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Lessons for restorative justice from methods and conceptual frameworks used in community building

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Project Field Glasses



- Exploratory project from February to December 2016
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- Researchers: Katrien Lauwaert en Inge Vanfraechem (KU Leuven)
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Problem definition



In Belgium, a long history and strong development of RJ in the field of criminal justice, but

- a limited use of restorative services
- still a traditional law and conflict culture and weak societal support for and knowledge of restorative approaches
- little contact between RJ in criminal justice and similar trends in other fields
- As far as we knew: a limited spreading of restorative services over different sectors/fields in society

Main objective



From:

Exploration of the potential for a broader implementation of RJ in fields which are less focused on crime.

Towards:

Explore possibilities of mutual learning and broader collaboration between RJ in criminal justice and some other fields less focused on crime

- Field of action:
 - community building
 - Socio-cultural education for adults
 - schools

Central questions



- Which conceptual frameworks and practices are used for dealing with conflicts/injustice and which connect to the values and/or methods used in RJ?
- What can RJ learn from these fields?
- How can the common ground between RJ and these fields become an incentive for these fields to
 - strengthen the societal support for restorative approaches;
 - develop new initiatives with a restorative touch?

Process



- Elaborate a conceptual framework
 - Explore where the conceptual frameworks of RJ and the other sectors connect
 - Where do we find common ground? In what way can these frameworks strengthen each other?
- Make contact with key actors or experts
 - Individual expert interviews and mixed focus groups
- Make use of international examples
- Initiate one or more pilot projects if possible

First part of the research

- Desk research: getting to know the field
- 12 interviews with key actors/experts from the fields of community building, socio-cultural education for adults and schools
- 2 gatherings of a reflection group with people of the different sectors involved in the project
- Contacts with policymakers
- Here: focus on community building sector

Community building sector



- RJ is not (well) known; ‘no need for new frameworks’
- ‘Dealing with conflicts’ is too narrow to enter the field and a delicate theme
- Looking for common values (see also Kay Pranis, 2007)
- Common ground:
 - participation, setting up democratic processes, ownership
 - start from the lifeworld
 - connecting people
 - emancipatory approach, empowerment
 - communication and dialogue



- Differences leading to opportunities
 - Prevention versus curation
 - Methods:
 - Working with groups
 - Working with networks
 - Diapraxis; dialogue via praxis
 - Specific methods for handling conflicts: circles...
 - Individual versus structural work
 - Restorative culture within the organisation?



Challenges

- Compartmentalisation
- Refocus on the core business
- Actively involving policy makers



Thanks for your attention

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Searching for common grounding on the basis of values

- Restorative values Kay Pranis































