Let’s celebrate recovery!
Citizens working together to support social cohesion

David Best & Charlotte Colman
Göteborg, 14th of May
I choose to be alive.
I would like to grow old peacefully without drugs, without living on the streets

(Peter, 2010)
Drug use

Recovery

PROCESS

Early Year 1

Sustained Year 1-5

Stable Year 5+
Personal

Health, self-esteem, identity,…

Social

Prosocial peer, parents, partner,…

Community

Attitudes, perceptions and actions of the community
Recovery is a personal journey within a social context.

The manifestation of recovery is community-based.
Individual responsibility and motivation

**BUT** a difference between wanting to change and being able to change

While personal and social capital seems necessary to initiate recovery, the role of the community is crucial in sustaining it

Recovery as a *co-production* (Beth Weaver, DRA conference, 2017)
“Would you want to live next to an addict, even if that person is in recovery?”

42% of UK households answered no
“People with a history of drug dependence are a burden of society”
“Would you hire a former heroin or crack user even if they were fit for the job?”

66% of employers answered no
“I support recovery, as long as it’s not in my back yard”

- Public perceptions of addicts (Philips & Shaw, 2013)
  - 4 populations: smokers, obese people, active and recovering addicts
  - The US population generally does not believe in recovery
  - Addiction as an irreversible stain
Extending the stigma research to trainee professionals

• 303 criminal justice and allied health students across all three years at Sheffield Hallam
• Liaised with Lindsay Phillips about vignettes
• Amended to four new populations active or recovering / desisting:
  • Heroin addicts
  • Alcoholics
  • Violent drinkers
  • Child offenders
Social distance scores for four key groups

Heroin addicts: 26.7
Alcoholics: 24.3
Violent drinkers: 26.9
Child offenders: 31.2

Active
Desisting
A society that discriminates, stigmatises and excludes, imposes negative consequences for sustaining the recovery process of her citizens.
Best and Laudet (2010)

- Personal Recovery Capital
- Social Recovery Capital
- Collective Recovery Capital
Life In Recovery Survey

We surveyed more than 800 people in recovery groups in the UK.

39.4% of families living with an active user of drugs or alcohol will suffer incidents of domestic violence. The figure drops to just 7% among those in long-term recovery.

Women spend an average of 17.7 years addicted to drugs or alcohol.
Men spend 22.4 years addicted.

79.4% of people in long-term recovery have volunteered since beginning their recovery journey.

74% of people in long-term recovery have remained steadily employed during their recovery, compared to 40.3% in active addiction.

60% in active addiction reported getting arrested during this time. 2.9% of those in long-term recovery reported being arrested.
• More negative community recovery capital (Cloud & Granfield, Best & Savic)
  • No access to meaningful jobs or stable housing
  • Social exclusion and stigma from gatekeepers
  • Disclosure of criminal records

• When society’s reaction to former drug users is to stigmatise, segregate and exclude ➔ limited opportunities to achieve and sustain recovery

• The fear among community members is mostly not based on personal experiences.
  • Less negative attitudes have been found among those people who currently (or in the past) have lived, worked or been friends with (recovering) drug users
How could we, as a society, facilitate & promote recovery?

• Focus on beating stigma, discrimination and exclusion which represent significant barriers to recovery
  • Invest in meaningful jobs, stable housing, social relationships
    • ‘Giving something back’
    • Social connectedness and belonging are key

• A change of mindset in the society can promote sustained recovery
  • Contribute to the growth of community recovery capital
  • Recovery community ➔ Co-recovery
Strategy to enhance recovery: building an inclusive city

Different stakeholders working together
- City council
- Public & private organisations
- Criminal justice actors & treatment providers
- Family & friends
- Citizens
- People in recovery
Best & Colman (in review)

Central idea: no one should walk the recovery path alone. An inclusive city promotes participation, inclusion, full and equal citizenship to all her citizens, also to those in recovery.

Central aim:
1) challenge social exclusion at city level
2) make recovery visible, celebrate it and create a safe environment supportive to recovery
   • “Recovery is contagious”

Beneficial for the person in recovery, as well as for the community as a whole
• “The helper principle”
• ROSC
  • Recovery Oriented Systems of Care (SAMHSA)

• CHIME (Leamy et al)
  • Connectedness, Hope & Optimism about the future, Identity, Meaning in life & Empowerment

⇒ Inclusive city: an initiative to support the creation of Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care at city level

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<th>Some examples of operational elements</th>
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<td>• Peer support and involvement</td>
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<td>• Relationships with others</td>
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<td>Hope about the future</td>
<td>• Champion visibility of recovery and desistance</td>
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<td>• Celebrate success</td>
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<td>• Hope-inspiring relationships</td>
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<td>Promoting a recovery identity around social inclusion and social participation</td>
<td>• Challenging exclusionary labels and practices - work with housing services, employment agencies etc to challenge exclusionary processes and structures</td>
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<td>Meaning</td>
<td>• Meaningful life and social roles: access to meaningful jobs and accessible recovery housing</td>
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<td>• Contribute and giving back to the society</td>
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<td>Empowerment and strength-based</td>
<td>• Focus on strengths</td>
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Best & Colman, in review
Jobs, Friends & Houses

Serenity cafe

Radio Gaga

San Patrignano

Recovery bike ride
How to build inclusive cities?

For example in Ghent:

1. Bring several actors from different organisations responsible for housing, employment, social welfare,... together. Include people in recovery as well!
2. Make an overview of existing practices for people in recovery
3. Identify gaps
4. Define the city’s mission, vision statement, goals (short-term and long-term) and actions towards people in recovery
5. Monitor, evaluate and adapt!

Several promising examples

- Small actions or big actions (according to mindset & resources available)

The most important step however, is to bring it all together and to create partnerships
Let’s start building inclusive cities!

Let’s start sharing ingredients and good practices to improve social justice and community engagement!
Questions, thoughts,..

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