

Panel #200 - Transnational STS: Theories, Practices, and Pedagogies

Transnationalizing Critical Drug Studies

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Few objects or subjects of knowledge present transnationalism's embedded dilemmas in such rich relation to colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism than do "drugs." Typically extracted from plant-based materials grown in the global South and East, "drugs" are refined, distributed, and consumed as legal, regulated pharmaceutical products in the global North and West—and refined, distributed and consumed illegally everywhere. Yet illegal "drugs," their users, and the cultural crises to which they are regularly invoked as central are used to justify police violence, authoritarian policy, and mass incarceration (Alexander 2012; Hinton 2017). This global circuitry has been held in place by a drug policy regime heavily influenced by the crudely imperial powers of the US and UK for more than a century. Permit me a short bit of drug policy history by way of orienting what "transnational" means in critical drug domains, and what it might be in the process of becoming with STS.

Extractive economies: agrarian production, monopoly logics, and North-South relations

Extraction of raw materials from the global South was a deliberate strategy, as Suzanna Reiss has painstakingly showed in *We Sell Drugs: The Alchemy of US Empire* (2014). The second World War allowed US consolidation of control over the world's opiate and coca supplies, and to shift sourcing to Latin America (through which Asian products have been trafficked since the 1940s). This broke German dominance over pharmaceutical R&D and manufacturing, which had hitherto been under-developed in the US (Reiss 22, 33). The "monopoly logic of enforcement" extended deeply into the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (Reiss 76), which engaged in a decades-long racial project to align racist ideologies with domestic subversion and to undergird a prohibitionist regime for illicit drugs and a permissive monopolistic regime for licit drugs (Room 2020). Drugs have typically been used to justify the suppression of "enemies within" (Campbell 1995). When US President Dwight D. Eisenhower declared "a new war on narcotic addiction at the local, national, and international level" on November 27, 1954, the country was fully 40 years into the criminalization of narcotics. During the 1950s, penalties became harsher, and racialized urban

youth were demonized as juvenile delinquents even as illicit drug markets became concentrated in their neighborhoods. With the spike in intravenous heroin use that followed war's end came the germs of the coming crisis (Hall, et al., 1978) and mass incarceration (Hinton, 2017) as the demographic profile of the heroin user shifted away from the prewar profile of white, male, and older than age 45 years. Indeed, the racialization of heroin use and traffic that occurred in the 1950s was prelude to the suppression of domestic political and cultural subversion in the next decade. These domestic dynamics accompanied shifts in the geopolitical environments.

Transnationalism cannot be considered without thinking about the Cold War, and the new Cold War historiography that has arisen with the thawing of the archives (Tobbell 2011). Of late there has been both a new diplomatic history of international drug policy, and a “new drug history” (Gootenberg and Campos 2015) that seeks to uncoil “relational and multiscalar analyses—those that closely connect different levels and geographies of power” (2015, 19) at the capillary points where these commodities originate as such highly symbolically concentrated and socially constructed “things” with social lives that feed into global supply chains. Historians have sought to shift their stories to the global South, to indigenous and indigenous elites in interaction with the colonial and imperial powers, such as those of the Dutch East India Company (Farooqui in Fischer-Tine and Tschurennev, eds. 2014; Toine Pieters). In order to counter the impoverished knowledge base, those who study drugs—both licit and illicit—from historical and anthropological perspectives have recently cultivated a flourishing interdisciplinary knowledge formation that starts from the global South and quite often includes South-South transactions and relations. This paper examines what might be called the growth of “critical drug studies” by tracing the conceptual dilemmas and methodological openings encountered in such scholarship for STS scholars and practitioners, and by stating the assumptions and commitments that have emerged from these conjoined arenas.

Transnationalizing critical drug studies

Transnationalizing critical drug studies requires new genealogies, new archives, new theories, and new confrontations with new forms of occlusion and duress, in the terms of Ann Stoler's book of that name. In studying colonial governance, Stoler argues for genealogies that are “not constricted or policed by the colonial archives themselves—or dominant readings of them” (*Duress*, 14). Conceptual “occlusions” derive from habits of mind that emplot the story of

agrarian production as told above, emphasis the movement of transoceanic shipping and overland transportation from periphery to metropole. Such directionality has been central to the movements of these products, which are perishable and potent to varying degrees, and the domestic regulation thereof, which has sometimes taken the form of military policing of nonmedical markets (Go 2020). If we are asking, How else could stories of drugs and the modern world go? One place that we would need to begin would be deconstructing the metropole-centric narratives that founded the field of drug policy history, and by diversifying world-systems-thinking. Both of these critical moves have been underway since the 1980s, gradually and in truly capillary fashion. Let us remember what capillaries do—they are networks of exchange, where what will be waste and what will be nutrient are sorted out, and made corporeal. They oxygenate, they give off toxins, and they are the metabolic basis for life itself.

STS has crucial narratives to supply to capillary and corporeal stories, and to their previously Washington, DC-centric plotments. Although drug policy was a historically premodern instance of globalization, since the 19th century it has been an agenda driven by attempts at American hegemony as well as attempts to legislate North American morality (Troy Duster). *The American Disease* (Musto 1999) had domestic effects (David Courtwright, 1982/2001) that were easily conscripted to various racial projects in part because they came out of proto-racial projects (Omi and Winant, 3rd Ed.). The very first attempt to legislate morality by governing drugs were California's Chinese Exclusion Laws of the 1880s. Despite dissident voices, a critical formation did not arise until the sociology of Howard S. Becker, in the midst of the racial project that was US drug policy in the 1950s.

In recently adding corporeal distinctions to their important concept of racial formation, Omi and Winant theorize that place where culture meets structure—to my mind, an apt characterization of the interlinked racial projects that are in the chronic crisis of drug policies that jumps scales, takes biosocial shape as a political technology of the body, while also governing the interactions of nations through transnational treaties and agreements from which none can afford not to consent. Thus were the earliest critics of US drug policy liberal lawyers, physicians, scientists, and historians . . . and the few anthropologists and sociologists concerned with marginalized people (Edward Preble and John Casey), literally named “outsiders” in Howard S. Becker's eponymous 1963 book of that name. The main comparisons were between the differential handling of drug policy by the colonial and imperial powers of the US and the

UK. I dwell upon this story in part to show why the drug policy history that emerged in the 1970s was Washington-centric and accomplished a great deal in assembling documents and naming the racial projects that led to the Harrison Act (1914) and subsequent legislation of prohibitionist logic. These projects were trained upon particular substances, and, as Kohler-Hausmann (2017), Hinton (2017), McAllister, and McGirr (2016) have demonstrated, they were essential to US statecraft both at the federal and state levels. But they were undertaken quite often in the interests of gaining and maintaining international and transnational hegemony over drug production, over the question of who would produce, refine, distribute, consume, but above all, profit from drug trades at a variety of scales.

The new transnational drug stories have been advanced by scholars who start from postcolonial contexts of the global South or global North contexts in which capillary exchange occurs. This new drug history is self-reflexive, proceeding from expansive archives untouched until now (Baruah, forthcoming; Campos, Carey, Gootenberg, Reiss). Thus has the field of drug policy history diversified despite remaining stubbornly bounded by nation-states that police international borders despite their porosity. These have been breached by new commodifications of the global, a case eloquently and seamlessly argued by David Courtwright in *Age of Addiction* (2019). Drugs always have to do with *both* political technologies of the body *and* the diplomatic and necropolitical technologies of state. STS is one of the few knowledge formations that tolerates such nimble scale-jumping, and so I will next proceed to talk specifically about what STS has contributed and promises to contribute to these stories.

Postcolonizing STS

As an adisciplinary or transdisciplinary project, STS might be said to be comprised of a mixture of anthropology, sociology, history, and political science. Deeply informed at its inception by the social movements of the 1960s—and deeply modulated by cross-cutting political and theoretical movements since the 1980s—each of these disciplinary formations found themselves grappling with the tenets of social construction, with the postcolonial critique that grew both from engagement with the domestic US politics of the “Third World” (Chela Sandoval, *Oppositional Consciousness*) and with “travelling theory” (Said’s influential 1982 essay (*Orientalism* was published later that decade). Cross-fertilization of postcolonial movements with literary and cultural theory, particularly British cultural studies, the Freirean popular education expressed in

Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and the conceptual contributions of Michel Foucault, led to the emergence of postcolonial STS, as well as queer and feminist formations that flourish today.

Medical anthropology, joined by the anthropology of capitalism, converged on production and consumption of mass-market pharmaceuticals (Banerjee, Dumit, Sunder Rajan, Tomes 2016). Meeting within the interstices of AAA (CASTAC), ASA, and the major historical professional associations (AAHM, AHA, OAH, HSS, SHM, and SHOT, the latter two from time to time in concert with 4S), those who study “drugs” convivially created sections and networks from the 1990s into the present. These networks crossed disciplinary boundaries, given the convergence of interests in the objects and subjects of knowledge they sought to produce, render, and mobilize. For instance, bio-prospecting would appear to be a simple case of extraction, but historians and anthropologists working on ethnobotany and the plant sciences have complexified that picture both by “animating” and decolonizing plants and (Dawson 2018; Foster 2017; Hartigan 2017; Hayden 2003, 2007; Jay 2019, Monnais and Tousignant 2016). Similarly, historians of science and medicine have traced the resurgence of social and scientific interest in psychedelics (Dawson 2018, Dyck, Jay 2019, Langlitz, Richert 2019a). In each of these projects, the cultural studies of science, medicine, and technology—and the analytic purchase that came from the rescripting of “drugs” as “technologies”—bore fruit while also smuggling a bit of STS theory and practice into drug discourse.

There was little or no comparable organizing effort around illicit drugs; these continued to preoccupy a motley crew of ethnographers and sociologists until activism around HIV and AIDS brought intravenous transmission—and thus illicit injectables—to public attention through protest, needle exchange, and pressure on the FDA drug approval process. *Impure Science*, Epstein’s first book, imported this story into STS, on which my recent book, *OD: Naloxone and the Politics of Overdose* (MIT Press Inside Technology Series, 2020), builds. Although my book was about the US and the UK (Scotland and England, which handled overdose and overdose prevention with naloxone differently), there cannot be said to have been an emergence of a transnational critical drug studies domain within STS proper.

Within STS, the legal status that governs interaction between legal “pharmaceuticals” and illegal “substances” has remained hegemonic. In 2007, when I organized a 4S panel “Knowing Pain: The Cultural Logics of Pain and Drug Addiction Research,” presenting papers by myself, Marcia Meldrum (1996, 2016), Noemi Tousignant (2011), and Emma Whelan (and Asbridge

2013), there was little examination of epistemological questions concerning how pain can be reconstructed in experimental situations, how pain is measured and catalogued, or the relationship between pain and self-medication. Connecting those who study the inter-connected yet far-flung social networks of pain researchers with those who study addiction to opiate drugs, and recognizing their intertwined nature, this panel nevertheless remained concentrated on the major institutions governing North American and particularly US drug policy. These include the US State Department, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), and the Department of Justice, all hostile to history and ethnography. NIDA has placed drug ethnographers in an epidemiologically surveillant rather than critical role, a structural relationship pointed out over the decades by scholars pointing up the politics of that status (Agar, Bourgois). Funding patterns shifted when Nora Volkow took NIDA's reins and built upon the field's successful courting of neuroscientists to the study of "addiction" during the Decade of the Brain (1990s). This was a palace coup when it came to the social sciences, which were once funded by NIDA and which rapidly found themselves "outsiders," except in those few emerging instances, as Agar has put it, "when paradigms crash." Similar to what happened to drug ethnography, radical or critical criminology was suppressed in the United States almost immediately following upon inception. What might be called "mainstream" sociology and criminology have scaled up into little more than an apparatus for the training of corrections officers and police. Thus there have been real reasons for STS scholars not to venture too far into these domains, and to dwell instead upon the more accessible reaches of the pharmaceuticalization of life.

Even as the history of pharmaceuticals (Healy 2004, Herzberg 2020, Richert 2019a, 2019b) burgeons, it remains similarly difficult to write corporate history, due to privatization, fear of litigation and actual litigation, and lack of access to archives in the United States (Lentacker 2016). By contrast to the Wellcome Trust in the UK, which has archived records of colonial extraction (Greenwood and Ingram 2018), the US industry has skirted the archives—although this may be changing in the face of litigation—propelling transnational drug scholars to access archives elsewhere (Dawson 2018, Foster 2017, Jay 2019).

Postpositivist STS

But there is some optimism for a critical and transnational drug studies domain within the social and scholarly worlds of STS. Science and technology studies (STS) is on the cusp of moving

beyond the enormously productive foundational ideas that science is socially constructed, with the co-implication that all knowledge is situated knowledge. As an influential form of cultural production, science “socially constructs” its objects and subjects—the pleasures and dangers of which have been much discussed. While it is not my purpose to reenact that conversation here, I want to suggest a different way of thinking about “in practices objects are enacted” (Mol 2002, 32-35). Laboratory logics and their vernacular kin enact “drugs” just as clinical logics are enacted in the course of disease. Which of these enactments win out over other contenders is consequential for drug policy. The performative language of enactment implies that there is not a “reality” under construction, but a social life that is being performed or lived out in accompaniment with drugs, neurons, metabolisms, receptors, and the other “stuff” of various biosocial realities. Enactment opens, I suggest, a fruitful path for thinking better about drugs, which confound sociologies and biologics, leading those who study them to enact conceptually problematic oppositions between pharmacological effects, physiological effects, psychological effects, cultural effects, and social effects. Drugs always already have all of these effects, and thus pressure forms of social thought to which social construction is integral. This constellation of properties is what makes them attractive “props” for theorizing past social construction.

As a sociology of knowledge, this paper would be remiss in not addressing the actively transnational convergences between STS and drug studies that have occurred in concert with these ideas over the past decade in the form of attempts to situate drug knowledges within postpositivist methodologies and human/nonhuman/more-than-human social worlds. Exemplary among these is UK researcher Fay Dennis, whose book *Injecting Bodies in More-Than-Human-Worlds* (2019) examines how subjectification, the agency of the body, and nonhuman materiality “emerge through the drug-using/treatment event.” These scholars nearly all work in Australia or the UK, building upon European STS and energetically converse with queer, feminist, and postpositivist drug researchers, including Cameron Duff, Suzanne Fraser, Helen Keane, kylie valentine, David Moore, Kane Race (2009, 2017, 2018), and Nicole Vittellone. Theirs are tight citational networks, partnering with Scandinavian and northern European researchers on studies that tend to be empirically based, often ethnographic, but deeply theoretical and very much in conversation with the experimental and ethnographic varieties of STS. Their works disrupt the dubious unities of substance, seeing intoxication events as “made with” humans and nonhumans, in and through “events,” Baradian intra-actions, Deleuzian plateaus, and material relationalities

drawn from ANT and New Materialism. They tend to emphasize pleasure and positive affects that are usually swamped by emphasis on risk and harm, aversion and disgust that are generated by the strong thread of prohibitionist policy that has dominated the past century of drug policy.

This particular assemblage builds upon the work of Emilie Gomart (2002, 2004), whose doctoral research on methadone maintenance in France in the late 1990s was directed by Bruno Latour. Her oft-cited papers made the point that drug effects were multiple and situated, attracting a transnational audience among those who studied drugs, their effects, and their users into the ambit of Actor Network Theory (ANT) and thus STS. As Gomart and Hennion (1999) argued in work on amateur musicians and drug users, “subjects may be seized, impassioned, and swept away,” becoming moved or attuned in Bruno Latour’s (1999) urging of attention to “that which attaches and activates” subjects—which drug use clearly does. These direct applications of STS theory to sociomaterial practices in drug-using social worlds, as well as in drug treatment and prevention contexts, join feminist materialism in influencing ethnographers in who study “drug scenes,” consumption events, and the pleasures they afford. Fay Dennis and Adrian Farrugia, in an editorial titled, “Materialising drugged pleasures: Practice, politics, care,” asked what new materialist modes of inquiry can tell us about drugged pleasure as they opened a special issue of the *International Journal of Drug Policy* in which “contributors delve into the inner social *and* material workings of pleasure as a matter of concern [Latour], that is, a precarious ‘event’ or ‘enactment’ involving various human and nonhuman actors and forces, which make it vulnerable, contingent and multiple.” They noted that, “One important implication of a new materialist analysis of pleasure is the requirement to become attuned to the politics and ethics of how research comes to make drugged pleasures matter,” not only for reducing harm but for expanding “notions and practices of living well, or living better.”

Indeed, Dennis’ book, *Injecting Bodies in More-Than-Human Worlds*, meditates upon the conceptual moves necessary for getting beyond social construction because it grants too much power and capacity to human sociality, and too little animacy to “significant non-human others.” In the case of critical drug studies, we see substances disrupted as the “dubious unities” they are. Although in the IJDP special issue, the discourse of “making” and “mattering” predominate, these analyses emphasize a vocabulary of “making-with,” of relational forms of work and the production of meaning occurring within dispersed assemblages of humans and nonhumans, of bodies instead of brains, of movement rather than stable fixity, of ‘events’ rather than identities.

New materialism imparts an animacy (Mel Chen) to addiction, building upon earlier attempts to “re-make” “addiction” from the material of “habit” (Fraser, Keane, and Moore 2014). Similarly, *Body and Society* published a special issue on “Habit” in 2013; see Bennett, et al., 2013. Within the performative register, “habits are central to how we do our bodies and become embodied,” and habit the “most indispensable” mode of existence (Latour 2013, 264; Dennis, 2019)—with which anyone who has tried to break one can identify.

The project of re-making “addiction” has widened, cyclically, the engagement of drug studies with science as well as with the remaking of language and discourse. Postpositivist theorists have remade habit alongside the recognition of affect, energy, movement, and materiality. Their clever interposition of addiction to pleasure is revealing, for addiction has long been defined in relation to compulsion, dependency, limitation, automaticity, lack of creativity, and concerns about the governance of so-called bad habits. Thus whenever erosions between these moral categories occur, there is potential room for proliferation of paradox and even positivity. For instance, Howard S. Becker’s short essay “What Is a Drug?” explores how drugs occupy moral categories—Becker, it should be noted, learned French in order to read Bruno Latour, and is widely credited with bringing drugs together with proto-social constructionism and symbolic interactionism back in the 1950s. Dennis notes that the more the ruling relations require clean separations—say between medicine and not-medicine—the more complex hybrids are wont to appear. Pleasure and addiction, she argues, are in Latour’s terms modern paradoxes. These join other postpositivist approaches such as “Deleuze’s ontology of ‘becoming’, Barad’s ‘agential realism’, Latour’s ‘Actor Network Theory’, and Jane Bennett’s ‘enchanted materialism’ [which] all move beyond notions that reality is a stable matter awaiting discovery and instead explore how materiality is relationally made or takes shape” (Dennis and Farrugia 2017). Another article in that issue, Duncan et al. 2017, “‘Enjoying the kick’: Locating pleasure within the drug consumption room,” linked safe injection sites, a current drug policy innovation, to Maria Puig de la Bellacasa’s work in order to explore how bodies, forces and things coalesce to afford specific acts of care that produce positive subjectivities, capacities and feelings such as ‘conviviality, belonging and comfort’. The possibility that drugs perform “life-fulfilling work” lies much closer to the ways in which pharmaceuticals have been animated (Dumit 2012) than to the ways in which currently illicit drugs have been instantiated in STS.

Finally, I also suggest a rapprochement along the lines of two recent fermentations in STS, the “provincializing” move undertaken by Law and Lin in relation to transnational Asian STS, and the “conviviality” move expressed in Hebe Vessuri’s *Tapuya* contribution to the re-examination of Law and Lin’s arguments from perspectives on plurality emerging from Latin America (Vessuri 2019). While I do not have space to rehearse the conversation broached by Law and Lin, and taken up in Vessuri 2019, transnational drug scholarship that starts from the global South recasts the drug crises of the North and West into new terms.

Bridging science and STS

Another set of events, most convened in the early to mid-2000s, sought to bridge neuroscientists with historians, anthropologists, and sociologists working on “addiction.” Howard Kushner and Scott Vrecko hosted one such event at Emory University, which was attended by historians Caroline J. Acker, Virginia Berridge, myself, David Courtwright, feminist ethnographer Claire Sterk, Helen Keane, Nicholas Rasmussen, and others. Similar events were held in northern Europe, due to large-scale EU-funded projects on critical neuroscience and addiction neuroscience (convened by Ilpo Helen in Finland, Jan Slaby in Germany, and, later, Martha Farah at the University of Pennsylvania). At the time, many historians were studying smoking, tobacco, and/or nicotine, in advance now flourishing work in the history and anthropology of capitalism (Berridge 1999; Enstad 2018). These ephemeral attempts at rapprochement hit up against the entrenched scientific investments of NIDA in addiction neuroscience. They also preceded the sensationalistic intensification of media reportage on the supposedly “white” opioid overdose epidemic (which built upon the racialized “Black and Latinx” endemic established in the 1950s racial project previously referenced; see Hansen and Netherland; Herzberg 2020).

“The symbolic economy of drugs,” Antoine Lentacker’s 2016 review essay in *Social Studies of Science*, disaggregated the differential contributions of brand, patent, clinical trial, and the “drug itself” (Lentacker reviewed four books and authors (Jeremy Greene 2016, Joseph Gabriel 2014, Healy 2004, and Peterson 2014—the first three historians of medicine and psychopharmacology, and the latter an anthropologist working on pharmaceutical circulation in Nigeria). Lentacker’s project was to advance the dream of a common language for thinking about pharmaceuticals, tellingly focused on consumers of legal pharmaceuticals produced by the regulated industry. Prior to that, very few articles on drugs of any kind had appeared in top STS

journals such as SSS and STHV. As Widmer and Lipphart (2016) indicate, “race” was central to colonial and thus postcolonial projects.

But where are drug users?

Against the above backdrop of academic work, you would be forgiven for thinking that there was not a transnational movement of drug users and drug unions, for harm reduction and the human rights of drug users. The user would seem to be the conceptual break, then, but even here work by Isabelle Stengers, Sara Ahmed, and Paul B. Preciado’s *Testo Junkie* (The Feminist Press, 2013, an example of “auto-theory”) offer STS-convergent ways of thinking about drugs and users that displace the passive consumers of the commodification narratives so common in studies of medicine and its pharmaceuticalization. Habits of mind—like mapping the antinomy between legal medicines and illegal “drugs” onto the moral distinction between “good drugs” and “bad drugs”—will have to be dispensed with if drug users are to be remade as actively exerting agency and care.

Drugs continue to prove good to think with—they are “material-semiotic actors” par excellence. What do “drug effects” do to STS thinking about social movements? I have already been forced to recalibrate my claims (Campbell 2020) concerning “evidence-based activism”—a form of activism that is **aware of itself** as transnational—thanks to the work of Tim Rhodes and Kari Lancaster in “Evidence-making intervention in health: A conceptual framing,” which takes a processual and relational approach that asks how evidence comes to be produced, and how “matters-of-practice” enact the performativity of science. I wish I had thought of that, for harm reduction and drug user or in the UK, “Service user” activists have been energetic in recruiting researchers and “making” evidence. Although Rhodes and Lancaster were specifically thinking in the domain of treatment and prevention intervention, the performativity of evidence-in-the-making carries Latour’s science-in-the-making and Hacking’s “making up people” into the postpositivist politics of materiality. As Donna Haraway reminds us in conversation with Bruno Latour (“Storytelling for Earthly Survival,” with Peter Weibel at Critical Zones Studio, ZKM on June 25, 2020: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-2r_vI2alg), thinking together is a materialist practice. I hope that “evidence-making activism” will join the STS social movements lexicon. Transnational engagements must be bi-directional, both STS-out, and STS-in, and situated within the newly formed collectivities and connectivities for which we are response-able in Haraway’s

sense of “cultivating the capacity of response.” Our postpositivist and postnational colleagues eagerly contribute to this conversation in the as-yet unnamed STSs that are the scenes of STS futures that can only become possible, in the words of this panel, “when nation-state as the only analytic breaks down.”

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