
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Quartermaking: method to create hospitality and inclusion

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Problem statement: In 2002 Article 107 sets in motion a gradual reduction in the number of psychiatric beds in Belgium. An important moment, because it is the first acknowledgement in centuries that an admission to hospital may not always be the best choice. A transformation to community based mental health care is difficult to achieve in a community that is intolerant and stigmatizing. Loneliness and exclusion amplify mental health problems.

Objective: Changing society to be more hospitable for people with severe mental ill health. The action is called “quartermaking” (Doortje Kal. “kwartiermaken”). Social workers are not used to work with this group. Caregivers in psychiatry are not used to work in communities. A new function is created: social workers who have experience with people with psychotic symptoms: “neighbourhood oriented quartermaking”

Target group: Quarter making is working on inclusion for people who feel excluded because of their mental ill health. Quarter makers support volunteers, citizens, in understanding the dynamics of psychosis. They try to create space and organize places that are not only accessible to the peer group of people with mental ill health.

Actions: “Hartelijke plekken” (warm places) is a quartermaking project. On a city map one can find locations of coffeebars, musea... where citizens have bought an extra coffee, extra meal, extra ticket... for people in need. Psychiatric institutions and Factteams are encouraged to organize outreach work in the community. Peergroup centers work by the principles of quartermaking and move away from segregation to inclusion. “Neighbourhood oriented quartermaking” is a new function and a method. Quarter makers are trained. Intervision is organized. I published two books on the subject. One is translated in English and is going to be published by Routledge in April 2023.

Impact: For six years quartermaking is known as a method for inclusion in Flanders, particularly in the field of mental health.

A psychiatric institution organised a structural partnership with the local community based on a care hotline and consultation platform. The care hotline follows a rigorous, step-by-step plan and has given good results.

Also a quarterly meeting of hospital staff and local residents was set up. This consultation platform ultimately became a core group of about fifteen volunteers, represented by people living in the vicinity of the hospital and hospital staff, as well as local politicians and the local police. This work is very destigmatising.

7 cities are organizing “hartelijke plekken”. (about 76 places in one city)

16 quarter makers work in different cities in Flanders.

The “Flemish group quartermaking” is touring in Flanders and is attended by caregivers, citizens, experts by experience...

The second series of train the trainer quartermaking has started.

Learning for the international audience: Community mental health care is best organized in cooperation with existing social work or even as support of social work. This is the best way to avoid community work based on a biomedical model.

Next steps:

Supporting more communities and institutions in Flanders.

Schoolcourses for quartermakers.