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Tolerating Deviance:

Drug Tourism and Normalization of Cannabis

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Abstract

Aim of this study is to explore the term normalization as a social process that shifts the level of tolerance in societies through examination of the association between cannabis usage as daily life leisure activity and the growing tolerance of this substance use. Contemporary studies suggest that consumption and usage of cannabis should be examined as any other social processes, which are unavoidable and widespread activities that are continuously changing, rather than the more traditional approach to the topic where scholars have generally categorized it as a deviant or pathological behaviour, which has been seen as socially condemned and subsisted at the margins of society.

If the anthropological approach and studies are to understand the native's point of view and the structures which shape this understanding, then the traditional approach on the subject are overlooking this phenomenon and are over-generalising people's behaviour to a universal phenomenon. Although this paper is not mainly about the social identification of cannabis consumers, the new insight on the social forces that is creating this identity is called for, and the contemporary researches are providing methods that can be used to comprehend this behaviour in a wider context. Data collected for this work are researches that are approaching new scientific theories about cannabis consumption in West, and are providing evidence for shifts in level of tolerance, which are the central point of normalization thesis, of which I use here to relate to tourism.

Keywords: Cannabis, normalization, deviant, tourism, leisure activity, social anthropology

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1. Introduction

The increasing use of cannabis in most western countries during the last four decades and the social and cultural shifts of the tolerance of consumption of illicit drugs, especially cannabis, makes this drug a fruitful window about which we can discuss issues of normalization and tolerance of formally deviant behaviour. However we must keep in mind that usage level and the social accommodation varies, which makes cannabis rates not to be the same around the world, just like the well-normalized and legal drug alcohol cannot be described in these terms in most of Muslim countries, we cannot use the term ‘normalization’ as a universal phenomenon but merely as an western “trend”¹. The purpose here is to demonstrate new insight on the theories of normalization of cannabis and find a connection between these new insight and tourism.

The social identification obtained through drug consumption within western world-system is part of the capitalism structures of the societies, but it cannot be overlooked that the western society is creating this alternative identity through the structures of the globalized world-system itself. The accommodation of attitudes to ‘sensible’ drug consumption, especially by the non-users is also like any other social process, constructed by this social force as any other discourse. Studying these structure in a globalized world and the social forces that are creating them is not in the scope of this work. However some theories on normalization will be presented here that could be considered being global phenomenon.

This work will outline a ground for theories about normalization theory as a sociological term used to understand what is regarded as “normal” in a culture, normalization thus gives the “abnormal” people of the society the same social, educational, and health services as any normal persons are provided with. Theories and data are presented about the preconception views of cannabis use as a deviant behaviour, but simply as the conflict between the authority and the reality of people’s everyday life. The anthropological approach here is to find a link between these contemporary studies on normalization theory and tourism. This task is complemented by interviews with tourists who were using drugs during their traveling time. The aim of this work is to support various theories of normalization

¹ More on trends of cannabis consumption will be presented in third chapter of this work.

through the examination of cannabis tourist's leisure-related behaviour. And further find new dimension on normalization process in tourism.

This paper is partly a comparative anthropological study. Studies presented here are suggesting normalization process of cannabis and are using different approaches to tackle the problem. The aim of the work is to uncover these new insights on the normalization as a social process and the objective is to use these new insights that are challenging the traditional view on cannabis use to understand the users point of view while traveling.

1.2 Hypothesis

The global initiative on prohibition of drugs derives from three UN conventions of 1961, 1971 and 1988. These conventions together had the intention to reduce supply of and demand for illicit drugs. In 1998 they had the slogan 'A drug free world, yes we can do it'. This has shown to be a failure, because despite the fact that war on drug started for four decades ago, the rates of drug consumption has increased more than ever.² This is due to the globalization, which has now more than ever changed the psycho-active consumption and identification of youth culture around the world and at the same time with the drug traffic and market moving beyond the national boundary and becoming more and more international and global (Parker, 2005:208).

Cannabis consumer's psychological addiction as a motive of identity and reality making that is created through the processes mentioned above is constantly questioned. However these identity and reality making is like in any other social process created through discourses. Consequently these discourses are the main reason that a normalization process is possible.

1.3 Problematization

As mentioned earlier in the work, this thesis is about the new approaches on the normalization of cannabis usage. These new points of view provide new dimension on how this behavior is becoming more tolerated in western societies. The focus of the study must then be the social forces that are producing and reproducing these new insights and tolerance. In order to

² This argument will be presented under the chapter "*Wave like trends*" in this paper.

understand how the new ideas of normalization are produced, we need to understand these social forces/factors also known as ‘discourses’, presented by Michael Foucault (1989). Foucault’s main concern was about the relationship between power and knowledge and how they operate within socially constructed categories of thought to which important social meanings and values attributed. The social practice in which we engage, social scripts we perform, either consciously or unconsciously, and finally what we think as being an experience is always an experience in or of a particular discourse. Discourses provide sets of values and beliefs that inform our social response and actions, although not always self-consciously and therefore can be seen to work in three ways: they enable, constrain, and constitute. (Tony Evans 2005:36)

Arguments mentioned above raises the question which discourses are creating this cannabis related psychoactive consumption and through that the identification of the users. Boire (1999) arguing for a theory of ‘cognitive liberty’ that is considering how do these social forces allow the users right to control their own consciousness?³ If the government is permitted to prohibit the experience of certain thought processes, or manipulate consciousness; via drug prohibitions or any other interdiction, it need not to worry about controlling the expression of such thoughts. Through the values and beliefs that discourses are producing in a given society, makes the social stigmatization and prohibition of cannabis usage possible. Therefore the free expression of thoughts through use of this illicit drug is made meaningless. These limitation and discourses need to be study in normalization theses. Because the social/cultural force, creating the normalization itself is also another kind of discourse, which as mentioned above change the social frames and experiences of both users and non-users. The problem here is then the way cognitive liberty can be ignored by societies while normalization process is taking place. Cognitive liberty, being a product of discourses, clearly cannot mean cognitive isolation.

1.3.2 Recreational drug use

The main problem in studying cannabis consumption is the way drug policies are not distinguishing between substance *use* and substance *abuse*, which refer to maladaptive pattern

³ Cognitive liberty is important in normalization thesis, because the term ‘normalization’ was developed in its basis as a human-right critique on service development. Considering Boire’s studies, same rights could be applied for cannabis consumers.

of use of a substance that is not considered dependant; this is an adaptive behaviour that allows the individual to change an unconstructive behaviour to something more constructive (URL 1). This creation of constructive behaviour is also called recreational drug use, which has the intention to create or enhance recreational experience or leisure activities that is related to the statements above about cognitive liberty and human rights about being able to create one opinion from personal experiences. This recreational use, as Parker (2005) argues, can be compared with usage of some of the more legal drugs such as alcohol, tobacco and caffeine. Although, this is seen as the occasional use of certain substance in certain setting in a controlled way, however it is important to notice that 'substance abuse' dose not exclude dependency.

The problem with the term is simply that it implies a negative judgment of the drug use that could perhaps be replaced by the term 'responsible drug use'. Responsible drug use is part of the *harm reduction* (HR) strategy that is concerned with public health policies and issues, designed to reduce the harmful consequences associated with recreational drug use and other high-risk activities where the intention is to create or enhance recreational experience that is seen as leisure time activities. The principles HR are different from the dominant policy of criminalization. HR offers a wide range of strategies instead of passing judgment on the deviant or questionable behaviour (Erickson, Patricia G. 2001:13). Such use is controversial, however, and is often considered as being related to drug abuse and illegal. However we must take in account the use and misuse of the socially accepted drugs, which are not illegal, such as alcohol, tobacco, or medicines are not questioned and considered deviant in the same extend. The problem here is the way policy makers has created an association between harm reductions, recreational controlled use of the substance and the harmful misuse of drugs as illegal as criminal activity. This raises another topic that needs to be studied: how do these policies affect the cognitive liberty of people who are consuming the drugs at home or while on vacation?

2. Methodological issues

This work is a comparative analysis that presents and compares different sociological understanding of the concept of normalization and other studies that are approaching normalization of cannabis usage in western societies. This study is relying mainly on the second hand data collection on cases regarding theoretical perspectives on cannabis normalization and different categories of normalization that tackle both de-normalization and normalization of different substance, but mainly cannabis. I will begin by discussing different dimensions on normalization/de-normalization and also present new alternative that could be added to the given list. These insights will be followed by a description of coffee shops in Amsterdam where interviews for this work took place with emphasis on personal experiences of drug user during vacation. Finally I will summarize the data and show how it relates to the new insights of normalization.

3. Normalization of Deviance

As mentioned earlier, normalization is about giving “abnormal” people the same rights as those consider being normal. This makes the normalization thesis to be a central and important understanding for users in societies where they have lost or could lose their rights as members of the community compared to those with “normal” behavior. The concept of normalization that we are concerned with in this work was developed in late 1950s in respect of creating ‘normal’ living condition for people with learning difficulties, people with disabilities, stigmatized, or deviant individuals or groups (Parker, Williams, Aldridge. 2002).

normalization is about stigmatized or deviant individuals or groups becoming included in many features of everyday life whereby their identities or behaviour become increasingly accommodated and perhaps eventually valued (Wolfensberger. see Parker, H 2005).

3.2 Research on normalization

The term above is a sociological understanding of normalization as a social process, which in this case essentially means the admission that the government can set new limits to what society can and cannot tolerate. Many societies already in the case with alcohol and tobacco have gone through the same process where the drug abuse has obtained a firm footing in the society and the only way to cope with the problem was normalizing and re-establishing new limits of tolerance by non users. However, what is considered to be normal can also become de-normalized, which is very clear the case of tobacco, which has during recent decade become less tolerated by non-smokers. Smoking behaviour has become stigmatized, the social space of smokers has become restricted, and their “deviant” behaviour increasingly challenged and perhaps even seen as anti-social behaviour by the social forces of de-normalization. These discourses have made it obligatory for many restaurants, cafés and other social areas to prohibit smoking (Parker et al. 2002:943-944). De-normalization has affected people’s behaviour in a personal level in societies that stigmatize tobacco use, for example, in a study that took place in United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, 80% of current smokers agreed that society disapproves smoking and consider it to be a deviant behaviour (David Hammond et.al 2006). Considering these statements, normalization than becomes a multi-dimensional tool, in this case a two-way street that could be used as a barometer for changes and shifts in the social behaviour and cultural accommodation of a society and their understanding about a deviant substance such as cannabis. In the upcoming chapters I will present some of the earlier research where the approach has been on normalization of cannabis in western societies. Further I will introduce some insight on the coffee shop phenomenon in the Netherlands, its rise from underground market into established cultural space and its connection to normalization that will be followed by interviews with drug tourists.

3.3 Six dimensions of normalization

Howard Parker (2005) use the term normalization as a barometer to map and explain the increased accommodation of ‘sensible’ recreational drug use among young Britons, and also how this normalization can become the measure for the shifts of the attitude and limits in the society. He categorizes six key dimensions in order to outline his arguments about

consumption of drug and its relation with normalization process among young Britons: availability and accessibility, drug trying rates, recent and regular drug use, the social accommodation of 'sensible' recreational drug use specially among non users, cultural accommodation of illegal drug use, and finally state or government responses to widespread recreational drug use.

As Parker (2005:206) argues, the same kind of research can be used to present not only the normalization of cannabis, but also the same debate can be used for other recreational use of other drugs such as amphetamine, LSD, ecstasy, and cocaine and even though his study in this paper is about young drug consumers, the same study can be used for lifetime users. It is important to note that the comparison of cannabis and other illicit drugs is in itself an statement that normalization process, as mentioned above, could be used as a barometer in changes in social behaviour, but to make this association and comparison with other drugs is beyond the scope of this work.

- *Availability and accessibility* without which the normalization cannot develop. The street prices have fallen significantly, while the purity remains stable. This has made the drug more accessible for young people to try the drugs for the first time, which leads to second dimension.
- *Drug trying rates*, although there is no systematic barometer of young adults substance use, the overall picture based on the studies of university students, nightclubs, and regional self-report studies of recreational drug use shows on-going incremental rises.
- *Recent and regular drug use*. Normalization does not require that the majority of people in a society will use illicit drugs. Although majority of young Britons participating in this statistics have done so, this is important but not crucial. It is important to track growth trends recreational drug use over time to identify normalization process, for instance the proportion of younger recreational drug user in England and Wales, rising from one in five in early 1990s to one in three at the end of the decade, is a way to identify this process.
- *The social accommodation of 'sensible' recreational drug use* shows signs of attitude changes in both young people and adults, and also non users and ex-users. Studies also confirm that young recreational users themselves distinguish clearly between instant controlled use of cannabis and the dependant use of heroin or crack cocaine.

- *Cultural accommodation* shows an increasing cultural acceptance despite its illegality. The role of media, films and television series showing and discussing drug use has changed across 1990s with ever more neutral and even positive portraits of illicit substance use. That is, ‘sensible’ drugs, thus dependent or over-frequents drug use, especially heroin and crack cocaine taking is socially condemned by both users and abstainers. These are evidence for a shift of the way drug use is presented and understood. Thus makes the normalization concept, not an ideological device but barometer of change.
- And finally, *state or government responses to widespread recreational drug use*, which used to be on the same line as war on drug, whereby any drug trying by adolescence had to be eradicated through preventions programs, has had a fundamental shift in official thinking. The response now is about recognizing recreational drug use being widespread but distinctive from problematic drug use, often associated with heroin and crack cocaine. There has also been a cautious public health information campaign, which reclassified cannabis from a class B drug to a class C drug, making possession a broadly non-arrestable offence for adults.

Dimensions above are parts of social discourses that are producing new ideas about cannabis consumption as a non-deviant behaviour. Its important to note that to analyse and explain each discourse on its own is nor in the scope of this paper. However I use these dimensions in my interviews in next chapter of this paper. By analysing gathered data I will find a connection between the dimensions mentioned above and the grass-root, personal experiences of users.

The cultural accommodation is an essential part of the social forces/discourses that we are discussing in this paper. The cultural acceptance of the users as functioning members of the society and media’s role in this accommodation, which portrait a positive understanding of illicit drug use, are the social factors that produce new identities and challenge social norms of a given society. In that sense these social institutions/factors are becoming the powers that challenge the social/cultural limitation of what society can or cannot tolerate and by doing so establish new obligations and rights for drug users in society. This effect on youth culture is noticeable:

“Drug-taking adventures are a key source of inspiration in stand up comedy (e.g. *Ali G*, Channel 4) and youth movies (e.g. *Human Traffic*, 1999). Drug realities are nowadays

discussed in youth magazines in a wholly partial ‘how to’ way. The drug-taking of film and popular music ‘stars’ are increasingly described in neutral rather than condemnatory terms” (Parker, Williams, Aldridge. 2002)

As Parker presents above, in order to study the term normalization as an on-going process, there is a need to focus on the continuity of recreational drug use to present it as an everyday leisure activity. These kinds of activity are visible in tourism and tourists behaviour during the time away from home.

3.4 Cannabis and tourism

I would argue that *Travelling to cannabis-oriented destinations* could be used as another dimension of normalization process. “cannabis consumption in tourism is driven and influenced by the wider process of the normalization of cannabis use in Western societies and, therefore should be examined in this context” (Belhassen, Santos & Uriely 2007:1). However I consider that drug consumption during traveling is not simply a social product that is influenced by normalization, but in itself part of the discourses leading to normalization process.⁴

According to Belhassen et al (2007:2), cannabis usage has been usually referred to as a characteristic of non-institutionalized forms of tourism and frequently associated with small groups of e.g. hippies or musicians. However they argue that motives of consumption of cannabis while travelling needs to be studied in the same manner as other pleasure-, tourist-, leisure-related activities such as alcohol use, tobacco use and sex activities as a continuum in behaviour between leisure and tourism. In their work, they interviewed people that have had experienced with cannabis during vacations and their findings shows that travelling to cannabis oriented destination could both be seen as a continuum of leisure activity of users, and also doorway to experiment or what is called ‘corridor’ approach, which means that the consumption of cannabis in tourism will lead to similar consumption in his/her everyday life in the country of origin (Belhassen et al 2007).

⁴ Traveling to cannabis-oriented destinations that leads to first time experiencing or continuum of behaviour in the country of origin (also known as the ‘corridor approach’) makes the travel destination and the experience to yet another discourse.

Travelling to cannabis-oriented destinations than is seen as a manifestation of belonging to a cannabis culture, and also as mentioned above can be another dimension of normalization that is creating new ways of identification. But does cannabis have a culture? The answer of this question require qualitative study among users, however as Patrick Matthews (2003) describes cannabis has connoisseurship, a way users talk about their experiences, the ritual of sharing joints with others, thoughts of getting stoned, how to behave when one is stoned, and not to mention the active consumer culture of getting their drug from their suppliers are some of the social dimensions of cannabis users. Regarding to what Matthews is describing on cannabis consumers behaviour, without these social dimensions this specific drug would not be that different from any other drug such as aspirin that we could consume from any pharmacy.

The continues of drug use or the ‘corridor’ approach of continuing the behaviour after traveling experience runs along with some of Parker’s dimensions on normalization mentioned above; ‘The accessibility of the drug, the social accommodation of the sensible drug use, the cultural accommodation of usage, and the governments liberal consideration of drug use’. If the existence of these dimension on the travel destination of tourists are both creating possibility for trying and could also lead to further use of the drug, consequently this new experience during traveling time and continuity of this behaviour must be considered to be a part of normalization process. This argument will be studied in upcoming chapters where tourists behaviour is studied just like any other leisure activity in order to support the argument that traveling to cannabis-oriented destination should be yet another dimension of normalization process.

3.5 Coffee shops: Decriminalization of underground market!

In this chapter I will present my own fieldwork that took place during the summer of 2011 in Amsterdam that can be seen as the cannabis consumer’s ‘Mecca’. However this chapter of the work could not be complete without an insight on the Dutch ‘Coffee shops’, and the history of changes in level of tolerance in Netherlands and its comparison to other western countries.

Coffee shop in this context is a euphemism for cafés where, since 1976, the sale and consumption of cannabis has been tolerated. It estimated to be somewhere around 737 coffee shops (2004) found in Netherlands, but their numbers have dwindled because of changes in

policies that have sought to tighten their licensing and also the cross-border drug tourism, particularly among neighbouring countries which challenges the liberal Dutch drug policy (Dirk Korf, 2008).

Decriminalization and regulation of cannabis in Netherlands, where possession or sale was a criminal offence in 1953, has been possible through four phases that Korf (2008) presents in his work:

- During the 1960s and early 1970s, the Dutch cannabis market was predominantly underground market. During that period, cannabis was bought and consumed in subcultural environment, which became known as a youth counterculture.
- As a consequence of this rising youth counterculture, Dutch authorities began to tolerate what was known as ‘house dealers’ in youth centres. However, Dutch policy made the distinction between two types of drugs: on the one hand, hemp products (Schedule II drugs), and on the other hand, drugs with ‘unacceptable’ risk (Schedule I drugs, such as heroin and cocaine). According to the law drug use was not an offence, possession of up to 30 grams of cannabis was consider to be a petty offence, while possession of more than 30 grams was a criminal offence. Prosecution of cannabis offence was believed not to serve the public interest and would stigmatise many young people and socially isolate them from society.

The national guidelines for retail sale of cannabis to consumers would be tolerated, only if they met the so-called AHOJ-G criteria. These criteria were:

1. *No overt advertising*
2. *No hard drugs*
3. *No nuisance*
4. *No underage clientele*
5. *No large quantities*

By following these guidelines, those so-called house dealers became a formidable competitor to the street dealers.

- During the third stage, cannabis was sold predominantly in café-like places, which became known as ‘coffee shops’. This was never the Dutch government’s intention, but by following the same criteria as house dealers, their business was to be tolerated.

- The last phase that began in the mid-1990s, when new laws were placed to cut back the number of coffee shops. Since then, the number of coffee shops has declined from about 1500 to 813 in 2000 and further to 737 in 2004. These new laws in addition increased the age for visitors of coffee shops from 16 of age to 18 years. Beside the changes in policy, local communities received the opportunity to decide whether or not they would allow coffee shops in their municipality. Consequently (to date '2008) 77% of the 483 communities decided not to allow coffee shops in their area at all.

As we can see the normalization process that Korf (2008) presents on Netherlands drug policy is a social process that is constantly shifting. Particularly the last phase presented here is a clear sign of shift on the level of tolerance that is connected to the changes in policies, which has let to de-criminalization of cannabis and is a good example that supports the argument that normalization could be considered as a multi-dimensional tool that goes both ways.

The reason why I chose to present the normalization process of cannabis in Netherland that consequently has let to institutionalization of coffee shops is because the same kind of social process and normalization has been taking place in other western countries that in not far from processes presented above in Netherlands. However the reaction towards it has been far from the Netherland's liberal policies. What we must study is if criminalization or de-criminalization has had any affects on the normalization process?

3.5.2 Wave like trends

Rising or falling cannabis consumption and shifts in level of tolerance need not to be unequivocal result of decriminalization or criminalization of its usage. In order to make that statement we need to analyse the rates of cannabis use both before and after decriminalization. Unfortunately as I mentioned earlier in this paper, the existing number in most western countries are gathered on those charged with criminal activity, thus this makes comparison of before and after criminalization almost impossible.

However, we do have the available data that has been systematically documented on the prevalence of cannabis use between late 1960s and late 1990s in Netherland. By studying these figures, we can see how cannabis use among youth in the country had evolved in two waves with the first peak around 1970, which decreased during the late 1970s and early

1980s, and a second peak in mid- to late- 1990s. Other European countries have also reported a wave-like trend in cannabis use that appeared to run along similar lines to those of Netherland. This shows that figures on cannabis usage were not out of line with those countries that did not decriminalise it and also that the normalization process that took place in Netherland and was documented by the country was being ignored and seen as deviant behaviour by other countries (Korf, 2008)

The fact that the lifetime prevalence of cannabis use in the Netherlands has developed in parallel to changes of their drug policy, does not automatically means that decriminalization has led to an increase in cannabis consumption. Contemporary studies shows that the Netherlands and other European countries with more ‘liberal’ cannabis policy’s figures on cannabis use are not very different from other countries with more repressive policy such as USA. Despite being the prototype of prohibitionist towards cannabis, Marijuana use among youth in USA also evolved in waves with a peak during the late 1970s, followed by a decline in 1980s and another rise in 1990s that is similar to waves trends of countries with a more liberal approach, Korf (2008). This supports Reuband’s argument that cannabis use trends evolve relatively independently from drug policy of countries (Reuband, 1995, see Korf 2008).

4. Case of study

Second method that is used in this work relies on ethnographic data obtained during summer 2011. This ethnographic work contains interviews with current users who were visiting coffee shops in Amsterdam during that time. This approach examines how people construct and make sense of their social world. The important approach here was to analyse that in what way discourses has constructed their identity. Consequently, these theoretical propositions provided are gathered directly from 11 in-depth interviews and observation of tourists who were visiting Amsterdam’s coffee shops and used cannabis during their travel. The 11 in-depth interviews conducted with three Americans, two Britons, two Germans, two Swedes, one Kuwaiti (whom I shared room with in a hostel), and finally my main informant a young Swedish male who has been living in Amsterdam for the past few years. It is important to notice that interviewees in this work are all from societies where the use of cannabis is regarded as deviant behaviour and is either illegal or illegitimate. The interviewees ranged

from 20 to 35 years of age; of these, seven were men and four were women. The majority of the interviews were recorded (with the approval of the interviewees), which lasted around one hour for each interview and participants were encouraged to speak about their experiences/behaviour with cannabis rather than their personal opinion/feelings. Questions were mainly about their cannabis consumption as a daily life experiences, their travel experiences, their travel motivations, and their fears and worries. The themes found in the previous interview were deliberately used in the next interview if the interviewee itself had not raised those topics.

4.2 Data from interviews

The collected data from interviews were coded at two levels: first, data were examined and studied line by line; next, they were reduced and categorized depending on their relevance to the topic and, finally discarded if they were unrelated to the work. Because I used some of the content from previous interviews in the next one, all data were analysed and transcript after each interview. Concepts were linked together, categorized, and highlighted depending on their significance to the work and compared to earlier approaches made on the topic by some of the researches presented earlier in this paper. The process was repeated until no further categories were emerged. This theoretical approach places emphasis upon individual accounts of experience and how they, through their behaviour are reproducing their reality. Further I connect tourism and cannabis consumption as a theory that could be used to support the argument that traveling to cannabis-oriented destination could be another dimension of normalization process.

4.3 Findings

The motives of cannabis use by tourists should be categorized according to the context of their experiences with the drug. Regarding to the findings, I have categorized their drug experiences in three main motivations: *experimentation*, *Identity and culture*, and *recreational* motives. This categorization is derived from general nature of the experiences that my interviewees reported. It is important to notice that all interviews took place in Amsterdam and similar kind of study in other cannabis-oriented destinations such as Jamaica, Florida

beaches, Thailand, or Melana in northern India would perhaps provide us other motives of consumption. However the characterization and analysis of these other destination and their comparison to findings in Amsterdam is not in the scope of this work.

Most of participants expressed a mixture of motivations for their cannabis use, and of course, various experiences in different destination and context. Nevertheless the heterogeneity of reported experiences from individual tourists in combination of the fact that this study took place in the same city during more or less similar context, prevents me from generalizing various tourist experiences in other destinations.

4.3.2 Experimentation and loss of social control

The first category of motives that I identified was the group were experimentation was the main motive of drug trying. Their experience was, as they perceived it, driven by the opportunity to consume cannabis during their vacation. For example, an American woman in her early 20s reported that she had no plans to try cannabis while traveling across the Europe, but when she arrived to Amsterdam the accessibility of the drug made the experimentation with it possible:

Interviewee: I had never tried marijuana before, although many of my friends back home (USA) had tried it... You see it on TV, you know. It's almost a big part of the entertainment industry... Last week was the first time I tried it and it felt that Amsterdam was the place to try it for the first time. In my second day here I walked in to a coffee shop and asked a waitress for help to chose between different kinds of grass (marijuana) that they were offering. She understood that I had never tried it before and gave me a ready-made joint...

Interviewer: Will you tell people about your experience with marijuana in Amsterdam?

Interviewee: Well, I guess people associate traveling to Amsterdam with cannabis smoking, than it won't be a secret, but I think its more understandable for them that I have tried grass here than back home. But I will not tell my parents and my boyfriend about it.

Interviewer: Why not?

Interviewee: I was raised as a good Christian girl and its not that tolerated in my family to do something illegal, not to mention smoking marijuana. And my boyfriend have never tried it himself and I don't want him to feel like my vacation in Europe was only about loosing control and you know, going wild.

In this case, the interviewee reported that trying cannabis during travel was just an experiment that was not a continuum of her everyday life experiences. However she stressed that this experience changed her attitude towards cannabis and people who use this substance. Two other of my informer showed reported similar kind of experiences during vacation. For instance, a 26-year old law student from United Kingdom reported that cannabis smoking has become part of traveling experience for him:

Interviewee: I am probably not the typical pot (marijuana) smoker, because before my trip to India for few years ago I had only smoked grass once or twice when I was a teenager.... But there is something with been away from home, which makes it easier to try and experience new things. After India trip, My friends and I started to change our travel destinations to places that we knew we could get marijuana if we wanted it.

Interviewer: Does it mean that you only use cannabis when you travel?

Interviewee: It has happened that I have smoked back home in UK, but only once or twice a month in social events. But being a law student and working in an office as a trainee, you don't want some people to know much about what you do in your free time.

Cases above are illustrating two different approaches on cannabis consumption while traveling. In the first approach the tourist experiment was functioning as trying the forbidden drug away from home while at the same time not breaking the norms of the country of origin. The second case is what is called the corridor approach where the tourist experiment may lead to similar behaviour in his/her country of origin.

Both these approaches and experiments can be explained as loosening of social control while traveling. The stigmatization of cannabis users and the prohibition laws in the country of origin of participants makes their cannabis use during the vacation to be norm- and law-breaking deviant behaviour. However to go back in what Parker (2005) describes as some of dimensions of normalization, it could be the: *accessibility of the drug, the social*

accommodation of sensible drug use, the cultural accommodation of usage, and the government's liberal consideration of drug use, of the travel destinations that is making this experimentation with cannabis possible for tourists.

“every one of us is attracted to what is considered deviant behavior. However, the fear from social sanctions deters us from acting upon such ‘temptations’.” (Hirschi, 1969, see Behllassen et al 2007:9)

Consequently, regarding to relevancy of normalization process and tourist experimentation of cannabis, could be seen as an argument that individuals abroad are more free from the social constrains of their society and laws of country they are from. This way, tourist cannabis use can be seen as a unique context that is a product of normalization process.

4.3.3 Identity and culture

The motive of this second approach is the search for tourist identity and authenticity. Tourists in this case are motivated by finding the cannabis-oriented destination where they would find other people who share the same experience as they do. This could also be seen in other tourist destinations such as the village of Melana in northern India where tourists are traveling to in order to see the source of cannabis industry (Behllassen et al, 2007:11). This is how a German male tourist in his early 20s describe the reason of his visit to Amsterdam:

Interviewee: Netherland and specially Amsterdam is almost a must for cannabis smokers. Here they can visit the Cannabis Museum, coffee shops, smart shops.... Anyone one want to try cannabis or just want to live somewhere, where they don't have to fear being arrested for smoking should travel here. Visiting Amsterdam is like being a Muslim and traveling to Mecca.

Interviewer: Are there any other reasons for visiting Amsterdam?

Interviewee: Last time I was here, I made few local friends and they have taking me with them to some of their favourite coffee shops that not many tourist know about. It's almost as if I am one of them now.

Reports from interviews in this category illustrated that the role of the visiting a cannabis-oriented destination could also be part of their social identity and a statement of belonging to a cannabis culture.

A Kuwaiti architect graduate male in his early 30s with whom I was sharing a room with in a hostel tolled me about his experiences in coffee shops:

Interviewee: We smoke pot from time to time back in Kuwait. If you have enough money and know the right person, you can even get ‘Melana Cream’ (a brand of Indian hashish) any time of the day. But you have to be careful and don’t tell many people that you smoke. The difference here is that I don’t need to be afraid for getting caught. And I can just walk in to a coffee shop and sit next to people from all over the world without feeling like an outsider.

Interviewer: In what way do you feel that you belong?

Interviewee: I don’t need to do anything besides participating in people’s conversations, tell stories about my experiences with cannabis and share a joint or two with them.

This social membership that is mentioned above is almost similar to belonging to a sub culture that find their group identity in similar behaviour and rituals. In the case above the rituals of sharing the joint and telling stories about getting stoned could be considered to be part of the cultural identity of cannabis users.

4.3.4 Recreational and leisure behaviour continuum

As mentioned earlier in chapter one of this work recreational use of cannabis is not that far from usage of the legal drugs such as alcohol, tobacco, or caffeine that is a controlled consumption of the substance, which allows individual to construct their behaviour. This substance use is part of leisure activity, which is the free time or the time spent away from work and before or after necessary activities such as eating or sleeping (URL 2). This recreational model summarizes the main attributes of cannabis user and is related to pleasure-oriented nature of this activity (Belhassen et al 2007:4). Therefore cannabis use during vacation in this case should be studied as an extension or continuum of leisure behaviour.

In this context the motive of tourists could be seen to consume cannabis as a complementary product of fun seeking during vacation. It is important to note that although recreational cannabis user do not necessarily always travel to specific destination in order to consume and use the product, reports from my interviews shows that accessibility of cannabis

in some resorts plays an important role in decision-making. Beside the fact that most of interviewees used cannabis as part of their everyday leisure activity prior to their travel support the contemporary argument that cannabis use is normalized and popularized in western countries.

My key informer was a young Swedish male in his late-20s whom because of legal reason I choose to call X, moved from Sweden to Netherlands for almost four years ago and explained the main reason of his relocation to Netherland as such: (Important to notice that this particular interview was translated from Swedish to English for this paper)

X: I have been using cannabis since I was around 15 years old and don't see any reason why I should quit. But for few years ago, one of my friends was arrested for possession of quite a lot grass, which resulted in that cops were keeping an eye on us others. After awhile I grow tired of the situation and started looking for a job and a home in Netherland and found a good job as web designer for a international company in Amsterdam and a nice flat for me and my girlfriend in Haarlem.

Do you use cannabis more now than you did in Sweden?

X: Actually not, back than my friends and me used to do smoke every time we were together and had the opportunity to do so, it could be for watching a soccer game or at weekends. We usually bought plenty grass because you didn't knew when you would get hold of it next time. But now I can just go to the closest coffee shop after my shift at work and smoke a joint to relax without having to hide it and I don't usually carry on me more than I need for a day or two.

As we can see this case is also related to the earlier notion of loss of social control, but this notion is merely appropriate for those experimenting with the drug and are not using it in their daily lives. The consumption of cannabis while traveling must examine the continuum of use of cannabis by tourists who do use cannabis in their daily life as a continuity of leisure behaviour. The reasons that X describes above for his movement to Netherlands in particular to be able to consume cannabis without fear of authorities, once again supports Parker's notions on normalization process. The access to drugs and social/political accommodation of cannabis are parts of the reasons why current users travel to cannabis-oriented destination such as Amsterdam.

“the pleasure-oriented behavior of tourists is basically an extension of related behaviors undertaken at home [...] existence of a tourism culture encourages people to behave in a hedonistic manner to a degree that may not be acceptable in their country of origin”
(Carr, 2002, see Belhassen et al. 2007:11)

Consequently the tourism-leisure behavioural continuum appears to apply on findings of this work and consuming cannabis should not only be considered as a complementary product that is part of fun-oriented vacation but for most of users as a continuum of everyday life leisure activity. It should be noted that these findings are in the same line as previous works the also suggest a continuum between leisure activity and tourism regarding cannabis consumption (e.g. Belhasen et al, 2007).

5. Summary

To begin with, this study highlights the importance of contemporary research on normalization of cannabis as a social process in western societies. These new approaches on cannabis consumption contradict the traditional understanding of this activity as deviant behaviour and argue that it should be studied just like any other social process. Earlier research on this process has been presented here, which include various approaches on the topic (Parker, 2005). Moreover a study on cannabis usage in tourism as a behaviour that seems to have been driven and influenced by normalization process that is related to my own field study was also presented here (e.g. Belhassen et al, 2007). The existing numbers on cannabis usage in many western countries appears to have ran along the same lines as the Netherlands process of de-criminalization of this substance use and not be very different, regardless on their liberal or repressive policies. Considering that I felt necessary to present normalization of cannabis in Netherland in this work and also because my own fieldwork took place during summer 2011 in Amsterdam.

This work states that there is a connection between the normalization process of cannabis in western countries and tourism-leisure behaviour. Cannabis related tourism demonstrates growing interest and attitude change towards the deviance understanding and should, in turn be seen as great important in contemporary normalization process. However there has been little attention on how this connection between the new approaches on normalization and tourism, affect tourist’s behaviour while traveling. In order to present the

anthropological perspective on this connection I decided to do an ethnographic study on tourist's personal experiences with the cannabis in Amsterdam. In addition this work aimed to present new dimension on the existing dimensions of normalization that is directly linked to tourism.

Conclusions

This examination of social behaviour among cannabis users suggests that presented dimensions of normalization process has had affects on tourist related behaviour in cannabis-oriented destinations. In this work I have presented findings through interviews, which suggest that tourists behaviour in these destination could also be considered part of normalization process and not merely a product of it. These behaviours: the corridor approach presented in this work, which leads to further consumption of drugs in the country of origin, the continuum of behaviour of cannabis use while traveling as recreational use, traveling to cannabis-oriented destination in order to maintain ones social identity, and experimenting with cannabis while traveling are all together setting the ground for yet another dimension on normalization. In order to make this connection possible I have used the ground theoretical approach on normalization and connected them to tourist's personal experiences in order to explore the notion of tourism and cannabis use.

But could this simply mean that those individuals who are exposed to cannabis during their vacation become cannabis users? Studies points that not all tourists who are exposed to cannabis consumption during their vacation and experiment with the drug, become cannabis users in their daily life. However the experimentation leads to changes in tourist attitude toward this deviant behaviour.

It is important to remember, as noted earlier, that the collected samples in this work, the heterogeneity of the presented experiences, and motivations found in each category of individual tourists should not be considered statistical generalization for all tourists and for all cannabis-oriented destinations. In order to make such statement further investigations in this under-explored topic in other tourist destinations and other contexts is called for.

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URL (2): <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leisure> (21-052012)

Empirical research:

Interviews, discussions, and observation that took place in Amsterdam in relation to this work from (25-06-2011) to (7-07-2011) by the author of this paper: Reza Sharifi.