

## Call for papers: Exploring the onto-politics of cannabis

This special issue of [\*Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs \(NAD\)\*](#) gathers work that approaches the phenomenon of cannabis as ‘made’ and enacted in multiple ways. We want to invite scientific articles and position papers that see cannabis as an emergent, volatile, or ‘fluid object’ of use and interventions.

While contributions from the Nordic countries are encouraged, we also welcome texts from other parts of the world which are helpful for grasping the premises of new understandings and regulation of cannabis use.

### **Towards more complex understandings**

Cannabis has long been understood and treated as a relatively stable substance and as an object with a coherent and universal essence. Duff (2016) has pointed out that this position of a singular object has in recent years been increasingly ‘splintered’, giving way for novel arrays that produce a new nature of cannabis as an object of observations.

For instance, the production of cannabis has always included the use of technologies, but the spread of knowhow, and new cultivation techniques and equipment, have resulted in a proliferation of productions, including high and low THC products, hybrid variants, and synthetic cannabis. This challenges our understanding of the ontological status of the object we call ‘cannabis’.

New socio-legal circumstances of manufacturing have contributed to this ontological destabilisation. Illegal production has thus transformed into and reappeared in legal pharmaceutical production. Moreover, legalisation has involved new types of products and ingestion formats: vapes, tablets, oil, cakes, chocolate, balm, gel, gummy bears, bath soap, tinctures, and drinks. Recent sociological studies have also demonstrated how socio-material contexts, including the methods of administration (smoking, eating, drinking, vaping), can impact the onset, intensity, and the duration of its psychoactive and social effects as well as its addictive potential (e.g., Borodovsky et al., 2016).

### **Policies and views on the user**

In the Nordic countries, and elsewhere, the object status of cannabis is currently being discussed and reconfigured through public discourses, policy debates, and even legislative changes. These enact cannabis as an illegal and dangerous ‘drug’, a ‘medicine’, or a ‘non-drug’ more akin to alcohol than cocaine.

Unfolding and discussing the contested ontology of cannabis is important, not least as it affects public policies and their inherent views on users as governable subjects. The enactments of cannabis – sometimes construed as a stable drug with fixed effects – underpin or are *made in* governing practices such as prohibitionist drug laws, public health initiatives, drug fears, and regulatory debates about what we as a society consider politically possible and suitable. Similarly, youth prevention measures and treatment programmes tend to lean on the enactments of cannabis, for instance as a ‘constrainer’ or an obstacle to personal development. Such enactments grow to generate treatment procedures and produce particular recovery identities (Kolind et al., 2016).

Historically, the Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden – have differed in their drug policies. Where Denmark has been pragmatically liberal, Norway has opted for restrictions (Moeller, 2019). However, recent decades have seen gradual shifts. Denmark, for instance, can be seen to be moving in a more repressive direction, while Norwegian policy-makers are now considering a more liberal approach.

### Scope of special issue

Adopting a perspective that does not take the ontology of objects as given allows an exploration of what goes into the *making* of cannabis phenomena.

This special issue of the *Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs (NAD)* opens up to work that sees cannabis as intensely contested and enacted into being in multiple ways.

We invite contributions that explore the myriad of network relations, practices, semantic registers, materialities, and political controversies. It is through these that particular cannabis objects and accompanied effects are *made, unmade, or transformed*.

We encourage scholars to consider how a focus on ‘ontological politics’ (Mol, 1999) might contribute to a better understanding of cannabis in contemporary society, and to consider ways in which the object of cannabis might be made *otherwise* in particular contexts, institutions, or policies.

**Submission deadline:** 1 October 2020 (scheduled publication Autumn 2021)

**Please, submit article through the journal’s Manuscript Central:**

<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/nad> (tick the box for “special issue”)

### Guest editors

*Thomas Friis Sogaard*, Associate Professor, Centre for Alcohol and Drug Research, Aarhus University ([tfs.crf@psy.au.dk](mailto:tfs.crf@psy.au.dk)).

*Tuulia Lerkkanen*, M.Soc.Sci, researcher, Centre for Research on Addiction, Control and Governance (CEACG), University of Helsinki ([tuulia.lerkkanen@helsinki.fi](mailto:tuulia.lerkkanen@helsinki.fi)).

### References

Duff, C. (2016). Natures, cultures and bodies of cannabis. In T. Kolind et al. (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of drug and alcohol studies: Social science approaches* (pp. 677–91). London: SAGE.

Borodovsky et al. (2016). Smoking, vaping, eating: Is legalization impacting the way people use cannabis? *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 36, 141–47.

Kolind, T., Holm, K., Duff, C., & Frank, V. A. (2016). Three enactments of drugs in Danish prison drug treatment: Illegal drugs, medicine and constrainers. *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy*, 23(2), 135–43.

Moeller, K. (2019). Sisters are never alike? Drug control intensity in the Nordic countries. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 73, 141–145.

Mol, A. (1999). Ontological politics: A word and some questions. *The Sociological Review*, 47(1), 74–89.