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'Killer Plants' and 'Ethnosatanicals': NPS Use and (Public) Space in the Mainstream Media

Objectives: This paper looks at mainstream media depictions of new psychoactive substance (NPS) use, head shops and urban spaces in post-communist Romania. Between 2009 and 2013, the country witnessed recurring episodes of 'moral panic' ignited by the increasing presence of street outlets distributing synthetic cannabinoids, amphetamine-type stimulant powders, party pills, hallucinogenic plants and other 'legal highs'. This open trade of what were also labelled 'legal drugs', 'ethnobotanical substances' and 'bath salts' aroused the moral imaginary, inspiring new urban and media mythologies of drug decay and antisocial behaviour.

Methodology: The findings are drawn from a thematic and critical discourse analysis of almost 600 news items retrieved from four national dailies. This was supplemented with three case studies of anti-NPS campaign efforts: a radio campaign that culminated with a mass rally on Valentine's Day 2011, a poster campaign designed by the Prefecture of Bucharest and a series of prime-time news stories produced by a generalist television network.

Significant Results: The main themes identified in the reporting of NPS and their presence within urban spaces, are grouped into three categories: time, space and institutional assemblages. They all refer to one specific mode of visibility of the presumed harms and toxic agencies of the new drugs. In the time dimension a middle-class and young drug user was confronted with a potential 'non-futurity' residing in notions of risk, addiction or dependence. In the space dimension, a chaotic and potentially violent sense of movement appeared to push NPS users through the city, announcing the anxiety of dangerous encounters. In looking at institutional assemblages, the occupation of cityscapes by head shops was mostly framed as a full-scale invasion of destabilising forces from both outside and inside.

Conclusions: What was suggested to be a hostile takeover of public space by the new drugs, users and distributors was mainly framed through pathological and military metaphors. The NPS issue revealed a larger moral politics of visibility that also touched on notions of classed and ethnic 'Otherness'. Discourses of drug abjection were shaped by historical forms of social abjection that beyond prohibitionist stances also hinted at structural forms of exclusion and raised larger questions about the limits of freedom, pleasure and governance in the country's transition to market democracy.

'It's a whole fresh, clean slate of communication': Exploring the MDMA experiences of couples using a pluralistic, qualitative approach

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Background information: MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxy-methamphetamine or ecstasy) has been called the 'love drug' and is well-known for its pro-social effects, including heightened empathy and increased openness (Bogt, Engels, Hibbel & Van Wel, 2002). These effects seem to provide the right kind of emotional environment to facilitate closeness; indeed, there is a wealth of research that discusses the role the drug plays in social bonding (Duff, 2008; Beck & Rosenbaum, 1998; Hinchliff, 2001; Solowij, Hall & Lee, 2006). However, there has been extremely limited research looking at MDMA's impact specifically on romantic relationships. For example, Vervaeke & Korf (2006) mention only two other studies, which paint conflicting pictures of MDMA as a positive or problematic force for couples.

Research question: What does closeness mean to couples and how is this manifested in their everyday lives and ecstasy experiences together? How do shared MDMA experiences influence a romantic relationship and a sense of coupledom?

Method: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 couples from the UK, Germany and America. A pluralistic, qualitative approach was used: incorporating elements of narrative, phenomenological and visual methods.

Results: Couples' emotional environments were transformed in a multitude of ways: communication changed from knowing something on a rational, cognitive level to a deep, felt understanding of the other; a protective bubble was formed around the couple's interactions: free from existing fears or judgments, and an emotional sense of self was brought to the fore. While all couples agreed that the emotional environments produced by taking MDMA together had shaped their relationship in some way, they differed over the degree to which this could (and should) be replicated in everyday life.

Conclusion: The study opens up new understandings of the role of MDMA in people's lives and romantic relationships through an appreciation of how emotional experience can be transformed by MDMA. These shifts involved partners experiencing a more felt, embodied connection to each other, protection from fear and judgment and an enhanced emotional self. It also points to a reconsideration of the therapeutic use of MDMA for couples.

[view presentation](#)

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[view presentation](#)

Drug Use and Substance Use Disorders among Prisoners in Switzerland. An Estimation of the Prevalence.

Objectives: Conventional wisdom might suggest that a prison as the “total institution” par excellence would hinder drug use by prisoners. However, reality is different, and drug use among individuals in custody is common. At the same time, there is a general lack of research on drug use in European prisons. Even though, scientific data on drug and health issues in prisoners is essential to assess treatment needs and to inform policy making. The present study aims at estimating the prevalence of illegal psychoactive substance use - mainly cannabis, cocaine, heroin, and amphetamine - as well as substance use disorders and related indicators (e.g. substitution treatment) among prison inmates in Switzerland.

Methods: Analyses are based on quantitative and qualitative data that was collected as part of the “Agequake in prison” project, a comprehensive research project on custody and health care for (ageing) prisoners in Switzerland. Of a total of 109 prisons in Switzerland in 2012, 26 fulfilled the inclusion criteria for the study (e.g. long-term imprisonment, more than 20 places). The final sample consisted of 406 (380 male and 26 female) prisoners from 15 prisons that agreed to participate in the study (76.4% of the eligible population). Quantitative data was obtained by analysing medical records of 406 prisoners retrospectively. In addition to that, semi-structured interviews with 35 prisoners were conducted.

Results: Prevalence levels of illegal substance use will be estimated based on information about prisoner’s drug use before and during incarceration, diagnoses of substance use disorders, diseases and prescribed medications, and illegal drug use (e.g. methadone), as noted by health professionals in the medical records. Further, reasons for incarceration are considered as well as visits to medical services, linked with illegal drug use. Finally, information from drug screening tests, carried out inside prisons, is analysed. This quantitative information is contrasted with material from the qualitative interviews and prisoner’s self-confessions about drug use before and during incarceration, as well as of their subjective reports on drug using prevalence and patterns in custody.

Conclusions: Estimated prevalence rates will be interpreted in the context of comparable results from other prisons in Europe. With accurate data on drug use among inmates, medical care provided to the prison population can be better-targeted and preventive measures improved.

Coordination problems in dark net drug markets

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[view presentation](#)

Internet has opened up for a new drug market. Visibility is no longer such a large threat in drug trade, and the competition has increased with the globalization of the market. Important vendor characteristics have changed and new methods such as customer service, knowledge, and traditional vending tactics have become essential. This presentation reports findings from a qualitative study of the top 20 vendors on Silk Road 2.0. Vendor profiles and product sites are used to describe vendors and their operations, emphasizing characteristics such as shipping, products, site activity, and profile language. Thirteen of the vendors were selling from European countries, while additionally four vendors listed Europe as a destination. We analyse the emergence of these new markets and discuss similarities and differences to traditional drug markets.

We use a combination of economic sociology and transaction cost economics to broaden the present understanding of cryptomarkets. Results focus on three coordination problems – competition, cooperation, and valuation - characterizing illegal markets and how they are alleviated in cryptomarkets. More information, better visibility and a global aspect increase competition in online markets where illegal drugs are presented as any legal item, using advertisements and gimmicks, such as commercial jargons, appealing pictures, and weekly deals or discounts. Cooperation is improved through the feedback system – a formalized trust-building system instead of violence and interpersonal trust. On the other hand, border control introduces a new cost influencing valuation, making vendors take precautions through packaging stealth and restricting distribution to certain countries.

We argue that the online context circumvents earlier coordination problems in illegal markets, making dark net markets more structurally efficient compared to conventional drug markets. Cryptomarkets are formally structured and regulated by rules of conduct and centralized decisions. In order to succeed, vendors need to build a brand and fulfil buyers' expectations of "customer service", honesty, and quality products.

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Drug abuse and fatherhood – views of drug abusing men and professionals

Objectives: Parental substance abuse is of significant concern when it comes to children's development and health. It has been associated with family dysfunction, child neglect and abuse and other malpractices of caregiving. Yet, much of the research on substance abusing parents has largely focused on mothers, whereas the fathering role of substance abusing men has been ignored. This is especially true for illicit drugs. Although research on alcohol abusing fathers and their children is often extrapolated to drug abusing fathers, it has been argued that there are important differences between alcohol and illicit drug abuse which limit the extent to which findings on alcohol abusing fathers can be generalized to fathers who abuse illicit drugs.

For Germany it is estimated that almost half of problem drug users have children. However, the lack of research in this field has left a gap of knowledge about how drug abusing fathers experience and interpret their parenting role, how their use impacts their children and what interventions are needed to promote more effective parenting by these men. Moving beyond a deficit perspective that focuses on the shortcomings of parenting, our study aims to describe fathering issues from the perspective of drug abusing men, focusing on their fathering role and their personal definitions and images of fatherhood, their experience and self-perception as fathers, their involvement in their children's lives and their perception of other people's view on them. The paper will present some preliminary results of this ongoing study.

Methodology and sample description: In order to explore fatherhood from the perspective of drug abusing men we used a qualitative design based on interviews with 25 fathers with a history of drug abuse. In addition, focus groups with 20 professionals working in drug treatment services were conducted. Fathers were recruited into the study via treatment services (including referrals through their partners/mothers of their children). Participants were between 25 and 55 years old ($M=38$ years). The majority ($n=15$) was unmarried (married=6, divorced=4). Their educational level was comparatively low; more than a half only had a lower secondary education ("Hauptschulabschluss"). Three quarters were unemployed, on average for 5.5 years. Their monthly income ranged from 175 to 4.900 Euros ($M=940\text{€}$, $Mdn= 450\text{€}$). 14 out of 25 interviewees had a history of heroin abuse and 11 were still in opioid substitution treatment. 15 participants had used illicit drugs within the last month (mostly cannabis, followed by cocaine, amphetamines, heroin, and benzodiazepines).

Results: The 25 fathers had a total of 57 children ($M=2.3$, $R=1$ to 5), 46 of these children (81%) were minors. Among the 15 participants with more than one child, three quarters had conceived them with different partners. Less than half of the interviewees were currently living with at least one of their children, though the majority had lived with their children at some point (usually following birth). Most of the children not living with their fathers them with different partners. Less than half of the interviewees were currently living with at least one of their children,

though the majority had lived with their children at some point (usually following birth). Most of the children not living with their fathers were living with their mothers, about every fifth child had been placed in foster care. Four fathers had no contact with their children. Interviewees had (joint) legal guardianship for half of the 46 minor children, mothers alone were the legal guardians of 16 children and in 7 cases the legal guardianship had been transferred to foster parents or child services. Two thirds of the interviewees had been involved with child welfare services and for about a half of the men this was still the case at the time of the interview.

The interviewees' images of fatherhood often revealed traditional views with fathers being the breadwinners of the family. However, participating in the daily care of their children and spending time with them was also important, although fathers reported a relatively narrow spectrum of activities with their children. Shaping their identity as a father was usually difficult as the interviewees often lacked positive father figures. They often expressed, in clear distinction to their own fathers, how they did not want to be as fathers but lacked a concept of how they wanted to be.

Conclusions: Drug abusing men who are fathers have been largely invisible in research and treatment practice. Common perceptions hold that drug abusing fathers represent an entirely negative influence and therefore need to be excluded from the lives of their children. This stigma also seems to be represented in the views of professionals who largely focus on mothers as central for providing care for their children while fathers are left out. However, given the relevant proportion of drug abusing men who are fathers and who are still living or in contact with their children, painting a more nuanced, research-based picture of drug abusing fathers and addressing fathering issues is important.

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Environmental cues or assemblages? Conceptualising socio-spatial aspects of substance use

Background: Over the past decade, there has been increasing interest in understanding the socio-spatial embeddedness of substance use.

Objective: The present study aims to provide an overview of current research on the space-drugs relationship among users of substances such as alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, party pills and powders, and psychedelics. Key questions in the review include: which socio-spatial aspects and settings are explored; how is 'space' conceptualised theoretically; and what research methods are used.

Theoretical perspective: 'Space' and 'socio-spatial aspects' were conceptualised using a (non substance use specific) sociological framework for the analysis of space (Löw 2001, 2008).

Methods: Systematic literature review techniques were adapted for the purposes of this study. Electronic database searches and manual searches were carried out. Qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods empirical studies were eligible for inclusion if they explored how specific socio-spatial aspects (e.g. location, people, music, objects, rules) (not necessarily identified as 'socio-spatial' by the authors) related to substance use behaviours, cognitions or experiences within the same micro-environment at the same time. Studies of opioid and injecting users, HIV positive, street-based and other vulnerable populations were excluded, as were studies exploring consequences of substance use (e.g. violence). Data were extracted in two phases using structured templates.

Results: At the time of writing, the review was still being carried out and thus the findings reported here are preliminary and may be subject to change. Some 200 studies were included, reporting on some 60 socio-spatial aspects (including >10 different aspects relating to people, e.g. role of parents, children, intimate partner, friends, other users, etc.). Studies explored over 20 different settings (e.g. home, private party, nightclub, outdoor spaces, workplace, holidays). Theoretically, qualitatively orientated studies referred frequently to assemblage, actor-network theory, and embodiment, while quantitatively orientated studies typically referred to environmental cues. However, in a large proportion of studies the underlying notion of space was not specified or discussed. A variety of research approaches was utilised, including ethnography, focus groups, standardised surveys (including ecological momentary assessment), and experimental studies.

Conclusions: The literature review suggests that the space-drugs relationship has been explored from a multitude of perspectives. However, these appear to have developed in relative independence from each other. Integration of these perspectives may help to advance the field.

Doing maturity through cannabis use

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Age has remained a rather under-theorised location of experience in social drug research, and the aim of this paper is to explore how younger adults construct adulthood in their stories of cannabis use. Age and adulthood is understood as something that is *accomplished*, in a manner similar to how West and Zimmerman (1987) describe gender as enacted and performed. The accomplishment of age is mediated through mechanisms like competence, dependence, responsibility or maturity, and we are often unaware that these function as proxies for age (Laz, 2003). How people experience various social phenomena and how they “do” age should be investigated in all life phases. In this article, my theoretical interest is cannabis use in younger adulthood.

[view presentation](#)

Constructing maturity and adulthood through cannabis use may seem paradoxical, as smoking cannabis is frequently classified as irresponsible or youthful behaviour. Drug users have generally been regarded as irrational and ignorant of the risks associated with drug use – or as wilfully seeking the risks for the thrill of it (Järvinen og Demant, 2011). The positioning of cannabis as a “gateway drug” (Melberg, Jones og Bretteville-Jensen, 2010), as a subcultural feature involving oppositional identity (Sandberg, 2013) or as a marker of independence and free thinking (Dahl, 2015) also contributes to the notion that cannabis use is linked to irresponsibility and to adolescence.

In my data, however, the informants also incorporate stories of cannabis use in their stories of being mature, younger adults. Participants construct adulthood by using cannabis in particular manners, for particular purposes and in particular situations. Contrasting how they used cannabis before, with more present using practices is an important strategy in their construction of adulthood. As adults, they can enjoy cannabis on their own, after a fine dinner and as a special treat at the end of the working week. As adolescents, cannabis was often used more intensively, in larger groups and in connection to partying.

The analysis is based on semi-structured interviews with 25 men and women (23-40 years) who have used cannabis frequently and for long periods. They have cut back on their drug use without receiving treatment for drug or alcohol problems, and they are classified as socially integrated users (see Dahl, 2015). I contextualise the study and compare findings with other European empirical studies on the construction of identity (gender, age, social roles) in relation to drug and alcohol use (e.g. Demant and Järvinen (2006), Herold (2015), Holm, Sandberg, Kolind & Hesse (2014), Järvinen & Demant (2011), Ravn (2012), Rødner (2005), Verkooijen, De Vries & Nielsen (2007)).

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[view presentation](#)

Governing families: Professionals' interpretation and negotiation of drug policy discourse

In European social policy, including drug policy, the domain of the family is evolving and expanding. While the changing role of the family may seem self-evident, this development has received limited critical examination with respect to the evidence and presuppositions underpinning its rationale. Building on recent scholarship that has examined how 'problems' related to drugs are constructed and represented in and through policy, and using a conceptual framework that draws on Foucauldian influenced governmentality studies (e.g. Dean 2010, Foucault 2007, Miller & Rose 2008), in my research I have examined representations of the family as a 'problem' in contemporary Irish drug policy discourse. My analysis shows that family is increasingly persistent in discourse as policy has evolved and is represented as a 'risk' or as a 'resource'. Wider contexts and rationalities have influenced these developments, for example the increasing political priority of child protection, the increasing emphasis on risk society, and the governmental strategy of responsabilisation. These representations of the 'problem' render possible certain forms of governing families and also produce unintended discursive and subjectification effects.

However, analysis of policy discourse is limited as it can only extend to examining the government of conduct of imagined subjects. In order to understand the extent of how policy works as a tool of governance, I explore how policy discourse operates in practice: How do professionals interpret and negotiate policy discourse and what are the practices used to govern families that encounter the drug treatment system? To address these questions I conducted semi-structured interviews with a sample of 18 policy makers and practitioners in the drug field in Ireland. I draw on the work of Jackson and Mazzei (2012) to analyse the interviews, a theory driven approach to qualitative data analysis where I apply concepts from Foucauldian theory and governmentality studies to 'read' the data. In this paper I describe and discuss how policy makers and practitioners understand and implement policy solutions relating to families, and how the family is redefined through these interpretations. I describe how these practices enable forms of governing families and discuss how they produce (un)intended consequences for families and service provision.

Drug consumption and health behavior among men who have sex with men in Germany. Results from a multicenter qualitative study

Background: Men who have sex with men (MSM) are the biggest risk group for new HIV infections in Germany. At the same time, research indicates that a higher proportion of gay and other MSM use (illicit) drugs (particularly so-called club drugs or chems) than is the case for age-comparable heterosexual men. While the use of drugs in sexual settings (i. e. 'chemsex') represents just one of a number of drug use pathways among MSM, several studies document that a rising number of MSM are utilising drugs before and/or during sex and associate this behavior with sexual risk-taking (e. g. transmission of STIs). Only limited data is available about the motivations, conditions and contexts of (sexualized) drug use among German MSM.

Objectives and Methods: Based on an explorative multicenter study with a qualitative design our research questions were: what are the experiences of MSM regarding the use of drugs and chemsex? Which motives and contexts are significant for the use of drugs? Which risk situations have been reported in the context of drug consumption and sexual behavior? What is the impact of gay communities on drug use and sexual behavior among MSM?

Between February and April 2015 we collected 14 semi-structured interviews with drug using MSM in Berlin, Cologne and Frankfurt/Main. The participants were recruited via a local AIDS counseling organization, a gay counseling center and a medical practice. The interviews were evaluated by content analysis.

Results: Out of 14 MSM, 12 men reported a positive HIV test result and 5 a hepatitis C infection.

The MSM interviewed indicated extensive experiences with alcohol, amyl nitrite, amphetamines, methamphetamines and GHB/GBL. Motives for consumption were: disinhibition, relaxation, identity foundation, parties and problem solving, but – to a significant extent – also sexual enhancement as well as intense sexual experiences. The interviewed MSM report a loss of control and a loss of safe sex strategies as a consequence of drug use. They describe an increasing sexualisation and a growing focus on physical attributes across gay communities. In parallel, according to the interviewees, the importance of drug use in sexual contexts has increased.

Conclusions: Drugs play a significant role in the analyzed sample of German MSM. They are often used in conjunction with acting out sexual behavior. A clear connection between drug use and sexual risk behavior can be discerned. While further research is needed to evaluate in how far this is true for larger parts of German MSM communities, these findings indicate that there is an urgent need for developing targeted prevention strategies and concrete assistance by HIV/AIDS and drug services.

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[view presentation](#)

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Women, Drugs and Agency

This paper discusses the problem of conceptualising dependent female drug user's agency in the context of their social and economic marginalisation and victimization. The issue of empowerment is crucial as a discourse dominated by images of inequality, criminality, victimization and disease make female users more susceptible to adverse legal, medical and welfare intervention (Malloch 2000). Pathology and powerlessness characterised the construction of female drug users in research studies in the UK, Europe and the US until feminist writers began to challenge these. For instance, Taylor (1993) showed that female injecting heroin users are not passive victims, and illustrated their drug using careers involve active agency and autonomy. However, in such work women's empowerment and pleasure in the 'drug world' was largely hidden.

In qualitative interviews with 40 female dependent heroin and/or crack users in the UK, the women provided accounts of their dependent drug use as motivated by a desire to escape emotional pain caused by trauma and abuse (Du Rose 2015). Viewed as victims of abuse and trauma, dependent female drug users are situated as 'sick' and their social problems individualised and psychologised. Embedded in the women's accounts were also tales of poverty, social marginalisation and further victimization by the criminal justice system, treatment and social services. However, such accounts appear to confound any attempt to conceive of female drug dependent user's agency, adaptations and resistance to oppressive social structures. At the same time, the female users asserted their involvement in a 'drug scene' initially and at various points in their drug career was experienced as empowering, lucrative, exciting and provided them with more social and economic options (Du Rose 2015).

Drawing from cultural criminology including Stevens (2011) concept of 'subterranean structuration' this paper attempts to provide empowering accounts of dependent female drug users exploring the active agency, empowerment, pleasure and sense of identity they derive from participation in the drug world. The drug market creates a social space in which female users are able to find meaning, purpose and company as well as escape from emotional pain and poverty. The drug market is an arena in which they can display their worth, their prowess and their identity and experience powerful fleeting sensations of comfort, social distinction and excitement. Nonetheless, the paper recognises these are adaptive experiences of women who are victims of poverty, trauma, abuse and pathologising drug policies and practices.

“We have quit using ecstasy now that we’ve got MDMA crystals”. Symbolic boundaries and re-emergence of recreational club drugs in Norway

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Background and objectives: Ecstasy pills, where the main ingredient was MDMA, was introduced in many countries in the 1980’s, linked to the rave and club scenes and the introduction of house and techno dance music. However, gradually the use levelled off, in part as a response to increased research-based concern about possible mental health consequences and even fatalities. However, extensive use of MDMA crystals and powder now seem to re-emerge in the nightlife of Oslo, the capital of Norway. Pharmacological analyses suggest that the two substances are more or less the same. In this study, we investigate the importance of the cultural and social meaning linked to MDMA use, emphasizing the perceived differences to “the old ecstasy pills”.

Methodology and data: We used qualitative interviews (n=35) conducted with young adults (20-34 years old, average age 26 years) to further our understanding of MDMA/ecstasy use. Recreational drug users were recruited in club settings. They were later contacted again and interviewed face to face using a qualitative semi-structured interview guide focusing on experiences with drugs and clubbing. The majority of interviews lasted between 90 and 200 minutes. Interviews were recorded after the participant had signed a written consent. All interviews was transcribed into text and coded in the software HyperRESEARCH. Regional Committee for Medical and Health Research Ethics have approved the study.

Significant results: The majority of research participants described their recreational infrequent and controlled MDMA use, many of which took place only on special occasions. Research participants emphasized four important perceived differences between MDMA and ecstasy pills: (i) The drug effects of MDMA was regarded better (more pure and giving better effects); (ii) MDMA was regarded as a safer drug because they knew what the MDMA crystal contained in contrast to ecstasy pills. Possible psychological and medical harms related to MDMA were regarded as lower than those associated with ecstasy; (iii) Participants emphasized that MDMA could also be used in contexts outside the dancing scenes, and was also sometimes referred to as a “sofa drug”; (iv) The characteristics of users of MDMA crystals differed from the characteristics of ecstasy pills. These four differences were all important dimensions of the social boundary work MDMA users engaged in to understand and justify their drug use.

Conclusions: MDMA has re-emerged as an important psychoactive substance on Oslo’s night time club scene. The main reason seems to be that the substance is framed as something completely different than ecstasy pills, even if the two substances are similar pharmacologically. Even though the drug’s cultural and social meanings are embedded in those previously associated with ecstasy, the users perceive MDMA crystals as a completely different drug. The study points to the importance of the social and symbolic meanings linked to the different substances. A rational drug policy should address these meanings, not only the potential medical harm of the various substances. Insights from

this study can be important in terms of understanding the rise of MDMA
in club scenes.

Oskar Enghoff

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[view presentation](#)

Revisiting the situated nature of recreational drug use by reading 21,000 trip reports with digital methods

Previous literature has shown that recreational drug use takes place within a wide array of different local contexts (distinct spaces, practices and relations), and that recreational users articulate the pleasures of drug use as highly situated within these contexts. However, the actual significance of different local contexts for the experience of recreational drug use has never been the object of a comparative study founded within a solid theoretical framework. In an attempt to engage with this emerging field, a digital study of the local contexts of recreational drug use is proposed. *Erowid Experience Vaults*, an online database comprising over 21,000 qualitative reports on individual drug use experiences, provides the data. Drawing on recent developments within digital text-analysis, a *Structural Topic Model (STM)* is used to digitally model the latent semantic structure of the database, and thus make it accessible for a quali-quantitative analysis. Duff's Deleuze-inspired theory of drug use contexts as assemblages of embodiment, space and practice is employed as the theoretical framework for the analysis, and this combination of data, method and theory provides the basis for a study of empirical convergence amongst thousands of recreational drug use experiences.

The STM resulted in 82 semantically *topics* (groups of words which tend to co-occur within the same reports), several of which describe specific examples of embodiment, space and practice. Thus, the STM enabled an operationalization of Duff's drug use assemblage. By examining the words assembled in each topic and the empirical co-occurrence of the topics themselves, the relations between the components of drug use assemblages as they are expressed in the database were analyzed – using quantitative measures (i.e. correlations) as well as qualitative readings of exemplary texts. A simple cluster analysis approach identified three clusters of topics relevant to the research question, each describing a significant convergence within the drug use experiences in the database. These clusters (rave, psychedelic introspection and psychedelic togetherness) describe distinct drug use experiences, and assemble distinct drugs, social practices and social spaces. While the rave cluster assembles entactogens, a destabilizing social practice and an inclusive social space, the two psychedelic clusters assemble psychedelics, a stabilizing social practice and an exclusive social space. Within each cluster, the social practice is closely related to the relations between the individuals present, while the social space interacts with the local physical environment. Thus, the clusters illustrate how different drug use experiences arise in different local contexts. These findings corroborate previous research and further elaborate the highly situated nature of recreational drug use, especially within the use of psychedelic drugs. Furthermore, they point to the value of contextual diversity in research on recreational drug use, which has traditionally tended to focus on the nightlife environment.

New world, old questionnaires

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From time to time it is good to ask how well our monitoring instruments are capturing changing social reality. In this presentation I will explore this issue in relation to the transformations in cannabis culture, the emergence of new psychoactive drugs and the growing public interests in polydrug use.

In recent years there have been several important changes in cannabis culture, markets and cannabis use. For example, there is a huge increase in domestic cannabis cultivation including a quick expanding of home growing of cannabis in many countries where cannabis markets have previously been based mostly on importation, i.e. an import substitution. This has also meant that marijuana has replaced hash as the most popular cannabis product in use. At the same time, we have experienced an increase in cannabis use for medical purposes. Furthermore, the modes of cannabis use are changing. This development has been accelerated by the opening of legal cannabis markets either for medical use or recreational use from 1997 onwards in several US states.

Another recent phenomenon is the emergence and spread of new psychoactive substances (NPS) in the drug markets and use. For example, in 2014, Member States notified the EU Early Warning System of 101 new psychoactive substances not previously reported.

The third phenomenon that has gotten increasing attention in the public drug discussion and research is polydrug use. It has, for example, been brought up as a challenge in the EU Drug Strategy (2013–2020).

In this presentation, I will take a look at how these phenomena – changes in cannabis culture, NPS and polydrug use – have been taken into account in recent population surveys used for the monitoring of the drug situation. The data concerning the surveys will be gathered from the EMCDDA web site and a literature search. In addition to that, I will describe how we tried to capture those phenomena in the Finnish Drug Survey in 2014 and what were the results. At the end of the presentation I will discuss the prospects of survey research methodology in monitoring emerging trends and changes.

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The motivations of using and not using Novel Psychoactive Substances: Internet-based interviews

Background: The few qualitative studies that have been conducted to explore the use of novel psychoactive substances (NPS) showed different motives and settings for the use of different types of NPS. The current study revives this theme and also takes into account the motives for consciously deciding against the use of NPS and rather engaging in the use of established substances. The goal is to compare and contrast the reasons for and against the use of NPS, as well as establishing the differences in motivations for using different types of NPS.

Methods: Twenty semi-structured interviews are planned that are all conducted via internet chat. This allows for a more anonymous setting, greater regional reach and quicker transcription, which will in turn allow for more interview partners, thus creating greater internal and external validity of the data. The target population of the study is not only consumers of NPS, but also consumers of established substances that consciously chose not to engage in this type of substance use. Preliminary studies were conducted in drug user forums, examining the issues of greatest importance to NPS consumers. Following this, the questions will be finalized. Recruitment was undertaken in user forums and will also take place at nightlife events and through personalized ads on social media.

Preliminary Results: Preliminary field studies were conducted in internet forums concerned with the use of NPS. Over a 3 day period, 11 individuals responded, resulting in the recruitment of two participants for further questioning. The main themes that arose for the use of NPS, as opposed to established substances were curiosity, gathering new perceptive experiences and the convenience of online retail of most NPS. In addition, frustrations with the current legal situations of most psychoactive substances, and the lack of control on the purity and dosage of established substances that result from this, were discussed. The reasons against the use of NPS that were mentioned were the anxiety centered on the unknown effects. The final questions to be posed in the interviews are developed based on the aforementioned themes.

Conclusion: Informed decisions are of key importance in the debate on the appropriate response to new drugs surfacing. The emerging themes provide lessons to be learnt from the consumers that may aid the prevention and policy makers, in their development of strategies in order to ensure feasible and competent ways in reducing the harms that are caused to the consumers.

Constructing knowledge about NPS online

Objectives: The surface web is commonly used to share and collect information about NPS (EMCDDA 2016). The goal of the study was to explore the social construction of online knowledge about NPS by comparing relevant (Hungarian-, German-, Norwegian- and Swedish-speaking) online (psychonaut) communities content from Europe and to gain first-hand and reliable information by online observation and by participatory online research about Novel Psychoactive Substances.

Methodology: Netnography (Kozinets, 2010) was used for identifying the online communities and data collection. Netnography provides a tool for an unobtrusive and covert way to study sensitive research topics online. Methodological stages and procedures including entreé, data collection, analysis and interpretation have been followed. The field notes/forum discussions were translated into English and were further analysed by two researchers. The texts and visual data (advertisements, illustrations) were analysed in a constructive-Interpretive paradigm of social construction of knowledge (Gunawardena et al 1997).

Results: After the three-month observation and discussions with native speakers, one site from each country was selected (daath.hu, www.land-der-traeume.de, Flashback.se, ww.freak.no).

In the constructivist model of online communication, we distinguish the contributions of topics and sharing, statement, questions and problems. The motives for use and the methods for gathering information were similar in the analysed webpages, although the topic of purchasing the NPS was the most overt on the Swedish site (supported by visual data and advertisements). The general elements of the forums were

The topics: effects, reasons for using different drugs, expectations, long-term consumption, safety, danger, dosage, legal settings, ways of purchase
The types of utterances: trip reports, reports of long term effects, description of customs, habits, rituals
The actors: moderator, 'the core' speakers, guests

Conclusions: The change on the content illustrates that the knowledge or ways of thinking (cognitive schema) have changed as a result of the online discussion. Empirical findings confirm that internet message boards are used to exchange information and advice about NPS. The topics can be conceptualized in the model of drug-set-setting (Zinberg 1984). The type of utterances can be regarded as socially constructed conceptual frameworks with the system of interpersonal dynamics (e.g. norms and relationships) and actors with different roles. Attitudes, opinions and experiences are expressed freely on these and we gained deeper insights into consumption motives, concerns and experiences.

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Intentional actions or outcomes of social regularities? A mixed method approach in explaining polydrug use behavior

The objective of our paper is to focus on the intentions of polydrug use. We set our research problem in the classical debate between agency and structure by asking: How much could polydrug use be seen as an individual phenomenon and to what extent it occurs at mercy of social and structural factors? Traditionally, human behavior has been explained by two explanatory paradigms: on one hand as an outcome of individual choices, and on the other hand as an outcome of social forces. The interplay between these two illustrating that human behavior is the function of the individual interaction with its environment has also been expressed from the classical settings to the present times.

In our analysis we apply a mixed method approach combining quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data consist of population-based Drug survey conducted in Finland in 2014 (N=3485, response rate 50%). The qualitative data consist of interviews with 56 Finnish drug users on experiences of using and mixing multiple drugs.

In the survey, 29 % of the respondents using multiple drugs reported experimenting as their intention for polydrug use, 43 % enhancing abilities or pleasures, 30 % healing and reducing pain, and 31 % getting smashed. Moreover, an additional category was found in the open-ended questions where 29 % reported that their polydrug use has occurred unplanned and coincidentally. This revealed, that polydrug use is not necessarily intentional, but something that 'just happens' due to sudden situational opportunities. Inspired by this, we coded the qualitative data according to this new category: 'unintentional polydrug use' to gather an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms of it by posing questions: how, why and under what kind of circumstances does unintentional polydrug use occur and how does it differ from intentional polydrug use?

We found that considering the human decision making with regard to polydrug use, the gap between the intended behavior and the actual behavior is probable as the drug use behavior is affected by social and situational conditions not under control of the actor. In our presentation, we will first, applying the quantitative data, present the wider material and structural conditions of the intentions of polydrug use exploring their prevalence in different sociodemographic groups. Thereafter, we linger on the qualitative findings by zooming them from different theoretical perspectives. The theoretical options and how they elucidate intentional and unintentional polydrug use will be discussed in the presentation.

NPS users – attitude, behaviours and recommendation for response

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Objectives and methodology: In the second half of 2014 (from June to November), an online survey of NPS users (at least once in life) under the I-TREND project was conducted in Poland (PL)(n=1355), France (n=536) (FR), NL (n=266) (NL) and the Czech Republic (n=166) (CZ). The survey was aimed at describing attitudes and behaviours of NPS users to find out recommendations for response measures. Each of the countries involved in the project recruited respondents mainly online. The main target audience were young Internet users (older than 15 years old). Information on the survey was posted on project partners' websites. Invitation emails had been sent to Internet forum users, NPS shops, college students and event organizers. Consequently, some of the respondents posted information on the survey on their own websites. Invitations to take part in the survey had also been sent to drug treatment units. In Poland, the highest number of the survey participants was recruited following the advertisement for the survey at the website of the University of Social Science and Humanities (SWPS). Differences in the numbers of responses might results from the scale of NPS use in the respective countries (e.g. in the Netherlands NPS are less prevalent than in Poland) as well as the population levels (e.g. the population of the Czech Republic is smaller compared to that of France).

Significant results: It must be noted that the results are not representative; however, they allow an attempt at describing behaviours of NPS users. Male respondents represent the majority (72%). The average age for the total sample is 25 (16-61 years old). Polish users took it most often to bond with others (62%); in France (62%) and the Netherlands (58%) most often to modify perception; in the Czech Republic to provide respondents with energy (63%). Every second respondent in each country experienced unpleasant effects (PL – 48%, FR – 43%, NL -52%, PL - 44%). Moreover, every second respondent had insufficient information on a safe dose (PL -53%, FR - 41%, NL - 60%, CZ - 42%). Few respondents had also little knowledge on the effects of NPS (PL – 64%, FR – 50%, NL – 67%, CZ – 53%). The results of the survey have shown that NPS users possess poor knowledge of NPS and despite negative consequences of the substance consumption rarely seek medical assistance. However, few of them believed that NPS are less harmful than drugs (PL - 8%, FR - 2%,NL -2 %, CZ - 6%). The most frequent negative consequences related to the NPS use varied across countries: strong paranoia, fear, anxiety (PL – 52%; FR – 37%), sweating (NL – 41%), extreme agitation and excitement (CZ -56%). Few NPS users who felt negative consequences sought medical assistance ((PL-6%, FR -4%, NL - 5%, CZ -4%). Some NPS users get hold of the substances free of charge from their friends or acquaintances (CZ – 31%, PL – 33%) while in the other countries the main source of NPS is the Internet (FR -44% and NL – 46%). NPS users also use traditional drugs e.g. more than half of the survey participants had smoked cannabis in the last 12 months (PL - 80%, FR – 82%, NL -65%, CZ -88%).

Conclusion: In view of the fact that one of the distribution channels is the Internet, it is worth considering this environment as a platform for preventive and educational interventions, especially harm reduction. The latter should be based on the knowledge and experiences of psychonauts, who often share their knowledge at online drug forums. The survey results have shown that recommendations of others have impact on the choice of shops among users. Peer-to-peer education may help to decrease the number of overdoses. This is particularly significant, as the majority of the survey participants do not have information on safe doses. Taking into account the outbreak of NPS overdoses in October 2010 and July 2015 in PL after harsh sanctions against NPS, it is worth introducing education and harm reduction action before next strong action against NPS. In 2015, a training course for harm reduction programmes was held in both Warsaw and Lisbon. So there are experiences, which could be utilized to plan harm reduction measures. Moreover, NPS testing programmes might prove useful, if we consider that e.g. every third NPS (research chemical) purchased under the I-TREND project in Poland contained a substance other than the one reported by the seller.

Ups and downs in funding a heroin career: Implications for persistence

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This paper will report on my PhD study which answered the question 'What explains long term heroin careers?'. The paper fits in with the theme of 'drug markets and drug economies' as it concerns the financing of drug using lifestyles.

The aim of this paper is to understand how people fund their drug use through a heroin career. Does heroin cherry-pick those who have the abilities to fund a heroin career, or do people learn? Can everyone learn? Are these abilities constant, if not how do they vary within a heroin career? How does all of this relate to persistence of heroin use?

The methods for this involved life story interviews with 51 long term heroin users in South Wales, UK. The mean lengths of the participants' heroin careers stood at around 11 years, ranging from 5 to 30 years. The study was primarily qualitative in focus. I am currently working on revisions following my VIVA, these will be submitted during June 2016.

Few participants managed to balance work in the legitimate employment market with daily heroin use. In all cases jobs were eventually lost due to heroin use. Participants accounts tended to relate this to how physical dependency ruled the rhythms of their daily lives, making many jobs infeasible. However, stigma was not irrelevant to this process. They could not admit to their heroin use to their colleagues. Similar issues manifested in their domestic and social lives.

It is difficult to posit an exact role to the illegal nature of heroin. However, the stigma attached to heroin use, alongside physical dependency and the high cost of the drug made certain criminal skills useful. Some participants already had these when they started using heroin. For others, their environments at the point that they began using heroin, led to a quick education. Others could not or would not learn. For those who arrived with criminal skill or could learn more, their heroin use rose up to a point. Then after this point their criminal capabilities reduced alongside their earnings.

These findings come with theoretical and practical implications. Bourdieu's (e.g. 1991) concept of habitus has been used to explain the identities of heroin users (e.g. Bourgois and Schonberg 2009) or success in desistance from crime or drug use (e.g. Best *et al* 2011). However, the concept might also help to explain criminal success and therefore persistence in heroin use. A further implication is that learning is important in persistent heroin use and that many institutions provide forums for this learning to occur. Also practitioners might be able to more successfully intervene in a heroin career when criminal skills are waning.

[view presentation](#)

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Trendspotting in Europe: Using mixed methods to explore new developments in internet drug markets

Since 2010, the EMCDDA has been undertaking ad hoc studies to explore new trends and emerging phenomena in the EU drug situation, as a complement to the agency's routine monitoring activities. These so-called 'trendspotter' studies rely on the use of mixed methods, multiple data sources and an analysis based on triangulation for complementarity and confirmation of results. This approach has been used to investigate EU-level heroin shortages, fentanyl and methamphetamine outbreaks, changes in the MDMA market and the emergence of Internet drug markets. This presentation will introduce the innovative methodology used for these studies and illustrate its implementation with critical analysis and results from an investigation into innovations in surface and deep web drug marketplaces. In conclusion, despite limitations and its ad hoc nature, the approach has the potential to provide both context and timely in-depth insights into Europe's contemporary drug situation and is a welcome additional method in the drug monitoring toolkit.

The Normalisation of Drug Supply: The Social Supply of Drugs as the “Other Side” of the History of Normalisation

This paper describes how the relative normalisation of recreational drug use in the UK and Europe has been productive of, and fused with, the relatively normalised and non-commercial social supply of recreational drugs. Drawing on recent fieldwork (Moyle, 2013) and the synthesising of several key contributions from the 1980s to 2010s, we explore the theory of normalisation as it relates to the social supply of recreational drugs as an adjunct to the relative normalisation of drug use (Parker, Aldridge, & Measham, 1998). In order to understand the relative normalisation of supply, we draw upon Matza’s (1964) theory of drift to explicate how drug users, by virtue of their strategies to keep themselves supplied and to get the best possible deal, gradually slip into social supply roles. We argue that it is this subtle drift or slip that renders social supply a practice that is, with varying degrees of involvement, increasingly engaged in and experienced by many recreational drug users.

Methods: Semi-structured qualitative interviews with 60 social suppliers of recreational drugs in two studies (involving a student population $n=30$ and general population sample $n=30$). Respondents were recruited via purposive snowball sampling and local advertising.

Findings: Both samples provided strong evidence of the normalised supply of recreational drugs in micro-sites of friendship and close social networks. Many social suppliers described “drift” into social supply and normalised use was suggested to be productive of supply relationships that both suppliers and consumers regard as something less than “real” dealing in order to reinforce their preconceptions of themselves as relatively non-deviant. Some evidence for a broader acceptance of social supply is also presented.

Conclusions: The fairly recent context of relative normalisation of recreational drug use has coalesced with the social supply of recreational drugs in micro-sites of use and exchange whereby a range of “social” supply acts (sometimes even involving large amounts of drugs/money) have become accepted as something closer to gift-giving or friendship exchange dynamics within social networks rather than dealing proper.

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Consequences of the criminalisation of khat in the Netherlands

Khat (*Cabanero edulis*) is a plant whose leaves are cultivated and used for centuries in the Horn of Africa, including Somalia. The international khat market outside Africa is largely concentrated around migrant communities (e.g. Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya and Yemen) in North America, Australia and parts of Europe, including the UK, Germany and Netherlands. The emergence of the khat market in the Netherlands went synchronically with the immigration of the first generation of Somali refugees in the 1990s. In the course of the 1990s khat was banned in a growing number of European countries. Among the last one are the Netherlands (in 2013) and the UK (in 2014). Although there are several scholar publications about khat use in the Western world, the consequences of criminalisation of khat has hardly been scientifically researched.

More than two years after khat had become illegal in the Netherlands, using a mixed method approach, including analysis of seizures, interviews with law enforcement and other professionals and local experts from the 11 Dutch communities with the largest number of Somali migrants, focus group interviews and a survey among 168 current Somali khat users.

In the presentation we will focus on the consequences of the ban for the khat market. In the theoretical discourse on criminalisation of drugs it has often been suggested that illegal drug markets, in spite of government efforts, largely evolves autonomously (e.g. in terms of price), and hardly affects prevalence of use. In addition, policies and law enforcement efforts do not always lead to the intended effects on the demand and supply side.

In this presentation we will first discuss to which extent and how the ban was brought into practice by customs and police. Then we will elaborate the consequences of the ban from the perspective of *users*, *local experts* and the *Somali community* with respect to both the supply side (price, quality) and demand side (number and type of users, use patterns) of the khat market. Finally, we will discuss our findings within context of the discourses on criminalisation and decriminalisation of drugs.

How to regulate Cannabis social clubs. Analyzing the experiences in Uruguay, Spain and Belgium

Cannabis Social Clubs are a model of non-profit production and distribution of cannabis among a closed circuit of adult cannabis users. The CSC model can thus be seen as a middle-ground option between prohibition and full (legal) commercialization. Cannabis social clubs are now operating in several countries around the world, albeit under very different legal regimes and in different socio-political contexts. Initially founded in Spain during the 1990s, this form of collectives has emerged elsewhere in Europe (notably in Belgium), mainly as a result of grassroots initiatives and self-regulation. Both in Spain and in Belgium, the CSC phenomenon is inherently a “bottom up” process arising from civil society that generates complex interactions among individuals, groups and institutions involved and that result in several -and at some point contradictory- regulation proposals. In this sense, CSC public policy is the reaction of the authorities to their existence -a reaction that has moved among repression, tolerance and proposals of regulation, depending on the moment and the level of government considered. In Spain, the particular evolution and characteristics of the CSC in the different regions of Spain has led to uneven reactions at the different levels of government (national, regional and local) to a similar phenomenon.

Uruguay remains the only jurisdiction to have legalized and regulated the CSC model. Marijuana (and others drugs) consumption has been legal in Uruguay for many decades now. But since the marijuana market became regulated by the government at the end of 2013, Cannabis Clubs are one of the three ways in which the marijuana regulation establishes it is legal to access the drug in Uruguay. The genesis of the CSCs in Uruguay and their regulation is – contrary to the developments in Spain and Belgium – a top-down process.

In this paper we describe and compare the practices of cannabis social clubs in three countries (Uruguay, Spain and Belgium). The objective of our analysis of the similarities and differences between these three countries in terms of various aspects, is to draw general lessons on how to regulate cannabis social clubs.

Aspects included in our comparative analysis are:

- a) the regulatory aspects (both formal regulation in laws and/or official guidelines, and informal self-regulatory practices),
- b) the establishment procedures or practices,
- c) the characteristics of the formal organization of clubs (facilities, membership limits, inclusion and exclusion criteria for members, etc),
- d) Governance/management (which would allow us to tease out the differences in terms of how Clubs are managed in some cases in Barcelona vs other CSCs in Spain/Belgium/maybe URY; and also discuss profit vs non profit Clubs)

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- e) Profile of the Clubs in terms of their involvement in policy discussions
- f) the cannabis cultivation procedures (outdoor versus indoor, asynchronous versus synchronous, profiles of the growers and relationships with the clubs, etc.),
- g) the cannabis distribution procedures (exchange fairs versus daily office hours, possibilities for consumption at the club, consumption limits, etc.

The data used for this analysis stem from independently conducted local studies by the authors in their countries. Although the particular designs of the studies differ, the data in all three countries was collected through similar data collection methods: analysis of (legal and other documents), field visits to the clubs, interviews with staff members, media content analysis.

Unknown Pleasures: Alcohol and Other Drug Studies and the Quest for Embodied and More-than-representational Knowledge

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In the last decade, scholars have increasingly reported the absence of discourses of pleasure in Alcohol and other drug (AOD) studies, a field dominated by a risk-oriented approach. In order to fill this gap, it is evident that carry on a research about pleasure - and, specifically, about the relationship between pleasure and AOD - presents ontologically, epistemological and methodological difficulties. In approaching this topic some question arises: how to define such a slippery concept/sensation as pleasure? How to studied it empirically? What influences and affects AOD pleasures? How to draw boundaries between physical and mental pleasures or between subjective and collective pleasures?

The former section of the presentation aims to investigate how pleasure has been conceptualized in other fields of study. Specifically, after an introduction on the sociological debate on this issue, it will be deepened Michel Foucault's pragmatics of pleasure and their role in his reflections on the normalizing imperative of biopower. Simultaneously, it is necessary reflect about how to produce pleasure-oriented knowledge and through which research methods. In this respect it is necessary to overcome both a Cartesian approach to scientific knowledge which favors the cognitive level over the practical, and a representational theory of knowledge which favors the discursive level over the experiential.

Starting from these general remarks, in the latter section will be presented the preliminary results of a multi-sited sensory ethnography in electronic dance music clubs conducted both in Milan and Berlin. The focus will be the clubbers' embodied sensory practices and somatic works, observing how clubbers actively engage with both club environments and their bodies. The attempt is to develop a reflection able to overtake the lack of academic discourses about pleasure, given that all the activities done at EDM parties – enjoying music, dancing, having fun with friends, meeting new people, drinking and taking drugs – are directly linked to carnal and abstract pleasures.

[view presentation](#)

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“Do I consider myself as dealer... Uh... That is a good question....”: Inquiry into conflicts in moral orders produced by „drug dealers“

In the presented analysis, I utilize data gathered by the Centre for Drug Research at Goethe University Frankfurt and data which I gathered in Prague. The subject of investigation are “dealers”, respondents having a vast experiences with drug handling, and the main issue is a conflict in produced moral order, which is apparent on incoherent and ambivalent answers. First, taking inspiration from cultural criminology, I focus on the ways in which respondents relate to the category of dealer as a folk devil, which are present in media discourses, repeated by some politicians and, in certain cases, reflected by law. Then, drawing on ethnomethodology inspired approaches, the conflicts stemming from refusal of folk dealer attributes (gaining profit from drug handling, seducing other people into addiction etc.) are discussed. These attributes are refused, for example, with references to doing business in a friendly manner with friends. However, monetary aspect, which is inherent to drug markets, is clashing with doing business in a friendly manner, producing mentioned incoherencies and ambivalences. In result, respondents “drift” between doing „friendly business“ and having profit.

Regularly, these incoherencies and ambivalences are not studied sufficiently because researchers are prone to overlook these aspects, using “conventionalist” (Baker 2004) approach to data analysis. In contrast, ethnomethodology inspired approaches offer possibility, firstly, to conceptualize respondents accounts as produced and situated, secondly, to grasp dynamic nature of identity. To stress broader relevance of my analysis, it is important to note that this study is an example of broader issues in contemporary world, which are frequently underscored: incoherency and ambivalence in moral orders produced by drug users. It is plausible to assume that drug users share in a certain degree such conflicts with “dealers”, responding to the stereotypes linked not only with drug handling but also to the drugs generally.

Cannabis Cultivation: from ideology to criminality

Domestic cultivation, rather than importation, now accounts for the major part of the UK cannabis market, with similar patterns of import substitution being observed in a number of other European countries (Potter et al., 2015). While a conceptual distinction can be made between those who grow on a small scale for reasons other than profit (e.g. avoidance of the black-market, regulation of own supply, affiliation with cannabis culture or other 'ideological' drivers; Potter, 2010; Potter et al. 2015) and those who grow on a much larger scale, driven primarily by profit and often associated with organised or other forms of crime, there is some evidence of overlap and interplay between the two groups. Drawing on the initial findings of an ongoing British Academy funded project involving qualitative interviews with cannabis growers (target n=50), this paper explores the overlap between ideologically and commercially motivated cultivation by investigating the experiences of those who start as small-scale, ideologically motivated growers but who experience temptation, opportunity and/or coercion (whether resisted or succumbed to) to escalate the size and profitability of their cultivation or to become involved in an organised crime model of cultivation or other criminal activity. Attention will be paid to how an ideological perspective or an affiliation to cannabis culture militates against or changes with escalation of criminality.

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‘The truth is that I’m a bad person.’
The persistent negative reputation of heroin and
methamphetamine users

Various aspects led to the decision to analyse the anti-meth campaigns *Faces of Meth* (FOM) and *Montana Meth Project* (MMP). Firstly, the choice was influenced by a former research conducted prior to this thesis. The aim of the research was to evaluate how recreational users of designer drugs felt influence by drug prevention measurements. With an explorative research design I conducted ten interviews with recreational users. During these narrative guided interviews I showed my participants two different drug prevention videos. One of them worked with disturbing ‘before’ and ‘after’ mug shots of arrested drug users. The aim of the research was to identify if such pictures had a discouraging effect on the recreational users, or if the interviewees would actually challenge them due to their own drug experiences. The individuals displayed on the mugs shots have been arrested for the possession of paraphernalia or different illicit drugs as heroin, cocaine, narcotics, prescription drugs and meth. Only the first person shown is supposed to have consumed meth, while two others are named to have taken heroin. Nevertheless, my interview partners identified all seven individuals as meth or heroin users, because of their extensive physical decay. I reminded the interviewees that this was not the case; nevertheless, they affirmed having seen other videos as for example *Faces of Meth* displaying similar pictures. Due to this connection I was interested in how the portrayal of meth users in the anti-drug campaign FOM contributed to the impression that my interview partners had about meth use. Since the FOM project exclusively works with mug shots the analysis was supposed to be enriched with a second campaign that presented a wider range of visual material. Through an internet based research I found images with the slogan “Meth. Not even Once.” leading to the website of the MMP. The website contributes a great amount of visual material all related to meth use.

The great amount of pictures accessible on the internet is the second reason for choosing these two American anti-meth campaigns. The pictures are very easy to find on the internet with only one google search of the term “meth” revealing various images related to the campaigns. Therefore, there are not limited to country borders with anyone who has access to the World Wide Web and wants to inform itself about meth able to see them. Both campaigns claim to display a realistic portrayal of meth users, which made the analysis especially interesting concerning the *regime of truth* and the question how knowledge is produced through visibility. Furthermore, the FOM campaign gained major international attention leading newspapers outside of the U.S. to print the mug shots while reporting about meth use. This leads to the question which influence such regional campaigns might have on the international drug discourse. All of my interview partners were Germans or resided since they childhood in Germany, nevertheless, they were familiar with campaigns as FOM, meaning that such pictures and ideas about drug users do cross country borders and also affect European citizens.

This visual analysis wants to terminate how ideas about drug use emerge. Scholars increasingly have argued that the visual is central for the cultural construction of social life in contemporary Western societies (Boyd 2002; Evans & Hall: 1999; Fyfe & Law 1988; Hill & Helmers 2004; Jenks 1995; Kaszynski 2016; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Rose 2012: 2). In these days all sorts of visual technologies like movies and photography's surround us. These technologies render the world into visual terms and provide an interpretation of it (Rose 2012: 2). The movie *Trainspotting* is a part of such a visual technology, providing an interpretation of one specific topic: heroin consumption. I personally saw this movie for the first time in 10th Grade at the age of fifteen for drug educational purposes. I remember being very disgusted by the images shown in the movie, and getting my first impressions about heroin use. The fact that the whole plot of the movie is about the life of heroin users, and that the use itself is portrayed unrated gives the viewer an impression of realism, which is essential to constitute specific believes. *Trainspotting* is a successful award winning iconic movie who has been criticised for glorifying heroin use and at the same time shocking the viewer with its realistic depiction (Boyd 2008: 3; Malcom 1996; Maslin 1996). Movies as *Trainspotting* can have an influence on how knowledge and believes emerge, especially because heroin consumption is not an everyday topic. In this case, *Trainspotting* stands representative for all the other drug movies as *Requiem for a Dream* or *Christiane F.*, and has been chosen for this analysis due to its popularity and international success.

The visual plays an important role in the production of believes and knowledge. As the analysis of the current drug discourse shows, it is difficult to obtain coherent information outside (and partially inside) the scientific community. Differentiated knowledge about the multiple factors influencing the occurrence of addiction, and data about the possibility of recreational use of any kind of drug rarely reach the popular discourse. Therefore, it is difficult to obtain diversified information about drug use, making the mediated picture a main source of information. This emphasised that the popular visual representation of drug user in movies and anti-drug campaigns is able to constitute believes and harden existing stereotypical ideas about drug use. Although *Trainspotting* is a about Scottish heroin users and *FOM* and *MMP* is directed to an American audience, in a globalised world these pictures are not restricted to country borders. Therefore American anti-drug campaigns and pop-cultural movies are able to affect anyone who sees them, including European citizens.

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“Abject prevention”-a timely critique of the use of scare tactics in control policies.

Objective: With this year’s implementation of the EU’s revised Tobacco Products Directive prevention of social drug use in Europe will take a highly visible new shape. Graphic health warnings with photos, text and cessation information will cover 65% of the front and the back of cigarette and roll-your-own tobacco (RYO) packs. The photos will show shock images of body parts affected by smoking. Prevention policies, therefore, from now on commit themselves to scare tactics as a preventive tool. The strategic use of fear raising messages initially gained popularity as a response to the drug culture of the 1960’s. Though used widely since - nowadays especially to show the dangers of stimulant (methamphetamine) use -studies prove scare tactics ineffective in substance abuse prevention. Many preventionists point out that they may even aggravate the problem. Such a perception has been confirmed recently by SAMSHA. NIDA, too, is advising against the use of scare techniques. It therefore seems astonishing that regarding tobacco control the strategy has become universally accepted and is even decreed by health authorities. It may well be that the development in the field of tobacco control probably will lead to a general reassessment of scare tactics and may facilitate their general use in the fight against any type of social drug use.

Using exemplary documents I will analyse that problem and undertake a critique of fear raising strategies from an ethical perspective and from the perspectives of semiology and of cultural history. The fear raising strategy uses shocking visual material to convey it’s message. Therefore, the methodologies of investigation have to be derived from media theory. Besides the theoretical considerations of Roland Barthes Julia Kristeva’s theory of the abject provides an excellent reference frame for such an investigation.

Conclusions: The use of shock photos as a tool for drug use prevention is highly debatable. It raises important ethical questions, since by the use of such pictures it directs fear and disgust at images of the diseased, suffering, human body and of surgical interventions. It is highly possible that fear and disgust become attached much stronger to the horrifying mutation of parts of the human body than to tobacco smoking. Furthermore generating intense anxiety can cause some people to ignore or discount the campaign messages. Like beyond a certain level stimulation leads to paralyses, fear and panic have their paradoxical expressions in indifference and apathy. The hidden affects may impact on psychic health as well as on the social and political behaviour.

'Person – in – context': narratives of adolescent drug users in Azerbaijan and Germany

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Labelled as moral conduct and handled in a strictly medicalized way, drug use among adolescents in Azerbaijan is viewed differently in comparison to the Western-European harm-reduction approach. There is a lack of research exploring perspectives of adolescents themselves, however, the novelty of this study precisely relies on a significant deficiency of social drug research in Azerbaijan. This research project aims to understand how adolescents interpret their personal experiences from the perspective of cultural ground, and specifically, reflect on the role of the *family*.

Inductively designed, the study initially relies on a general hypothesis that coping strategies of parents with drug abusing adolescents in Germany lead to quicker severed relationships, compared to the case of Azerbaijan. The important factor in this hypothetical assumption is the distinctive authority of the family in two countries.

Coping strategies will be viewed within a broader social context including socioeconomic positions, availability of treatment centres, socio-cultural elements, intra-familial power dynamics and authority. Narrative inquiry complements the scope of this research as it allows to capture both the person and the context.

Data collection envisages in-depth interviews with older adolescents [16-18 years old] in both countries. Pilot interviews revealed that narrativization process can be challenging for some study participants and affect their interview performance, as it requires abstract thinking, analyzing one's own thoughts and constructing explanations of experiences.

This work – in – progress will discuss so far acquired data on following questions:

- How can the narrative method be adjusted to cognitive impairments of drug using adolescents?
- What (if any) cultural contexts do adolescents relate their experiences to?
- What are the differences and similarities between these meanings in the narratives of Azerbaijani and German study participants?
- How adolescents adjust to changes associated with their drug use within the family?

The comparative design of this study aims to explore drug use related social knowledge and practice in Germany for future contribution of their culture – sensitive adaptations to local circumstances in Azerbaijan. It attempts to draw similarities and differences between cultural elements – identified as sum of beliefs, values, attitudes, family standards and behavioural norms – that inform adolescents' experiences and subsequently, their coping strategies. Anticipated outcomes will define culturally-nuanced coping strategies.

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High inspectors Police perspectives on drugs and drug-related crime

The presentation highlights partial results of the research project “drugs and organized crime between virtual and real drug trafficking” sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

In order to identify police perspectives on drugs and drug-related crime, a series of narrative and semi-structured expert interviews was conducted throughout Germany with drug squad members or teachers at police educational institutions, which mostly worked in narcotics investigation. The objective was on the one hand to explore squad officers’ everyday knowledge and on the other hand to identify effective policing strategies from the police officers’ point of view. Additionally, participative observations of political events as well as statements of representatives of the police published in the press provide the empirical basis. The methodological approach is based on procedures used in the Grounded Theory.

A similar study with police officers regarding action against drug and drug-related crime has been carried out 1996 by Stock/Kreuzer in Germany. The everyday knowledge of police officers concerning this matter in the present time has not been previously researched.

The results show (similar to the study of Stock/Kreuzer) very diverse perspectives of the drug squad officers. Therefore the police perspective on drugs and drug-related crime can be characterized as divided.

One part identifies with the nature of law enforcement by the police. Some police officers even intend to intensify the repressive approach and demand e.g. a zero- or at least a minor-tolerance-strategy.

Another part takes a critical view of the action against drugs and drug-related crime and is the main research subject of the study. According to the opinion of enquired interviewees, policing strategies addressing the drug-users are regarded as unproductive or even counterproductive. The interviewees were critical, in particular, of the principle of legality that demands police action even for consumption related offences.

The police officers with a critical view show strategies of dealing with their situation and make demands towards the justice system and for changing drug policy. The primary demand is a transfer of parts of the German Narcotics Law into the Administrative Offences Act, in order to apply the opportunity principle. A further important request is the decriminalisation of parts of the German Narcotics Law, e. g. possession of cannabis. To conclude, while there is a divided perspective within the police, still there is constant pressure to find an alternative social and political intercourse with drugs and drug-related crime, to make better use of police resources.

Drug testing in schools

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Objectives: Drug testing is a widespread procedure aiming at detecting drug use in different societal settings, e.g. in private schools. The implementation of drug testing in schools can be viewed as a specific policy measurement, within its course, by the means of a technical device, (any) drug use is construed as problematic behavior, as the test cannot differentiate between different consumption patterns and the procedures are routinely contextualized in programs of addiction prevention. Within my presentation, the ambivalences and risks of drug testing procedures at schools will be discussed, also in connection with other measures aiming at young people's drug use (e.g. school-based drug prevention programs).

Methodology: A qualitative research was conducted in Germany on the rationalities and consequences of drug testing in different settings. For the school setting 19 semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts, pupils, teachers, and parents. Furthermore, a document analysis (15 documents) was realised. The data analysis was executed by using qualitative content analysis methods.

Results: While it is hardly practiced in public schools, drug testing is widespread in private boarding schools (not only) in Germany. Private boarding schools argue with their specific image of being institutions of integrity and their economic situation which would make them particularly open for the demands of the parents (which regularly contains the request of strict drug abstinence). All in all, drug testing can be understood as a control measure. It is viewed as an ambivalent practice by most protagonists, nonetheless the importance for this instrument is emphasized. Consequences of a positive drug test may be routinely testing in the future and often, when a positive result occurs more than once, school expulsion is likely. As every procedure aiming and prohibiting certain demeanor, the practice of drug testing provokes clandestine drug use and attempts of deception (e.g., the manipulation of test results).

Conclusions: Although executed by private actors and not with explicit reference to governmental regulations, drug testing procedures in (private) schools can be understood as part of a restrictive drug policy, where any drug use is sanctioned and viewed as a problem, no matter what the frequency, extent or concrete circumstances in the individual consumption case may be. At the same time, private schools are trying to preserve their economic needs of distinction. Drug testing therefore appears to be a rational instrument for demarcating from public schools, which, at the same time, manifests a repressive drug policy.

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Cannabis Social Clubs: an analysis of the landscape and the media coverage in Belgium

Cannabis Social Clubs (CSCs) are non-profit organizations that collectively organize the cultivation and distribution of cannabis for the personal use of their adult members. This model for the supply of cannabis first emerged in Spain during the 1990s, but can now be found in many European and Latin American countries. In Belgium, since the establishment of the first CSC in 2006, the landscape of CSCs has evolved significantly, with some new Clubs emerging and others ceasing their activities (usually following police interventions or legal proceedings). At the same time, a particularly interesting new development is the appearance of a few CSCs which exclusively admit medical cannabis users. This presentation aims to offer an overview of these changes in the landscape of Belgian CSCs, drawing on a mapping exercise and preliminary findings from an ongoing research project into the CSC model in Belgium.

In addition, we present also findings from an analysis of the media coverage of the CSC model in that country, since its inception in 2006 and until today (as of November 2015). We identified and analyzed about 150 news articles which in some way touched upon the existence or covered some of the activities of the Belgian CSCs. Our searches included printed media sources from both Flanders and Wallonia, amounting to 11 different publications. In our presentation, we discuss whether and how the CSC model has featured in the printed media, with a particular focus on the types of events deemed newsworthy by those media outlets. This analysis, which is also part of the wider study mentioned above, sheds light into the public visibility of the model, as well as the ways in which the CSC model has been represented by the Belgian media.

As the debate about cannabis policy intensifies, it will be important to develop a nuanced and evidence-based knowledge about the various alternative models for the supply of cannabis. We hope that our findings can contribute to advancing the knowledge about this under-researched model of supply.

Development of structures and trends of online drug markets

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Background: Anonymous online drug markets, which operate on platforms in the darknet, are a recent phenomenon that have gained importance only over the last couple of years (Tzanetakis et al. 2016). Although selling and buying a variety of psychoactive substances on the Internet has a long history, new technological developments enable systematic drug trading on the net (Martin 2014). These technological innovations on the Internet allow users to proceed with (illicit) drug transactions with almost completely anonymous identities and locations.

Objectives: In this paper, the results of an ongoing project on the evolution of anonymous online drug markets will be discussed. We provide a systematic measurement and analysis of structures and trends of online drug marketplaces and discuss the role of online drug markets for drug distribution.

Methodology: We gather and analyse data on three different darknet marketplaces during a period of twelve months between July 2015 and August 2016 on a daily basis. Empirical data is generated by developing and applying web scraping-tools with which automated reading out of data from darknet marketplaces is enabled. Analysis is conducted by using a business-intelligence software. By combining our long-term monitoring and data analysis with previous published measurement analyses (Christin 2013; Soska & Christin 2015), we offer a detailed understanding of the development of types of goods being offered, number of deals and distribution of vendors.

Significant results and conclusions: We provide insights into structure and building of marketplaces, categorisation of drug offers and prices, as well as trends over time regarding both payment methods, the number of marketplaces, distribution of vendors, security enhancements, and extended offers of languages on various marketplaces. In doing so, we discuss the implications of online drug market trends for drug vendors and users. How are drug offers with diversified prices related to vendors from different destination countries? How are ratings distributed among vendors on various marketplaces? In providing detailed market data, the paper puts into perspective and contributes to demystifying imaginations outlining anonymous online drug markets as a new security threat of unprecedented dimension.

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Measuring attitudes in subjects that have no attitudes

Politicians and the public commonly want researchers to assess attitudes of the population in relation to certain issues before deciding on policy and after policy changes were enacted. This makes little sense if many individuals do not understand the basics of the field and have no opinion on the subject yet. In these cases, different wording makes enormous differences. Many people state e.g. that substance users should not be punished and at the same time do not think that abolishing punishment for drug users is acceptable. We have commonly overserved such differences in the past without using different versions with identical content to demonstrate the problem explicitly. When we were recently asked by the Federal Ministry of Finance to evaluate how the public thinks about a recent gambling law amendment in Austria, we designed a questionnaire with two parallel forms to demonstrate that the task we were asked to accomplish makes no sense at all. We constructed sets of parallel phrases identical in content but formulated differently. With some items we got 0% approval in one condition and 100% approval in the other condition, with other items the difference was less. It is possible to explain these divergences based on the qualitative interview protocols. The results demonstrate vividly that the popular interview approaches to assess attitudes make no sense in areas where the population has a low level of factual knowledge and therefore has not made up their minds. The result was not surprising for us but quite unexpected for the contracting entity.

Gentrification and injecting drug users – an exploration of the situation in the Frankfurt ‘open drug scene’

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Introduction: Since decades, the ‘open drug scene’ in Frankfurt shows special features compared to other urban settings of injecting drug users (IDU), particularly with regard to size, visibility and substances being used. Encounters with law enforcement and imprisonment are inherent parts of everyday life. In recent years, there has been growing discussion on gentrification processes in the geographical core area of the scene (“Bahnhofsviertel”) and their consequences for the IDUs.

Methods: We present results from the bi-annual quantitative survey in the Frankfurt “open drug scene” which is part of the local monitoring system “MoSyD”. In each year of inquiry, around 150 persons are interviewed face-to-face in typical settings. The last available data comes from the year 2014. Additionally, we analysed the discussion on the issue in local media.

Results: While the special characteristic of a mainly crack cocaine-using scene has increased in recent years, other features such as education and work status, health problems or years of imprisonment have not changed significantly over time. However, the number of routine checks by law enforcement has increased, particularly among non-German members of the scene. In the same time period, the social and economic structure of the respective district has changed, accompanied by media coverage.

Discussion: Although the attractiveness of the Frankfurt ‘open drug scene’ for younger people and people from abroad is declining since many years, the network continues to exist, with participants growing older. After several failed efforts to displace the IDUs from the “Bahnhofsviertel” in the last decades, it remains to be seen how the current processes of gentrification and increased law enforcement pressure will affect the users in the future.

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Pricing Strategies of Drug Vendors on the Dark Net Markets

Strategies for setting a price for drugs clearly differ between illegal offline and online markets as well as legal and illegal online markets – the ‘Clear-Net’ and the ‘Dark-Net’ markets. The perhaps most intriguing characteristics of Dark Net Markets (DNMs) have been the little regulated market places and the anonymity of market participants. However, the pricing strategies of drug sellers on DNMs have remained widely unexplored. This project seeks to understand sociologically how drug sellers set and adjust the prices of their products offered on the cryptomarkets. At the conference, we will offer a conceptual framework of 1) major risks for vendors on a market, such as market risks of scams and legal enforcement and individual risks such as secure payment and shipping, 2) anonymity, 3) vendor rating and feedback on product, as well as 4) classic factors such as the role of access to information, entrance barriers and product placement. Preliminary findings indicate the following challenges for dealers in maintaining a coherent pricing structure: bitcoin exchange rate volatility; short life of markets; difficulties in quality signalling. We outline some of the ways in which dealers seek to minimise these risks. We argue that pricing should be seen in the context of performing an identity as a professional, networked criminal.

What works and what does not work in measures against NPS? Changes in the NPS market brought by new regulatory approaches in Eastern and Central European States

The emergence of new psychoactive substances (NPS) has become one of the central issues in the global drug policy. The NPS market is developing in a sophisticated way, and by 2016 approximately 560 (EMCDDA, Europol, 2016) new substances had been placed under monitoring. Moreover, substances on the market are changing constantly both at the national and European level. These substances are being supplied and distributed as legal highs, research chemicals, food supplements, medicines and designer drugs (EMCDDA, 2015). They can be distributed through the stores, dealers in the illegal market or by surface or deep web possibilities of the internet (EMCDDA, Europol, 2016). Some of these substances have been put under control at national and European levels, but the majority of them still remain beyond control, which contributes to the development of a diverse market.

In order to stop the spread of NPS, countries are amending their national drug laws in various and innovative ways, for example, listing substances individually, introducing analogue or generic systems. In addition, such tools as emergency scheduling and temporary prohibitions as well as laws regulating medicine control and consumer safety are used to control NPS (EMCDDA, 2011; UNODC, 2013).

When it comes to the assessment of the results and effects of the responses, it seems that there is a lack of data. On the one hand, between 2008 and 2011 there were a number of responses and by 2016 some conclusions can be made. On the other hand, this process is still continuing and in a rather diverse way. Outside Europe, in Japan the introduction of one generic formula did not improve the situation, because controlled substances were soon replaced (Kikura-Hanajiri R. et al., 2014). While the UK has not seen any significant market developments for a number of the NPS groups, a generic system, temporary orders and alternative legislation are unlikely to get fully ahead of the NPS market (NPS report, 2014).

There are some publications on the effects of responses to the NPS prevalence and patterns of use (e.g. Grund J. et al, 2016; Ledberg A., 2015); however, this issue remains rather undiscovered.

Aim: The main objective is to explain and compare the effect on the NPS market brought by new and innovative responses in the Eastern and Central European countries.

Procedure: The study focuses on the existing approaches to regulate the emergence and spread of new psychoactive substances (NPS) in Estonia (EE), Czech Republic (CZ), Hungary (HU), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Poland (PL) and Romania (RO), with a more in-depth research on situations in LV and PL. The analysis has been divided into three parts: emergence and development of the NPS market in each country; a description of applied legal measures and divided into three parts: emergence and development of the NPS market in each country; a description of applied

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legal measures and rationale behind them and finally, changes in the NPS market due to new measures.

Methods: A review of available literature covering the NPS market as well as introduced legal and practical responses in Europe and other countries; analysis of legal acts regulating NPS in research countries; review of presentations from several seminars and conferences on the NPS issue; interviews with experts from research countries; collection and analyses of available data, e.g., seizure data, hospital emergencies, surveys and studies on prevalence.

Results: The development of the NPS market in the research countries varies. Firstly, seizure figures, numbers of shops, treatment and prevalence data indicate that Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Romania have experienced the NPS problem to a wider extent, while in the Czech Republic, Estonia and Lithuania NPS are a relatively minor issue. Secondly, substances and patterns of use differ, e.g. the use of injecting NPS (stimulants) among high risk users in Romania (Romanian Reitox Focal Point 2013), which was not the case in Latvia, where NPS are associated with synthetic cannabinoids that are mainly used by students and young adults (Eurobarometer, 2014; SPKC 2016) as well as among high risk users (Trapencieris M. et al., 2014).

It is hard to clearly indicate what factors are responsible for the emergence and development of the NPS markets. The emergence of synthetic cathinones in Warsaw, Budapest or Bucharest was influenced by the lack of heroin on those markets. Injecting drug users have found a replacement. Synthetic cannabinoids gained popularity in Latvia, because it was “legal” status.

In countries where NPS markets are well-developed, simply scheduling substances or introducing a generic system failed to reduce the availability of NPS. A more complex, precautionous and rapid legislation foreseeing penalties or large fines contributed to the closure of the “legal highs” shops and decrease of intoxications.

Transformation of the NPS market after sharp reduction of NPS availability has varied. It seems that in Romania and Latvia NPS are not available in street shops anymore (Sava, 2016), while in Poland, after a period of silence (Malczewski, 2015), NPS are widely available on the Internet and in street shops (170 street shops in 2015) (Główny Inspektor Sanitarny, 2016).

The extent and patterns of NPS use have developed differently before and after legislative responses. For example, after the closure of the NPS market in Romania, heroin became more prevalent among individuals admitted to treatment (Romanian Reitox Focal Point, 2015) while in Poland cathinones were used among high risk users independently of its legal or illegal status (Malczewski, 2016). It seems that NPS also change attitudes towards narcotic drugs, for example in Latvia a more restrictive drug policy is now gaining support in society (SPKC, 2016), which most likely is the effect of the NPS problem.

Medical Cannabis: An Oxymoron? Discourse Analysis of Qualitative Interviews with Israeli Physicians

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Background: Medical cannabis regulations have been shifting in many places around the world in recent years and Israel is at the forefront of this social development. Although physicians have a major role in medical cannabis authorization, no previous study has investigated the impact on the professional discourse of physicians.

Objectives: This qualitative study aimed to examine the meanings that Israeli physicians assign to cannabis – considering their professional autonomy and the current change of medical cannabis regulations.

Methodology: Twenty-five physicians participated in this qualitative study. The open-ended questions addressed various issues regarding the recent change of medical cannabis regulations, including: professional skills, patient-physicians interaction, professional autonomy and social concerns. Additionally, participants commented freely on relevant topics. We performed a discourse analysis of physicians' interviews – which were analyzed as reflecting the subjective meanings constructed by participants.

Results: Physicians exhibited two major discourses about medical cannabis: 'cannabis as an illegitimate medicine' and 'cannabis as medicine'; most physicians tended to move between the two discourses.

Cannabis as an illegitimate medicine: This discourse included medical perspectives as well as social and moral attributes. Cannabis was described as being in clash with medical standards, mainly evidence-based evidence. Physician constructed medicine as being purely rational, while cannabis was perceived to clash with this paradigm. Another concern was the difficult interactions with many patients that demand medical cannabis authorization. Physicians described "a huge wave of people", reflecting their implicit feeling of being drown – due to bigger powers/forces – and their inability to "control the situation".

Cannabis as a medicine: Physicians also presented an opposite point of view, in favor of medical cannabis. Physicians seemed to be remarkably affected by their real-life experience that showed that medical cannabis improved patients' medical situation. Disadvantages of 'conventional' medications were mentioned, thus justifying medical cannabis use as an alternative. Physicians were much more open and willing to consider medical cannabis use by very sick patients, as for these patients much less weight was given to the scientific evidence and for the potential risks and harms. Many physicians used the term palliative care in relation to justified use of medical cannabis.

Conclusions: Physicians seem to undergo struggles in this newly developed area of medicine. Additionally, physicians extremely opposed medical cannabis in different ways, which may indicate a barrier in the implementation of current policies. As new policies are being considered in Europe and elsewhere, physicians' perspectives should be taken into account.

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