Will the cannabis culture survive legalization?

Copenhagen conference, March 15. 2013

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Between The Royal Palace and The Faculty of Law, University of Oslo. Summer of 1966
Life-time ever use of cannabis – Oslo and USA.
Is there «a cannabis culture»?

• «Normalization hypothesis» (eg Parker et al): No
• Our data set: Longitudinal population-based; ethnographic, qualitative interviews
• Main finding: We did find a reservoir of cannabis symbols, rituals, and narratives
• Underpinned by popular culture (e.g. hip hop)

• This social reality is surprisingly under-researched (biomedical dominance of «cannabis» research)
Elements of the cannabis culture

- Everyone is expected to share
- The joint is passed to all present
- Sanctions versus «wrong behaviour» («bogarting»)
- «The one who rolls it, tokes it»
- Argot
Cannabis use and subsequent social welfare assistance (28-30 years)

Pedersen 2010: *Addiction*
Nutt et al: Drug harm scale (max = 100)

Benzodiazepines
Cannabis
Amphetamines
Tobacco
Heroin
Alcohol

Harms on others
Harms on oneself

Lancet, 2010

Copenhagen March 2013
The real harms of cannabis

- The biomedical perspective: mid to low range
- How to explain cannabis-related marginalization?
- A powerful cannabis culture
- A powerful illegal cannabis economy
- Both must be addressed in the Copenhagen model
The Dutch experience: Cannabis culture, legal economic incentives, and backdoor problem
US medical marijuana: Cannabis culture, semi-legal economic incentives, misleading rhetoric
Suggestions for Copenhagen

- Nordic countries have a tradition for regulation!
- No private economic incentives at wholesale/retail level
- Cut the symbolic link to the cannabis culture
- Use blueprint from the Norwegian Vinmonopol
- Monitor prices in the illegal market – to avoid increased consumption
- Various brand, avoid unfortunate THC- and CBD levels
- Strongly regulated access – only Danish citizens, 18 + years
- Well designed research-based evaluation, international team of top researchers
Good luck! You are brave!