

Guest editorial

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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 1980s and 1990s has emerged in North America and Europe with the formation of open drug scenes (Bless *et al.*, 1995; Bourgois, 1992). Afterwards, spatial sciences started contributing to drug research with not only 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 stigmatisation of people who use drugs (Smith, 2010; Bernstein and Bennett, 2013; Davidson and Howe, 2014; Davidson and Howe, 2014; Jauffret-Roustide and 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; Böhling, 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 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 a 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 localisations. 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 whilst others are at the margins is also the result of social construction, embedded in local and global histories and constantly changing. Places materialise and thus reproduce social relationships that would not exist without the practices of distancing, belonging, imagining, evicting, etc.

The aim of this special issue is to focus on the spatiality of drug practices and policies, to question how practices and policies are spatialised and how common perceptions of social space influence social practices and associated meanings of particular drug places. By *drug places*, we mean places characterised by the consumption of psychoactive substances. However, drug use by itself is not sufficient to characterise a drug place: it requires some other factors and actors such as public, media and

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political discourses; the intervention and action of drug policy stakeholders like prevention and harm reduction services, municipalities, police; the organisation of residents' initiatives; the underground, (sub)cultural knowledge or hearsay narratives specific to certain groups and the emotional atmospheres *et al.* So, drug places might be public, private, semi-public or institutional spaces; they might be geo-localised areas, as well as imaginary or digital spaces; they might be very mobile and changing or persistent over decades. Drug places are neither determined by their urbanistic design or localisation nor by their social characteristics. Drug places emerge as the result of complex social production, as they are populated by people who use drugs, residents, professionals and workers, intertwined with health and public safety issues, appropriate for many uses, designed and managed by public and private landlords. Their history, the power relationship they are into, their configuration, the manner in which they are named, their localisation and the scales they are embedded in all matter as follows: all this contributes to their construction, at a specific moment, in a particular configuration, as a drug place. With the notion of drug places, we don't mean that there would exist places *per se* related or dedicated to drug practices. The intent of this special issue is to show how drug places are socially constructed, why and how actors interact with these constructions. Therefore, the question raised by the notion of "drug place" is not the one of the localisation of (public) places where people do drugs (no matter if this refers to open drug scenes, alcohol-related nightlife settings or other places), usually referred to as places that require public intervention by political actors and public attention by media. A huge part of the state of the art in drug research and urban studies already deals with this question. Our question is one of the spatial knowledge and representations about places associated with drug practices. How does knowledge about where and what drug places are emerging? What are the actors, the methods, the processes involved in the construction and circulation of knowledge and representations about drug places? From regular drug users to residents and professional stakeholders, everyone has a particular perception and representation of drug places, which influences the places people are visiting or avoiding, as well as the spaces of public intervention.

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

The idea for this issue arose from a joint bi-national (German-French) research consortium called "Drugs and Urban Security" (DRUSEC). Funded by national security research programmes (run by the German Ministry of Research and Education, BMBF and the French National Research Agency, ANR), the main focus of this consortium was to identify security risks for people who use alcohol or other drugs, residents, passers-by or society as a whole and to give recommendations for improvement. The main areas of concern were "open drug scenes" and environments of drug consumption rooms, nightlife settings and areas with public drug dealing. The research done in this project consortium made clear how complex and manifold social processes in these different settings may be, fueling the idea of not only presenting research from the DRUSEC consortium but also inviting other scholars to present findings from other perspectives or other social-geographical areas. Three articles in this special issue were prepared in the frame of the DRUSEC project. These papers deal with tolerance zones supported by social work in Bremen (Schmidt-Semisch *et al.*), marginalised

drug users' representations of several German cities (Germes *et al.*) and self-perceptions of socially marginalised cannabis dealers in public spaces in Frankfurt (Werse). Other articles address drug places in UK prisons framed by gender (White), emotions in open drug scenes in Vancouver, Canada (Stallwitz), needle exchange programmes framed as a “melancholy” intervention in Budapest, Hungary (Danyi and Czak) and the sociological and spatial evolution from a “blank” place to an open crack cocaine users' scene in Paris, France (Jangal *et al.*).

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

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

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