

**33rd Annual Conference of the
European Society for Social Drug Research
(ESSD)**

Vienna, 6 - 8 October 2022



**BOOK OF ABSTRACTS
& PROGRAMME**

Hosted by
Sigmund Freud Private University, Vienna
Austrian Public Health Institute
University of Vienna
University of Manchester

Alfred Uhl & Meropi Tzanetakis & Ulrike Kobra
ESSD 2022 Organising Committee



Gesundheit Österreich
GmbH



ESSD
European Society for
Social Drug Research

ESSD 2022 – Detailed PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2022

starting 19:30 Get-together in a restaurant near the venue place – latecomers are welcome until 22:00 (to be paid by participants)

THURSDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2022

10:00 – 10:30 **Opening of the conference and general information**

10:30 – 11:40 **Session 1: Cannabis Normalisation**

Chair: Dirk Korf

Gary **Potter** (Lancaster University, Lancaster, United Kingdom)

Domestic cannabis cultivation in a changing world

Thomas Friis **Søgaard** (Aarhus University, Denmark)

Exchange and “demand sharing” in social cannabis supply

Alfred **Springer** (Medical university of Vienna, Austria)

Onward to the regulation of social cannabis use in Austria

11:40 – 12:00 *Coffee break*

12:00 – 13:10 **Session 2: Substance Use and Drug Policy**

Chair: Tom Decorte

Pekka **Hakkarainen** (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki, Finland)

Differences in cannabis use and opinions on drug policy between generations

Kristiana **Bebre** (University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia)

The othering of policymakers: How cannabis users explain policies in Latvia

Mats **Ekendahl** (Stockholm University, Sweden)

Men as unthinkable alcohol policy targets – findings from Australia, Canada and Sweden

13:10 – 14:40 *Lunch*

14:30 – 15:40 **Session 3: Drug Policy Aspects**

Chair: Pekka Hakkarainen

Aileen **O’Gorman** (University of the West of Scotland, United Kingdom)

Drug policy futures: Reconstructing the problem of drug deaths for better policy making

Tanja **Schwarz** (Austrian Public Health Institute, Vienna, Austria)

Aging in opioid substitution therapy – a cross-country comparison between Austria, Germany and Switzerland

Landon **Kuester** (King’s College London, United Kingdom)

Drug testing parents: Findings from UK children’s and family social work services

15:40 – 16:00 *Coffee break*

16:10 – 17:20 **Session 4: Digital Drug Markets**

Chair: Aileen O’Gorman

Caroline **Chatwin** (University of Kent, United Kingdom)

Gender representations in online modafinil markets

Nigel **South** (University of Essex, United Kingdom)

Cultural politics and uberization in dark web marketplaces

Meropi **Tzanetakis**, (University of Manchester, United Kingdom),
Nigel **South** (see above)

Digital transformations of illicit drug markets: Continuity and reconfiguration

18:00 *Social Event and afterwards Dinner in a restaurant (starting 20:00) (sponsored by hosting organisation)*

FRIDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2022		
10:00 – 11:10	Session 5: Theoretical Aspects	
	Chair: Gary Potter	
	Josefin Månsson , Patrik Karlsson (Stockholm University, Sweden)	<u>Atmospheres of craving: In-between time, relationships, spaces and objects</u>
	Julian Strizek (Austrian Public Health Institute, Vienna, Austria)	<u>Alcoholism and stigma: A perfect (mis)match</u>
	Alfred Uhl (Austrian Public Health Institute and Sigmund Freud Private University, Vienna, Austria)	<u>Is it justified to attack fallacious or misleading arguments that support valid conclusions?</u>
11:10 – 11:30	<i>Coffee break</i>	
11:30 – 12:20	Session 6: Drug Markets	
	Chair: Moritz Rosenkranz	
	George Simpson (University of Kent, United Kingdom)	<u>Benevolent brokers: A case study of impression management in middle level markets in Kent coastal towns</u>
	Agnese Zile-Veisberga (Ministry of the Interior of Latvia and University of Latvia, Latvia))	<u>The Covid-19 impact on the illegal retail drugs market in Latvia and drug use patterns</u>
12:20 – 12:35	Announcement of ESSD Board Election results	
12:35 – 14:00	<i>Lunch</i>	
14:00 – 15:10	Session 7: Attitudes of Users	
	Chair: Jane Fountain	
	Bernd Werse (Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany)	<u>Views from people who use drugs heavily on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on urban drug scenes in Germany</u>
	James Morgan (London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom)	<u>The nature and implications of lifestyle transitions for persistent heroin use</u>
	Kostas Skliamis (Freelance Researcher, Amsterdam, Netherlands)	<u>'It's a magical weed': Analysis of drug themed chants in the Greek football fandom</u>
15:10 – 15:30	<i>Coffee break</i>	
15:30 – 16:20	Session 8: Prevention, Therapy and Attitudes	
	Chair: Bernd Werse	
	Moritz Rosenkranz (Hamburg University, University Medical Centre Hamburg-Eppendorf, Germany)	<u>Implementing Methamphetamine Prevention Strategies into Action (IMPRESA): Design and first results of an ongoing project in five European countries</u>
	Petr Zeman (Institute of Criminology and Social Prevention, Prague, Czech Republic)	<u>Therapeutic programs for drug users in Czech prisons: outcomes, shortcomings and perspectives</u>
18:30	<i>Get together / dinner (to be paid by the participants)</i>	

SATURDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2022

10:00 – 10:50	Session 9: (Dis-)integrated Consumption	
	Chair: Annemieke Benschop	
	Heike Zurhold (University Clinic Hamburg-Eppendorf, Centre for Interdisciplinary Addiction Research, Hamburg, Germany)	<u>Different risks groups of cocaine users</u>
	Zsuzsa Kaló (ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary)	<u>Present orientation and psychoactive substance use: The sociological-psychological-existential trap of the extremely deprived life status</u>
10:50 – 11:10	<i>Coffee break</i>	
11:10 – 12:00	Session 10: (Dis-)integrated Consumption and Specific Issues: Street Code and Risk Prediction	
	Chair: Agnese Zile-Veisberga	
	Jonas Strandholdt Bach (Aarhus University, Denmark)	<u>Going steady – the drinking shed as a place of retreat for ageing heavy drug and alcohol users</u>
	Ali Unlu (Finnish Institute f. Health and Welfare, Alcohol, Drugs and Tobacco Unit, Helsinki, Finland)	<u>Risk prediction model for cannabis use with an artificial intelligence approach</u>
12:00 – 12:20	Winner – Early Career Researcher Award	
12:20 – 13:00	Closing words and end of the conference	

ABSTRACTS

Authors in Alphabetical Order

The othering of policymakers: How cannabis users explain policies in Latvia

Kristiana Bebre¹

¹ Social Sciences Faculty, University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia

Keywords: cannabis, policymakers, constructionism, cannabis engagers



Abstract

Background: People are motivated to adhere to existent policies if they perceive their makers are basing these policies upon sound reasonings. If policymaker decisions are perceived as unsound, the policy target population may be less likely to adhere to it. This is problematic when it comes to illicit substance policies that can decrease risk of harm from illicit substance engagement. Therefore, it is important to understand how a policy target population perceives the policymakers and their policy decision reasonings. For this reason, this presentation objective is to highlight how cannabis engagers in Riga construct policymakers regarding punitive policy responses to cannabis engagement.

Methods: This presentation is part of a PhD study that aims to locate the cannabis engagers in Riga in the historic and contemporary (inter)national cannabis policy context. The presentation findings are also reported upon in Bebre (2022). The data is based on the qualitative results from semi-structured interviews with cannabis engagers aged 27-50. Convenience, snowball, and self-identification sampling methods were utilised. The interview transcripts were analysed using the Doucet and Mauthner's (2008) Listening Technique.

Results: The interviewed participant constructions of policymakers fit well into Latvian socio-cultural historic context as a post-Soviet country. The interviewed participant constructions of policymakers were similar to Gulens' (1995) Homo Sovieticus. Gulens observed this character to exist in early post-Soviet years in Latvia. Originally, Homo Sovieticus was the ideal soviet man that all citizens were to aspire to become. However, after the fall of the regime the characteristics that were once celebrated now became inferior. Amongst the many characteristics that Gulens (1995) ascribes to the Homo Sovieticus, one is that it is unable to distinguish state claims about reality from any contrasting evidence of reality. This is a characteristic that was salient in the interviewed participant explanations of existent cannabis perceptions in Latvian cannabis policy. Participants argued that it is due to the older generations socialising under the Soviet regime, that had left them unable to question state claims about issues related to cannabis. This in turn meant that policymakers were perceived as both victims of the regime and perpetrators of current harm caused to cannabis engagers by punitive policies.

Conclusions: The sampled cannabis engagers in Riga do not perceive policymakers to be capable of questioning the utility of existent cannabis policies. Simultaneously, this inability is assigned to the historic legacy of the Soviet Union's regime in Latvia. As such, the policymakers are looked upon as victims of this regime. Therefore, the interviewed participants do not perceive the decisions of the policymakers to be legitimate. It is important to focus upon highlighting policymaker capacity to engage with current research regarding cannabis policies. By shifting the focus on using research in making cannabis policies it may create the needed legitimacy in perceptions of policymakers and the basis of their policy decisions.

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Biography: Kristiana is a PhD candidate, ASPRI grant and FSFW scholarship holder at the University of Latvia. Her PhD evaluates harm-reduction outcomes in Latvian cannabis policies. She teaches sociology modules to BA students across the University of Latvia. Kristiāna holds an MA from Durham University (UK) that has provided her with a solid ontological, epistemological, and ethical foundation for research methodology. Her First Class BA in Sociology from Durham University has provided her with an in-depth understanding of illicit substance theories and harm reduction strategies.

Gender representations in online modafinil markets

Caroline Chatwin ¹

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² Goldsmiths University, London, United Kingdom

Keywords: online drug markets, modafinil, gender



Abstract

Background: Virtual marketplaces are now a well-established facet of the **international** illegal drug landscape but, in contrast to offline markets, our knowledge about women's roles within these markets and the performance of gender is limited. This paper undertakes a gendered analysis exploring the Clearnet marketisation of Modafinil – a prescription only medication with a high proportion of female consumers.

Methods: It focuses on three Clearnet sites specialising in off-prescription Modafinil sales: i) a popular, current e-commerce website; ii) a now closed e-commerce site; and iii) an unregulated online pharmacy. Our feminist, interpretivist analysis explores depictions of drugs, buyers and sellers, drawing on current and archived webpages, as well as promotional material and E-mails. We contrast these depictions with women's own published accounts of using Modafinil.

Results: Gendered representations were ubiquitous to all of the examples we provide, in surprising variation. Women (as well as other marginalised groups) tended to be ignored in the narrow representations of modafinil as part of the competitive and corporate sphere. This is particularly interesting given that women represent 40% of the modafinil market share according to Global Drug Survey data, and given that their own accounts provide a much broader imaginary.

Conclusions: Our exploration of online Modafinil marketing reveals a narrow and 'socially sanctioned' representation of Modafinil users. Despite being a large proportion of the user group, women were not specifically targeted by Modafinil vendors, and some of their reported motivations for use are not represented. These findings have wider implications for understanding why not all drug use is problematised and suggest that exploring some of the counter-typical drug markets adds to the depth of our knowledge of the international drugs landscape.

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Biography: Caroline Chatwin is a Professor of Criminology at the University of Kent. She is interested in comparative European drug policy; new psychoactive substances; and online drug markets.

Men as unthinkable alcohol policy targets – findings from Australia, Canada and Sweden

Mats Ekendahl ¹

Non-presenting authors: David Moore ², Helen Keane ³

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² Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS), La Trobe University, Australia

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Keywords: Controversial outcomes, alcohol policy, epidemiology, gender, violence

Abstract

Background: In recent years, the issue of ‘alcohol-fueled violence’, particularly among young people, has generated policy debate in Australia and elsewhere. Although quantitative research shows a disproportionate involvement of young men in alcohol-related violence, and qualitative research highlights the complexities of gender and power to such violence, these issues receive scant attention in the research recommendations informing contemporary policy debate and its outcomes. To address the need for feminist analyses of gender in alcohol research and policy, Australian drug scholars David Moore and Helen Keane launched an Australian, Canadian and Swedish research project (‘Analysing gender in research and policy on alcohol-related violence among young people: A comparative study of Australia, Canada and Sweden’) exploring the relationship between violence, alcohol and gender in alcohol policy and research. I have worked as a partner investigator on this project and headed its Swedish arm. This presentation summarizes key findings from the project as a whole and goes into some detail about a Swedish example of alcohol prevention (the ‘STAD-model’) that has also been popularized in the EU.

Methods: A set of linked qualitative methods (survey instrument analysis, textual analysis, and interviews with quantitative researchers and policy stakeholders) was used. Theoretically, policies were approached as productive of – rather than merely responsive to – the problems they seek to address. We draw on interviews with alcohol policy stakeholders and researchers based in the three countries. The data were primarily scrutinized through the lens of Carol Bacchi’s concept of ‘gendering practices’, i.e. how subject positions such as ‘man’ and ‘woman’ are produced by policy, and through John Law’s notion of ‘collateral realities’, i.e. assumptions that make the world appear stable, noncontingent and predictable.

Results: A finding in several project sub-studies was that blanket measures to reduce everyone's drinking were considered more effective and legitimate than targeted interventions aimed at specific groups, such as young men. The Swedish case-study that will be discussed also showcases how different narrative forms were used by interviewees to make the subjective and normative appear objective and neutral.

Conclusions: We argue that while the interviewees in the three countries viewed men’s violence as a target for intervention, masculinities were backgrounded in proposed responses. Instead, generic interventions understood to protect all from the harms of men’s drinking and violence were prioritized. These responses backgrounded and therefore naturalized the role of men in violence, leaving them unmarked and many possible policy responses unthinkable.

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Funding sources: Alcohol Research Council (Discovery Project DP18010036).

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Biography: Mats Ekendahl is a Professor of Social Work at the Department of Social Work, Stockholm University, Sweden. His research covers a wide range of topics in the context of Swedish alcohol and drug policy, such as user perspectives, drug discourses and policy processes. Together with Professor Patrik Karlsson (at the same department), he has recently published articles on relapse prevention for substance use problems.

Differences in cannabis use and opinions on drug policy between generations

Pekka Hakkarainen ¹

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² Finnish Youth Research Society, Helsinki, Finland

Keywords: cannabis use, trends, opinions, generations



Abstract

Background: The paper compares the prevalence of cannabis use, attitudes towards cannabis and opinions on drug policy in ten-year age cohorts born between 1950 and 1999. Theoretically, the article discusses the concept of generations as an analytical tool for the interpretation of trends in cannabis use and opinions.

Methods: The analysis is based on a National Drug Survey conducted in Finland in 2018. The 2018 study was a random sample population survey (N=7,000) in the Finnish population aged 15–69 years. The youngest age groups (15–39 years) were oversampled. The Åland Islands, the institutionalized population and people with no permanent address were excluded from the study. The data were collected by Statistics Finland by means of a self-administered anonymous online/postal questionnaire. A total of 3,229 persons took part in the survey, giving a response rate of 46%. The data was analysed using SAS Enterprise Guide 7.1 software.

Results: The results show that the lifetime prevalence of cannabis increases almost exponentially when moving from those born in the 1950s (8%) to those born in the 1960s (14%), the 1970s (26%) and the 1980s (42%). In the youngest generation born in the 1990s, the prevalence was 39%. That figure may still rise as the cohort ages, but it is unlikely that the exponential growth trend will continue. The use of cannabis during the previous year, experiences with other drugs, and familiarity with crypto markets were also more prevalent in the two youngest generations. Consequently, attitudes towards drugs and drug policy were more lenient in younger generations.

Conclusions: The generational differences echo the flows of youth culture and market conditions in the years of the respondents' youth. Results question the success of the restrictive Finnish drug policy, particularly in its main objective to prevent young people from experimenting with drugs.

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Biography: Pekka Hakkarainen, PhD (sociology) is a Research Professor at the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) in Helsinki. He has published numerous studies on drug issues. Recently, his research work has focused on three interlinked themes: drug use, drug policy, and medical cannabis. Lately, he has led the research project *Making Sense of Polydrug Use: Prevalence, Use Patterns and Harms*. He is a member of the *Global Cannabis Cultivation Research Consortium* (GCCRC) and the Finnish research consortium *Silent agents affected by legislation: from insufficient knowledge base to inclusive solutions* (SILE).

Present orientation and psychoactive substance use: The sociological-psychological-existential trap of the extremely deprived life status

Zsuzsa Kaló ¹

Non-presenting authors: **Judit Szécsi** ²; **József Rácz** ³; **Máté Kapitány-Fövényi** ⁴
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Keywords: mixed-methods, trauma-study, present orientation, deprived life status



Abstract

Background: The trap of the deprived life status is that only the present time gives meaning to life thus the future orientation, planning is impossible. The people living in segregated, extremely deprived circumstances are facing such hopelessness that the psychoactive substance use becomes a maladaptive coping mechanism. International and national studies have shown that the use of new psychoactive substances (NPS) is highly present at the segregated areas due to the availability and the cheap price.

Aims: The aim of the study is to explore how the psychoactive substance is formed by i) the participants' time orientation and possibilities of action, ii) the experienced personal and collective traumas and responses, iii) the structural characteristics of the segregated area. This is the first study to explore the question within this interdisciplinary framework. The results are important in the policy making and the practical work.

Method: The study design is mixed-methods, it includes quantitative and qualitative methods. The data collection of surveys and semi-structured interviews are combined. The topics of the survey are: structural position (cultural, material social capital, politics, religion, openness); relations (solidarity, discrimination, institutional security), intimacy, relationships; the substance use and its motivations; trauma and negative life events; values and community; time orientation; trauma – PTSD. The topics of the semi-structured interview are the following: life story, substance use, present orientation, personal and collective traumas, and coping mechanisms. The participants are inhabitants of the segregated areas with substance use history. The data collection happens twice within a one-year follow-up.

Conclusions: This topic and the hidden target population is often neglected in research in Europe. The presentation shows a mixed-methods approach how it is possible to address the topic. The strength of the study is mainly the interdisciplinary (sociology-psychology) approach and the applied methods. The mixed methods are making possible of i) comparative analysis of quantitative results, ii) profiling participants, iii) complex understanding of individual and environmental factors.

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Biography: Zsuzsa Kaló, associate professor at the Institute of Psychology of Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary. She is psychologist and has a Ph.D in linguistics. Her primary interest is focused on qualitative drug research methods, interdisciplinary solutions in data collection and analysis. She also studied female addiction and trauma narratives. Lately she has focused on the online drug scene and novel psychoactive substances by expanding her knowledge on CAQDAS and big data methodology. She was member of the ESSD Summer School in Amsterdam in 2009.

Drug testing parents: Findings from UK children’s and family social work services

Landon Kuester ¹

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² Addictions, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust



Keywords: drug testing, children’s service, safeguarding

Abstract

Background: Drug testing is commonly used across Europe as a decision-making tool in child welfare assessments where parents are known or suspected of using drugs. Although the accuracy of drug testing has frequently been called into question, little attention has been given to the status of drug testing as evidence in child welfare practice or how parents experience the interpretation of test results. This paper uses Desmond’s Relational Ethnographic approach to critically explore the context and decision-making process of drug testing, identifying when and under what conditions parental drug testing is carried out by children and family social workers in England and Scotland.

Methods: We draw on ethnographic data from a study examining the governance of parental opioid use in Scotland and England, enrolling 12 drug services and 30 families. It includes extensive observational notes, key informant interviews, and a professional focus group discussing parental substance use testing. Data captures substance use consultations in family homes, in-service meetings with parents who use substances, team leadership meetings, and social work case discussions. Data were thematically analysed.

Results: A “positive” test result is frequently taken as proof of poor parenting and can influence child protection and guardianship decisions. Several themes arise from this study, including social workers’ decision to test based on assumptions, client history, or ‘hunches’ outside their professional training. Testing was carried out when providers feared clients were being untruthful or manipulative, underpinned by the anxiety of missing the potentially harmful effects of drug use on children. The decision to test was influenced by parents’ desire to demonstrate abstinence and was mandated by judges in children and family courts, who do not always have the knowledge to interpret drug screening results. Testing was affected by the level of rapport service providers had with parents and was sometimes stopped in situations where clients became distressed.

Conclusions: Children and family social workers face distinct challenges under more assertive child protection conditions when supporting parents and families impacted by substance use. Drug testing has become a common tool for decision-making around child safeguarding, yet providers’ decisions to test are influenced by a range of personal, social, and relational factors. Furthermore, in cases where parenting capacity was being assessed, drug testing had a collateral effect on the client-provider relationship in other substance use support settings that might have wide-ranging consequences for parents engaging in a continuum of drug treatment and support services.

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Funding sources: Economic and Social Research Council [Grant Number: ES/S015809/1]

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Biography: Dr Kuester is a research associate on a three-year sociological study funded by the ESRC investigating the management of parental opioid use. His ethnographic work transcends the disciplines of public health sociology and criminology.

Atmospheres of craving: In-between time, relationships, spaces and objects

Josefin Månsson ¹, Patrik Karlsson ¹

Non-presenting authors: Mats Ekendahl ¹, Karin Heimdahl Vepsä ¹

¹ Department of Social Work, Stockholm University, 114 19 Stockholm, Sweden

Keywords: craving, atmosphere, user perspectives, assemblage



Abstract

Background: Craving is commonly described as an ‘intense desire’ to use drugs, and is at the center stage for addiction theories and treatment. This is emphasized by the vast literature covering the topic as well as its inclusion in diagnostic systems such as ICD and DSM-5. Despite the effort put into understanding how and when craving occurs – primarily through quantitative experimental studies – an undisputed definition of craving is however still lacking. In this study, the ambition is to explore the messiness of craving, and how it is experienced and resisted after the cessation of substance use.

Methods: The analysis is based on 12 qualitative interviews with people with extensive substance use experiences. The interviews were coded thematically focusing on ‘the event of craving’ and how craving goes beyond the body and the brain of the individual. Inspired by the notion of affective atmospheres we investigate how different spaces, bodies and time dimensions act together in shaping craving experiences.

Results: The study shows the complexities in narratives about craving situations. Craving can be many different emotions, feelings, and situations. We find that it is in the interaction between different temporal, material, and relational forces that people are moved towards craving or away from craving. Craving thus seems to be both relational and interstitial; it exists in-between the gathering of different forces.

Conclusions: We conclude that craving appeared in the studied narratives to emanate from different atmospheres, with a concurrent focus on settings rather than on substances. This indicates that promoting a relational understanding of craving can add to the typically limited description of craving as individual. It also contributes to rejecting stigmatizing ideas that people who do not resist cravings simply fail to say no. Finally, if craving is both difficult to identify and rooted in a deeply personal gathering of forces, we ask if it is even a relevant concept within the addiction field.

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Funding sources: This work was supported by FORTE (Grant 2017-00290).

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Biography: Josefin Månsson (PhD) is a researcher and lecturer at the Department of Social Work, Stockholm University, Sweden. Her main research interests are in substance use, drug policy and drug discourses. Patrik Karlsson (PhD, professor) is a researcher and lecturer at the Department of Social Work, Stockholm University, Sweden. His research covers a number of issues related to substance use, including epidemiology, treatment and user perspectives.

The nature and implications of lifestyle transitions for persistent heroin use

James Morgan ¹

Non-presenting author: Trevor Bennett ²

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² University of South Wales, United Kingdom

Keywords: typologies, heroin users, lifestyles, semi-structured interviews



Abstract

Background: While existing research has tended to focus on specific drug user groups, the current paper explores how heroin users might move between such groups over time. Building on previous research that has identified types of heroin-using lifestyles, we investigate the nature and extent of lifestyle transitions from one type to another. In doing so, we examine the implications that lifestyle transitions might have for drug use as well as harm-reduction strategies and treatment.

Methods: The research was based on a sample of 51 heroin users interviewed for a study into persistent heroin use, 38 of whom provided data relating to transitions between heroin-using lifestyles.

Results: Participants in the study explained changes in their lifestyles through three distinct narrative themes: grabbing onto 'hooks for change', 'taking opportunities, and 'losing control'. The findings also show how, through case studies, the nature and implications of lifestyle transitions can be wide ranging.

Conclusions: While such explanations for change have been identified in criminological and substance use literature, they have not, to our knowledge, been used to understand changes within heroin-using careers. Further theoretical work to develop these concepts and advance understanding of persistent heroin use is encouraged, as is using these concepts to inform policy and practice.

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Biography: Dr James Morgan has been teaching criminology, and more recently psychology since 2010. He is currently Senior Lecturer of Psychology at London metropolitan university. His research interests have related to his PhD concerning the lifestyles of heroin users, heroin using careers and the intersection of using and dealing, some papers from this thesis have been published, more are in progress and planned. In addition, James co-curates, organises and presents the Street Drugs Discussions series of symposia and webinars.

Drug policy futures: Reconstructing the problem of drug deaths for better policy making

Aileen O’Gorman ¹

¹ University of the West of Scotland, Scotland, UK.

Keywords: drug-related deaths, risk environments



Abstract

Background: As drug-related deaths (DRDs) continue to rise in Europe. Drug policy and practice continues to focus on the substances implicated in drug deaths. Yet, substance use harms and ‘deaths of despair’ are constructed and embedded within broader social, structural and systems contexts.

Methods: This paper brings together the findings from two related studies that explored the social, structural and systemic factors underpinning drug-related harms and deaths.

1. A case study of two health systems of care using semi-structured interviews (n=28), focus groups (2x8) and an ‘Expert Event’ (n=79) with people who use drugs and a broad range of stakeholders.
2. A social autopsy analysis of health, social work, police and post-mortem records of a cohort of Scottish youth (n=22) who died of a drug overdose.

Theoretical Framework: Both studies were underpinned by complex systems thinking and mapping. Bronfenbrenner (1977) and Rhodes (2002) concepts of ecological systems and risk environments informed the analysis.

Results: Both studies indicated the extent of complex unmet needs experienced by those at risk of drug-related deaths. These included high risk polysubstance use but also untreated mental health & physical health conditions, as well as poverty, insecure housing and employment, stigmatisation and criminalisation.

Both studies found a complex fragmented neoliberal system of care that focused on individual’s capacity and motivation for behavioural change regarding their drug use despite the inadequacies of the system to address their broader social and health care needs.

Conclusion: These studies highlight the importance of the interaction between substances use, the individual and the environment in understanding drug-related deaths. System complexity, inflexibility, hard to reach services facilitated unmet needs and an internalisation of stigma and responsabilisation which affected people’s care outcomes. Drug policies need to focus on addressing the multiple interrelated health and social care needs of people not just their substance use if drug-related deaths are to be minimised.

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Funding sources: 1. Scottish Government Drugs Deaths Task Force. 2. Corra Foundation

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Domestic cannabis cultivation in a changing world

Gary Potter ¹

Non-presenting authors: GCCRC ²

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² The Global Cannabis Cultivation Research Consortium, worldwideweed.nl

Keywords: cannabis cultivation, domestic production, online survey, active offender research



Abstract

Methods: The Global Cannabis Research Consortium (GCCRC) ran its second international online survey of cannabis growers from August 2020 to September 2021. Conducted in 18 countries (with a 'rest of the world' supplement version for non-participating countries), we recruited 11,900 respondents reporting on current or recent cannabis growing activity.

Results: This paper will present some initial findings on cannabis grower demographics, cultivation careers, methods used by growers, market participation, experiences with law enforcement, and growers' perspectives on cannabis policy, with a particular focus on European countries participating in the survey. As well as providing a snapshot of findings across the cohort, the paper will present comparisons across different countries and changes over time (comparing our current findings to those of our earlier survey conducted 2012-13), with a particular focus on differences in patterns of cannabis cultivation under different drug policy regimes.

Conclusions: The analysis is currently underway, so findings are not yet available.

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Biography: Reader in Criminology at Lancaster University, my main research interests focus on drug markets, drug use and drug policy – with a particular emphasis on cannabis growing. I obtained my BA, MA and PhD from the University of Sheffield. As well as drugs, I research and teach green criminology and the illegal wildlife trade.

Implementing Methamphetamine Prevention Strategies into Action (IMPRESA): Design and first results of an ongoing project in five European countries

Moritz Rosenkranz ¹

Non-presenting authors: Marcus-Sebastian Martens ¹, Harald Lahusen ¹, Heike Zurhold ¹, Uwe Verthein ¹

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Keywords: methamphetamine use, prevention, harm reduction, evaluation, knowledge transfer

Abstract

Background: Methamphetamine use is spreading in the European Union with significant public health impact in Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany, Poland and Lithuania. Several preventive strategies are described in the literature, but a systematic overview is missing. Moreover, we still lack a sound understanding of what works in which context and specifically for which target groups, when it comes to tackling methamphetamine use. In order to reduce methamphetamine related harm across Europe, the project aims to provide an effective knowledge transfer model for five highly affected regions in the EU.

Methods: A systematic literature review was employed, building the basis for a subsequent Delphi consensus finding process in order to select the most adequate evidence-based prevention strategies. Further, a desk review, a survey of stimulant users as well as of relevant stakeholders was conducted to assess the local needs in the model cities/regions. Multi-stakeholder partnerships (incl. local authorities, researchers, service providers, and users) in each of the five cities/regions were established to drive the design, assessment and implementation of intervention packages. Best practice strategies to prevent methamphetamine use will be tailored according to the local context and needs and will be implemented accordingly. Translation processes and public health impact of the tailored intervention packages will be evaluated based on the RE-AIM framework.

Results: Results of the literature review and the Delphi consensus finding process will be presented. Furthermore, preliminary results of the desk review, the user and the stakeholder survey will illustrate the implementation context in the model cities/regions. First impressions of the ongoing implementation phase of the intervention will be given.

Conclusions: IMPRESA will provide new insights into the implementation of methamphetamine prevention activities in daily practice and an improved understanding of which factors and processes influence the effective and sustainable implementation of such programs in different European regions.

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Funding sources: European Commission, DG HOME / German Federal Ministry of Health

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Biography: Moritz Rosenkranz is a Sociologist and has a background in psychology and political science, too. He is a research associate at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Addiction Research of Hamburg University. His special research interests are controlled consumption of stimulants, regulated cannabis distribution, and research methods. He was involved in several EU and international projects as a researcher and short term expert.

Aging in opioid substitution therapy – a cross-country comparison between Austria, Germany and Switzerland

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Keywords: opioid substitution treatment, aging, people who use opioids, Austria, Germany, Switzerland



Abstract

Background: As large cohorts of opioid users receiving Opiate Substitution Therapy (OST) are growing old, there is a need to evaluate the preparedness of European treatment systems for meeting the increasing and complex drug, health and social needs of an aging cohort. Austria, Germany, and Switzerland represent three countries which share a common language, a comparable quality of life, and a similar health care system with widespread availability of publicly funded OST. The aim of this study was to evaluate the OST receiving patient population of Austria, Germany, and Switzerland, as well as compare the health care system of these countries as it relates to aging adults receiving OST.

Methods: The national datasets used in this study are aggregated data on treatment demand and health and social responses datasets that are partly published in the EMCDDA's Statistical Bulletin on an annual basis. Additional to basic data, we present a description of national approaches by the authors to provide information on relevant perspectives and treatment approaches. National information on the history, availability, accessibility, and affordability of OST, as well as on the misuse and diversion of OST medications (incl. heroin-assisted treatment) were collected as well.

Results: Age- and gender-specific data were extracted to analyse the age structure of people receiving OST for the years from 2010 to 2020. Available data sources on opioid use show a steady increase in the proportion of older patients receiving OST over time. In Austria, mean age of OST patients increased from 33.0 in 2010 to 39.1 in 2020 (relative change of 18.3%) and median age from 31.0 to 38.0, respectively. In Switzerland, mean age increased from 39.6 in 2010 to 47.1 in 2020 (relative change of 18.8%) and median age from 40.0 to 48.0, respectively. No age- or gender-specific data are available for Germany.

Conclusions: The impact of an aging population of opioid users on European health and social care systems and treatment facilities have received only insufficient attention up till now. Understanding these developments and incorporating them into health care planning will be crucial to successfully address the specific needs of people who use opioids.

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Benevolent brokers: A case study of impression management in middle level markets in Kent coastal towns

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Keywords: drug markets, ethnography, drug supply

Abstract

Background: This case study is one of three that form my ethnographic doctoral work challenging the usefulness of archetypal dealer conceptions when seeking to understand the lower levels of drug markets. Drawing on Goffman's (1959) face work and dramaturgical framework it explains the fluidity of roles and interactions within this market structure.

Methods: It comprises an ethnographic exploration of middle level dealers in a South East Kent coastal town who occupy a fluid and autonomous space within the supply chain, but outside of hierarchical chains of command.

Results: In this paper, I draw on three themes from my findings to present the 'Benevolent Broker' concept as a face type on display within middle level markets: i) the friends and favours nature of middle markets I encountered in my research; ii) the importance of trust rather than coercion in the governance of these markets; and iii) the empathetic nature of conflict resolution employed by my participants. Overall, I argue that shared histories and experiences underpin many market relationships and that many middle level drug deals are often complex capital (Bourdieu) exchanges, rather than purely profit driven.

Conclusions: Situating these findings within the wider context of my doctoral work, I propose a new 'gas cloud' model for understanding the fluidity of drug markets across Europe.

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Biography: George Simpson is an ESRC funded doctoral candidate at the University of Kent where he is in his final year of a Ph.D. exploring bottom and middle level drug markets in a South East Kent coastal town.

'It's a magical weed': Analysis of drug themed chants in Greek football fandom

Kostas Skliamis¹

Non-presenting author: Giorgos Chatzinakos

¹ Freelance Researcher, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Keywords: drugs, identity, normalization, football, chants



Abstract

Background: Despite a large body of work addressing football chants, there is one category of chants that has not been sufficiently explored: the football chants that include references to alcohol and drugs. To the best of our knowledge, the continued presence of drug themed chanting in Greek football has received little academic attention. The aim of this article is to review evidence for the existence of references to alcohol and drugs in Greek football chants and explore the role of drugs themed chants in Greek football fandom. What is the specific function of these references within the chant? What is the purpose of the drug themed chants?

Methods: We conducted a textual and a thematic analysis in 440 chants from eleven Greek football clubs (40 from each club): Olympiacos, Panathinaikos, AEK, PAOK, Aris, Iraklis, Panionios, Atromitos, AEL, OFI, and Giannina. Our main source was the YouTube. We included clubs from Athens Metropolitan Area, Thessaloniki, and three large provincial cities (Heraklion, Larisa, and Giannina). We excluded shouts, anthems, chants against players and stuff, clapping chants, and the so called 'anti-chants'.

Results: In total sample, we found 52 references to 'state of mind', 112 references to use of substances, and 69 analogies that include metaphors and similes. Also, we found 196 references to legal and illegal substances. References to cannabis were the most (n=77), followed by 'other drugs' (n=52), the word 'drugs' (n=44), and alcohol (n=25).

Conclusions: References to substances were widely encountered in chants, showing that it is a common phenomenon. References are used either as expression of 'state of mind', or refer literally to 'use', or lastly, are used in analogies. The references to substances, may be used to create a sense of belonging, and to form and maintain a collective identity among the Greek ultras. Greek ultras associate the collective performance of chanting to the 'demonized' drug use, creating a performance of deviance, enhancing the broader subcultural archetype that already characterizes the Greek ultras. Furthermore, the criminalization of drugs, the punitive drug policy, and the overall low degree of drugs normalization in Greece, may lead the ultras to seek spaces and time that they can freely 'talk' about drugs and drug use in an unhindered and undisturbed way. Therefore, the stadium is used by Greek ultras as a refuge to accommodate behaviour and language that is condemned in the wider Greek society.

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Dr. Kostas Skliamis is a criminologist with a background in political science, specialized in social drug research. In his PhD studies, he focused on cannabis policy, cannabis markets, drugs supply, drug use settings, self-regulation rules, normalization, and stigmatization. Currently, his research interests are: colonial opium policy in South-East Asia; social supply of cannabis in Greece; drugs in football fandom.

Dr. Giorgos Chatzinakos is an urban and cultural geographer. He studied political science and public administration at the University of Athens. He holds an interdisciplinary master's degree in European Urban Cultures. He received his PhD at Manchester Metropolitan University for his research on the everyday and cultural life of the suburbs. His research interests are focused on neighbourhood-building, the urban commons, and festivals.

Exchange and “demand sharing” in social cannabis supply

Thomas Friis Søgaaard ¹

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Keywords: drug markets, cannabis, social supply, sharing, reciprocity



Abstract

Background: Much research has documented how social supply plays a key role in the bottom level cannabis market. In outlining how social supply differs from commercial market exchange, existing studies have often explicitly or implicitly drawn on classical anthropological exchange theory to argue that social supply is driven by two overall cultural logics: reciprocal gift-giving and sharing. In this presentation, we argue that more recent anthropological theories on sharing, and particularly Widlok’s concept of “demand sharing” (2017), can be used to develop a more nuanced understanding of the sharing aspects of social cannabis supply.

Methods: The presentation draws on in-depth face-to-face interviews with 35 young cannabis users in Denmark. The interviews lasted between one to three hours, were all recorded, transcribed, and later coded.

Results: Typically, drug sharing has been depicted as a sub-version of a more generalized pattern of reciprocation and/or as a type of transfer that is motivated by altruism on the part of the giver. While acknowledging the importance of reciprocal logics in social drug supply, in this presentation we demonstrate how many sharing events are not initiated by a generous giver, but rather by persons who would like to get their hands on something valuable i.e. cannabis. More specifically, we outline how diverse “receiver demands” are often the precondition for creating the social pressure that leads those who have, to allow others to take. The presentation in this way sheds light on the important role played by receivers in facilitating sharing processes.

Conclusions: We conclude by arguing that the work of Widlok presents a novel framework that can be used to enhance our understanding the complex sharing dynamics sustaining much social drug supply, by encouraging us to explore questions such as: what role do receivers play as initiators of transfers? By use of what explicit or subtle acts do actors make “demands” to be included in supply circuits? How do individuals in possession of drugs experience being faced with demands to share? How do they try to avoid sharing? And how do different (i.e. non-commercial) transfer logics coexist, inter-relate, and shape the flow of drugs?

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Funding sources: Nordic Research Council for Criminology

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Cultural politics and uberization in dark web marketplaces

Nigel South ¹

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² Independent researcher

Keywords: online drug markets, uberization, cultural politics, drug cultures



Abstract

Background: In recent years dark web drug markets have seen continuous growth in revenue and exchange. Existing literature has provided various explanations for this, but the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction and Europol has suggested that current interpretations of trends are not sufficient. This paper provides an alternative approach by considering web-based drug selling and purchasing in terms of trends toward 'Uberisation' and 'McDonaldisation'. It also explores the roots of the cultural politics of online / dark web markets.

Methods: Based on review of quantitative and qualitative studies.

Results: Using the technologies of online presentation, drug distributors have a medium in which they can use textual and visual advertising for their products and services, leading to an extensive use of marketing and branding techniques as well as offering consumer-friendly services such as photographs, 'customer information' and 'time to browse'. This also involves presenting psychoactive substances in consumption ideas and images that reflect contemporary cultural movements and lifestyle aspirations.

Conclusions: Drug market entrepreneurs wanting the trust of customers and repeat business may simply follow the strategies of legitimate markets to generate brand fidelity. This reflects the wider cultural normalisation of drugs as a result of drug references in marketing and media. None of this should be surprising when we remember the staging-posts – the actors and ideologies, the organisational innovations and technologies – that have marked the journey from Californian counterculture to cyberspace.

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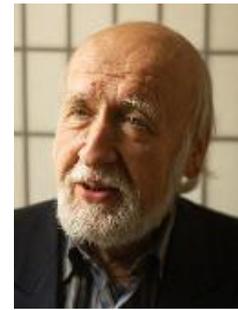
Biography: Nigel South is an Emeritus Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Essex and has published widely on drugs, crime, cultures and controls, including co-authoring *Traffickers: Drugs Markets and Law Enforcement*, *Eurodrugs*, and editing *Drugs: Cultures, Controls and Everyday Life*.

Onward to the regulation of social cannabis use in Austria

Alfred Springer ¹

¹ Medical university of Vienna, Austria

Keywords: cannabis regulation, politics, history



Abstract

Background: In Austria, the use of cannabis is subject to the Austrian „Suchtmittelgesetz“. The ingestion itself is prohibited but not criminalised, however the acquisition is. As cannabis drugs are the most frequently used of all illegalised substances, most charges for violation of the Narcotic Substances Act are filed because of cannabis, and a relatively large number of cannabis users serve a prison sentence. The criminalising and penalising attitude, which is expressed in the legal situation and the application of the law, is supported by almost all political parties and has only in a few cases led to initiatives to change this situation in the past.

Method: Research on policy and control issues. Creation of a timeline of the Austrian initiatives to induce changes in Cannabis control and a critical analysis of the related initiatives.

Results: Current surveys show that probably the general prohibitive attitude concerning social use of cannabis has changed, possibly under the influence of developments in the USA, Canada and neighbouring European countries. Accordingly, initiatives can be observed that strive to draft new regulatory rules in Austria which adapt to the developments in the international space.

Conclusions: In this presentation, the history of resistance against cannabis prohibition in Austria will be traced and placed in the framework of a general change of awareness regarding the control of illegalized substances. Since an observable fresh anti-prohibition stance is also shared by concerned professionals, there might currently be a chance to bring about a lasting change in Austrian control attitudes.

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Going steady – the drinking shed as a place of retreat for ageing heavy drug and alcohol users

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Keywords: ageing, drinking sheds, heavy drinking, alcohol, marginalization



Abstract

Background: Drinking sheds, sheds or shed-like constructions where people congregate to drink alcohol and/or use other substances, exist in many Danish cities and towns. Some places, often the centrally located ones, are chaotic alcohol and drug scenes, while other sheds in more peripheral locations are less volatile and function as places of retreat for drug and alcohol users who are feeling too old or too weakened to participate in the more chaotic and often more violent open drug and drinking scenes. While particularly the more peripheral sheds are still understudied as they often are considered temporary “non-places” and are neither systematically monitored or policed, there seems to be some potential in investigating them as social scenes of alcohol, and, to some extent, drug consumption and exchange.

Methods: The presentation builds on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in and around a particular drinking shed in a suburb to Aarhus, Denmark, and qualitative interviews with the shed’s users, but also draws on other research on marginalized drug and alcohol users and open drug and alcohol scenes.

Results: The shed’s users point to the shed as a place that is more “quiet” and “easy-going” than the centrally located drug and drinking scenes in Aarhus, where, as one of the users put it, “you have to be tougher to get by”. Another pointed out that he drank less, and in a different way, in the shed than in the city centre. In that sense, they consider the shed as a kind of “retreat” post, where they can still hold on to social networks and consume alcohol and sometimes drugs, but can also distance themselves somewhat from the more violent and volatile aspects of open alcohol and drug scenes.

Conclusions: While the social life in the shed revolves around drinking alcohol together, and sometimes sharing a joint of marijuana or exchanging smaller amounts of other, illegal or prescription, drugs, the patterns of consumption seem different from other drug and drinking scenes in that they are more “easy-going”, less chaotic, temporally more limited in lower amounts. This allows the users to be part of a social network centered around alcohol consumption as they age and are increasingly subject to more challenging health conditions.

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Biography: I currently work as an assistant professor at the Center for Drug and Alcohol Research, Aarhus University. I hold a PhD from Anthropology and have worked both as a practitioner and a researcher on disadvantaged housing estates and marginalized populations in Denmark. My current research focuses on the intersections between ageing, health and substance use and on both the users and the professionals working with them.

Alcoholism and stigma: A perfect (mis)match

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Keywords: stigma, stereotypes, alcohol use disorder



Abstract

Background: Stigmatisation is a specific form of social power based on incorrect stereotyping of social reality. Stigmatisation consists of stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination (Link/Phelan 2001), can take place on different levels (direct, structural, cultural, self-stigma) and leads to serious health and social consequences for affected persons.

Method: Literature based analyses of the discourses on stigmatisation and alcohol policy.

Results: Due to the characteristics and aetiology of the disease, alcohol dependence is commonly defined as one of the most stigmatised mental illnesses. Population surveys reveal that alcohol use disorder is less often perceived as mental illnesses and affected individuals are more often held morally responsible for their condition than people with depression or schizophrenia (Corrigan et al. 2017). Alcohol dependence is more often experienced as self-inflicted disease than other diseases related to risky behaviours, e.g. diabetes, cardiovascular disease (Schomerus et al. 2011, Grausgruber et al. 2019). As a consequence, in most populations the population's willingness to save money by less investment on treating people with alcohol disorders is remarkably high. At the same time, stigma receives less attention in addiction research compared to other mental illnesses (Schomerus 2017). Furthermore, to increase stigma even seems to be an accepted way to prevent risky substance use behaviour by some addiction experts (Corrigan et al. 2017, Room 2005).

Conclusions: The aim of the presentation is to emphasize differences between the role the issue "stigmatisation" has in alcohol policy related research and in the field of stigma specific research.

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Digital transformations of illicit drug markets: Continuity and reconfiguration

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Keywords: digital technologies, online drug markets, cryptomarkets, social media, embeddedness



Abstract

Background: This paper is about the recent and ongoing development of information and communication technologies and how this has fuelled transactions involving illicit drugs in a variety of ways. It explores the disruptive potential of the internet to transform illicit drug markets whilst also challenging stereotypical depictions and superficial understandings of supply and demand.

Methods: We argue that the digital transformation of illicit drug markets combines, on the one hand, continuing trends in the embeddedness of market structures in cultural, economic, political and legal realms, and, on the other hand, reconfiguration of the scope and impact of how sellers, buyers and other actors interact within and upon digitally mediated retail drug markets. The paper provides an overview of chapters of the edited collection of the same title and how their findings contribute to the overall argument of the book.

Results: This paper develops conceptual ideas for studying the architecture of digital drug markets by drawing on inter-disciplinary approaches to digitalisation, markets and drugs. In order to understand the functioning of online drug markets we first need to understand digitalisation. Thus, we draw on scholarship on the digital transformation of society and, second, put forward an understanding of markets that takes into account how personal relations and social structures enhance and restrict market exchange. Thus, we draw on economic sociology. Third, we build on and extend social science research on illicit drug markets which points out that drug markets exhibit significant variations over time and across jurisdictions. The chapters in the book build on the longstanding tradition of researching change and continuity in drug production, distribution, and consumption practices through the development of theoretical concepts and empirical enquiries.

Conclusions: This paper aims to provide a research agenda that can help us to explore ongoing digital transformations of illicit drug markets. It expands and deepens scholarship on the technological, structural, economic and cultural factors underlying the resilience and growth of digital drug markets. It also goes beyond concern with just one type of digital drug market into wider forms of digital environments.

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Is it justified to attack fallacious or misleading arguments that support valid conclusions?

Alfred Uhl ^{1,2}

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Keywords: flawed scientific reasoning, methodological competence, pragmatism



Abstract

Background: Central task of science is to critically question arguments supporting hypotheses and if necessary to falsify them. Since scientists, like all humans, are interested in seeing their own convictions prevail, the temptation to uncritically select arguments supporting own convictions and to attack or ignore counterarguments is naturally strong. To criticise flawed arguments as well as irrational reasoning leading to flawed propositions may create a conflict between the critic and the criticised – but does not induce an inherent dilemma for the critic. Such a conflict emerges though is flawed data and/or reasoning are applied to support correct propositions and/or own convictions. In the latter case methodological rigor is liable to provoke applause from sides where approval is not appreciated at all and unintendedly to undermine the position of colleagues sharing common convictions and engaging for similar goals.

Method: Unsystematic search in the scientific literature, to find false or misleading arguments applied to support proper propositions.

Results: From the abundance of examples adequate to illustrate the central issue of this paper, a few examples are selected and briefly discussed.

Conclusions: Scientists as well as readers of scientific reports should be familiar with basic methodological principles and resist to popularise their positions with untenable arguments. Working with flawed arguments makes researchers vulnerable to attack. If critics notice this weakness, they can easily jeopardize the reputation of such scientists and discredit what they stand for. Consequently, care should be taken when attacking flawed discourses leading to correct propositions. Such criticism should be performed unemotionally preferably in a scientific context, and if feasible supply valid arguments to support these propositions. Otherwise this criticism could result in strengthen irrational propositions instead of combating them.

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Risk prediction model for cannabis use with an artificial intelligence approach

Ali Unlu ^{1,2}

Non-presenting authors: Pekka Hakkarainen ³, Karoliina Karjalainen ⁴, Abdulhamit Subasi ^{5,6}



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Keywords: cannabis use, feature selection, prediction, artificial intelligence, machine learning, Finland, survey data

Abstract

Background: Cannabis use has been studied by various disciplines and several indicators have been identified to prevent its prevalence. However, the conventional statistical approach is limited regarding factors that can be included in a single linear model or applying non-linear analytic tools. Artificial Intelligence (AI) provides additional insights into complex, often nonlinear, interactions between dependent and independent variables. This study utilizes AI tools to select and rank the most important indicators of cannabis use in the Finnish population.

Methods: The data used for this analysis was gathered from the general population by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL). The data consists of 3229 observations and 313 variables. Initially, 48 questionnaire items were selected for pre-processing, which resulted in 61 features. After missing data imputation, and applying resampling and scaling techniques, the recursive feature elimination (RFE) method was used to identify the top 10 most important features of cannabis use. The prediction model was performed using 10 common statistical and machine learning models for classification.

Results: Among 61 features, we eliminated less relevant features and our results show that 10 features are enough to classify cannabis use with around 96% accuracy level. Having a drug user friend, free and purchased drug offers, perceived health risk of experimental and regular substance use, perception of drug problem prevalence in the country, attitudes toward punishment of drug use, use of alcohol, e-cigarette, and snus are the most important risk predictors for cannabis use.

Conclusion: Our results show that the social settings of individuals are the main predictors of cannabis users. The AI method enables us to identify the most important features to predict cannabis use. These results also show how the AI approach could be utilized not only to identify the most important risk indicators among several other factors but also to use scarce public resources when designing prevention strategies.

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Views from people who use drugs heavily on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on urban drug scenes in Germany

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Keywords: Covid-19, Coronavirus, marginalised drug users, urban drug scenes



Abstract

Background: As examined in earlier research, marginalised users in urban open drug scenes were heavily affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly because of the effects of mitigation measures on drug services and public space. In this study, we aimed to add the voices of people who use drugs to our research on the subject.

Methods: We interviewed 28 people who use drugs heavily from urban open drug scenes in four German cities (Frankfurt, Darmstadt, Nuremberg and Mannheim), using a semi-open guideline-based qualitative interview. Data was coded and sub-coded using MaxQDA20.

Results: While the assessment of the pandemic's effects on substance use were ambiguous, most respondents confirmed the notion that 'lockdowns' made it particularly hard to obtain money for drugs, with small-scale dealing being one of the few exceptions. The mitigation measures were often hard to meet for scene members. While take-home doses for opioid replacement therapy were facilitated, only few of the hard-core users were allowed to benefit from it. Particularly the housing situation worsened during the course of the pandemic. Many respondents also claimed that repressive measures by law enforcement increased.

Conclusions: Not only because of the general precarious conditions in this setting and the fact that most of everyday life happens in (semi-)public spaces, but also due to drug prohibition, people who use drugs heavily particularly suffered from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. This not only refers to the perception of more repression during lockdown periods, but also to the fact that most of the prevalent substances are illegal and have to be handled clandestinely.

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Therapeutic programs for drug users in Czech prisons: outcomes, shortcomings and perspectives

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Keywords: drug-using prisoners, addiction treatment, criminal thinking, criminal recidivism



Abstract

Background: EU Drugs Action Plan 2021-2025 explicitly calls for, inter alia, responding to the drug use in prison settings (Overarching indicator no. 10). The Plan requires ensuring evidence-based drug services for imprisoned drug using offenders (Strategic priority 8, Action 50). Available studies repeatedly show that the proportion of drug users among prisoners is significantly higher than in the general (age relevant) population (Griffiths, Nilson, Carpentier, & Merino, 2003). Specific treatment programs for imprisoned drug users have the potential to contribute to reducing criminal recidivism and to rehabilitating or resocializing drug-using prisoners in general. In the Czech Republic, the prison population includes about 20,000 convicts serving their prison sentence. About fifty percent of inmates are registered as drug users by Prison Service and almost 30% self-reported the characteristics of a problem drug user (GDPSCR, 2018; Mravčík, et al., 2018). Specific prison treatment programs are run at specialised departments for the treatment of drug addiction (SDDA). The main aims of treatment at SDDA's include reducing the risk of recidivism among drug-using prisoners and changing their high-risk attitudes, values, and thinking patterns (Jiříčka & Kejřová, 2015). However, treatment programs at SDDA's are not subject to any systematic evaluation. Aim of the paper is to present results of IKSP's research on effectiveness of therapeutic treatment programs at SDDA's in terms of their potential impact on the criminogenic attitudes and thinking patterns ("criminal thinking") of program participants and their criminal recidivism after release.

Methods: Criminal thinking among participants was measured by means of the Czech version of the Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (PICTS) – PICTS-cz (Blatníková, Faridová & Vranka, 2016). Participants entering the program were tested twice – at the beginning of the program and at its end. The change of participants' criminal thinking during the course of the program was measured and results were compared with two control groups – (a) imprisoned addicts/problem users not participating in the program, and (b) imprisoned occasional users/non-users. The criminal recidivism of program participants was ascertained using data on criminal convictions from the Penal Register. Results were compared with the control groups as well.

Results: Significant changes in participants' pre- and post- program criminal thinking were found. Compared to control groups, their mean differences between pre-test and post-test results were significantly better. It indicates the positive influence of the program on the criminogenic thinking patterns of imprisoned drug users. However, the rate of participants' criminal recidivism after their release remained high.

Conclusions: The program is obviously able to bring about the desired changes in the criminogenic attitudes of prisoners, but this effect cannot be maintained and slowly dissipates on leaving the SDDA. The potential of programs in terms of reducing criminal recidivism following release from prison is largely untapped.

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The Covid-19 impact on the illegal retail drugs market in Latvia and drug use patterns

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Keywords: Covid-19, retail drugs market, drug use patterns, Latvia.



Abstract

Background: Similarly, to other countries Latvia has experienced the COVID-19 pandemic with four waves. At this point, it is not very clear if COVID-19 restrictions have been drivers to considerable and underreported trends in drug use or the illegal market. This study aims to explore if and how the pandemic has affected the retail drugs market and drug use patterns.

Methods: The mixed method with explanatory sequential design was used in the analysis. Initially, administrative data (seizures, drug prices, purity, production or cultivation), data on prevalence of use, patterns of use, patterns of purchasing and obtaining from regular and *ad hoc* surveys (General Population Survey, Drug users cohort study, ESPAD, European Web Survey on Drugs on Covid-19 and European Web Survey on Drugs in 2021), and data from other researchers (e.g., wastewater analysis and residuals in syringes) were analysed and triangulated. After this analysis, identified information gaps were supplemented with the qualitative information from researchers and reports.

Results: The illegal cannabis market seems to be slightly affected during the first COVID-19 wave. The initial restrictions and uncertainty might have boosted domestic production for both profit-drive and for personal use. However, later cannabis prevalence and the retail market seems to be functioning as before the pandemic.

MDMA was becoming more prevalent before the pandemic and in 2020 prevalence was still increasing, but in 2021 this prevalence decreased. This could be easily explained with harsher restriction in 2021, and consequently less entertainment possibilities.

As regards other substance groups, the available data doesn't suggest any changes, however, some data, for example on benzodiazepines has some limitations.

Finally, it does not seem that the retail illegal market has been affected – any shortages, personal contact remains the most common purchasing type, purity and price are similar to before the pandemic.

Conclusions: Findings suggest that COVID-19 hasn't left any considerable impact on the illegal market. After some uncertainty in cannabis market during the first wave, overall the cannabis market seems to be stable and operating as before. Available data suggest that drug use patterns have not changed either, except for a slight fluctuation in cannabis and MDMA use. At the same time, it cannot be excluded that long-term impact of the pandemic could be visible in forthcoming years.

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Different risks groups of cocaine users

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Keywords: cocaine use in Germany, online-survey, consumption patterns



Abstract

Background: The supply and demand of cocaine use is constantly increasing in Europe and thus also in Germany. Due to the growing cocaine market the prevalence of last year cocaine use was rising within Europe. According to EMCDDA (2021) more than two million people aged 15-34 years consumed cocaine in the last year. Despite this development there is still a lack of research addressing different groups of cocaine users, including socially integrated cocaine use. The aim of the recent survey was to gain insights into moderate, risk and dependent cocaine use, consumption patterns and consumption motives.

Methods: A web based online-survey among cocaine users was conducted between June and September 2021 in Germany. The link to the standardised questionnaire was applied via a total of 77 advertisements in Facebook, different reddit groups, Twitter, Instagram and chat groups within the music scene and drug-related self-help groups. Inclusion criteria was an age of 18 years +, cocaine use of at least 5 days in the last 12 months and no regular use of opioids or crack.

Results: A total of 521 individuals responded to the survey and 245 individuals were included in the analysis. The 245 cocaine users were dedicated to three groups according to the frequency of cocaine use and a fourth group of those in cocaine treatment. The vast majority of cocaine users were integrated as regards occupation, income and housing. About half of the respondents described their cocaine use as social and controlled and about 20% admitted using excessively. Most of the cocaine users tried cocaine for the first time in the age of 19 to 24. During cocaine use the use of alcohol, but also of cannabis and speed was common. Cocaine use was mostly motivated to feel euphoric, high, to stay awake and to socialise with friends. They most often buy cocaine within the private network, from a private dealer but also “cocaine taxis” became increasingly common to order cocaine. As regards the duration of cocaine use, moderate users tend to limit their use after 3 years whereas risk users were likely to consume cocaine 8 years and more. More than 80% of the moderate users had no difficulties to quit cocaine use while this was the case for about 50% of the risk users.

Conclusions: Cocaine users are predominately socially integrated and practice a more or less controlled use of cocaine. Hedonistic motives dominate and only few of the cocaine users ever utilized treatment for their cocaine use.

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