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Social inclusion of people with psychosis living in the city of Zwolle (NL): study outline and preliminary findings (FOCUS part-1)

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Learning Goal:

How can we stimulate a sustainable exchange of perspectives on relevant topics with regard to social inclusion and participation of people diagnosed with a psychotic disorder in Dutch society?

Abstract Text:

Many people diagnosed with a psychotic disorder in supported housing experience great (existential) loneliness and isolation living in the community. Although they – like all humans – search for places to belong, they often walk the streets feeling like an outsider, lack meaningful daily activities and are labelled 'people distanced from the job market'.

The Netherlands have the second highest percentage of psychiatric hospital beds and supported housing facilities. Although localized within the community, people living in these facilities are poorly integrated in the community. Over the last two decades Dutch politics and policy-makers increasingly emphasize social participation and inclusion of every citizen, including people with chronic disabilities. To this end, goals have been formulated to strongly reduce supported housing facilities on the short term and to promote living in the community as independent as possible. Paradoxically, spaces for abnormality, strangeness and otherness remain very tight. For example, recently 24/7 hotlines have been put into place for the general public to report disturbance caused by confused behaviour.

In the recently started empirical-ethical qualitative study, part of a larger scale study funded by NWO called FOCUS, we aim for a thorough understanding of the processes of social inclusion and exclusion of people with psychosis, first and foremost from their own perspectives and secondly from the perspectives of their family members, neighbours, friends, housing-facility and mental health workers. For an extensive period (3 years), we will conduct participant observation and semi structured interviews, in Zwolle and three other areas, both urban and rural, in the Netherlands. Researchers will engage closely with people with psychosis and their family members, neighbours, friends, housing-facility and mental health workers and their narratives concerning social inclusion and exclusion. We will present our study outline and some preliminary findings.

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