

Preface to the Dutch translation of the “International Guide on the Methodology of Streetwork throughout the world”

This international guide on "social street work" may be read as a reference book, addressing a wide range of topics, as well as examples from all over the world and theoretical considerations. At its heart is the basic methodology of detached and/or outreaching youth work (ambulante jeugdwerk) and streetcornerwork (straathoekwerk), while special attention is paid to the basic attitude adopted by workers toward their target groups. Throughout the world, the underlying methods and ethics appears to display the same characteristics, even though target groups, social situations, and structures differ greatly. This guide will pay less attention to these latter factors, resulting in a publication, worth the attention of all our colleagues and other interested parties, all over the world.

My personal introduction

October 2008: my very first participation in a meeting near Lisbon, held by the Pilot Group of the "International network of social street workers". I am surprised, and quiet. Among about thirty representatives of national networks, most of which are still developing, I encounter a collective of strong personalities firmly supporting their common cause. International solidarity, founded on an explicit intention to realise Child Rights (as well as those of adults) worldwide, by encouraging deployment of street work and consolidating the professional field to this end. A relatively small group of writers is completing the finishing touches of this book's final editing, as the pilot group sets the course for the network for the years to come, discussing also the formal aspects of the organisation. In doing so, the group decides upon admitting NAPYN (National Association of Professional Youthworkers in the Netherlands; BV Jong, Beroepsvereniging Jongerenwerkers), allowing them to join their ranks based upon the information supplied by me.

NAPYN joined this grassroots movement in order to get tuned in to developments that are under way elsewhere, intending to rekindle attention paid to streetcornerwork methodology, which has been relatively neglected in the Netherlands of late. Dynamo International coordinates and supports the network activities, stimulating its development at an international level. Whereas voluntary and professional youth work is fairly well-organised in the Netherlands, and also streetcornerworkers are in a position to meet each other, the same cannot be said for many of the various countries included in the network. Western European countries differ hugely from countries to the South and East. It is common practice for such work to be built from scratch; either by volunteers, or by a single paid worker (often receiving a wage from funds for development or similar financing). While the affluent West has its own variants of poverty and social exclusion, street workers in other parts of the world are faced with goals such as saving children from starvation or child prostitution, or offering them an education for the first time in their lives. Nevertheless, the methods they use in doing so remain the same.

The late stage at which NAPYN joined this process prevented us from providing any true contribution to this guide. It is our intention to be of greater value in the coming about of an upcoming production, an international guide on "Education and training".

Translation

It has been the great privilege - and the relatively complex task - of professional translator and former youth worker Jeroen van Swaaij (*Pen and Sword Translation Services, Rotterdam*) to translate this document from English into Dutch.

Both the complexity of translating this document and the rich nature of its contents are due to its diverse origins. Firstly, the English version of this guide has largely been translated from the French edition, which is hardly beneficial to the clarity of its English contents. This is generally true for both original versions, in which the contributions written by "native speakers" can be clearly distinguished from the remaining sections. The various styles of writing encountered throughout the guide's chapters and paragraphs reflect the diversity of the many authors involved in its coproduction. For both original guide editions, please visit www.street-work.net.

Secondly, according to Dutch standards, the original body of text is often quite abstract and contemplative, as well as incidentally being "woolly" in its use of language. This is largely due to the fact that the international network is dominantly French-speaking (in contrast to the German-speaking ISMO). The impetus for establishing the network came from Dynamo, a French-speaking street workers' organisation in Brussels.

Thirdly and finally, one easily notes that the various contributions have been made by workers differing greatly in background, education, and experience, operating across a vast range of situations with respect to target groups, social situations, and institutional circumstances. To do justice to such diverse contributions within this translation has been quite a challenge.

The international network has however explicitly requested its representatives from foreign-speaking countries to have the text translated as literally as possible, precisely to maintain the heterogeneous nature of the various contributions, thus expressing the mutual solidarity it contains. This request has been complied with in a dozen European countries, and for this reason, the guide is published in multiple languages, each edition reflecting the described varied style of writing. We hope that these basic assumptions will be respected by the reader.

The Netherlands

The year 2002, which was also the year in which the National Streetcornerworkers Platform was dissolved, saw the last national publication of "Straathoekwerk" (ed. Ide Kelderman, published by Stichting Streetcornerwerk Amsterdam, Mets & Schilt, Amsterdam, 2002). This book has a similar design as the international guide: written "bottom-up", emphasising key points of methodology and basic attitude (30 pages), featuring street worker interviews and a number of case descriptions (60 pages). It simultaneously portrays the typical Dutch streetcornerworker: operating from solidarity with his targetgroup, from the heart, and directly from practise.

The Dutch translation of this guide consistently uses "*straathoekwerk*" (literally: *streetcorner work*) where street work or its variant expressions appear in the source text. The various terms circulating in different countries are described in a separate paragraph (3.1.2), depending among other things on target groups, situations, structures, and history.

The Dutch context would appear to allow replacing "*straathoekwerk*" also by either "*randroepjongerenwerk*" (*fringe group youthwork*) or "*ambulant jongerenwerk*" (*outreach and/or detached youthwork*). Hardly any nationwide research has been conducted to explore the different targetgroups of these specialisations in general youthwork and various manifestations of the methodology described. Two publications in which the active members of NAPYN have been involved since 2003 (*Jongerenwerk, stand van zaken en perspectief*; Noorda et al., 2006 and *Jongerenwerker*; Movisie, 2008) describe streetcornerwork as a specific youthwork component, verging on detached and/or outreaching youth work. This does not mean, however, that its manifestations are all the same across the sector in the Netherlands: the opposite seems true. In many areas, streetcornerwork has become extinct or has become the victim of budget cuts. In areas where it is still present, it has often either been incorporated into large welfare institutions, or it is operating from tiny independent organisations, or alternatively, streetcornerworkers are employed directly by local authorities.

Streetcornerwork methodology and nomenclature have also been adopted by organisations operating from other sectors of administration and financed by alternative means, such as various youth care institutions, mental health care, drug addiction relief organisations, police or justice administration authorities, organisations directed at the homeless, and foundations combating illegal prostitution.

This shift is accompanied by new names as well: examples include Youth Intervention Teams and Street Coaches. These are generally directing their efforts at care/relief efforts and at repression/hindrane control. Further research of these phenomena would be most welcome; it would have the added benefit of clarifying Dutch developments in the sector abroad.

In recent years, both outreach and detached youth work (*ambulant jongerenwerk*) have been on the rise, which may be concluded from recent publications, training courses, etc. At times it would seem that its intended approach and at-risk target group, have taken over the position formerly occupied by streetcornerwork. In

addition, the multi-problem target group that the latter discipline used to focus on seems left alone, to specialised care institutions and the police.

This guide will prove useful to streetcornerworkers, outreach and detached youth workers alike, regardless of their policy origins and different targetgroups. It describes ethics, work cycles, the importance of being present in the street, establishing contact, and first and foremost, entering into relationships based on trust with young persons who have turned away from existing facilities. This guide is about methods helping them get back on their way, setting out together on a continued course of life.

I sincerely hope that this guide will encourage Dutch outreach and/or detached youthworkers as well as specialized streetcornerworkers, and other persons involved to (re)organise their efforts, continuing development of the profession, and raising awareness of the target group and the poverty and social exclusion to which they are subject.

This may also be achieved by reaching across borders: both literally and metaphorically. Further investigation of the "State-of-the-Art of Streetwork in the Netherlands" may also prove a valuable contribution, a process in which many other countries are already ahead of us.

Henk Geelen, NAPYN,
Maastricht, the Netherlands, December 2009.

Translated from Dutch by Jeroen van Swaaij, Pen and Sword Translation Services,
Rotterdam, the Netherlands, December 2009.