



DROGAS EN MOVIMIENTO

NUEVAS PERSPECTIVAS

Un proyecto de Espolea A.C. www.drogas-en-movimiento.org

Harm Reduction at festive environments

By: Brun González *

For a long time, there have been different social mechanisms for allowing leaving aside the conventional norms and enjoy various forms of artistic or creative expressions, sensory stimulation and limitations or regulations more flexible than in other contexts. Whether a bacchanal, a Dionysian celebration, a wedding or an electronic music festival, each of these has the purpose of loosening up from daily routines while seeking the ecstasy of static dance, collective euphoria and other branches tending towards hedonism.

At each different historical period, such ritual spaces, ceremonies and festivals have been generally accompanied by a [large diversity of plants and psychoactive substances](#). Today, due to the modern industrial and pharmaceutical development, the range of psychoactive compounds is larger than ever, and – arguably – [more dangerous than before](#).

[The new psychoactive substances](#), and the (not so new) synthetic substances known as 'design drugs', have found a very good social and commercial niche in these scenarios, more specifically, at outdoor electronic music festivals that bring together massive crowds for the same purpose and under the same 'beat' or rhythm.

This has been evident in various ways, both through psychedelic subcultures that have emerged from this new re-discovery of substances like [LSD](#) or [2C-B](#), substances that play important roles in the development of the various ramifications of electronic music; as well as through the systematically [reported deaths](#) at the biggest and massive events around the world directly related with the abuse of stimulants such as [MDMA](#) or other amphetamines, and the replacement of these substances (MDMA, LSD, 2C-B, etc.) by more toxic, experimental drugs that may have unknown interactions when mixed with alcohol or other drugs.

This phenomenon of substitution, adulteration or mislabeling (selling a substance saying is quite another) is directly related to the prohibitionist policies and the rhetoric of the 'war on drugs', seeking to ban a number of substances, but that not taking into account the growing demand for equivalent experiences that these - forbidden - substances would provide.

[The appearance of substances that replace MDMA](#), as parametoximetamphetamine (PMA), cathinones, mephedrone; and psychedelic substitutes - highly toxic - of LSD, as NBOMe and DOM or DOC, respond to the demand that people still maintain, despite the original substances are controlled and therefore their acquisition and use is illegal.

In these contexts of celebration, party and pursuit of ecstasy (the experience of being outside oneself) has transformed the use – quite indiscriminate – of psychoactive substances in an everyday activity and on which many people may not reflect or investigate enough.



DROGAS EN MOVIMIENTO NUEVAS PERSPECTIVAS

Un proyecto de Espolea A.C. www.drogas-en-movimiento.org

Thus, it becomes necessary to provide information about the various substances that can be found in these environments, the implications of its use and the various harm reduction recommendations that may exist in order to prevent, or at least reduce, the negative health impacts each specific substance may cause.

In addition to information, it is important to have some way to introduce quality controls, or for testing and analyzing the substances that are thought to be consumed. In many cases, harm reduction initiatives include analysis with colorimetric reagents to detect the presence - or absence - of certain substances, and when possible, thin layer chromatography tests have been implemented as an option to corroborate the full content and breakdown of a specific sample (tablet, square of blotter paper, powder, crystal, etc.).

Such efforts have been developed in different countries. In Espolea we have taken on the task of bringing this initiative to Mexico, bringing information materials on most used substances at various electronic music festivals, cultural fairs, concerts and other festive environments, and guiding people toward better ways to learn of unknown substances that may be present in those spaces. At Espolea, we have developed the website of the [Universe of Drugs](http://www.drogas-en-movimiento.org).

Inspired by international projects like [Energy Control](#) in Spain, [Échele Cabeza](#) in Colombia, [Dance Safe](#) in the United States or [Trip! Project](#) in Canada, we have designed different ways to help people making more responsible and more informed decisions about the use of psychoactive substances, the possible interactions when mixing substances, the various complications that can occur and, at some extent, to strengthen awareness about how the black market and the way in which drug trafficking works creates a very difficult situation and exponentially increases its risks.

We invite you to take a look at these projects, including [Espolea's materials](#), and help us to reach as many people as possible to achieve fostering a culture of responsible use of drugs, to avoid accidents so we can continue sharing in a less risky context these events that, through joy and euphoria, have remained as catalysts of social ties from time immemorial.

It is very important to gain more support for these new methods of intervention, such as *in situ* analyses or the market regulation for new psychoactive substances. This, undoubtedly, should be part of a greater drug policy reform in order to raise awareness and encourage an objective risk perception and responsible decision-making processes for every person who is thinking of using a psychoactive substance, whatever this may be.

* Harm Reduction Program Coordinator at Espolea