

2011 World Hearing Voices Congress living with voices: paths to Recovery

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The Prato (Italy) hearing voices group, an evaluation project

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The Prato hearing voices group, established in 1998 within a project of dissemination of self help groups, has had an interesting development in relation both with the Prato area context and with national and international organizations (mostly users groups and associations)

- We will present some significant steps of the Prato group in relation to the development of international self help movements and particularly of Intervoice, the hearing voice network.
- We will describe an evaluation project done jointly by AISMe and by the Prato Mental Health Service

Steps of the Prato hearing voices group

- 1989-1991 national and international Prato self help conferences
- 1991-1997 users evaluate services, European project
- 1998 establishment of the Prato self help hearing voices group
- 1998-2000 Prato Intervoice seminars
- 2000 Prato international conference on recovery
- 2001-2011 Joint experiences and Local Mental Health Systems project

The voice hearers group of Prato (probably the first one in Italy) has been established in 1998 in a context where:

- many user self help groups were growing locally in relationship with the international user movement,
- the deinstitutionalisation process, due to the closure of the psychiatric hospitals in Italy (law 180, 1978) was going on despite some difficulties,
- the user groups and the mental health associations appeared as a new impulse for real deinstitutionalization.

- The group meets once a week in the premises of the Prato municipality (the East Borough Council) outside the services and is led by a professional of AISMe
- AISMe has a formal contract with the municipality of Prato and with the service to run the group
- A nurse of the service participates to the hearing voices group
- Most of the clients come from the service and from the GPs
- Beside the hearing voices group other activities have been developed during the week in the same place

The group has been continuously active and there has been a complete turnover of voice hearers from the beginning (1998) till now, except one woman.

Some of people could develop more autonomy leaving the parents' home and finding a job.

Most of them could cope much better with their voices

Now the group is attended regularly by six voice hearers: the woman attending the group since the beginning and other five new persons

The relatives group

The Prato relatives' self help group has been established in 2000 with the consent of the user hearing voices group.

The agreement was that the relatives would speak only of themselves as individuals avoiding to interfere with the group of user.

The relatives' group decided to facilitate the establishment of a flat for three of users (belonging to the user group) to allow them to live independently.

It has been a very interesting process which has involved the service and the local community.

Now the relatives' group is composed of 7/8 persons, some of them are changed and have not necessarily a hearing voices relative in the hearing voices group. They support each other and may help people when there are difficulties with the service

The growth of the Prato hearing voices group has been influenced by the parallel growth of a wider project, the so called “Joint Experiences and Local Mental Health Systems” project which is composed by the following elements interacting among them:

- local mental health associations with active participation of users and relatives
- local mental health service
- local municipality/s

For this reason the group has had many occasions to be involved in several research and evaluation projects

- The 2009-2011 edition of “Joint Experiences and Local Mental Health System” project involves three areas of Florence, Prato and North Lanarkshire.

AlSMe and the Prato hearing voices group takes part also to this research-action project which is promoted and carried on with the active participation of users self help groups and mental health associations

A new evaluation project for the group

AlSMe and the Mental Health Service are currently working to a new project of evaluation of the activities of the group with the aim of :

- focusing on some key points with each voice hearer of the group by fulfilling the Maastricht Interview, writing a report and making a construct. This methodology is clearly written in the book “Making sense of voices” by Romme&Escher. The book has been recently translated by AlSMe, in collaboration with some of the Prato voices hearers group,

- monitoring fluxes both of professionals and of users within the group

An expert, chosen both by AISMe and by the service to help create methodologies of interaction and evaluation, participates:

- once a month at the group with the AISMe facilitator and the service professional
- every three months at a meeting between AISMe and the service

3 forms have been prepared for data collection

- *Attendance form*
- *New entry form*
- *Evaluation form*

The above forms are open to all people involved who are also requested to subscribe them

- Within this year, beyond the above mentioned existing elements, we hope to develop special meetings involving the key persons of each voice hearer to discuss more deeply the relationships of individuals with their voices and how voices can indicate the solution of the problems. In these meetings the work through the Maastricht interview, through the report and through the construct will be particularly discussed.
- We hope also to organize meetings for training and education to prepare more people to a new approach to voice hearers

DARE UN SENSO ALLE VOCI

**Una guida per operatori della salute mentale che lavorano
con gli uditori di voci**

**Follow-up del lavoro rivoluzionario di Romme e Escher
sviluppato nel precedente libro Accettare le Voci: una
nuova analisi dell'esperienza dell'udire le voci al di fuori
del modello di malattia**

Prof Marius Romme & Dr Sandra Escher

Parte 1: Perché abbiamo bisogno di un nuovo approccio all'udire voci

1. Ragioni
2. Ricerca
3. Procedure diagnostiche
4. Voci e loro relazione con la storia della vita

Parte 2: Analizzare le voci

5. L'intervista
6. Il report
7. Il costrutto

Parte 3: Interventi

8. Imparare a trattare con le voci
9. Educazione sanitaria, cure mediche e supporto
10. Tecniche a breve termine
11. Tecniche a medio termine
12. Il lungo termine
13. Uso della teoria dell'uditore di voci
14. Terapie alternative
15. Auto-aiuto

Epilogo

Appendice 1-2

Tavola 1-7

Appendice 3-4