

Good afternoon and welcome everyone,

My name is Marc Hellinckx, I am a psychiatric nurse and the coordinator of the project called "Te Gek!?" ("Too Crazy!?!")

Te Gek!? is a project on the public representation of mental health in Flanders.

For ten years now, it tries to foster the debate on psychological problems in Flanders. Therefore, projects aiming for the decrease of stigmatization of psychological problems, are set up.

I will briefly present you the project and then I will talk about a campaign, set up in 2014, specifically aiming for the prevention of suicide.

Te Gek!? has its roots in a small psychiatric hospital, Sint-Annendael in Diest, where I have been working for about 20 years now as a psychiatric nurse. We noticed how psychiatric patients, who are treated in a hospital, suffer from the way they are suddenly perceived and stigmatized. It is as all of a sudden, they belong to a different population, as a consequence of their admission in psychiatry. Of course, this stigmatization influences their self-conception.

This created the idea of setting up a local project on the representation of mental health for a more general public and this by organizing concerts and exhibitions with the support of famous Flemish artists and musicians. 3 times a year, a concert by a famous artist was organized in the hospital and the patients were involved in the organization. These concerts were very successful and attracted a lot of people. Of course, they came to see the specific artist but consequently, they were introduced in the world of psychiatry, in the practice of our hospital and they got to know the activities and the patients. People were all very surprised about the way the hospital looked like, how open and new it is, ... Also the image of persons who stayed in a psychiatric hospital was strongly adapted.

The success of this local project stimulated us to propose a larger project for Flanders. Several artists were asked to compose a song concerning mental health and so at the end of 2004, we released the first 'Te Gek!?'-cd, with 16 songs of well known Flemish artists.

The songs were played on the radio, so the topic of mental health obtained a large attention. The Ancienne Belgique also participated in the project and newspaper 'De Standaard' was our mediapartner from the beginning.

Also the 'Christelijke mutualiteit' was an important partner from the start.

Over the past 10 years, a lot of big projects were realized: 5 "Te Gek!?" cd's were released, featuring 75 artists, for example Milow, The Scabs, K's Choice, Arno, Mauro, Milk Inc., ... Every time we released a new cd, there was a big concert organized in the Ancienne Belgique. De Standaard published 7 reports on mental health (which reached over a 100.000 readers), a lot of cultural centres organized extra music shows, famous writers participated in literary events of Te Gek!?, specific shows were performed for schools, we built a Te Gek!? tour bus, providing information on mental health to schools, concerts were organized in psychiatric hospitals, 5 big cities organized open air concerts, Canvas made a tv-documentary called Te Gek!?, ... So as you see, the project got a lot of public and media attention and was very frequently featured in newspapers, on radio stations, national television, ...

In 2014, we set up the project "Op de pedalen" ("On the pedals") concerning the public representation and idea of the topic of psychosis, and this in cooperation with The University of Maastricht and the Catholic University of Leuven. This was a cycling project where the participants

were sponsored per kilometre and they cycled in Leuven, in Maastricht, from Leuven to Maastricht and vice versa.

A part of the project was the activity 'Doorgetrapt' ("chain slip"), where a symbolic link was made between the bicycle and the human being. A bicycle can have a 'chain slip', you can 'loose the pedals'. Also a human being can slip, get lost or lose grip. 36 famous Flemish and Dutch persons donated a bicycle with chain slip or other problems to the project, as a symbol for a sick bicycle that needs treatment. These 36 bicycles were treated in 36 psychiatric hospitals in Flanders and the Netherlands, and this by persons diagnosed with psychosis.

Here we see some results:

This is the bicycle of Guy Swinnen, godfather of the project Te Gek!?. Guy Swinnen is the frontman of the rockband The Scabs and his personal identity is really visible in the treatment.

This is the bicycle of cyclocross-rider Niels Albert, who was treated in UPC Kortenberg, department Sint-Joris.

Here we see the bicycle of the minister of finance, Koen Geens.

Every bicycle was perceived as "a patient" and for each bicycle an admission report and a treatment protocol was set up. In 2013, the 36 treated bicycles were auctioned by the International Christie's Auction house.

For the literary project 'Te gek voor woorden' (Too insane for words) a text, a song and a film were made by the artist Pieter Embrechts, about 3 people in an assisted living project in a psychiatric hospital and about their history of illness. We will watch one of the three films: Nadja.

*Text: 'Te Gek' of the Tour 2014 – Prevention Suicide:*

*Films – photo:*

*Bicycle:*

*Nadja:*

*VRT news Hautacam:*

*Fragment of the documentary:*