



HAL
open science

Guest editorial: Drugs Places Between Knowledge and Representations

Mélina Germes, Bernd Werse, Marie Jauffret-Roustide

► **To cite this version:**

Mélina Germes, Bernd Werse, Marie Jauffret-Roustide. Guest editorial: Drugs Places Between Knowledge and Representations. *Drugs and Alcohol Today*, 2021, 21 (3), pp.173-177. 10.1108/DAT-09-2021-086 . halshs-03339155

HAL Id: halshs-03339155

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-03339155>

Submitted on 9 Sep 2021

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Drugs and Alcohol Today



Drug places between knowledge and representations

Journal:	<i>Drugs and Alcohol Today</i>
Manuscript ID	DAT-06-2021-0028
Manuscript Type:	Editorial

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

Editorial: Drug places between knowledge and representations

The attention to the spatialization of drug practices is not new in the social science academic area. Ethnographic research work in the context of heroin or crack used in public spaces in the 1980's and 1990's has emerged in North America and Europe with the formation of open drug scenes (Bless *et al.*, 1995, Bourgois, 1992). Later, spatial sciences started contributing to drug research with geo-criminological and geo-epidemiological approaches to drug-related issues (Gruenewald, 2013), but also a growing body of geographical research (Jayne *et al.*, 2016). The ways in which a variety of stakeholders (including residents, people who use drugs, police officers, harm reduction workers) share public urban space led to more attention to socio-spatial analyses in social drug research. Drug-related studies dealing with space and place range from subjects, e.g. the NIMBY ("not in my backyard") phenomenon as a form of spatial stigmatization of people who use drugs (Smith, 2010; Bernstein and Bennett, 2013; Davidson and Howe, 2014 ; Davidson *et al.*, 2014; Jauffret-Roustide et Cailbault 2018; Bancroft and Houborg, 2020), strongly linked to the implementation of harm reduction services in urban areas to the significance of campsite environments or 'classical' nightlife spaces for recreational drug use and associated practices and meanings (Dilkes-Frayne, 2016; Bøhling, 2014). The framing of places related to drugs is often reduced to public safety issues, such as the notion of "risk environments" for drug use (Rhodes, 2002) and repressive responses (Belina *et al.*, 2021), but some authors also found that the experience of such places by different stakeholders can be more ambivalent (Kammersgaard, 2020). Other research explores emotional aspects of spaces of drug practices (Duff, 2008; Duncan *et al.*, 2019; Duncan *et al.*, 2020). Some scholars published programmatic and theoretical texts in order to integrate the dimension of space and human geography into social drug research (Cooper and Tempalski, 2014; Potter *et al.*, 2018), some of which refer to 'new materialism' approaches like actor-network theory (Duff, 2012). In any case, when considering 'space' and 'place', these cannot be understood as factors on their own, but as social constructions and productions and subject to permanent change in related ascriptions. Following Jayne *et al.* (2016), we assume that place is neither "a passive backdrop" (p. 118), nor an autonomous actor. After a few decades of broader interest in space for social sciences and the so-called "spatial turn", space is definitively more than a mere dimension, a given landscape, a passive environment or an established structure of localizations. Spaces and places are constructs, and so, no place is predestined to be the scene of drug practices. Why particular (drug) practices happen here and not there is the result of social construction. Why such drug uses (and places) are in the focus of policies and research, while other are at the margins is also the result of a social construction, embedded in local and global histories and constantly changing. Places materialize and thus reproduce social

1
2
3 relationships that would not exist without the practices of distancing, belonging, imagining,
4 evicting, etc.
5

6
7 The aim of this special issue is to focus on the spatiality of drug practices and policies, in order to
8 question how practices and policies are spatialized, and how common perceptions of social space
9 influence social practices and associated meanings of particular drug places. By *drug places* we
10 mean places characterised by the consumption of psychoactive substances. However, drug use by
11 itself is not sufficient to characterise a drug place: it requires some other factors and actors such
12 as public, media and political discourses; the intervention and action of drug policy stakeholders
13 like prevention and harm reduction services, municipalities, police; the organisation of residents'
14 initiatives; the underground, (sub)cultural knowledge or hearsay narratives specific to certain
15 groups, and the emotional atmospheres *et al.*. So, drug places might be public, private, semi-public
16 or institutional spaces; they might be geo-localised areas as well as imaginary or digital spaces;
17 they might be very mobile and changing or persistent over decades. Drug places are neither
18 determined by their urbanistic design or localisation nor by their social characteristics. Drug
19 places emerge as the result of a complex social production, since they are populated by people
20 who use drugs, residents, professionals and workers, intertwined with health and public safety
21 issues, appropriated for many uses, designed and managed by public and private landlords. Their
22 history, the power relationship they are into, their configuration, the manner in which they are
23 named, their localisation and the scales they are embedded in all matter: all this contributes to
24 their construction, at a specific moment, in a particular configuration, as a drug place. With the
25 notion of drug place, we don't mean that there would exist places *per se* related or dedicated to
26 drug practices. The intent of this special issue is to show how drug places are socially constructed,
27 why and how actors interact with these constructions. Therefore, the question raised by the
28 notion of "drug place" is not the one of the localization of (public) places where people do drugs
29 (no matter if this refers to open drug scenes, alcohol-related nightlife settings or other places),
30 usually referred to as places that require public intervention by political actors and public
31 attention by media. A huge part of the state of the art in drug research and urban studies already
32 deals with this question. Our question is the one of the spatial knowledges and representations
33 about places associated with drug practices. How does knowledge about where and what drug
34 places are emerge? What are the actors, the methods, the processes involved in the construction
35 and circulation of knowledge and representations about drug places? From regular drug users to
36 residents and professional stakeholders, everyone has a particular perception and representation
37 of drug places, which influences the places people are visiting or avoiding, as well as the spaces of
38 public intervention.
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 The practices of knowledge about drug places vary from hearsay in specific settings to
4 geographical studies ordered by cities, social workers' long-time experience on the street, GIS-
5 supported data treatment to empirical ethnographic data collected by social scientists
6 (anthropologists, geographers, sociologists). Expert knowledge about drug places ranges from
7 rather organisational knowledge such as the implementation of collected data, e.g. in treatment
8 or regulatory policies, to a more vernacular and personal knowledge, gained in day-to-day
9 experiences and interactions– e.g., by local traders and businesses, residents, social workers or
10 the people who use licit and/or illicit drugs.
11

12
13
14
15
16 The idea for this issue arose from a joint bi-national (German-French) research consortium called
17 “Drugs and Urban Security” (DRUSEC). Funded by national security research programs (run by
18 the German Ministry of Research and Education, BMBF, and the French National Research Agency,
19 ANR), the main focus of this consortium was to identify security risks for people who use alcohol
20 or other drugs, residents, passers-by or society as a whole, and to give recommendations for
21 improvement. The main areas of concern were ‘open drug scenes’ and environments of drug
22 consumption rooms, nightlife settings and areas with public drug dealing. The research done in
23 this project consortium made clear how complex and manifold social processes in these different
24 settings may be, fueling the idea of not only presenting research from the DRUSEC consortium,
25 but also inviting other scholars to present findings from other perspectives or other social-
26 geographical areas. Three articles in this special issue were prepared in the frame of the DRUSEC
27 project. These papers deal with tolerance zones supported by social work in Bremen (Schmidt-
28 Semisch *et al.*), marginalised drug users' representations of several German cities (Germes *et al.*)
29 and self-perceptions of socially marginalised cannabis dealers in public spaces in Frankfurt
30 (Werse). Other articles address drug places in UK prisons framed by gender (White), emotions in
31 open drug scenes in Vancouver, Canada (Stallwitz), needle exchange programs framed as a
32 “melancholy” intervention in Budapest, Hungary (Danyi and Czak) and the sociological and spatial
33 evolution from a ‘blank’ place to an open crack cocaine users' scene in Paris, France (Jangal *et al.*).
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45

46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
Clearly, drug practices spread in many places that are less known or even unknown, far from the
sight of the public eyes and the public knowledge. But all the contributions of this special issue
focus on archetypal places for drug use and selling in urban contexts. The geographical places such
as downtown Eastside Vancouver (Fast *et al.* 2010, Collins *et al.* 2019), Frankfurt-Bahnhofsviertel
(Sultan and Werse 2020, Belina *et al.* 2021), North-Eastern Paris (Cadet-Tairou *et al.* 2021,
Jauffret-Roustide 2020), Berlin-Neukölln (Huning and Schuster 2015, Ecke 2019) or the 8th
district of Budapest (Rácz *et al.* 2015) are already publicly known and intensively studied for
being places of drug practices. Apart from one contribution about prison (White), all other papers
deal with inner-city neighbourhoods in Europe and Canada, most of which are characterized by

1
2
3 economic deprivation and stigmatised in many ways. They are also the stage for very intense
4 interventions by public institutions, sometimes through area-bound urban policy programs, as
5 they are in the focus of police surveillance and intervention and/or subject to intensive social
6 work and harm reduction. These archetypal places are at the core of the construction of “drug
7 places” as an (urban) problem, nurturing the idea that it is a place that needs interventions,
8 including deviant persons who need regulation. Often, the focus on places as given instead of
9 constructs drifts away from a broader scaled perspective (and intervention) on the processes of
10 criminalisation and urban marginalisation. The conception of places as historical and multi-scale
11 constructs highlights the structural factors leading to social marginalisation of some users of
12 illegalised drugs and its spatial form. The contemporary neoliberal governance of cities expresses
13 the paradoxical efforts of a morally regressive and repressive approach with aggressive policing
14 and reinforcing marginalities, while often pursuing a harm reduction approach that partly accepts
15 drug use, thus, performing life-saving services but at the same time cleaning the streets from
16 individuals that some voices regard as “undesirable”.

17
18
19 Nevertheless, this issue reflects a wide range of perspectives, including different research
20 methods (ethnography, semi-directive interviews, archives), different modes of (re)construction
21 of places, different kinds of drug places and respective actors, and different political contexts with
22 regard to drug policies (Germany, France, UK, Hungary, and Canada). In this respect, the papers
23 deal with negotiations of preconstructions and knowledge, scales and boundaries, changes in
24 spaces, actors, practices and perceptions of drug places. The authors take into account how people
25 who are present in such places perceive themselves, their emotions relative to places and people,
26 and the ways they use and handle psychoactive substances, or how they deal with people who do
27 so.

28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60

References

Bancroft, M. and Houborg, E. (2020). “Managing Coexistence: Resident Experiences of the Open Drug Scene and Drug Consumption Rooms in Inner Vesterbro, Copenhagen », *Contemporary Drug Problems*, March 25.

Belina, B., Klaus, L. and Werse, B. (2021). “Harm reduction in the face of gentrification. Encounters of police and illicit drug users in Frankfurt”. *Policing and Society* (in press)

Bernstein, S.E. and Bennett, D. (2013). „Zoned Out: "NIMBYism", addiction services and municipal governance in British Columbia”. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 24(6), pp. e61-5. doi: 10.1016/j.drugpo.2013.04.001.

1
2
3 Bless R., Korf D.J., Freeman M. (1995). "Open Drug Scenes: A Cross-National Comparison of
4 Concepts and Urban Strategies", *European Addiction Research*, 1, 3, pp. 128-138.

6
7 Bøhling, F. (2014). "Crowded contexts: On the affective dynamics of alcohol and drug use in
8 nightlife spaces". *Contemporary Drug Problems*, 41 (3), pp. 361-392

10
11 Bourgois P. (1992) "Une nuit dans une "shooting gallery". Enquête sur le commerce de la drogue
12 à East Harlem". *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 94, pp. 59-78.

14
15 Cadet-Taïrou A, Gandilhon M, Dambélé S, Jangal C, Jauffret-Roustide M. (2021) *Résultats de l'étude*
16 *Crack en Ile de France*, Inserm-OFDT, janvier.

18
19 Collins A, Boyd J, Meyer S, Fowler A, Kennedy M, Blunthental R, Kerr T, Mc Neil R. (2019). Policing
20 space in the overdose crisis: A rapid ethnographic study of the impact of law enforcement
21 practices on the effectiveness of overdose prevention sites. *International Journal of Drug Policy*,
22 73 : 199-207

24
25 Cooper, H.L.F. and Tempalski, B. (2014). "Integrating place into research on drug use, drug users'
26 health, and drug policy". *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 25 (3), pp. 503-507

28
29 Davidson, P. J., and Howe, M. (2014). "Beyond NIMBYism: understanding community antipathy
30 toward needle distribution services". *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 25(3), pp. 624-632.
31 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2013.10.012>

33
34 Dilkes-Frayne. E. (2016). "Drugs at the campsite: Socio-spatial relations and drug use at music
35 festivals". *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 33, pp. 27-35. doi:10.1016/j.drugpo.2015.10.004.

37
38 Duff, C. (2008). "The pleasure in context.", *International Journal of Drug Policy*, Vol. 19, pp. 384-
39 392.

41
42 Duff, C. (2012). "Accounting for context: exploring the role of objects and spaces in the
43 consumption of alcohol and other drugs", *Social and Cultural Geography*, 13:2, pp. 145-159, DOI:
44 10.1080/14649365.2012.655765.

46
47 Duncan, T., Sebar, B., Lee, J. and Duff, C. (2019), "Mapping the spatial and affective composition of
48 care in a drug consumption room in Germany", *Social and Cultural Geography*, pp. 1-20.

50
51 Duncan, T., Sebar, B., Lee, J. and Duff, C. (2020). "Atmospheres of engagement within a German
52 drug consumption room". *Social Science and Medicine*, 253, pp. 1 - 9

54
55 Ecke, J. (2019). "Die Parkläufer_innen in den Berliner Parks: Problem oder Lösung?" *Sozial Extra*,
56 43(6), pp. 409-413. DOI: 10.1007/s12054-019-00241-x. Gruenewald, P.J. (2013), "Geospatial
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 analyses of alcohol and drug problems: empirical needs and theoretical foundations”,
4 *GeoJournal*, Vol. 78 No. 3, pp. 443–450. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-011-9427-5>.

6
7 Fast D, Shoveller J, Shannon K, Kerr T. (2010) Safety and danger in downtown Vancouver :
8 understandings of place among young people entrenched in an urban drug scene. *Health Place*,
9 Jan, 16 (1) : 51-60.

11
12 Huning, S. and Schuster N (2015) ‘Social Mixing’ or ‘Gentrification’? Contradictory Perspectives on
13 Urban Change in the Berlin District of Neukölln, *International Journal of Urban and Regional*
14 *Research* 39(4), pp. 738–755. DOI: 10.1111/1468-2427.12280.

16
17 Jauffret-Roustide, M. and Cailbault, I. (2018). Drug consumption rooms: comparing times, spaces
18 and actors in issues of social acceptability in French public debate. *International Journal of Drug*
19 *Policy*, June, 56, pp. 208-217.

21
22 Jauffret-Roustide M. (2020). Les villes face à l’usage de drogues dans l’espace public : quels
23 modèles hors de nos frontières. *The Conversation*, [https://theconversation.com/les-villes-face-a-](https://theconversation.com/les-villes-face-a-lusage-de-drogues-dans-lespace-public-quels-modeles-hors-de-nos-frontieres-133083)
24 [lusage-de-drogues-dans-lespace-public-quels-modeles-hors-de-nos-frontieres-133083](https://theconversation.com/les-villes-face-a-lusage-de-drogues-dans-lespace-public-quels-modeles-hors-de-nos-frontieres-133083).

26
27 Jayne, M., Valentine, G. and Holloway, S.L. (2016). “Geographical Perspectives on Drug and Alcohol
28 Studies”, *The SAGE Handbook of Drug and Alcohol Studies*, London, SAGE Publications, pp. 117–
29 131.

31
32 Kammersgaard, T., (2020), “Being ‘in place’, being ‘out of place’: Problematizing marginalised drug
33 users in two cities”, *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 75, p. 102589.

34
35 Potter, G. R., Fountain, J., and Korf, D. (Eds.) (2018). *Place, space and time in European drug use,*
36 *markets and policy*. PABST Science Publishers, Lengerich.

37
38 Rácz, J., Csák, R. and Lisznyai, S. (2015). "Transition from “old” injected drugs to mephedrone in
39 an urban micro segregate in Budapest, Hungary: a qualitative analysis“, *Journal of Substance Use*,
40 20:3, pp. 178-186, DOI: 10.3109/14659891.2014.895872

41
42 Rhodes, T. (2002), “The ‘risk environment’: a framework for understanding and reducing drug-
43 related harm”, *International Journal of Drug Policy*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 5–94.

44
45 Smith C. B. (2010). “Socio-spatial stigmatization and the contested space of addiction treatment:
46 remapping strategies of opposition to the disorder of drugs”. *Social science and medicine*, 70(6),
47 pp. 859–866. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2009.10.033>

48
49 Sultan, A. and Werse, B. (2020): Motivations for prescription drug use in a marginalised open drug
50 scene. *Drugs and Alcohol Today*, 20(1), pp. 17-26

51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Editorial: Drug places between knowledge and representations

Mélina Germes, CNRS PASSAGES, France, melina.germes@cnrs.fr

Bernd Werse, Centre for Drug Research, University of Frankfurt, Germany, werse@em.uni-frankfurt

Marie Jauffret-Roustide, Cermes3 (INSERM U988/CNRS UMR 8211/EHESS/Paris University), France, Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy, Buffalo University, New York, USA, British Columbia on Substance Use (BCSU), Vancouver, Canada, Marie.JAUFFRETROUSTIDE@santepubliquefrance.fr

Drugs and Alcohol Today