



# 'Just For Today'

The rise of Narcotics Anonymous in the Netherlands since 1988

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- Wim Kieft, 52, Dutch football international
- Cocaine & alcohol addiction
- 2012: Clean with help of NA
- 2014: Huge bestseller in Holland (19<sup>th</sup> printing)



# Just for today...

JUST FOR TODAY \*\* I will be agreeable. I will look as well as I can, dress becomingly, talk low, act courteously, criticize not one bit. not find fault with anything and not try to improve or regulate anybody except myself.

JUST FOR TODAY - I will have a quiet half hour all by myself to relax, During this half hour, sometime I will try to get a better prospective of my life.

JUST FOR TODAY - I will have a program. I may not follow it exactly but I will have it. I will save myself from two pests: Hurry and Indecision.

JUST FOR TODAY - I will be unafraid. Especially I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful, and to believe that as I give to the world, so the world will give to me.

# This paper

- NA: narratives, history & identities
- Impact of NA on Dutch addiction treatment
- NA in broader historical context of Dutch user movements
- Conclusion

# Paper = part of bigger project:

## Dutch heroin “epidemic” (1970s/80s) from below

- Project started in 2015
- Main sources: memoirs, pamphlets, & interviews with (former) heroin users
- Their memories and interpretations
- “Epidemic”: sign of the times?

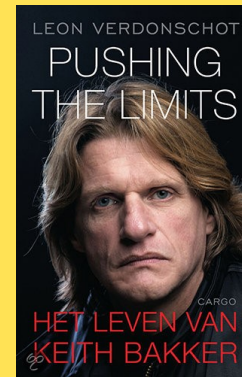
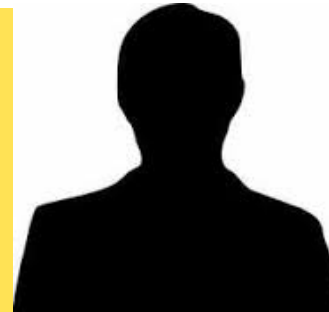


# Narcotics Anonymous

Narratives, history & identities

# NA narratives: themes

- Wish to create understanding of addiction – and warn young generation
- Certain 'pride' about being very experienced addicts
- 13th step: carry the message outside the group?





“I have been clean now for 8 years, after having used heroin for about 20 years of my life. And during the last couple of years, I’ve been looking back upon my life, you know. Trying to make sense of what happened. And I have read some of your stuff as well. And what I want to add...well, the whole 12-step thing...I just feel very lucky that I came across that program, and that some American guy took the trouble to set up the first spiritual NA meeting in Holland about 25 years ago...and it is still growing. This is still just the beginning. And I feel that this is a part of the story you should take on board in your story about the history of the addiction treatment.”



# Abstinence from all mind-altering chemicals

- 1953: NA founded in America
- By Jimmy Kinnon, poly drug user & alcoholic
- Addiction treatment, and self-help groups, should not focus on 1 substance



# Disappointment with addiction treatment

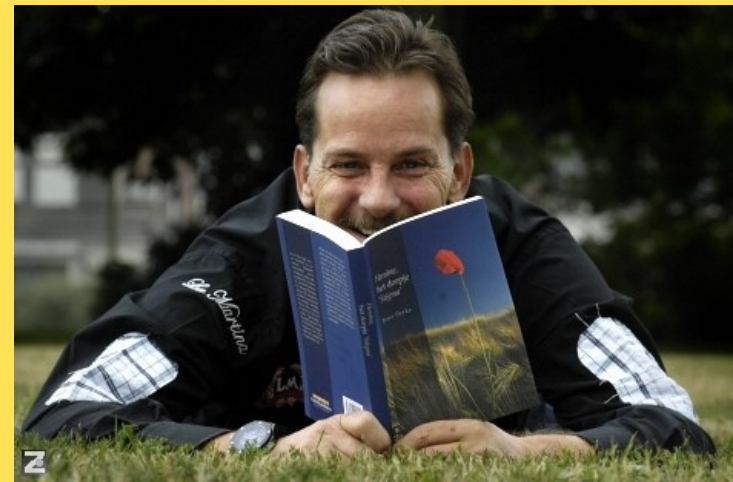
- Naive
- Fatalistic
- Belittling
- Stigmatizing



# Peter Derks, former heroin user

- Methadone clinics are depressing places, chaotic, the workers are badly dressed 'alternative' looking people who have been stuck in one place for too long, and have lost all faith in their clients' ability to become abstinent again. These clinics should be closed. Their negativism rubs off on the addicts.

Quote from: Peter Derks,  
*Heroine, het dorpje Stigma* (2010)



# Context: dominance of methadone maintenance in Holland

- Controversial until 1980
- Strong rise in 1980s
- 12.500 methadone clients in 1993 = about 50% of opiate users
- In 2013: 8185 methadone clients, ± 600 heroin assisted treatment = about 70 % of users



# Growth & international dispersion

- Largest growth from 1990 onwards
- From ± 10.000 meetings in 40 countries in 1990; to 63.000 meetings in 132 countries today



Street banner at 2013 Narcotics Anonymous World Convention

# NA in the Netherlands

- First meetings late 1980s
- 2006: 23 meetings (13 in Amsterdam)
- 2016: about 180 meetings in 64 towns



Narcotics Anonymous®  
NA-Anonieme Verslaafden

Een  
Introductie tot  
NA-Anonieme  
Verslaafden

# Impact on Dutch addiction treatment



# Dutch 12 step 'entrepreneurs'



Maarten Dammers



Keith Bakker



Dick Trubendorffer

Don Schothorst

# Since 2005: rise of private 12 step addiction treatment in the Netherlands



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*verslavingszorg en meer*



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NEDERLAND



SMITH & JONES



**THE FINAL STEP**  
Interventies, family counseling & recovery coaching

**Consistent**  
VERSLAVINGS PRAKTIJK

# Ex-hard drug user Keith Bakker

- 2005: Lawsuit against addiction treatment
- Instead of helping him in becoming sober, they offered him methadone & heroin assisted treatment
- He lost: but trial was good publicity for 12-step treatment & NA



± 2005

# Addiction treatment under fire nationally

- Critics: clients, family, media
- Claim: addiction treatment “gives up on people”
- Lazy, fatalistic attitude





# Reactions within public addiction treatment

- Opening of several public 12-step clinics (Minnesota) after 2009
- Closer cooperation with self-help groups, including NA
- Information & Development Centre for Self Help Groups (2003-2008)



# NA in broader historical context of Dutch drug user movements

# Nico Adriaans (1957-1995)

- Founder Dutch Junkie Unions (1977)
- Acceptance of drug use
- Methadone maintenance, needle exchange
- Activist methods, provocative campaigns





# 1970s: therapeutic communities



- 1980/1990s: more professional user organisations
- Financially supported, advisors to city councils & treatment field
- Slightly less activist, but with same harm reduction agenda



# Junkie Unions & NA compared

## Shared characteristics

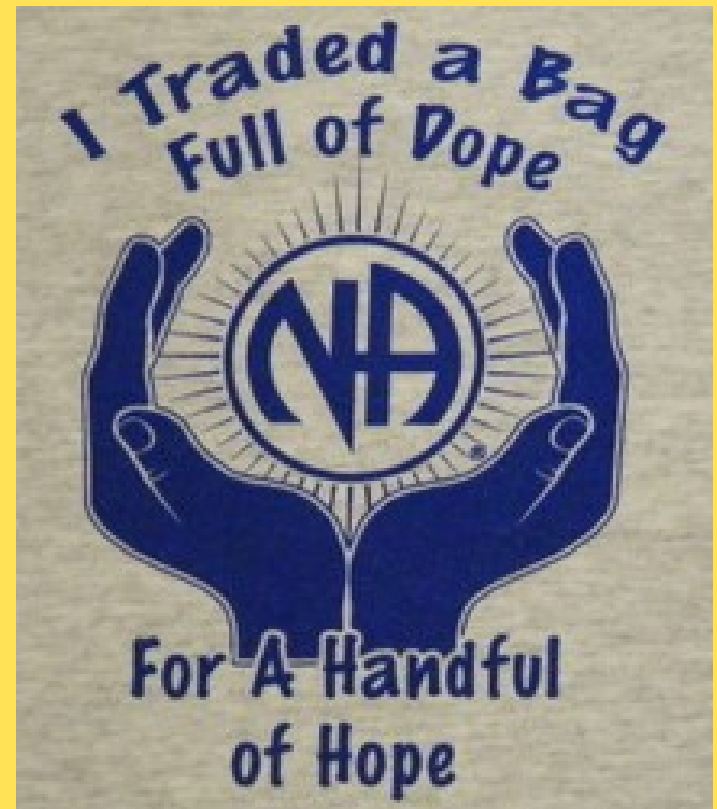
- Strong critique of addiction treatment
- Seeking public attention
- Claim: addiction treatment does not understand addicts/addiction
- Field's interest lies in maintaining public order



# Junkie Unions & NA compared

## Differences

- Junkie Unions fought for harm reduction
- NA fights against (dominance of) harm reduction
- NA = less 'activist' & 'angry'
- NA organisation as such not publicly engaged – individual members are



# Conclusion

- Addiction treatment in the Netherlands after 1970 has developed in a dialectical relationship with user groups
- 1980s: Junkie unions helped along the acceptance of harm reduction methods
- 2000s: NA members & 12-step entrepreneurs stimulated a new emphasis on abstinence in the field
- Story symbolizes a fundamental struggle in addiction treatment: finding a balance between acceptance of chronic drug use, and therapeutic optimism