

**Street Careers:  
An Ethnographic Study on Heterogeneous Experiences of Children in  
Street Situations in Tondo, Manila**

Over the last several decades the growing issue of ‘street children’ has motivated researchers to study the lives of children on the street. Although existing literature has acknowledged heterogeneities in experiences and characteristics of children, studies on children living, working or visible in the street still tend to homogenize these (groups of) children, demonstrating their marginal place within society. Scholars have indicated a need for child-centred research techniques as well as research on multiple aspects of children’s lives, to bring a richer understanding of how children in street situations perceive their realities. To do justice to heterogeneities in experiences, this thesis analyses children’s lives in terms of a ‘street career’. By applying Goffman and Becker’s concept of a ‘career’ to children in street situations, it examines how children as social actors create and use economic and social networks differently, in an effort to build opportunities for survival. Drawing on child-centred ethnographic research methods, this study with children in street situations in Tondo, Manila examines children’s alternative street careers to illustrate how these children experience variations in their social identity formation, social experiences and livelihood strategies. Findings of this study reveal substantial differences in experiences in livelihoods and life trajectories, and demonstrates how changes in self-perceptions influence children’s social identity formation. It concludes by revealing that a lack of space in housing is among the most important factors that ‘push children on the street’ contributing to the increasing visibility of children on the streets of Tondo. Due to this high visibility of children on the street, variations in children’s street careers seems to not be persistently influenced by public opinions on ageing children on the street, contrasting with existing literature.

**Keywords**

*Children in street situations, street careers, livelihoods, social identities, life trajectories, Tondo Manila*