

Recovery as Cruel Optimism: Exploring recent responses to substance misuse through policy, practice and lived experience

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*The Paradoxes of Recovery Policy: Exploring the Impact
of Austerity and Responsibilisation for the Citizenship
Claims of People with Drug Problems*

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Story-lines are narratives on social reality through which elements from many different domains are combined and that provide actors with a set of symbolic references that suggest a common understanding. They are ‘devices through which actors are repositioned and through which specific ideas of “blame” and “responsibility” and of “urgency” and “responsible behavior” are attributed’.



A dominant story-line provides a compelling account of policies which ‘sounds right’, based on its plausibility, trust of the author, and acceptability for the listener’s own discursive identity. The thread of a story-line provides a rallying point, under which a diverse range of projects can be accommodated. (Hajer, 1995 62-65).





Three eras of policy



**What happened
next?**

The Move to

Recovery 

**What happened
next?**

The Move to

Recovery 

Reducing Demand, Restricting Supply: Supporting People to Live a Drug Free Life





Recovery as Cruel Optimism

.... optimism is cruel when the object/scene that ignites a sense of possibility actually makes it impossible to attain the expansive transformation for which a person or people risks striving.



The 'R' word

 November 3, 2013 By DDN  [Leave a Comment](#)

Alex Boyt tells DDN why he is having trouble climbing the steps of the recovery bus.

Maybe it is the circles I operate in, or those that I gravitate towards, but when I mention the word 'recovery' there is good chance that low level groans are emitted, and eyes will roll as the glint of defeat replaces the sparkle of indifference. On the face of it, this doesn't make sense – surely recovery is a positive thing, speaking of hope, lives saved and purpose regained.

A commissioner said to me the other day, 'If we put the word recovery in enough strategic documents and action plans, people are bound to get better faster.' You couldn't accuse them of being serious but it did wag a finger at the gap between theory



Contesting Recovery

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DDN The magazine for the substance misuse field
Drink and Drugs News

PCP a new beginning

HOME MAGAZINE ARCHIVE JOBS & TENDERS PAST DDN CONFERENCES RESOURCES THE CHALLENGE

Seeing purple

December 2, 2013 By DDN [Leave a Comment](#)

[Last month Alex Boyt](#) took the recovery movement to task. Alistair Sinclair, Richard Maunders and Melody Treasure of the UKRF respond

In DDN's November issue Alex Boyt shared some of his thoughts on the 'R' word and this prompted much discussion on social media among the recovery community. It would be interesting to know if something similar happened within services. While Alex, tongue located somewhere in his cheek, has a poke at the 'purple t-shirt' brigade (we're fully signed-up members) and the 'warm fuzzy feelings' found at recovery gatherings, it seems to us that he is principally 'venting' about services/commissioners and their interpretation of 'recovery'.

Alex is a SU coordinator in central London. In his article he refers to commissioners, the NTA,

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Substance Use Recovery

Evaluator, which the authors suggests now makes it possible to 'measure' the concept of recovery in a 'meaningful way'

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Substance Use Recovery Evaluator
– Guidance for users

‘these questions are to help you measure your own personal recovery from drug and alcohol dependence’.

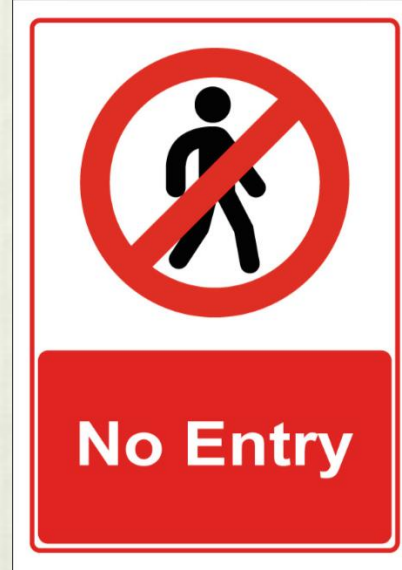
Contesting Recovery

‘This is the world of the active voice of human agency, of imaginary control over one’s environment and one’s own self, in which one appears able to shape one’s own destiny or destination (Hogget, 2015).

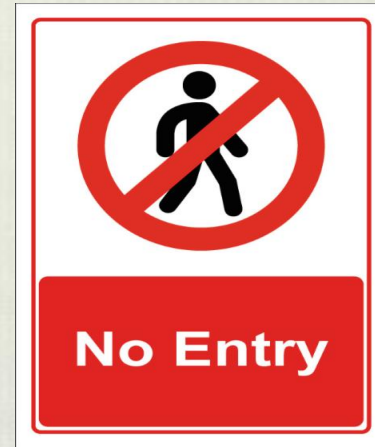
Recovery as 'Cruel Optimism'

.... optimism is cruel when the object/scene that ignites a sense of possibility actually makes it impossible to attain the expansive transformation for which a person or people risks striving.

(L. Berlant 2011 p.2)



How does one imagine oneself in connection with a community, a culture or a nation... What is it that allows one to feel part of a social order, able to take up 'citizenship', neither excluded nor excluding oneself? ... To be a citizen, one not only needs to formally belong somewhere; one has to feel that this belonging is real (Frosh, 2001)



Thanks for Listening

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