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INTRODUCTION



Spirit and being: interdisciplinary reflections on drugs across history and politics

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ABSTRACT

Few commodities are as global as drugs. Cannabis, opium, heroin, amphetamines, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), khat, psychedelic cacti and mushrooms as well as an interminable list of other natural or synthesised substances travel and are consumed around the globe for all possible reasons. Human migration, trade, cultural trends, medical practice, political repression: together they constitute the drug phenomenon today – and indeed in much of human history. In this, drugs are spirit-like commodities, their value resting upon a fundamental ambiguity made up of individual, psychological, social, cultural, economic and medical circumstances. Defining a drug is an attempt at defining a spirit on the edge, which metamorphoses in time and space. At the same time, drugs remain a fundamentally political object. They are substances controlled by states, through mechanisms of policing, legitimated by judicial and medical evaluation, condemned often on moral grounds. Situated between a fluid social existence and a static legal dimension, drugs can become inspiring hermeneutic objects of study.

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Alternative interpretations of misery and oppression need to re-channel the debates around culture and poverty to more exciting theoretical arenas that reframe material reality's relationship to ideology and redefine how social process emerges in the confrontation between structure and agency.

Bourgois, "Just Another Night in a Shooting Gallery," 43.

Few commodities are as global as drugs. Cannabis, opium, heroin, amphetamines, Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), khat, psychedelic cacti and mushrooms as well as an interminable list of other natural or synthesised substances travel and are consumed around the globe for all possible reasons. Human migration, trade, cultural trends, medical practice, political repression: together they constitute the drug phenomenon today – and indeed in much of human history. In this, drugs are spirit-like commodities, their value resting upon a fundamental ambiguity made up of individual, psychological, social, cultural, economic and medical circumstances. Defining a drug is an attempt at defining a spirit on the edge, which metamorphoses in time and space. At the same time, drugs remain a fundamentally political object. They are substances controlled by states, through mechanisms of policing, legitimated

by judicial and medical evaluation, condemned often on moral grounds. Situated between a fluid social existence and a static legal dimension, drugs can become inspiring hermeneutic objects of study.

Yet academe has systematically left scholarship dealing with drugs to a corner of the whole, especially in the social sciences. Drug scholarship is met with curiosity and anecdotal interest. These feelings are a reflexive spasm at the heart of which stands a formalistic understanding of social sciences and humanities, one that narrows the scope of social and political phenomena to univocal manifestations. The ambiguous nature of drugs in the modern world and their transversal effect are seen as dispensable oddities in a world made up of institutional records, leadership personalities, econometric stats and epidemiological surveys. Can social scientists and humanities scholars dispense drugs as a side note of bigger questions around the social and the political?

In October 2016, 12 scholars coming from different disciplinary backgrounds gathered in Oxford at St Antony's College to test the potentials and perils of interdisciplinarity in drug research. The event, sponsored by the Wellcome Trust Small Grant for Society & Ethics, took the form of a symposium titled 'Drugs, Politics and Society in the Global South', which later gave the name to this special issue. The primary objective was not that of simply producing new analytical and descriptive knowledge to be added to the annals of drug studies. The goal, instead, was to build through an interdisciplinary platform fresh insight into the study of the modern and contemporary world. Historians, political scientists, urban and cultural anthropologists, geographers, criminologists and medical anthropologists enlivened the discussion for two days. Rather than gathering a list of the usual suspects working on drugs, the symposium enabled a venue for the encounter of a unique blend of multiple disciplines. The blending of these different approaches resulted in a polyvocal and multi-faceted engagement around and within the phenomenon of drugs. Drugs became a frame, a lens, through which one could interpret and relocate broader historical and epistemological questions.¹

On the benefits of interdisciplinarity, academic departments have long been informed. The consumed edge of disciplines is often where new knowledge is produced, but there is more in sight for the heterodox seekers. It is the intellectual encounter, even when rowdy and disharmonious, between different disciplines that salutes the production of episteme and the unleashing of new interpretations. The fields opened up by this volume remain *in fieri*: made of multiple disciplinary approaches, this volume hands the reader and the researcher a rich basket of primary material. The archival notes of Indian, Mexican and Egyptian narcotic officials and medical practitioners are prelude to the field notes in rehabilitation and treatment centres in contemporary Iran and Peru and to the interviews with poppy cultivators in Afghanistan, the khat and cannabis consumers in East and West Africa and gang dealers in Nicaragua, as well as to the geospatial images of cropped lands in Central Asia and the prohibition dictums in the south-east. This unparalleled methodological landscape speaks firmly about the plurality of the drug phenomenon and on the open-ended horizon in front of those willing to engage with it. In this spirit, the contributions that propped up the symposium aim at integrating drugs – and their annexed realities – within the social sciences and humanities, by addressing larger questions around history, power, society and life. After all, how can one pretend to understand contemporary drugs policy and drug worlds without acknowledging the historical dimension of drug phenomena? Or else, how can we realistically speak of drugs in modern cities if we do not look at the life of drug use(rs) in praxis?

Before introducing the volume's contributions, I would like to direct the readers' attention towards a few contextual and theoretical particulars that animate this special issue.

What is the drug situation?

'Farcical' and 'delusionary' are two ways that one could describe the ways governments, throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, attempted to counter the market of illicit drugs or to depict drugs as essentially and exclusively evil.² The latter of these attempts is readily provided by the 2017 World Drug Report, published by the main United Nations (UN) anti-narcotic body United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), where it is argued that 'the magnitude of the harm caused by drug is underlined by the estimated 28 million years [*sic!*] of "healthy" life ... lost worldwide in 2015 as a result of premature death and disability caused by drug use'.³ The data is intended to produce a state of alertness in the reader and to convince them that drugs are a serious cause of danger and harm in today's world. That said, a few pages onwards the report dedicates a small section to incarceration and the institution of prisons. It says that of the many millions of people who are incarcerated every year around the world, around 20% of them use drugs,⁴ with drug use in prison being notoriously more dangerous due to riskier modes of consumption (ie injection). This said, one is invited to ponder about drugs being a serious danger for people in prison, which they effectively are. Yet a second thought is indispensable: isn't drug crime a primary cause of incarceration worldwide?⁵

This model of thought, which by 2017 has developed a certain level of sophistication – exemplified by the provision of complex data on 'life loss', for instance – remains at the heart of knowledge production about drugs in governmental institutions. After more than a hundred years since the first Opium Control conventions in Shanghai (1909) and The Hague (1911), drugs policy and, with it, drug scholarship has gone through a moment of reflection and transformation – perhaps the transition to a new cultural era about drugs. A consensus has been reached, rather unanimously, on the failure of the status quo: the legitimacy of prohibition of drugs, as enunciated by North American officials in the 1960s and 1970s with Richard Nixon and, with greater emphasis, in the 1980s with Ronald Reagan, has expired. For those who had announced the crumbling of the prohibitionist regime,⁶ Uruguay's president Pepe Mujica's bold steps towards legal regulation of cannabis in Uruguay symbolised a *sui generis* Judgement Day. Contextually came also the recreational and medical cannabis laws in the northern part of the Americas, which so far has resisted the regressive tide embodied by Donald Trump's election to the US presidency in 2016. Variants of these examples are in progress in other parts of the globe, including Europe where the Portuguese government had led the drug decriminalisation camp since the late 1990s. Other cases may be less obvious: the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is discussed in the special issue, has opened up discussions about the possibility of managing drug consumption through state intervention and is currently introducing 'safe injection rooms' for heroin users; Latin American heads of state, from Colombia and Mexico to Bolivia and Guatemala, have expressed support for an alternative model to the US-led 'War on Drugs'. If there is a time for renewal of policy models vis-à-vis drugs, it ought to be the coming decade.

Reform of international strategy towards illicit drugs does not exhaust the rationale behind its discriminating power. At the other end of the spectrum of reform stands the militarisation of drugs policy to which the United States has historically been faithful and which has recently enlisted among its ranks the Philippines' president Rodrigo Duterte. The

latter has manifested his auspices of nothing short of the physical cleansing of 'drug addicts' from the face of the Earth. To do so, he has legitimated law enforcement to shoot on sight suspected drug users and drug dealers. If not taken down, drug criminals are taken to overcrowded prisons, where they exist in degraded human conditions. The result is several thousand cadavers, including dozens of teenagers.⁷ His vision is not exceptional, even though his means may be for now. Being tough on drug users is a policy position hard to reform after several decades of systemic demonisation of drugs in the modern world. Evidence of this is given by drug reformers themselves. Proponents of cannabis regulation and legalisation are often forgetful that cannabis represents a small share in the economy of punishment of drug prohibition. Especially in the West, cannabis represents the bourgeois milieu of consumption, the one affected less systematically by policing and prison. Were cannabis legalised, the core of prohibition, its assemblage of crime/punishment, would remain in place, perhaps even more powerfully against vulnerable social classes, and categories already the object of criminalisation.

War on drugs is no metaphor. Fought with weapons, armies, police and an array of media, medical and justice tools, this war has nonetheless an allegorical dimension. It is not a war *on* drugs as most of the governments and international agencies involved in it declare. The objective of the combat is other than the chemical substance or the psychophysical state the substance induces. The targets of this system are the categories deemed worthy of punishment. With some generalisation: Black and Hispanic people in the United States; Arabs and Africans of the suburbs in Europe; poor, rural, indigenous and marginal populations in Latin America; proletariats and precariats in Africa and Asia – transversally poor, marginal, unorthodox, subaltern groups of humans around the globe. The rich and bourgeois classes are practically left untouched by the 'War on Drugs', unless they feel emotionally involved in some narco-saga on Netflix.

To this institutional violence produced by state enforcement of drug laws, there are other competing forms of violence. One is the violence of criminal organisations and drug traffickers. This violence is largely symbiotic and contextual to the 'War on Drugs', as it is reproduced within ecologies of contention between state and criminality. The other side of drug violence is that of 'addiction'. An object of caricature in state-led discourse and propaganda, addiction remains both a governmental concept⁸ and a biomedical(ised) datum. Its violence is intimate and diffused at the same time, as it touches upon individual psyche and familiar/societal lived experience. Yet its violence is rendered more dramatic by the encounter with a system of prohibition which outlaws the biomedical existence of the condition itself: a drug user dependent on a certain illegal substance suffers from his/her condition and, simultaneously, from that of illegality (with its more nefarious consequences: police, prison and punishment). These different forms of violence all fall within a line of continuity; indeed, they belong to the same line of existence, which the special issue discusses in its plurality.

The insistence on the multidimensionality of the drug phenomenon is a key component of the following contributions. After all, what is a drug and what is addiction remain questions with unclear answers. The definitions of drug and addiction are not only tied to a political, legal interpretation; they are also connected to the ambivalent boundaries of medical knowledge. One should carefully evaluate the pharmacological determinism of medical production on drug use, as it exhausts drugs of their social value and place. In this respect, the line of legality and illegality is blurred as much as that of use and abuse. This is acknowledged in a clumsy way by public authorities, their reaction dwindling between a totalitarian discretion,

as in the UK ban of all substances with mind-altering effect (with the commercially wise exceptions of alcohol, coffee, tea and sugar), or in the holistic ambiguity of anti-narcotic policing across the globe, which makes the crime at the discretion of law enforcers.

The holistic engagement with the matter of drugs in this special issue is contextualised within a geographical political space, itself the choice of an epistemological evaluation. The contributions of this volume provide analyses on the Global South. They do so not because they deem this space, the South, exceptional and differing. On the contrary, the contributions take regions other than the West as a site of investigation of global history, cultural phenomena, political paradigms and social theories, eventually to integrate knowledge across space.

‘Global South’ defines a region that encompasses the southern hemisphere of the globe. It is heir to the categories of ‘Third World’ and ‘Developing World’, both of which have reached, in the eyes of many, an ethical and political bankruptcy. Seeing drugs from the South, thus, enables a reconfiguration of established scholarly narratives on the subject. Ideas and practices in this field are not simply imitated and univocally spoken by non-Western populations; they are often the result of localised dynamics, themselves moving across borders, in time and space. More specifically, the special issue has the objective to prioritise those areas of the world that have been left beyond scholarly gaze, despite drugs being a salient element in their history and politics. Might it be the case that empirical cases emerging from the South inform the hermeneutic effort of those studying similar phenomena in the North?

The contributions

All in all, the special issue has three main purposes, which I tried to explore in the first part of this introduction. One is of a conceptual type and is concerned with situating ‘drugs’ within the study of history and society in the contemporary world. This means that the way the contributions discuss the issue of illicit drugs is one that invites complementarity, rather than exclusivity and exceptionality, in the context of larger-than-drugs questions. Another principal question which drives this volume is that of methods and disciplines. Interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary are fully explored here, with a rich range of different methodologies and theories at play. Drugs being a polymorphic question, they deserve pluralistic methods. Finally, the special issue invites exploration of areas and worlds that have been off the radar of drug scholars. With this, it also incites scholars to turn upside down established assumptions about the place of drugs in the social sciences, *sensu lato*, suggesting that we may understand the history of drugs more aptly *from the (Global) South*.

The special issue is divided into three main sections. Following this introduction, three articles constitute the section titled *History and Genealogy of Drugs*. Here James H. Mills tackles the coming of age of cocaine use, a drug regarded as modern and Western, in the Indian subcontinent. Through this case, the author recasts assumptions about the Orient and its drug culture, showing through detailed historical narratives how cocaine was indigenised and not simply imposed by Western market forces. A derivative of the coca plant cultivated in the Andean region, in the early nineteenth century cocaine was the emblem of the emerging Western pharmaceutical industry. In Mills’ account, one can see how this substance travelled across the globe not so much as a colonial product (to say it with Antonio Gramsci, *as hegemony*) imposed on the colonised, but rather as a commodity to which the local population bestowed new social and cultural meaning.

The second contribution is that of Isaac Campos: his study of the Mexican state's attempt at regulating opiate distribution through state-led programmes. If one expected India to be the setting for cannabis and opium use, and found that Jim Mills discussed cocaine, the Mexican case has little connection to *marijuana*, the quintessential Mexican drug. Instead, opiates and opiate maintenance programmes occupy the historical stage. The article opens with a vignette in which the Mexican government takes steps to regulate narcotic drugs in order to eradicate the role and influence of criminal organisations, which corrupt the institutions of the state. One is led to think that it is Mexico City in 2018. Instead, it is 1938!

Campos's article convincingly demonstrates how forms of governance of 'addiction' and illegal drugs have not unilaterally descended from the north of the border, the United States, to Mexico. The Mexican case tackles this in two moments: firstly, with the proposition of maintenance programmes for drug users by the Mexican official Salazar Viniegra (a character himself worthy of great interest); and secondly, with the withdrawal of this same programme in favour of prohibitionist policies. All of this is, using the title of Campos' earlier book, *home grown*.⁹

The last piece of this section is about Egypt. Philip Robins, a scholar of politics, provides a detailed account of the Egyptians' taste for drugs in modern times. The article follows the vicissitudes of hashish users and haphazard efforts by the state to counter its trafficking and mass use up to the 2011 popular uprising. By then Egypt's drug culture had dramatically changed, with an increase in Tramadol consumption, a sign of changing social and political conditions in the country. The political deadlock brought in following the Arab Spring might have engendered a changing perception of historical time among young Egyptians.¹⁰ With its attention to historical continuity and the place of formal politics in shaping anti-narcotics, the article stands out as one of the few contributions on drugs history and policy in the modern Arab world.

The historical and genealogical inquiry is followed by the second section, titled *Ethnographies of Drugs*. Ethnographic knowledge lives in symbiosis with in-depth, bottom-up historical research. As a method, a tool of action, ethnography is a premium approach for public engagement.¹¹ Because of its use of narrative, often told in an accessible language, and the portrayal of situations of ordinary life, knowledge conveyed through this methodology speaks more directly to a broader audience. It also enriches theoretical knowledge with empirical details, which when juxtaposed can facilitate transversal understanding – in our case, of global drug situations.

Dennis Rodgers, who is the author of the first piece of this section, writes in an ethnographic style rich in colourful conversations and (extra)ordinary episodes. This total immersion in the field, supported by untranslated Spanish expressions, follows the highs and lows of local drug entrepreneurs, through a long-term ethnographic study of a *barrio* in Managua, Nicaragua's capital. This longitudinal perspective has obvious sociological value, but its insights are greater than that. It describes with acumen the economic options of drug criminals, their investments, venture failures and success in an ecosystem that changes rapidly and, very often, with drama. But a dramatic conclusion is not the fate of all drug dealing. Contrary to much of the scholarship, which holds that drug traffickers eventually fail in their business model – being killed, imprisoned and/or taken over by competitors – Rodgers shows how the trajectory of drug dealing is not set a priori. Indeed, it is open-ended and the result of multiple factors, made up of individual as well as structural conditions. Unemployed drug dealers often develop 'alternative occupational trajectories' and investments, which enables

them to cease or alternate their involvement in the illicit – and dangerous – trade. In line with the vision of the special issue, the author invites us to understand the narcotic issue holistically.

This invitation is taken up by the second article, which focuses on the Islamic Republic of Iran. Maziyar Ghiabi's piece identifies an apparent paradox in Iran's drugs policy, the co-existence of draconian measures for drug traffickers and welfare-oriented policies for drug users. Paradoxes are rich interpretative moments and the Iranian case is intended as a window through which one can observe broader political questions around power and illegality. By using ethnographic vignettes from different settings of Iran's drug world, the article shows how state-led and civil society programmes work along a continuum, at times hardly distinguishable. The reader is taken through the author's field notes on plain-air drug-using hot-spots in Tehran, in-flat female rehab centres in Arak and illegal treatment 'camps' through the country. This micropolitical approach suggests that the Islamic Republic does not adopt strict ideological and hierarchical lines of control over the enforcement of order. Instead, power operates by *maintaining disorder* and through grassroots authoritarianism. The text opens up a new venue for studies of drugs policy in Iran, a country that tops rankings of drug confiscation, drug consumption and medical support for drug users. It also paves the ground for scholars in politics who are keen to adopt ethnographic methods, thus setting a new horizon both for interdisciplinary studies of politics and grounded political analysis.¹²

The third and last article of the ethnographic section is that of Pablo Seward, on a Pentecostal ministry acting as a rehabilitation facility for drug addicts. Parallel to Ghiabi's findings, the author shows how recovering drug users adopt the 'war rhetoric' of anti-narcotics in treating addiction. Seward, however, is not interested in the political dimension of recovery, but mostly in its spiritual one, which adds up to the literature on global Pentecostalism and faith-based recovery. Based on three months' immersion in a Pentecostal addiction treatment ministry in the Upper Amazon, Peru, the article looks at how individual transformation occurs through conversion and recovery among coca paste users. The social abandonment is juxtaposed to the promise of miraculous recovery, and social re-integration. This narrative proceeds with great attention to the contextual world of the 'War on Drugs' and its structural burden. The three ethnographic pieces bind together, painting a polymorphous phenomenon, that of drugs, which overarches crime, health, power and spirit.

The third section that concludes the special issue is made of *Comparative Perspectives on Drug Wars*. Here the reader encounters a truly varied set of contributions, from those of geographers to criminologists, and political scientists to cultural anthropologists. The trait d'union among these four contributions is the incitement to comparison. Broadly speaking, this occurs in two ways: classically, through the comparison of two different countries, as in Anais Pessoa's article, between Brazil and Mexico; otherwise, as in David Mansfield's contribution, it occurs through the juxtaposition of two domestic cases in Afghanistan, or through a multi-case study or transnational look as in James Windle's as well as Neil Carrier and Gernot Klantschnig's articles, respectively.

In brief, Anais Passos takes into consideration two distinct military operations deployed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and Tijuana, Mexico. The period under analysis is 2007 to 2015, one in which anti-narcotics played a key role in national politics both in Brazil (in view of the Olympic Games) and in Mexico (in light of the cartels' hyper-violent activities). Based on dozens of interviews with top officials in the police and military, the author investigates the

transition to a militarised approach to drug control in the two countries. Brazil and Mexico represent two important cases in drug scholarship, yet comparative approaches have been scant thus far. In its argument, this study describes how militarisation produced increased violence and high human costs, all of which fomented rather than quieting state–cartel confrontation.

David Mansfield studies Afghan opium with the aim to reassess the ‘balloon effect’, a major theory arguing that eradication of drugs in one area prompts increase in another. His objective is, firstly, to go beyond the anecdotal and unsystematic claims in favour of this theory. Based on a combination of in-depth fieldwork and high-resolution geospatial imagery, in more than 20 sites divided between two formerly desert areas, the author brings new light on the dynamics of crop cultivation in the world’s opium hub, Afghanistan. The article provides unparalleled details about poppy crop dynamics, making use of a comparative approach between two different Afghan regions.

Neil Carrier and Gernot Klantschnig’s article considers the legal status of cannabis and khat, two of the most popular drugs in the African continent. Their objective is to demonstrate that legal ambiguity matters, something they name ‘quasilegality’. In this endeavour, they re-interpret Lee Cassinelli’s original work on khat¹³ and situate it in a transnational comparative perspective. They describe how a commonly legal substance, such as khat, is publicly regarded as illegal, whereas cannabis, which is illegal with no exceptions, is used and tolerated almost as a legal drug. Both substances, thus, exist in a condition of ‘quasilegality’. This condition bears dangers and opportunities, and one wonders whether they are peculiar to Africa or can actually be meaningful in interpreting drug laws in other contexts around the globe.

The final article of the comparative section is James Windle’s contribution on South-east Asia. The author is concerned with the rationale behind the adoption of prohibition in Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. By providing a catalogue of different factors, such as economic, security, national, ethnic and religious, the article sets a taxonomy of motivations behind prohibitionist policies. This dispels the argument about prohibition being simply an imported ideological object, while reassessing the importance of political economy and security for drugs policy.

History, ethnography and comparative approaches build an arc of knowledge that covers – or hopes to cover – the long spectrum of social and cultural manifestations of drug worlds.

Conclusion

Drugs are an epiphenomenon of secular processes of social and political formation. They affect and are affected by larger historical dynamics, their value in today’s world being tied to a political category, that of illegality. One could recount innumerable episodes where enforcers of drugs policy – police, justice, prison and welfare/medicine – impinged upon the existences of people using, or dealing with, drugs. It goes from the pharmaceutical opiate epidemic in the United States, where patients on prescription painkillers are forced to rely on illegal opiate supplies once their prescription expires, with the high risk of overdose (eg 60,000 deaths only in 2016);¹⁴ to young men from former colonies being the object of systematic police searches in the Parisian suburbs; or the impoverished, plebeian groups of opiate and amphetamine users in Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, who circulate among prison, rehab centres and the cities’ outskirts; or the gang members dealing in drugs for

wealthier consumers and being arbitrarily shot down by militarised police in Brazil and the Philippines; or those who have developed a dependency on a chemical substance, it being heroin, meth, crack cocaine, methadone or fentanyl, who perish from overdose due to adulteration of the drug they purchased, illegally, in the street; or the human misery caused by chemical crop eradication plans across the planet. All these episodes have a common theme, that of violence engendered by a systemic exclusion. This makes drugs policy, essentially, a global policy of *means without ends*.¹⁵

Besides the imposition of policy upon people's lives, drugs constitute also social life in the Global South (and, in different ways, everywhere else). They are a source of sociality among people who share a taste for a common substance (eg khat chewers, cannabis smokers, heroin users, etc.). Pleasure remains a key aspect of drug use, one that is often overlooked in drug studies, including partly in this special issue. Hence, they have also a deep-seated cultural value and belong to a dynamic body of traditions (eg opium use in the Middle East and North Africa [MENA], coca in the Andean region, cannabis in Africa and the Indian subcontinent). In the guise of religious practice this happens with hashish among Sufis in Western Asia and North Africa; but it occurs also through the birth of new traditions, for instance in the rave culture of Western capitals and their use of psychoactive substances such as LSD, amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) and psychedelic cacti; or through the ayahuasca tourism to which bourgeois cosmopolitans sign up for therapeutic purposes.¹⁶ Their economic value is key to drug producers as much as in communities in which drug dealing often secures the means of sustenance. Indeed, drugs partake in the production of social life in ways that go far beyond chemical intervention on the brain.

This condition of drugs in the modern world informs everyday life in the South as much as in the North of the globe. Of course, as this special issue describes, circumstances change, means of intervention vary, political gestures elapse and cultural values shift, but a common frame can be ascribed globally. The phenomenon of drugs, whether consumption, dealing, cultivation or repression, deserves inclusion in the treatment and study of the modern world. It does so through the acknowledgement of its multidimensionality, which in return invites interdisciplinary passion. With this in mind, the special issue invites researchers to embrace that, as sometimes in everyday life, trespassing is key to any advancement.¹⁷

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Note on Contributor

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He holds an MPhil (Distinction) in modern Middle Eastern studies from Oxford, and an MA (*magna cum laude*) in international relations from the University of Venice Ca' Foscari. Maziyar is a political ethnographer who has worked on drugs policy and addiction in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In October 2016, he organised a two-day symposium on 'Drugs, Politics and Society in the Global South', supported by the Wellcome Trust. Maziyar collaborates also on a side-project on revolts, displacement and civil war across the Mediterranean, on which he has published in *Middle East Critique* and other scholarly venues. He has previously been a visiting researcher at SciencesPO – Paris (CERI) during 2014/2015 and a teaching fellow at the Paris School of International Affairs (PSIA) in 2016, as well as a visiting researcher at the American University of Beirut (AUB) in 2017. His webpage can be found at <https://ehess.academia.edu/MaziyarGhiabi>.

Notes

1. A description of the symposium can be accessed here: <http://www.area-studies.ox.ac.uk/symposium-drugs-politics-and-society-global-south> The participants in the symposium were: Dennis Rodgers (Amsterdam), Gernot Klantschnig (York), Giulia Zocatelli (King's College London), Isaac Campos (Cincinnati), James Mills (Strathclyde), James Windle (East London), Maziyar Ghiabi (Oxford), Neil Carrier (Oxford), Orkideh Behrouzan (King's College London), Pablo Seward (Stanford), Saeyoung Park (Leiden) and Anais Medeiros Passos (SciencesPO – Paris).
2. Levine, "Global Drug Prohibition."
3. UNODC, *World Drug Report 2017*, 9.
4. Ibid., 13.
5. Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*; Dikötter and Brown, *Cultures of Confinement*.
6. Quah et al., *Ending the Drug Wars*.
7. *Al-Jazeera*, "Thousands Demand End to Killings."
8. Seddon, *A History of Drugs*.
9. Campos, *Home Grown*.
10. Brownlee and Ghiabi, "Passive, Silent and Revolutionary."
11. Fassin, "Why Ethnography Matters."
12. Auyero, "Introductory Note to Politics under the Microscope."
13. Cassanelli, "Qat: Changes in the Production."
14. CNBC, "US Drug Overdose Deaths Topped 60,000 in 2016."
15. Agamben, *Means without End*.
16. Labate and Cavnar, *Ayahuasca Shamanism in the Amazon*.
17. Cf. Wacquant, "Towards a Reflexive Sociology."

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