

The development and use of concertation: lessons from a subsidy program in Quebec aimed at preventing sexual exploitation of youths by street gangs

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Abstract

This article presents the results of research evaluating the implementation of 16 local and regional initiatives financed by Quebec's Ministry of Public Security, whose goal was to prevent street gang recruitment of girls for sexual exploitation. In order to access funding, participants had to explain how they would use concertation mechanisms and local partnerships to achieve their aims. Results rely on a qualitative content analysis of 32 telephone interviews and 8 face-to-face interviews conducted with the program's stakeholders and managers. Results show that coordinating actions and exchanging expertise allowed project stakeholders to initiate more effective preventive actions to deal with the complex problems associated with youth sexual exploitation in their respective territories. Results also show, however, that creating effective concertation is a challenge that requires time and personal commitment, especially in negotiating the relative positions of those involved. Our findings demonstrate that concertation must never be thought of as a given but always as the result of complex social processes. They also suggest that while financing authorities should encourage the development of effective concertation, they should also ensure that new programs do not divert so many resources that existing organizations are threatened. The discussion includes suggestions on how to avoid harming existing organizations while implementing concertation.

Keywords: street gangs, sexual exploitation, prevention, partnership

Introduction

In spring 2008, 16 community-based organizations received financial support from the Quebec Ministry of Public Security to allow them to initiate and implement local and regional programs aimed at the prevention of sexual exploitation of young girls by street gangs. In order to receive this funding, organizations had to develop programs based on concertation mechanisms and local and regional partnerships. Concertation is a collective process in which stakeholders cooperate to coordinate services and activities. A structured relationship between autonomous and willing stakeholders who share information, discuss problems, and agree on common objectives, it differs from a partnership in that it does not necessarily rest on a formal contractual agreement (Bourque, 2009).

Our research and evaluation team was given a mandate to evaluate the implementation and day-to-day functioning of all 16 initiatives. More precisely, we were asked to document specific achievements at each site and to evaluate why some groups were successful in reaching their objectives while others encountered problems. We were also asked to analyse and document any potential benefits or difficulties associated with concertation mechanisms, particularly those, such as expertise sharing, that were developed as part of the concertation process.

The ministry's decision to attempt to prevent sexual exploitation through efficient use of concertation mechanisms was based on existing literature on intervention with street gangs (Stinchcomb, 2001; Grekul *et al.*, 2009; Grekul, 2011; Boyes-Watson, 2012). It is not clear, however, that the literature on the challenges of implementing concertation was

sufficiently considered (Else, 2008; Grekul *et al.*, 2009). As our research reveals, recipients were able to show results at the levels expected by the ministry and to do so using concertation. The relationships developed by the local sites took different shapes, depending on specific objectives and local contexts. Some of the projects were highly ambitious and therefore required high levels of organizational integration. In these instances, some stakeholders felt that the level of commitment required to keep concertation alive and effective could threaten the survival of the original organization, a consequence the ministry was not aware of when the project began.

The results of our qualitative research reveal the mechanisms developed, the issues faced by local stakeholders, and the positive and negative consequences of implementing concertation and partnerships. These results should be considered in relation to the context in which the programs were created, in which financing agencies required local organizations to make use of concertation and partnerships, often without being fully aware of the consequences of such a requirement.

The problems

Because prostitution is largely clandestine, it is difficult to provide precise assessments of how much takes place in any given territory (Poulin, 2007; Dorais & Corriveau, 2006; Geadah, 2003). The most recent data indicate that somewhere between 11,300 and 34,000 youths in Canada are victims of one form or another of sexual exploitation (Poulin, 2007). The negative consequences of such sexual exploitation, as well as the urgent need to prevent such activity, are much easier to demonstrate. Damant *et al.* (2006), as well as Fournier (2004), have shown that 80 percent of adults engaged in prostitution began such activities while they were teenagers. Fleury and Fredette (2002), and Flowers (2001), have shown that the problems associated with sexual exploitation and prostitution increase over time: youth involved in such activities become increasingly marginalized and

integrated into a lifestyle where violence, major health problems, and psychological distress are far too common.

Street gangs have received increasing attention from public authorities and researchers in the last few years and their proliferation in the North American urban environment is now undeniable: police agencies such as the Canadian Security Intelligence Service estimate that in 2006 300 gangs, with nearly 11,000 members, roamed the streets of Canadian cities (CISC, 2006). This expansion has been accompanied by increasing sophistication of both criminal activities and criminal networks, especially among those involved in sexual trafficking (Curry, 1998). Prostitution related to street gangs takes place mainly through private organizations, such as escort agencies, where sexual activities are somewhat hidden by the other social activities provided (Dorais & Corriveau, 2006; Totten, 2000; Joe-Laidler & Hunt, 1997). Girls working in such organizations may gradually become involved in street sex markets without being aware that they are participating in such activities, reinforcing the image that they are victims of sexual exploitation. This view does not, however, necessarily capture the whole reality of youth sexual exploitation, particularly those instances where a young girl does not consider herself a victim but sees paid sexual activities as a way to escape a dead-end situation. Research clearly demonstrates that, within the street gang context, girls' roles go beyond that of mere sexual objects. While girls in street gangs are often victims, they may also have other functions, such as recruiting and providing surveillance of newly recruited girls (Fournier *et al.*, 2006; Haynie, 2003; Weichold *et al.*, 2003).

Existing intervention programs for prevention of sexual exploitation by street gangs

Because the sexual exploitation of girls by street gangs is not a one-dimensional process (e.g. the girls are not solely helpless victims),

attempts at intervention must approach the problem from different perspectives. Successful intervention with sexually exploited youth is a highly complex endeavour and over the last few years at least a dozen intervention programs have been developed in Quebec and Canada by community-led initiatives, public social welfare institutions, police organizations, and schools. While these programs are important, they also have problems; the most important one being that they do not cooperate with one another. Such a lack of communication makes it difficult to determine how and to what extent these initiatives are able to reach their expected targets without, for instance, overlapping efforts. Some intervention programs claim that they have worked with other groups, but financing authorities have found it difficult to verify what such cooperation includes and who is involved.

In order to counteract these problems, the Quebec Ministry of Public Security has attempted to promote concertation and to document the elements that facilitate or restrict efforts to develop cooperation between groups. A better understanding of the process would make it easier for those attempting to prevent youth sexual exploitation in the context of street gangs to develop programs based on what previous research has shown to be the most effective solution: taking action in terms of the phenomenon as a whole – the individual, the family, and the social situation (Hamel *et al.*, 2013). Our analysis suggests, however, that developing intervention programs based on such tenets poses considerable challenges.

The mechanisms and issues related to the establishment of efficient concertation

Concertation cannot be established without a considerable expenditure of energy (Bourque, 2009; Grekul *et al.*, 2009; Elsey, 2008; Dallaire *et al.*, 2003; Pence & Shepard, 2001; Cinq-Mars & Fortin, 1999). Because concertation requires dealing with the organizational cultures of partners who may be very different, with varying mandates,

traditions, and privileged approaches towards their clientele, understanding how partners interact remains the principal key to determining whether and how concertation is or is not working and is or is not producing the expected outcomes. While a diversity of approaches among the different participating actors can be a positive element, it may also introduce positions that are sufficiently irreconcilable that basic coordination alone will not guarantee effective performance. The values and beliefs of every stakeholder, personal as well as organizational, must be taken into account if all partners are to accept and assume their roles and duties with regard to the roles and duties of others (Dallaire *et al.*, 2003; Duval & Fontaine, 2000; Roberts-DeGennaro & Mizrahi, 2005). Establishing effective concerted intervention systems requires sufficient time and space to allow each stakeholder to communicate and understand the values and perspectives of other participants, and may sometimes involve directly confronting these values and perspectives. Given the urgent situations with which, all too often, we are confronted, communication is often neglected as the actors involved wish to act as quickly as possible and may be uncomfortable with programs that rely on dialogue and exchange of views (Wigley *et al.*, 2011). But understanding the position of other participants is vital to the success of concertation. Callon & Latour (1986), for instance, even suggest that confrontation may be more effective at producing innovation than consensus. Controversy forces the stakeholders to put aside their ideological positions in order to better negotiate the roles they will take in concerted actions. Dallaire *et al.* (2003) propose that romantic visions of idealistic partnership be abandoned in favour of recognizing the potential of an imbalance of power and resources among the stakeholders. Compromises and a better understanding of each participant's limits will lead to recognition and acceptance of the fact that participants do not necessarily engage in concertation with comparable intensity (Bourque, 2009; Roberts-DeGennaro & Mizrahi, 2005; Guay *et al.*, 2000). A true

deliberative democracy must be established, accompanied by strong and efficient leadership (Bourque, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). This leadership must be based on solid field expertise as well as a demonstrated knowledge of the problems to be dealt with, the resources available, and the dynamic links between local actors (Dallaire *et al.*, 2003).

These aspects of effective concertation may seem to conflict with the managerial approach that has been part of public administration since the 1990s. This approach was aimed at creating programs within local communities that provided easily identifiable results. For some administrators, partnerships became imperative, even if they create tensions among local actors, tensions that are never directly addressed in the process of integrating stakeholders (Harvie & Manzi, 2011). As well, such partnerships are sometimes imposed in contexts where the organizations involved are competing with each other for scarce financial and human resources (Collins & McCray, 2012). This is not to say that all such partnerships are ineffective. In areas such as child protection, for instance, multi-agency cooperation has been and still is highly recommended, especially in the U.K., where such an approach has shown significant advantages in both continuity and stability of services (Wigley *et al.*, 2011; Worrall-Davies & Cottrell, 2009). Research has shown that multi-agency cooperation has resulted in less service duplication and more efficient delivery of services to both children and their families (Sloper, 2004). Moreover, those working for the service-providing agencies have had increased opportunities to develop connections with their colleagues and a better understanding of how colleagues at other agencies work, as well as sometimes advancing their own professional development (Worrall-Davies & Cottrell, 2009). But such potential benefits of multi-agency cooperation depend on the development of a common language and converging goals among the partners involved (Conway, 2009).

Research objectives and methodology

Research regarding the implementation of the 16 projects subsidised by the Ministry of Public Security had two main objectives. The first was to produce, primarily for the ministry, a normative follow-up of project implementation, documenting the issues and difficulties faced by project promoters and the solutions suggested. The follow-up would give both subsidizing authorities and project organizers a clear indication of any disparities between what had been planned and what actually took place at each site. The second objective was to document the short and mid-term benefits from the initiatives and was more constructive and formative in nature. In dealing with this second objective, the research team wanted to reflect to local stakeholders the effects the projects were having in their communities while also pointing out the level of integration involved and its relation to particular community contexts. For this part of the evaluation, the research team hoped to fill a role close to that suggested by Guba & Lincoln (2005), that of reflecting to the actors engaged in a program an image of what they are doing and the goals being reached.

For the first objective, the team conducted a content analysis of all documents provided by the 16 subsidized sites in order to receive financial support from the Ministry of Public Security: project proposals, progress reports by the project managers, and reports of on-site visits conducted by the ministry's employees throughout the implementation processes. The number and categories of youths and adults reached by each project, the proposed activities, and the participation levels in these activities were collected through this content analysis. This first level of analysis helped us to better understand the context in which the projects had been implemented, as well as giving us a better picture of what we needed to learn during the interviews that were the next step in our research.

For the second research objective, two sets of in-depth interviews were conducted with project managers and a qualitative analysis¹ of the resulting discourse was undertaken. The first set of interviews was conducted during fall 2009, when the subsidized projects were entering their sixth month. The second set was conducted exactly a year later. On these two occasions, the project managers, who were guaranteed anonymity, were instructed by the interviewers to assess their work, their needs and goals, and how and to what extent the ministry's subvention program had enabled them to reach these goals and meet their needs. **Table 1** (p.126) summarizes the information received from this sample.

Results obtained by the subsidized projects

Analysis of the documents provided by the 16 projects and by the ministry showed that all participants were significantly active and productive. The projects implemented or, in some instances, consolidated, reached close to 13,000 youths (n = 12,809) through awareness activities in schools in participating sites. Analysis also showed that 679 youths considered to be at risk of becoming involved in sexual exploitation were helped through individual support offered by trained personnel and professionals. Moreover, 1,749 professionals and educators were trained about and sensitized to the realities of youth sexual exploitation in their region. Among all the activities supported by the ministry's funds, educator training seems to have been one of the most important. These training sessions not only helped educators and youth counsellors to better understand the dynamics of the problem but also encouraged active networking among professionals from sometimes widely different organizations: schools, police, public health organizations, community-based non-profit organizations,

and so on. These networks, in turn, then supported the establishment of efficient concertation and concerted actions. All 16 projects met the ministry's requirement that prevention mechanisms rely on pre-existing or newly created concertation. Individual projects, however, met the requirement in accordance with their own needs and in relation to the historical and political constraints of their individual environments, as well as the available resources.

This last observation relies on the analysis we conducted on data gathered through the interviews that were part of the second research objective. Our analysis is based on the theoretical understanding of the different approaches partners use in creating increasing levels of concertation developed by Guay *et al.* (2000) in a diagram such as the one illustrated on p.127 (see **Figure 1**). This theoretical diagram proposes an incremental scale of levels of cooperation among stakeholders that goes from simple information exchange without concerted effort to synergistic collaboration, the highest possible level of partner integration.

Using this theoretical model, our analyses revealed four different levels of collaboration: (1) coordination, (2) a moderate level of involvement between coordination and concertation, (3) concerted action, and (4) synergetic action. In **Table 2** (p.129), we provide more detail on the characteristics of the projects, classified according to these four types of collaboration. This table makes clear which partners were involved, the intensity of the connections between them, and the activities in which they were involved. In creating this table, we recognize that the way the partnerships are organized varies and that the projects in the moderate level between coordination and concertation are as dependent on the strength of the relationships between the partners as those involved in concerted action or synergetic action. Projects in these last two levels involved collaborations that had been in place before the projects received financing from the ministry. In general, projects that fall in these

¹ In contrast to the first step of the research project, we conducted a qualitative analysis on this material rather than a content analysis of descriptions and official documents describing the financed projects as was done in the first stage.

last two categories show a maturity that the other projects have yet to develop.

In the analysis that follows, we consider the objectives of the projects associated with each of these categories of collaboration, as well as their challenges and successes.

Coordination

In this category, all the partners contribute but without relying on a clear action plan. Among the 16 projects under evaluation, only one project could be described this way. In this case, youth thought to be at high risk were targeted by the leading organization using

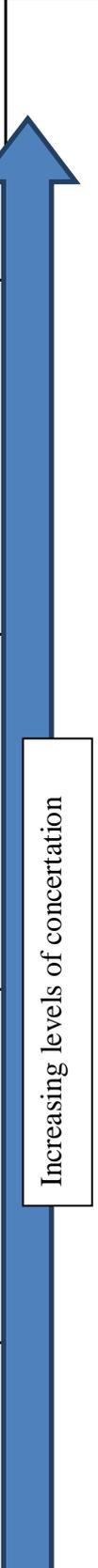
specialized intervention protocols and the input from other partners depended on the particular situation and problem of each targeted individual. In this project, organizers acknowledged that effective intervention might not require a concerted plan of action for all partners. However, they also recognized that delivering services this way limits the project's visibility and restricts its outreach capabilities. The cultural and organizational challenges and issues the organizers encountered in their attempts to create a more effective network with other partners seemed to have hindered their efforts to enhance concertation.

Table 1. Sample, types of material collected, analysis objectives and rationale

Material collected and respondents	Analysis objectives	Types of analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Official documents filed by the proponents in order to obtain financing from the ministry - Reports of on-site visits conducted by ministry employees throughout the implementation processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goals and expected results for each project - Characteristics of each site 	Content analysis
32 telephone interviews conducted with the 16 project managers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 16 interviews during fall 2009 - 16 interviews during fall 2010 	Implementation follow-up	Qualitative analysis
8 face-to-face interviews conducted with managers from 4 selected projects ² . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 interviews during fall 2009 - 4 interviews during fall 2011 	Understanding the issues and processes related to the development of concerted actions projects	Qualitative analysis

² The selection of these four sites was based on six criteria: (1) types of principal stakeholders involved in the financing request, (2) types and modalities of proposed concertation, (3) types of targets proposed by the different projects, (4) geographical context, (5) proposed evaluation strategies, and, (6) potential for evaluation.

Figure 1. A theoretical continuum of professional collaboration (from Guay *et al.*, 2000)

Mono-disciplinary	Pluri-disciplinary	Multi-disciplinary	Inter-disciplinary	Trans-disciplinary
 <p data-bbox="467 969 539 1462">Increasing levels of concertation</p>				
Individual intervention	Information exchange	Coordinated action	Synergetic intervention	Synergetic cooperation
Social interventions conducted concurrently with no cooperation.	Social interventions conducted with minimal exchange of information.	Common objectives are derived through basic concertation mechanisms.	Expertise and skills are integrated into synergetic efforts.	Expertise and skills are so integrated that actions to deal with social problems are shared between one discipline and another.

Situations between coordination and concertation

These situations occur with projects where activities are undertaken by all partners but according to a plan that may have been elaborated by only one or a small minority of partners. Five out of the 16 projects were in this category. The goal for all of these projects was to produce a generic portrait of youth sexual exploitation (review of available literature, resources and tools) and to identify the needs of youths in their own community with regard to this problem. These two activities then provided the opportunity to develop sensitizing tools and training intended for youth in schools as well as their teachers and counsellors. In some cases, sites also developed promotional tools for the prevention of youth sexual exploitation as well as specific training aimed at youth counsellors in both public institutions (youth centres, healthcare related personnel) and community-based organizations. The diversity of proposed activities is the most defining characteristic of the projects in this category. However, such diversity also meant that partners had to rely on sometimes highly complex inter-organizational mechanisms. All participating entities (community-led institutions, public institutions, the police, and the school sector) were contacted, and working committees were organized through deployment schedules and agendas. Satisfaction levels expressed by project organizers in this second category seemed to be higher than those of organizers in the first category. The working committees involved in the concerted actions reported positive results with regard to both levels of participation and achieving planned objectives. There are clear indications, however, that not all partners invested the same amount of energy in the project. Partners representing the schools and local community-led organizations invested significantly more than other institutional partners, perhaps as a result of their having shared expertise and involvement in local projects well before the announcement of the ministry's initiative. These same actors, however, were concerned about another issue,

which they felt rested on their shoulders alone: survival of the initiated projects once the ministry's funds are no longer available. They found that the time between organizing efficient concertation mechanisms, setting the necessary conditions for action, receiving the expected funds, and, finally, getting the attention of those targeted by the projects is often too long, while the time allowed to spend the allocated subvention is too short. Partly because of these concerns, those most involved in the projects were concerned about the continued capacity and strength of the networks they had spent so much energy putting in place.

Concerted action

In this category, all partners take part in elaborating a concerted plan of action. Three out of the 16 subsidized projects are in this category. For these projects, proactive concertation aimed at youth goes beyond the creation of concertation mechanisms. To a significantly greater extent than for projects in the previous category, identifying youth needs and creating locally adapted prevention tools became vehicles that helped mobilize stakeholders to establish durable partnerships. Accordingly, both the identified needs and the tools developed to meet these needs seem to be more precisely tailored to community realities and local capacities. In this category, as in the previous one, interviewees all agreed about the complexity involved in the creation and day-by-day functioning of such mechanisms. Organizers of two of these three projects expressed some discomfort regarding the relative imbalance of partner involvement. In these instances, however, specific problems were identified, such as the fact that some organizations found that assigning personnel to the project was costly, especially when there were other projects in the community that used a concertation approach.

Table 2. Characteristics of projects according to types of collaboration, the level of collaboration between partners and the institutions involved

# of project	Committee formed specifically to coordinate and evaluate the project	Part of an existing project involving concertation	Regular participant in concertation not related to projects supported by ministry	Characteristics of partners involved directly in projects								
				Non-profit organizations involved with					Police	Health or social service centre	Youth centre	University, health agency, school commission, city, OMHQ
				Work on the street	Cultural diversity	Services for women	Sexual exploitation	Other				
Level of collaboration and number of organizations												
Coordination only												
#8			D	B(1)	B(1)					B(1)		
Moderate												
#1	X		D	B(2)	B(1)			B(2)		B(1)	D (Health agency and social services agency)	
#5	X		D		C(1)	C(3)		D(1)	B(1)	D(1)		
#10			C (several)		D(1)	C(4)	C(1)	D(1)	B(2)		D(1)	
#12			C (several)							D(1)	D (City)	
#16	X					D(2)						
						D(1)	D(2)					

The third project organizer expressed satisfaction with the establishment and day-by-day functioning of the partnership. In this particular case, however, the partnership and concertation have existed for more than 20 years, while organizations involved in the other two projects in this third category started to work together a little less than 10 years ago. This same organizer noted that the project their committee presented to the Ministry of Public Security was characterized by realistic and clearly established planning. They also proposed, as a first step, conducting a thorough diagnosis of the situation of youth sexual exploitation within the community before embarking a plan of action. In this project, two committees were established, one responsible for decision-making and the other in charge of executive tasks in the field.

Included in the category of concerted action are three other subsidized projects that presented initiatives that relied on already established partnerships and concertation begun a few years before the ministry's announcement (two years, three years, and six years respectively). The goal of the first of these projects was to create sensitizing tools aimed at local youth and to develop a follow-up mechanism for youth considered to be at risk. The two other projects proposed sensitizing and training programs aimed at larger audiences. In these three cases, organizers relied extensively on already established relationships when undertaking active intervention and to reinforce links between partners as the projects evolved.

Synergetic action

This category is characterized by integration of expertise of all partners. Four projects among the 16 fall into this category. As with most of the projects, their main objectives were to produce a situational portrait of youth sexual exploitation in their territory, identify youth needs, develop and apply prevention tools, and organize intervention for those youth identified as being at greater risk of being exploited. They differ, however, in the way that partners involved in these networks

described their plans to develop and use intervention strategies aimed at youth already involved in sexual exploitation and experiencing the problems associated with it. In these instances, those involved in intervention protocols must be able to cope with crisis situations and undertake the immediate and sometimes very delicate action that these situations require.

Not surprisingly, these projects showed the highest levels of complexity found during our evaluation. While the characteristics of the concertation mechanisms used in these four projects are quite similar to those in the previous category, in this case partners were clearly determined to overcome the limits inherent in their mandates and fields of expertise. Responsibilities for plans of action and intervention strategies were therefore shared among the different partners in the project. As with the projects already discussed, these four projects also experienced relative asymmetry among the partners involved, with some engaging in substantially more action than others. Organizers for these projects agreed that most initiatives resulting from the action plan proposed to the ministry's authorities were dependent on relationships developed during previously initiated actions. On the other hand, they acknowledged that relationships with partners were satisfying and expected that the understanding and field actions their projects were able to create and implement might, in the near future, attract partners and institutions outside those already involved. In order to further this involvement and to make sure that the issues discussed remain of interest to the targeted organizations and eventual partners, the organizers engaged in contacts with these outside organizations, largely on a person-to-person basis. The organizers acknowledged in interviews that these efforts had to be undertaken constantly, as the issues at hand are evolving, as are the networks and the social situation itself. Prejudices resulting from different organizational cultures must, of course, be overcome within these discussions, even in a context where the future remains unclear

regarding the human and financial resources that will be needed or whether the initiated local actions will remain in place.

Discussion

Two key findings emerge from this research and its results. First, these results confirm that all participants agreed with the ministry's vision of active promotion of concertation. Participants were convinced of its intrinsic value and of the positive effect it might have in their environment and were committed to its use for reasons that went beyond the fact that it was a *sine qua non* condition for obtaining a subsidy. From a practical perspective, all 16 projects demonstrated that they were able to reach significant numbers of youths, especially youth at risk, who are recognized as difficult to reach and less responsive to intervention and its benefits.

The research also shows that, in order to obtain their results, project organizers, as well as their partners, had to deal with a number of issues that forced them to set conditions very similar to those described in the literature on concertation. For instance, it was necessary to allow sufficient time and space for stakeholders to learn to know each other and to negotiate their place with regard to others. There were also issues with the relative asymmetry among partners with regard to human and financial resources. In some cases, these elements might have led to the failure not only of the project but of the supporting organizations themselves. For instance, organizations involved in the projects being studied had to put aside work on other projects and services in order to better manage the complexity of concertation and to reach the objectives proposed to the ministry. It is worth repeating that the networks established by some of the 16 sites in order to reach these objectives remain in need of financial support, although no such support has yet been announced. Such a situation is, however, the exception rather than the rule. Sites that had well-established concertation efforts and mechanisms in place prior to the present project will be able to pursue their

long-term objectives with or without supplemental financial support.

The subsidising agency's main responsibility should be not only to encourage concertation but to provide the conditions necessary to achieve it. For example, considerable effort could have been saved if less experienced organizers in the subsidized organizations had benefitted from expert knowledge about concertation and the establishment of profitable partnerships. In this regard, a structured approach, such as one involving interprofessional practice and networking, should be explored. This networking approach is now regarded as a promising way to support the development of emerging communities of practice (Hill *et al.*, 2009). Such communities usually share expertise or professional approach and wish to learn from one another (Bourhis & Tremblay, 2004; Wenger *et al.*, 2002). Developing efficient networking requires finding ways to overcome any competition between the organizations involved. As such, communication strategies may provide ways to develop better concertation structures. Liaison officers have been effective in coordinating emerging networks, making it possible for information to circulate more effectively among participating organizations, negotiating compromises when necessary, and reflecting the developing levels of a growing partnership to those involved (Hamel *et al.*, 2008). The literature in the field has recognized such actions as positive conditions for promoting the success of work involving more than one agency (Worrall-Davies & Cottrell, 2009).

Conclusion

While we were able to demonstrate that stakeholders engaged in concertation agree that it offers real advantages, we must also recognize that it also comes with constraints that might distort results and that have not necessarily been taken into account. If concertation is an obligatory condition for receiving funding, subsidized organizations should be supported in building such

concertation and financing authorities should develop better mechanisms for providing such assistance. They should also recognize that the expectation that those involved with the subsidized project will put the goals of this project before other concerns may put the subsidized organization at risk once financing is withdrawn and, moreover, might discourage possible future partners from participating in concerted efforts. Such a negative response might mean that the youth who are the target of such programs will be increasingly affected by dangers that are well known and documented in their communities.

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