
POSTER ABSTRACT

Consolation spaces: why, how and what? A workshop on the development, experiences, pitfalls, challenges, and opportunities of consolation spaces

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Sarah Dury¹, Leen Vermeire³, Pieter Deknudt²

1: Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium

2: Reveil, Deerlijk, Belgium

3: Ferm, Wijgmaal, Belgium

A recent groundswell of movements and organisations is rising in Flanders, Belgium, stimulating engagement with serious illness, death, and bereavement. One result is the huge growth of public consolation spaces and concerts. However, it remains largely unknown how consolation spaces and concerts are developed, what actions are taken or how they are used.

This workshop discusses the development, use and prospects of consolation spaces and concerts in Flanders, Belgium. The workshop will share experiences about the development, challenges and opportunities faced, and promote further advances. Additionally, the goal is to stimulate reflection among participants about the concept of consolation spaces and concerts in relation to Compassionate communities and to jointly advance the state of knowledge about serious illness, death, and bereavement at the community level.

This workshop is for anyone interested in developing or actively participating in consolation spaces and/or concerts. Both people who have some experience with consolation spaces, consolation concerts, engagement with serious illness, death, and bereavement and those who have no experience with the subject are welcome.

The structure of the workshop is based on the active involvement of all participants and is inspired by the “Golden circle” of Simon Sinek. During the workshop we will focus on the three circles: 1) why the organisations developed and for what purpose, cause, or belief, 2) how the organisations developed and organise their consolation spaces, 3) what they do.

1. Presentation by Sarah Dury on consolation spaces in Flanders, Belgium (10min) on the meaning-making of consolations spaces, the use of them, the role these spaces may have in the neighbourhood and the actions taking place.

2. Presenting two case studies – why, how & what (30min): We will discuss two case studies on their development, the actions/activities that are organised, and prospects of stakeholders and users for the consolation spaces. Each case study will present 3 challenges faced within the process. Case study 1: Pieter Deknudt of Reveil on consolation concerts and case study 2: Leen Vermeire or local Ferm stakeholder, leader of a consolation space.

3. Interactive part - how & what (30 min): Reflections on case studies: pitfalls, challenges, and opportunities & prospects.

- What are the challenges and opportunities when developing a consolation space and/or linked activities with serious illness, death, and bereavement?
- How can we increase community involvement?
- Do these spaces play a role in connecting people in the neighbourhood? Can these spaces foster Compassionate communities?

Participants will be divided into different groups to discuss these questions related to their own practice. For each group there will be a moderator present. This will be followed by a collective discussion where each group presents its main findings.

4. Plenary and closing session (20 min):

During the plenary session participants will present their work and have the possibility to share personal experiences and insights on the topic.

End goal: People will go home having an idea of what consolation spaces can look like, and what the challenges and opportunities are when developing a consolation space.