



Call for Papers

Drugged Sociology in the Semi-Periphery: Psychoactive Substances, Governance, and Resistance in Central and Eastern Europe

Sociological inquiry has extensively examined the relationships, subjectivities, and socio-political meanings surrounding psychoactive substances as well as the policies that emerge in response to their use. Drugs and intoxication have long occupied a complex and contested space within societies and sociological research. The concept of “collective effervescence” (Durkheim 1912/1915, Tutenges 2023) has not only fueled societal unease around altered states of consciousness but has also driven scholarly exploration of the social and cultural dimensions of mind-altering practices. From foundational works by Lindesmith (1947), Becker (1953), and Young (1973) to contemporary, less normative perspectives (Dennis 2019; Zigon 2019; Stevens 2011; Sandberg & Fleetwood 2017), drugs have served as a lens for examining power, identity, and social control. Yet, within sociology, the study of drugs often occupies a marginal position, particularly in the context of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Shaped by its semi-peripheral status, the region is caught between global anti-drug policies and its own historically situated experiences with drugs. These experiences include the social denial and marginalization of drug-related issues during the state socialism era, the HIV epidemic linked to injecting drug use in the 1990s, and the neoliberal restructuring of public health and social policies following the post-communist transition (Malinowska-Sempruch 2014; Struzik 2021a; Allaste & Lagerspetz 2005; Alexandrescu 2017). In recent years, policies, cultures, and markets have experienced significant shifts on both a global scale and within CEE, driven by efforts to move beyond the war on drugs and prohibitionist approaches. These changes include the introduction of regulated cannabis markets, signaling yet another complex chapter in the ongoing evolution of drug policy globally, while also reflecting region-specific developments in CEE (Decorte et al., 2020). This special issue of the *Polish Sociological Review* seeks to recenter sociological perspectives on drugs, highlighting the richness and diversity of approaches to understanding psychoactive substances in CEE and beyond.

In the proposed framework, we aim to position drugs as a central lens through which to examine society. The concept of the “drugged sociology,” in our view, offers the potential for a rich analysis of ontopolitics of the substances, the power relations, citizenship practices, and political subjectivities emergent in the context of drug use, production and circulation (Stevens, 2024; López 2020; Fritzgerald 2015). This perspective allows us to challenge categories such as (il)licit drugs, health, illness, addiction, or sobriety and analyse them as social constructs, stemming from complex governing of society and its subpopulations.

In this call for papers, we focus specifically on Poland and Central and Eastern Europe to address the gap in literature, resulting epistemic injustice, and the discrepancy in policy and culture. Compared to the human rights based and evidence based, and harm reduction-oriented approaches to psychoactive substances in the North or West, CEE presents a compelling case for critical analysis. Our objective is not to seek an essentialized understanding of drug-related experiences in the region but rather to illuminate the nuanced social landscape of drugs, which is often neglected in the literature that tends to be predominantly focused on the Northern hemisphere. For example, in the book *European Drug Policies: The Ways of Reform* (Colson & Bergeron 2017), which analyzes contemporary drug policies in Europe, Poland is the only country from the region to receive a dedicated chapter – the rest focuses on Western Europe. Our call aims to fill this gap, locating this special issue among a few recent scholarly endeavors to decolonize the drug studies (Dertadian, 2024; Mazahir et al., 2025) making the special issue on CEE globally relevant. Central and Eastern Europe is conceived here twofold: either as a historically and geographically specific context of drug supply, use, governance and societal reception - or as a model semi-periphery in between conservative regulations and cultural framings and liberalizing paradigm shift. We propose the semi-periphery as both a concrete case study (focusing on CEE) and an analytical category for examining drug governance globally. This dual approach reveals how regionally specific power relations produce distinct modes of control and resistance, while providing a framework to analyze similar contradictions across the global drug policy landscape. We encourage scholars to examine drugs in three distinct yet interconnected areas.

First, we seek contributions that center the **lived experiences** of people who use drugs, exploring how their practices and narratives can be understood as forms of **resistance, citizenship, or navigation of oppressive structures**. We invite authors to critically engage with the ways in which drug use intersects with bodily autonomy, self-determination, and the pursuit of pleasure, while also confronting the stigmatization, state neglect, and systemic barriers faced by drug users (Rosińska, Zakrzewska 2022). Drawing on scholars such as Heidt & Wheeldon (2022), Struzik (2021b), and Race (2017), we encourage contributors to examine how individuals and communities navigate the complexities of drug policies in their everyday lives, reclaiming agency in the face of marginalization. We are particularly interested in how psychoactive substance use fosters social connections, shapes identities, and challenges dominant narratives about drug use and users.

Alongside the level of lived experiences, we are also interested in the **assemblage of discourses, ideas, policies, and laws** surrounding drugs and their social implications. We, hence, propose a critical analysis of dominant constructions and representations of drugs in the region. We seek inquiries into criminalization and other legal avenues of control, as well as processes of “controlled decontrol” (Featherstone, 1998), such as introduction of medical cannabis. We encourage a sociological deconstruction of the concepts of **abstinence and the drug-free model**, paying particular attention to how these discourses materialize in the practices of various actors and institutions, such as policymakers, healthcare providers, law enforcement, and media. These materializations shape the lived experiences of “ordinary” drug users, often reinforcing stigma, marginalization, and exclusion. Drawing on Jennifer J. Carroll’s (2019) work on methadone clinics in Ukraine, we ask about the “addiction imaginary” – how addiction and drug use are socially imagined, how the political identity of users is constructed, and how the construction of “**junkie(ness)**” is tied to processes of Othering. By examining these dynamics, we aim to uncover how institutional practices and societal narratives intersect to perpetuate structural inequalities and impact the everyday lives of those who use drugs.

Finally, we welcome contributions that focus on the **differentiated normalization** of drug use (Duff, 2020; Pennay & Measham, 2016) and the growing gap that emerges in the “twilight of prohibition” in the West/North (Reid, 2020; Wheeldon & Heidt, 2024). We seek contributions that explore the consequences of the global coexistence of diverse, sometimes contradictory, drug policies and drug cultures (Wanke et al., 2024). These implications include the globalization of the regulated drug industries, epitomised by the “medicalisation of the revolt” (Pedersen & Sandberg, 2013) through medical cannabis regulation (Wagner et al., 2021; Wanke et al., 2025). Of particular interest

are the dynamics of transnational organized crime and the migration of people who use drugs. Arguably, the migratory experiences of the Central and Eastern Europeans, their engagement with global communication platforms, and the progressive policy trends in the West/North—such as cannabis regulation and the adoption of harm reduction approaches—have created tensions between the more restrictive drug policies in CEE and **lived experiences and social remittances of the mobile people who use drugs**. Conversely, as Poland and some other CEE states are at the verge of becoming immigration destinations, contributions that examine the intersection of migration and intoxication (De Kock, 2021; van Selm et al., 2023) are also encouraged. Furthermore, building on a rich scholarship of governance and governmentality (Rose, O'Malley, Valverde 2006), we examine how contemporary drug policies – shaped by *carceral* and *neoliberal logics* – produce *governed and drugged subjects*. These policies ostensibly create autonomous, self-managing subjects who use psychoactive substances to enhance experiences, agency, and productivity. Yet empirical case studies reveal they also generate *disposable subjects*: populations abandoned by necropolitics. We thus invite scholars to interrogate these contradictions at the heart of modern *narco-governance*.

Submission guidelines and timeline:

- Extended abstract (5-6 pages) + brief bios by September 15, 2025 to criticaldrugstudiesgroup@gmail.com
- Notification of acceptance and feedback from the lead editors by October 20, 2025.
- Final version of the paper due to be submitted for review by November 30, 2025 via the journal system.
- Publication of the Special Issue is planned for mid 2026.

The guest editors of the Special Issue are pleased to announce **a seminar in Kraków on 17 October 2025**, featuring dedicated sessions for draft discussions. This event will provide authors with an opportunity to receive feedback from the editorial team and fellow contributors. **Participation in the seminar is optional and not required to submit a proposal for this Call for Papers.**

Learn more about the event: https://sociologia.uj.edu.pl/aktualnosci/-/journal_content/56_INSTANCE_0iyIOm3cRN5/15033991/158706560

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