying to play an important role where all other authorities have failed in their task of socialisation and integration.*

*From this stance as witness-player involved in the heart of places where the daily lives of marginalised people unfold, the street worker's mission goes beyond direct intervention and has many dimensions:*

- *assess the problems experienced*
- *raise awareness of public opinion and of the authorities*
- *contribute to a better perception of the phenomena leading to exclusion*
- *and in so doing contribute to the construction of ways to solve the causes of social delinquency.*<sup>46</sup>

We note that throughout its history and currently, street work constitutes an excellent tool for **revealing** and **analysing** the **social area**, its **structure** and the **driving forces** prevailing in our societies.

Whether it is directly implemented by the **public authorities** or by the **associative sector**, street work is often created as a **reaction to the inadequacy** of the State and its institutions to take into consideration the needs of the most deprived and the most excluded people.

And this, in an international context where concerns are more geared to symptoms than to the causes.

<sup>45</sup>Aide à la jeunesse et Contrats de sécurité - Réflexions préliminaires, Yves CARTUYVELS, Mission Report, November 1994.

<sup>46</sup> In Training Guide : Social street work and communication with the media. Edwin de Boevé & Philippe Gosseries, 2005.



The implementation of such a mission of involvement and support therefore depends on the recognition of fundamental values of street work such as:

- **Respect** for the individual, recognition that he is a **subject** and **actor** in his own existence.
- Respect for **professional secrecy**
- Respect for the informal and non-formal **socio-educational scope**.
- Taking into consideration and valuing the **wealth** and **potential** of the target public.

It is basically around these values and the necessity to find **structural and lasting responses** to the difficulties experienced by the target public that a strong **associative dynamic** has developed among the street workers both at national and international level. Indeed, this alliance constitutes a means for street workers to act coherently with their deep convictions, by mobilising group action capable of extending the scope of their individual action to a more global level.

## Conclusion

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Our Senegalese colleague, Moussa Sow, regularly reminds us that if you plant a baobab tree today you will not pick the fruit yourself tomorrow.

It is true that a baobab only bears fruit after 200 years of growth and unless one has a particularly long life expectancy, the thing seems clear.

In the field of education, things often go like this. Which of our actions will we leave behind us? What about the real effects of street work? Can educational support come down to a disinterested act?

We know this type of question and the answers all too well.

It is up to everyone, individually or collectively, to answer in their own way over time.

In the same vein, the publication of this guide does not aim to be an answer but rather an invitation to pose further questions.

Its production is also part of a path where every step counts and it therefore traces one of the possible routes for substantial progress.

Stemming from many experiences on the ground, geographically very far from each other yet methodologically so very close, **the guide was drawn up in a real environment of thoughts and an upwardly participative process.**

Of course, the issue of the differing styles of writing was not the easiest task to overcome. Firstly, because writing is already a way of distorting reality, this daily reality dear to the heart of every street worker.

It follows that it would be deceptive to deny the cultural and societal models which cross over different styles of writing.

This is indeed where the richness of such an exercise lies, aiming to portray a **multi-faceted, multi-cultural** approach which respects the **differences** experienced on the ground, everywhere in the world.

Let us not forget that street workers from over 30 countries have been involved in this process. A process which above all wanted to avoid falling into the trap of short-cuts, hasty conclusions and hazarded comparisons, which end up 'comparing apples and pears'.

The members of the international network of street workers approved this document in the pilot group on November 20th in Ericeira in Portugal.

A shortened version will also be made available. Other publications on various themes such as the evaluation of actions, the problems found in the street...will follow in time.

The next publication and forthcoming exchanges will be on **street workers' training**. This guide is not an end in itself, but forms part of a stage, among others.

We could not have dreamed of a better picture than the one Jean Blairon paints in the epilogue that follows.

An epilogue which reminds us that nothing can be taken for granted by man, neither his strengths nor his weaknesses and that we should remain vigilant and upstanding in the face of issues worrying us.

### *A potential double incomprehension*

Frequently, street work causes a lot of “practical” incomprehension: the informal, unplanned nature of the interventions results in a certain tendency towards idleness; adaptation to people, with wild improvisation or inexplicable non intervention.

This guide book has endeavoured to show that this is not the case: street work, however many forms it may take and however unpredictable it may be, nevertheless implements precise, coherent and relevant action frameworks.

A second risk arises here: that of reducing this work to technical modes of action which could be adapted (i.e. be pinned onto) everywhere, whatever the context, whatever the direction.

On the contrary it is important to understand the intrinsic connection of the means and the end: the former and the latter having an unbreakable link and only making sense through that link.

This is why it seemed useful to conclude this methodology guide by linking together the practical aspects to the directions which give them sense, both at a political and societal level.

### *An emblematic scene*

An advertisement recently displayed in a Belgian train station: the main picture is of a rather peculiar centaur, half-woman and half-horse. The young woman/animal, with long blond curly hair, naked, has her back turned; she contemplates a notice board showing train times. Behind the board, facing us, a young executive, whose rather tight costume seems to symbolize the psyche, contemplates the “traveller”; his face expresses surprise, the posture of his body; attraction and mistrust. The caption asks us: “Seen something suspicious? Call freefone 0800...”

The scene seems to us an emblematic way of ‘sexing up’ the act of informing, as if doing so in a context loaded with ambiguity becomes as worthy as resistance to sexual temptation. The “something suspicious”, is the strangeness of the centaur, strangeness full of desirability. Through a metonymic shift, it is the act of informing which can become attractive rather than shameful.

The scene is exemplary of a tendency to “reverse all values” which affects our society; it is also a testimony of the new conception of the public space: placed under the permanent surveillance of each of us as we become “moral” police, “overexposed” public space can no longer accept something different.

### *Society overturned*

What we have been witnessing since the eighties is society turned on its head. After having quelled the big cultural contests of the sixties, societies no longer want to ensure the security of each of their members, instead paying more attention to the security of goods and persons, of the more well-off groups in any case: this is the case in local areas, but also in international relations.

Indeed structural violence hits certain social groups, including youngsters in a massive way. Public policies in the sectors of housing, work, energy, even education, aim for privatisation and assumed exclusion.

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<sup>47</sup> Jean Blairon, manager of Réalisation Téléformation Animation (RTA), supervision department of Dynamo International and of the international network of social street workers.

This is how Paul Virilio reports, citing Michael Heim, “distant Californian disciple of Heidegger”:

“All the signs of social, political, civil decline have to be interpreted positively as signs of the advent of the Cyber. It is true that we risk abandoning part of the population to its lot by entering Cyberspace, but techno-culture is our destiny.”<sup>48</sup>

Proposal completed by those of N. Negroponte and J.P. Barlow, president of the Electronic Frontier Foundation:

*“We have entered the digital era; that of a universal network without anyone in charge, without a president, without a head figure... Owing to its decentralised structure, it will moreover be impossible to censure the network unless we ban the telephone! And this is fortunate since cyber space must reflect the society of the people and in no case become the toy of the States”.*

Paul Virilio comments:

“The absolute paradox of a society of people “without someone in charge, no law, no head”, is already etched in the nocturnal splitting of the non-national and non-social suburbs which continuously spread to the detriment of ancient historical areas, but also with the recent creation of the American priva-topia and the Japanese projects of “towns next to towns”...”

We clearly see the effects of this concept of a society where privatisation and exclusion will reign supreme.

We would like to criticize them on the basis of the “policies” which have taken the lead in the financial sector, and of which we now observe the consequences on the “real economy”. In our opinion, the same policies are at work in the social sector, with catastrophic consequences on real society – although the latter do not mobilise as many massive world investments.

A long time ago, the economist François Chesnais<sup>49</sup> described the changes in the financial sector which today produce the effects we have seen.

The author brought out three inter-connected orientations:

- Deregulation, i.e. the dismantling of all legislation considered to hinder free trade; the growing weakness of the Nation-State on its economy is one of its consequences (we are surprised to notice the spectacular about-faces in the matters that arise with the crisis, notably with the “nationalisation” of the banks or what is presented as such);
- De-compartmentalization, which “allows” us to pass very easily from one product to another (the risky American mortgage credits, “packed” into discreet other financial products are a clear illustration of this);
- De-intermediation, i.e. the tendency of direct contact between the individual and the financial activity: (an indirect component of this is the limited information the small individual investors had obtained, many among them amazed to discover the real nature of the shares they had acquired without knowing

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<sup>48</sup> P. Virilio, « Le grand Soir », in *Un paysage d'événements*, Paris, Galilée, 1996.

<sup>49</sup> F. Chesnais, *la mondialisation du capital*, Paris, Syros, 1994.

We declare that the social field is affected by the same diversions (beneficial to the same people?).

Indeed, de-regulation is such that today one can maintain great principles without being in the least affected; this is how international conventions can be signed without being applied. We refer to the imprisonment of minors, the security diversions leading to the dismantling of the laws ensuring protection of childhood and youth, by clearly distinguishing these people from the responsibilities which automatically apply to adults.

We should also examine the passing, in many societies, from a government regime of unconditional social protection to assistance (under more and more conditions): Those who benefit from such “assistance” being moreover automatically considered as suspects, liable to be “profiteers” of the system, when at the same time “golden parachutes” were granted without hesitation to the high holders of responsibility, even if they then proved to be failures.

De-intermediation is present everywhere: it is in fact the individual himself who must directly take on his social “integration” through his activity. The array of projects and contracts to which all people in difficulty are submitted functions like so many parodies of the spirit of entrepreneurship which is supposed to triumph, as it is “liberated”, in the new society of individuals.

We will come back to de-compartmentalization hereafter, since this function is essential. We shall show that it essentially affects the activities of assistance and those of control: from now on we may move from one to the other without difficulty and this as significantly ambiguous as the “eroticised informing” which we noted earlier.

For the moment, it is essential to remember that these new ways of functioning in the social field are triumphing in societies where cultural capital occupies a vantage point it never had before.

Indeed, the development of societies rests, as never before, on the cultural resources, expressed by the trilogy *capital of knowledge*, *capital of creative force*, *capital of confidence*. In a society ruled by movement, the lack of these forms of capital has an unfortunate particularity; the capacity of connection with new experiences (what Luc Boltanski called “the world of the project”<sup>50</sup>), to produce a reduction of the same capital: we have here an infinite regression/exclusion.

For example, the lack of confidence stemming from this erases all possibility of connection, on which the constitution of a creative capacity often depends. This capacity is a generator of knowledge acquisition – and inversely: a deficiency in terms of capital/knowledge can lead to stigmatisation in the strictest<sup>51</sup> sense, which cuts off possibilities of rich and rare connections in which only a strong confidence capital may find an opening, etc.

For a large number of our fellow citizens, especially the young, cultural inequalities produce a cultural exclusion liable to become increasingly serious, and this in a context where everyone who is invited to become “responsible”, is likely to be blamed with regard to his situation as if he “had wanted it because he did not try to get out of it”.

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<sup>50</sup> Ref on this point J. Fastrès and J. Blairon, *Luttes culturelles, Luttes sociales*, Développement n° 6, in <http://www.intermag.be>

<sup>51</sup> Idem, *ibidem*, Développement n° 10.

It is not exaggerating to say, as G.Tabacchi<sup>52</sup> does, that the youngster whose path goes from the education institute to the family and then to leisure, including commitment activities, is no longer the same as those who have the street for a path, the reserved or even illegal places, various wanderings; it may even be observed that the paths of these groups no longer cross.

### *The protagonists*

These inseparable cultural and social acts of violence, very often committed in silence or ignorance, have obviously produced reactions of refusal and appropriate counter offensives. As is often the case, it is the community sector which came to the rescue.

Certainly, we have witnessed many types of initiatives, with various sources of inspiration: institutional dynamics that social workers have got involved in, appalled to notice that traditional forms of action were no longer suitable for these new situations; more community-based initiatives, as has been the case for several churches; measures of philanthropic inspiration, such as the support of foundations and even financial bodies such as the World Bank. We admit we feel some perplexity with regard to this last category, since it leads to a “humanitarian” rationale taking shape; basically, the youngsters we talk about do not have their own resources and are finding themselves on the edge of humanity. We may also regret that disinvestment of the private sector as regards its contribution to the redistribution mechanisms, (nowadays taxes are considered a burden which hinders economical and financial activity,) is in a certain way often masked by philanthropic actions. These tend to be one-off and moreover changeable, as they come to replace more structural measures and to justify their absence.

On the contrary, for our part we think that adequate responses lie with a particular structure of the public services (which guarantee equal treatment and are opposed to “corporatist” interventions, only ever destined for the “chosen few”) and in a community-based approach, (characterised by commitment, the capacity to restore a confidence link, mobility and intervention). But this structure of associations and of the State is not without problems.

### *The double meanings of the State*

Let us recall that the cultural revolts of the sixties often saw the State as the main adversary: considered as a police officer, armed to protect its dominant positions, worming its way into everywhere, (schools, hospitals, asylums...these are the “ideological state apparatus”), the State standing for order and repression.

As it loses interest in social action, we will better perceive the double meaning of the State: intermediary of dominant positions, certainly, but the State is also guarantor of the conquests of workers movements and support for the less fortunate (for instance in social democracies), notably by embodying collective solidarities.

The best definition of this awareness of the double meaning of the State was set out by Pierre Bourdieu in 1998:

“And if one may therefore keep a few reasonable hopes alive, it is because in state institutions and also in the dispositions of agents (notably those who have the most attachment to these institutions, as a small State nobility), there still exist forces which, under appearance of simply defending, as one immediately reproaches them, a missing order, and the corresponding “privileges”, must in fact, resist the ordeal, work to invent and to build a social order which would not have the search for selfish interest and the individual passion for profit

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<sup>52</sup> Consorzio Sociale Abele lavoro, conference during the days « Metis Europe » dedicated to “*Jeunes sans limites, jeunes sans frontières*”.

as its only law, but would make room for groups aimed at the *rational pursuit of collectively devised and approved ends*. Among these collectives, associations, syndicates, parties, how could one not give a special place to the State, the national State, or better still, supranational, i.e. European (step towards a world State), capable of efficiently controlling the profits made on the financial markets; capable also and above all of counteracting the destructive action that the latter exercise on the work market by organising, with the help of the syndicates, the development and the defence of *public interest (...)*<sup>53</sup>

So, this first **double meaning** notes that the “bourgeois State”, highly criticised in the sixties, can also be an actor capable of opposing the drift towards the excluding individualism we mentioned earlier on.

From there springs Pierre Bourdieu’s formula (from 1993<sup>54</sup>) of the “schizophrenia of the State”: one remembers his famous formula stating that “the right hand of the State” no longer knows or refuses to know what its “left hand” is doing – the one preoccupied in compensating social and cultural inequalities, resisting the structural violence perpetrated by the markets, relayed and therefore strengthened on a daily basis by a series of small acts of violence “which escape both sight and sanction.”. The street is in this respect one of the most important theatres.

But here we must note the presence of a **second double meaning**: to resist the repressive side of the State, the workers of the left hand (among them the street workers) have invented a series of more open, more participative practices, as near as possible to the resources of their beneficiaries. “Accompaniment” has been one of the key words of this transformation. But today we are seeing the “reversal” of this direction<sup>55</sup> to the benefit of “soft”, decentralised, mobile and ambiguous controls: accompaniment becomes delocalised, falsified surveillance, the worker is invited to detect deviances and to “warn” the standardisation forces (in other words to inform them).

The new professions in the social sector are becoming as ambiguous as the initial image we discussed, where informing seems desirable.

“In certain European countries, such as France, one notes the emergence of a new form of social work with multiple functions, which *accompanies the collective conversion to neo-liberalism*. On the one hand, in the manner of the national Workshops in former times, by occupying those who hold devalued school certificates, who are often generous and militant, by making them manage people occupying a opposite position; on the other hand, putting the ‘left out of School’ to sleep-manage, by proposing a fictitious job and turning them into salaried workers without a salary, entrepreneurs without enterprise, extended students without hope of a diploma or qualifications.”<sup>56</sup>

In this case we are witness to **de-compartmentalization between the tasks of surveillance and control and the tasks of help and assistance**.

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53 P. Bourdieu, « Le néo-libéralisme, utopie (en voie de réalisation) d’une exploitation sans limites », in *Contre-feux*, Paris, Raisons d’agir, 1998. We would draw attention to the publication date, ten years prior to the current crisis.

54 In his sum *La misère du monde*.

55 C. Bartholomé, L’accompagnement, des postulats et des engagements pédagogiques à sauvegarder, <http://www.intermag.be/images/pdf/accompagnement.pdf>

56 P. Bourdieu, « La main invisible des puissants », in *Contre-feux 2*, Paris Raisons d’agir, 2001, p.53

So the left hand of the State (and its many delegates) is invited to practice fluid transfers towards its right hand under the biggest confusion permitted by the new forms of management.

Unfortunately, street work is not alone in being taken into this double meaning: the project “Jobpass” implemented by the public Service of Employment in Belgium (the Forem) should permit the automated transfer of information flows concerning the actions of jobseekers from the associations to the public checking (and exclusion) services of the unemployed, via the civil servants who “accompany” the individual projects of said jobseekers.

Social work like street work is consequently confronted with two double meanings of the State, unbalanced double meanings moreover: the resignation of the State is a stronger tendency than the protection it can ensure as a collective actor: at the moment control is taking the upper hand over open and participative assistance.

### *Internal support*

One might think that these imbalances would not be so strong if the prevailing currents could not count on internal support (probably barely visible) in the very midst of those who resist the domination and who wish to reduce its effects at least a little.

This is how the “State schizophrenia” has been so easily accepted that the group of social workers locked themselves up in an ideology peculiar to the “middle group” and which led them, on the one hand, to declare themselves “non-dupes” of the part the State wished them to play, but on the other hand, to represent themselves as powerless to put pressure on public goals. This “Neither-Nor” ideology, according to the terms of Emile Servais (neither dupes nor actors) has of course strengthened the first imbalance (between left hand and right hand).

As to the second imbalance (between free accompaniment and de-compartmentalization to the benefit of a latent control presented as attractive), this is based on the current state of the prevailing ideology.

Luc Boltanski<sup>57</sup> describes it on the basis of the following components:

- the recourse to a technicality supposed to embody the neutrality of reason, but which in fact imposes a programmatic approach that is always inspired by the entrepreneurial approach (ref. the theme of the project discussed by Pierre Bourdieu); the invasion of managerial approaches at the heart of associative action is an example of this: the eagerness to develop “quality systems”, an analyser;
- the dumping of collective responsibility on the individual, charged to “exercise will”, since “willing would automatically render capable”;
- an exercise of power which from now on is carried out by means of compulsory implementation rather than by imposing an order; implementation which transforms cultural capital in target and in vehicle of manipulation: knowledge for instance, becomes merchandise, renewal of which follows the cycles of fashion.

### *Street work and sense of the action*

Hence we can grasp the importance, in street work’s own methodological reflection, of a certain number of elements which oppose the new forms adopted by the prevailing ideology, feature by feature.

The model of efficiency adopted by the network of street workers, for instance, is completely opposed to a technocratic concept of the work. We may rejoice that what we have proposed to

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<sup>57</sup> L. Boltanski, *Rendre la réalité inacceptable*, Paris, Demopolis, 2008.



call, following up François Julien, the “model of propensity”<sup>58</sup> has been adopted and approved by the network. Indeed we think that this model can efficiently oppose the “double meaning” held by many technicalities pretending to support the “professionalisation” of social work.

The attention paid by street work to the group dimension constitutes a second area of opposition to the prevailing ideology. It is in no way a question of contributing to the generalised dumping, allowing the responsibility for the inequalities they suffer to fall to the youngsters. Neither is it a question of approaching them as victims, by denying them the resources which would definitely deprive them of the possibility to retrieve some hold over their existence.

Finally, the accompaniment advocated by street work waives the power exercised by the movement. By admitting the necessity, for a certain time at least, of some protective “wings”, away from the overexposed social scenes where the youngsters can only be stigmatised, street work gains time and gives itself a chance to defeat exclusion; at least it mobilises the workable margins for manoeuvre in the situations it faces, in order to try to “undo what the social world has done”, as Pierre Bourdieu says.

By acting in this way, it does not only endeavour to meet the “clandestine” needs of so many youngsters that society over-exposes without even accepting to see them. At an international level it also reminds the State of its duties and appeals to clear the ambiguities responsible for the cruel daily lot of so many young people today.

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<sup>58</sup> J. Fastières and J. Blairon, *La prévention, un concept en déperdition ?*, Brussels, Luc Pire, 2002.

## Appendices

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### ***Charter of the international network of social street workers***

Between the signatories and members of the present charter have decided to create an international network of social street workers .

#### **Definition**

The network privileges **action** in favour of street children, youngsters and adults in difficult circumstances. With respect for singularities or choice of self determination, these educational projects must be close to daily realities.

More particularly, the question is to introduce innovations in favour of children, youths and adults dwelling occasionally or permanently in the street as life environment, be it as a result of a choice and/or under duress.

Pirority is therefore given to general prevention, reduction of risks and remediation with a concern for social well being.

Non formal and informal education, action focussed on the child's, the youngster's and adult's life environment will be privileged.

These innovations consist of three criteria :

- They imply a new manner of taking into account the **demands** of the children, the youngsters and the adults, both in the way these demands are understood and how they are answered.
- They usually proceed from the field, therefore as social answers to demands ; in the language of institutional analysis one would say they are the result of an **establishing movement**.
- They define and incorporate a reflection on what is at **stake** in the situation of the children, the youngsters and the adults with regard to society as a whole.

The object will be to arouse **local** and **international solidarities** between the associations and street educators engaged in the same type of mission on the field both North and South and who fight actively against discriminations and poverty, in favour of equality, emancipation but also to obtain access to fundamental needs such as food, health care and of course access to education and professional training.

#### **Objectives**

The network sets itself the following objectives :

- **Exchange of practices, training and reflection.**
- **Increasing of awareness** both of opinion and public authorities ; **Promotion** of street social work in its specifications and with respect to the **recommendations** given at the Forum of November 2002.
- **Solidarity** and partnership between the participants of the network.
- **Encouragement** of creating a network at local level.

## Methods

In each country :

- One or several **street social workers workshops** will mobilise in support of their needs and specifics.
- A **co-ordinator** will be appointed
- He will convey the results and propositions among the members of the **pilot group** which meets twice a year.
- In case he is prevented, the workshop coordinator can arrange to be represented.
- The pilot group indicates the courses and priorities of the project.

More precisely, it will be a matter of meeting the fundamental needs of the street social workers, namely the necessity :

- to pursue the Forum of November 2002 by means of **local** activities (seminars, conferences, ...), made to measure and adapted to situations and demands at hand;
- to set up projects « **in clusters** » (a few partners work in association in order to carry out an action they share);
- to study **cross-section themes**, about which there is an interest and the need to carry out a global action (the starting factors leading to chose the street as a place to live ; the part played by the media ; children's rights ; general and professional ethics, etc.) ;
- to make up for a **deficit in terms of training**, either basic or continued, of the actors led to work in the street .

## Structure

The structure is made up of :

### *1. Workshops*

To become a member of the network and set up a workshop of street social workers, criteria should be met :

- 1.1. Each workshop must absolutely have **at least 8 street social workers** having a field experience. There is no maximum limit.
- 1.2. The workshop is borne by an existing structure or has its own identity (association, federation, collective). It is desirable that the workshop be constituted by street workers coming from different associations, in order to prioritise the **start-up** of a **local network**.  
The workshop gives official **mandate** to a co-ordinator. This act is sanctioned by a formal document made over to the secretariat.
- 1.3. The workshop co-ordinators undertake to **communicate on a regular basis** the information to the members of the workshop and to the secretariat.
- 1.4. Once created, each workshop remains independent in its way of functioning and its priorities.
- 1.5. If there are several workshops in a country, only one coordinator will be represented at the pilot group. If necessary, particular situations will be valued by the pilot group.
- 1.6. The workshop meets at least once every two months in order to create a continued dynamic of reflection and mobilisation around various international activities and exchanges of practices with the other workshops.
- 1.7. The workshops undertake to respect the planned datelines.
- 1.8. The workshop co-ordinators promise to reply within the time allowed to any mail from the secretariat and received.
- 1.9. The co-ordinators advertise publicly the existence of the workshop and the collaboration with Dynamo International.
- 1.10. They communicate to the secretariat all papers appearing in the press or any other media about the projects of the network.
- 1.11. The workshops promises to transmit at the secretariat all useful information for new memberships.
- 1.12. The workshop is allowed to organise or co-organise any projects such as : seminar, pilot group, training session...
- 1.13. Each workshop can represent the network in its own country.

## ***2. Secretariat and general co-ordination***

- 2.1. Dynamo International carries out the directions decided by and ensures the secretariat and general co-ordination.
- 2.2. It promises to convey all information to the workshop co-ordinators and to reply to all information requests they may have.
- 2.3. It ensures the follow-up of the projects and the management of the Internet site : ([www.travail-de-rue.net](http://www.travail-de-rue.net))
- 2.4. Dynamo International represents the network, ensures its promotion and organises and/or co-organises the meetings of the pilot groups.
- 2.5. It promises to seek the funds necessary to the global function of the network, including the costs of the secretariat and the general co-ordination, the costs for communication and those relating to the management of the Internet site.
- 2.6. It promises to seek with the partners of the network the other funds necessary for the different projects of the network, including the costs linked to the pilot group, trips, organisation of specific projects within the frame of starting up the network (publication, conferences, seminars, training, ...)
- 2.7. It promises to organise with the partners the projects of the network, including international meetings, projects relating to the chosen themes and other projects decided by the pilot group.
- 2.8. It promises to facilitate the synergy and the co-operations which will help the partners in their projects outside the network.
- 2.9. However, it is their competence to examine any new requests for membership and to submit them to the pilot group which will have the final decision. The examination will control if the membership criteria contained in the present charter are being duly satisfied.

## ***3. Regional grouping (America, the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, Asia)***

- 3.1. With a care for proximity and efficiency the workshops belonging to the same geographical region are called upon to co-operate more closely.
- 3.2. Each regional grouping is free to develop its proper projects according to their needs.

#### **4. *Pilot group***

- 4.1. The pilot group gathers the workshop co-ordinators, the secretariat and the general co-ordinator.
- 4.2. Experts can be invited.
- 4.3. Pilot group meets twice a year, the minutes of the meeting will be written by the secretariat and sent to the members of the pilot group.
- 4.4. The pilot group decides which themes will be discussed and which projects will be launched within the network.
- 4.5. It can constitute workshops around particular projects (for instance : editorial staff).
- 4.6. Participation to all the projects of the network is not compulsory, but once voluntarily implied in a project, the workshop pledges to finalise it in accordance with the distinctive features, the requirements and terms and conditions of this project.
- 4.7. The pilot group takes every decision concerning membership applications. If the accession criteria are met, the decision to grant membership to a new workshop becomes effective after a probation period of two years.

**Written and approved in Lille in meeting of the pilot group on 22 June , 2004**



**Contact information of members of the international network of social street workers**

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