Coming of age on the streets: Reflections from a longitudinal study in urban Brazil

Helping young people feel at home in Scotland: Building Collaborative and Integrated Services for Youth Homeless through a Reflexive Mapping Approach for Health and Social Care Integration

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Longitudinal qualitative multi-method study, 2005 – 2015

1st fieldwork period – eight months:

- Participant observation (street locations, center for street children, family homes, prison, etc.)

2nd – 5th fieldwork periods – two to three months:

- Repetitive narrative interviews with twelve young men who resided/used to reside on the street

3rd fieldwork period – three months:

- Structured interviews with middle class residents, traders and police in neighbourhood of study

Why are they heading to the street?

1) **Traditional pattern**
   - Leave family home in childhood
   - Home environments with economic hardship in addition to domestic violence, parental neglect and/or addiction

2) **Additional pattern**
   - Leave family home during adolescence/young adulthood
   - Engaged in heavy drug use, drug trafficking and/or property crime

The role of drugs and crack cocaine

- Crack cocaine <u>does not</u> cause homelessness per se

- Factors involved
  - ✓ crack as substance
  - ✓ individual user attitudes, mentality, self-control, experiences and expectations
  - ✓ social relations characterized by inclusion and trust, AND avoidance, stigma and fear
  - ✓ income-generating possibilities for poor, uneducated young men
  - ✓ perceived and actual safety (i.e. presence of police and weapons)

Ursin, 2014

The complex reality of everyday life on the street

- Sentiments of hunger and fear, and experiences of destitution and violence

- Being social and having fun: hanging out with peers, playing football, going out dancing and courting
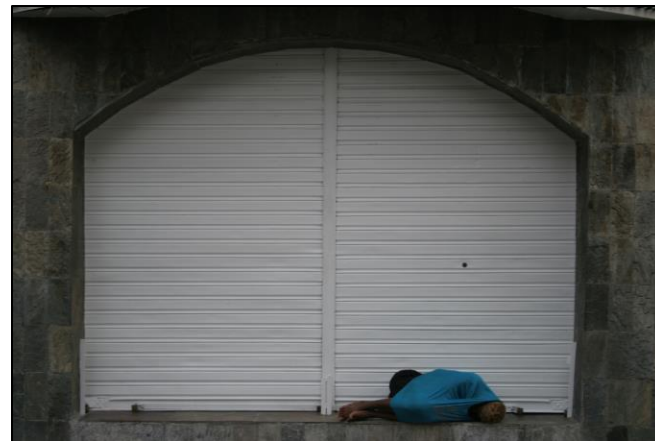

Ursin, 2006

Narratives of home

o Essential aspects in their home narratives:

- Safety

- Autonomy

- Belonging

o Feelings altered with time, maturity and involvement in crime and violence.

o Seldom an one-off event.

o Causing a migratory process between family home, street locations, institutions and elsewhere.

Ursin, 2011

Complex social relationships

- Torture and homicides by police and informal death squads

- Discriminated and excluded by mainstream society

- Valuable social relationships with middle class residents, traders, and tourists

- Dichotomies
  - helped and shunned by the surroundings
  - perceived as both threatening and threatened by the mainstream society

Ursin, 2012

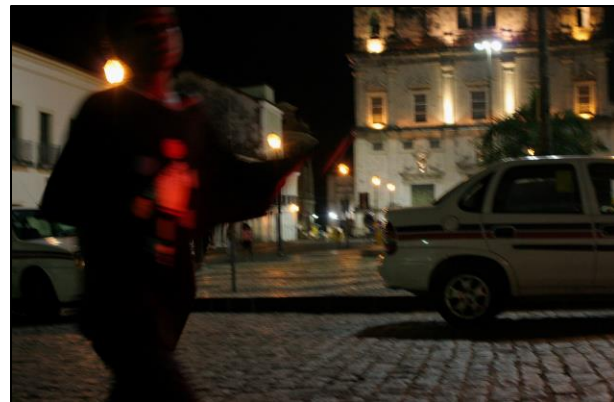# Livelihoods, maturity and identity

- Choice of livelihoods as identity-marker, emphasizing belonging to or distance from the street culture.

- Portfolio of street skills, spatial knowledge, and social networks.

- Street identity draws upon a set of values and morals that are in conflict with the mainstream society.

- Risk levels of livelihoods are highest between mid-teens to early twenties.

Ursin & Abebe, 2017

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When 'street children' grow up

- Street trajectory:

  - The innocent street child who needs protection

  - The street youth menace who needs correction

  - The adult vagrant who needs assistance

- Past memories, present situation and future dreams intersect and shape livelihood and domicile choices

- Manoeuvre between marginal street identities and family obligations

Ursin, 2016

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