



In the year 1980, I was a rebellious teenager of 19 years old, living with my parents, in a small town called Wormer. One night we were watching tv, my parents sitting on their new couch, and me on the floor next to it!, because I thought it was too ugly to sit on. On tv there was a show on pop music and the musician of the night was Iggy Pop. I was flabbergasted watching him trash the studio decor. Half-naked, waving a palm-plant through the air. Exactly the same palm as WE had next to the tv . I never knew you could also do THAT with a plant! That's when I decided to GET OUT and move to Amsterdam.

Without money or a job I quickly found myself in the punk and squatting scene. Here I met people that were like me. Ready to fight the system, we found dysfunctional and unfair. This was my introduction with a subculture that I had only seen on tv.

As time progressed, I got intrigued with the many different subcultures I discovered. Each with their specific looks, likes and behaviors. During my social science bachelor, I developed a specific interest for subcultures in connection to music and drug use.

I have been studying the subject for 30 years now. And today will tell you about the monitor that we developed to follow subcultures and drug use in Amsterdam, and try to understand its cultural meaning. I will also discuss some data on specific substance use and its dynamics. At the end I will run you through some of the conclusions.



These pictures represent a few iconic subcultures. Rock N Roll, the Teddy boys or Nozems. The Provo's, the Hippies and the Punks. Today the street cultures have turned to rave and club cultures.

In 2010, a few months before finishing my thesis, I talked to my supervisor Dirk about the title: High Amsterdam: Rhythm, Rush, and Rules in Nightlife. Why not rules first? He asked me. 'After all, this thesis is sponsored by the faculty of Law.'

But by studying the subject, I saw that new music styles are often the fire starter that shift the mindset and setting, creating new subcultures, with new forms of drug use.



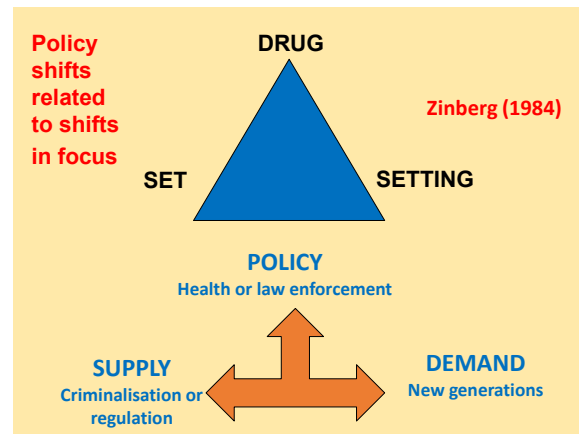
This results moral panic, followed by new regulations. There are many examples of it. "Jazz was born in a whiskey barrel and grew up on marihuana. Punk was born in the gutter and grew up on speed. And house? House was born in a club and grew up on MDMA."

So answering his question: It starts with a new rhythm, and changes in drug use follow. Finally resulting in new rules and regulations.



Sometimes history is created through chance occurrences. Like MDMA meeting the synthesizer, the Roland 808. This created a universe of new possibilities in music.

It was an absolute game-changer in nightlife. Starting in Detroit, in empty warehouses, that turned out to be a perfect decor for raves. From Detroit, it spread like a bushfire, to Chicago, New York, Europe and beyond



Right from the beginning XTC changed the mindset. It was the new love drug and different from all other drugs before. Besides the difference in effect, it also came in pill form, which was very convenient for consumption.

It also changed the setting, by connecting different scenes: bodybuilders, hooligans, hip hoppers and creatives, suddenly blended together, on spontaneous outdoor raves on outskirts of the city.

In the center, new extravagant clubs appeared in empty old theatres like the Roxy or Club It.

The drug, set and setting model from Zinberg on this slide, can be very useful to understand the dynamic-interaction between these 3 factors.

I had the honor of meeting Alexander Shulgin once at a etno-psychedelic conference in Mexico. As some of you may know, he re-discovered MDMA in the 70s.

We had a conversation about the drug, set and setting model, related to MDMA. He told me he was very surprised that ecstasy was used on raves. He always did it at home with friends, listening to classical music, doing yoga in the garden and chilling out.

In the mid-nineties, 5 years after the synthetic and electronic music revolution, Amsterdam was facing a booming dance-industry, with new venues, more drug-use, and increasingly more health-incidents. New regulation was necessary.





### Amsterdam Antenna

Multi-method Monitor

**(1) Prevention indicators**

- Online data
- Unity (peer education)
- Local drug market (test services)

**(2) Yearly surveys in risk groups:**

clubbers, ravers, pub goers, coffeeshops, problem youth

**(3) Panelstudy twice a year**

- Nightlife: trendsetters / influencers
- Neighborhood's: social workers

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With the birth of a new chemical generation we were wondering what the next drug trend would be. Together with the Jellinek Centre we made a plan to develop a monitor, to follow drug use and markets over time. We came up with 3 different perspectives.

The first being: prevention indicators Like data from the Jellinek, the Unity project and from drug testing services.

The second is: yearly surveys rotating between 5 risk groups in nightlife

And third: an ongoing Panel study of trend setters in the festival, club and party scene who we interview twice a year face-to-face.

We call the monitor Antenna. It has become an important tool for the city of Amsterdam to follow new developments.



### Panel study

50 rounds since 1994

Those who sense the spirit of the time

- **Panel members (n=25)**  
Trendsetters: DJ's, organisers, clubbers, dealers, doormen, bartenders etc.
- **Different settings in nightlife**  
Venues, music styles and subcultures
- **Participant replacement:** 20-25% /year
- **Cycle (sub)generations:** 4-5 year

Now >>> 6<sup>th</sup> cycle

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Over the last 25 years we've conducted 50 rounds of interviews with an average of 25 panel members each round. Participants were selected for being deeply involved in Amsterdam nightlife and representing different scenes. Overall they represent an estimated 500 to 1000 people. Panel members generally rotate every 5 years.

It turned out to be a valuable instrument to catch the spirit of the time. We use a questionnaire or topic list for interviews. The topics are related to drug, set and setting issues. What makes a drug popular or not? It's not only about effects, user patterns and risks, but also on the image of how a drug is perceived by different generations. These interviews are essential for discovering new networks, upcoming scenes, shifts in music styles or the emergence of new substances.



Birds of feather flocked together. But what kind of color and sound do they like? Nightlife is driven by distinction and choices of where to go out and where not.

After many interviews we distinct four profiles of influential trend setters in nightlife. They are typed to be sensitive for hip and cool. But the definition of these terms are fluid and constantly changing. Just like the definitions of mainstream and underground.

One of the first definitions of hip comes from jazz musician Chad Galloway in '30: "Hip is Streetwise, sophisticated, someone with boots on" So actually; boots are made for walking: from the cottonfields all the way to New York and Chicago).

In Dutch perspective the majority of trendsetters in Amsterdam come from rural areas too. Hip in Urk (a tiny town where Dirk grew up) is fine but you need a place to shine! A sparkling nightlife in the big city.

We were able to distinct 4 profiles representing a typical sub-cultural capita:

- Alternatives: have a strong affinity to music and a broad perspective on what's happening in the dance as well as the urban scene.
- Creatives: Dj's, producers, bookers, concept creators, influencers...
- Psychonauts with drug experience capital, lots of knowledge on drugs, keeping track of new substances etc. they are influential in introducing and promoting drugs and exchanging knowledge through the internet
- The sensualists: reflect body capital, they like to dress up, look good, and are rather gender and race fluid.

Each of these profiles embrace specific cocktails of drug use.

| Panel study: Dynamics nightlife (5 cycles)       |  |   |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|
| start<br>1994 >                                  | 1<br>1999 >                                    | 2<br>2004 >   | 3<br>2009 >                              | 4<br>2013 >   | 5<br>2018 >   |
| <b>Trends:</b><br>Nightlife<br>& festivals       | Under-<br>ground<br>Clubs +++<br>Festivals +++ | VIP / glam<br>Urban music<br>Lounge                 | Techno in<br>clubs<br>Festivals+++       | Upperground<br>Revival raves +++<br>Afterparty's                    | Tourism center<br>Urban music<br>Periphery<br>Festivals =         |
| <b>Drugs:</b><br>Rise +<br>Fall -<br>Stable =    | XTC<br>Speed<br>Cocaine<br>GHB<br>Nitrous      | XTC<br>Speed<br>Cocaine<br>GHB<br>2C-B              | XTC<br>Speed<br>Cocaine<br>GHB<br>2C-B   | XTC; speed;<br>Cocaine;<br>Nitrous; GHB<br>Ketamine<br>NPS (4-FA)   | XTC; NPS<br>Speed<br>GHB; Nitrous<br>Ketamine<br>Cocaine<br>3-MMC |
| <b>Issues:</b><br>Policy<br>Health<br>Technology | Regulation<br>Mobile<br>phone                  | Safety &<br>health issues<br>Regulation in<br>clubs | Zero-<br>Tolerance<br>Economic<br>Crisis | Social media<br>Smartphone<br>Apps<br>Longer opening<br>hours clubs | De-<br>normalisation<br>Moral issues<br>Ecology                   |

The Antenna monitor turned out to be a qualitative goldmine that gives us information about successive generations. They tell us about their habits, drug and music preferences, used technologies and moral issues. We discovered that every generation reflects a 'zeitgeist'. But all that is solid melts into air when a new sub generation takes over.

This scheme shows us 5 cycles with a 5 year interval from the last 25 years. It shows us that completely new trends have emerged each time with subsequent in- or decrease of specific substance use.

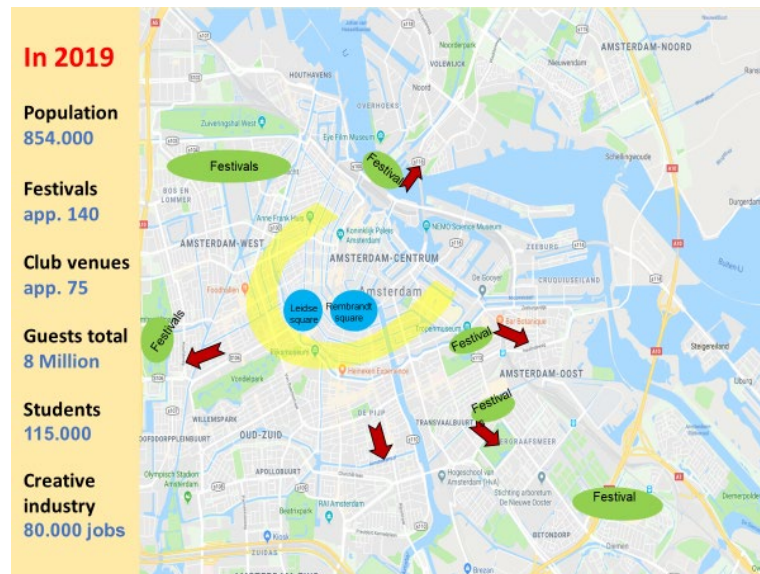
**Cycle 1:** Point zero in our monitor; The rise of the underground scene and birth year of major festivals like dance-valley and Mysteryland. Shows an overall increase of drug use.

**Cycle 2:** Shows a decrease in drug use. In contrary to the rather vile underground scene we now see a rise in the urban glam and bling scene. (VIP, sophistication, logo, lounge etc.) Being cool is more important than being wasted on drugs.

**Cycle 3:** Shows a stable low level of drug use with the exception of 2CB. It is the start of the zero tolerance approach with a visible and strict police enforcement on festivals.

**Cycle 4:** A new peak period of drugs use and an increases availability of New Psychoactive Substances or NPS. Rise of a new upperground by a fusion between underground and mainstream. Venues and raves on the outskirts have some regulations but less than in regular nightlife. Policy allows longer opening hours, and there is a rise of alternative lifestyles fed by social media.

**Cycle 5:** Developments in social media, provide increased networking possibilities and promotion of events. Going out = using WhatsApp, Facebook, You tube, Instagram etc. We live in a 24/7 economy with flexible working hours. Work and leisure time, are less separated and especially in the summer season there is a diffusion between night and day festivals.



This slide, shows us something about the setting in a macro perspective. Since the nineties, the economy of Amsterdam is growing. And like many other European cities, is going through a process of gentrification: together with a growing number of tourists, colonizing the center with more people and new regulations. This pushes nightlife outward of the center with new more adventurous settings appearing in the periphery.

In the next few slides I will dig a bit deeper into the cultural meaning of the party scene and drug use.

**Who are these kids, what are they doing and why? (Becker)**

**Social & symbolic meaning**

- Collective effervescence
- Admiration of others
- Spontaneous gift economy
- Sharing and caring
- Minimized harm and maximized joy

**No 'escapism' but 'vitalism'**

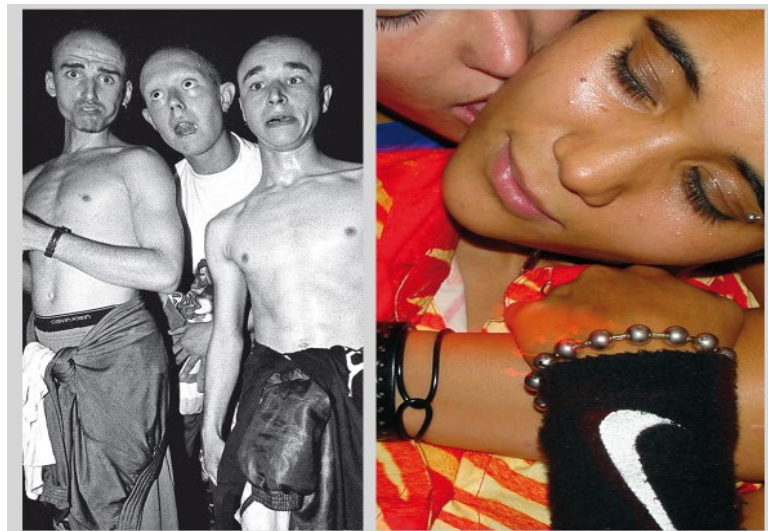
Who are these kids, what are they doing, and why? That was one of the central questions from Howard Becker, a famous North American criminologist. By understanding rites and symbolic interaction we can learn more about the meaning of drug use and what the value is to its user. In the current discussion the focus is on problematic drug use. It ignores the fact that most people have fun and don't experience problems at all. Unfortunately there is only a focus on risk behavior and little interest for a more holistic approach.



I certainly believe that the value of the experience to the user, is more important. Who has ever been to a festival will understand my point.

One of the conclusions in my thesis is that festivals (and clubs) can be very valuable for social interaction. New contacts are made spontaneously. Strangers feel like friends. Tattoos and outfits are admired, addresses are exchanged and anyone who trips is immediately helped. This altruism, contrasts with the pessimistic view of an individualized society, with insecurity and uneasiness towards 'strangers'.

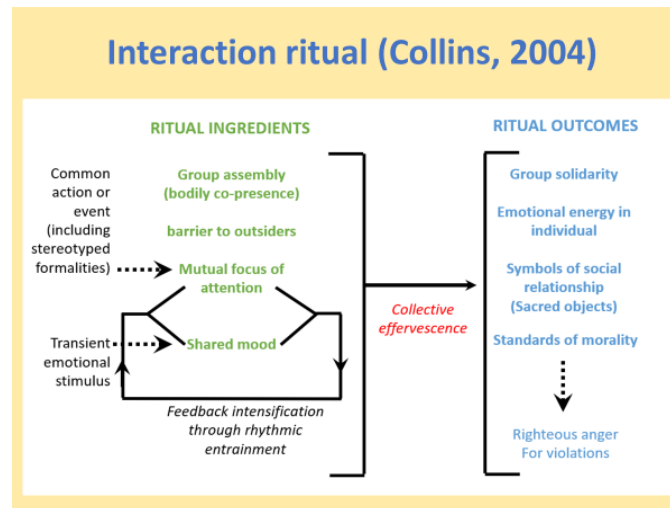
Commonly seen on festivals is a spontaneous manifestation of a gift economy between visitors: drinks, cigarettes, candy, or party relics are exchanged with complete strangers. The atmosphere is of sharing and caring, of minimized harm and optimized joy. The festival or drug experience is commonly negatively typed as esceepism, but is in essence the opposite.



These two pictures reflect different worlds in the party scene. The left one is shot by a friend of mine in 1995, the heydays of hardcore and terror where XTC was combined with lots of speed. The photo on the right was shot 10 years later in club Chemistry. These photo's represent two different worlds from rough to more cuddly.

From our interviews we know that the rough exterior does not necessarily reflect the atmosphere. At the roughest hardcore parties the atmosphere is mostly also joyful. And interaction reflects the same sharing and caring attitude as on other parties or festivals.

We do know, that an increase in dosage, can cause a decrease in good atmosphere. In the zero's the new sobriety was a reaction to the peak in drug use at the end of the nineties. When everybody's wasted and off their tits nobody cares.



This slide shows a model created by Collins and expands on Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence, which means exhilaration, excitement, and sparking with joy. This collective effervescence is achieved by interaction rituals.

The ritual's ingredients are:

- group assembly,
- a barrier to outsiders,
- mutual focus of attention and
- to share a common mood or emotional experience

The ritual outcomes according to Collins are:

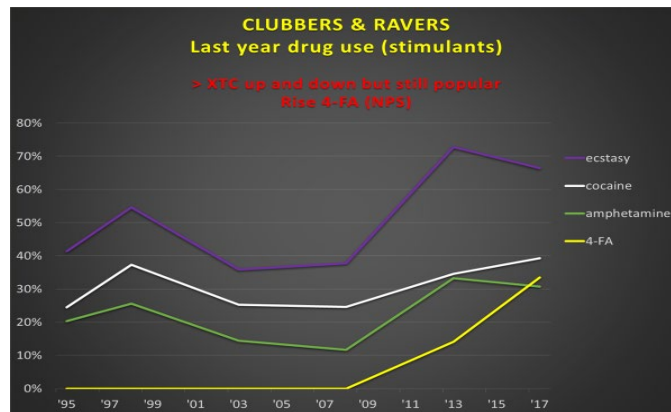
- *Group solidarity*, a feeling of membership
- *Emotional energy in individuals*, a feeling of confidence, elation, strength and enthusiasm
- *Symbols of social relationship*, outfits, objects, words and gestures
- *Feelings of morality*, the sense of rightness in belonging to a group

I feel that this should be studied more by authorities and law enforcers who mainly believe that festivals are riskful and dangerous places.

Unfortunately, in the current discourse, the pleasure of XTC is only a footnote.

In the Netherlands there is currently a conservative policy with a focus on de-normalizing XTC use. Over the last years politicians and law enforcers did a moral appèl on users. Those who use drugs facilitate crime and are thereby also guilty of it.

My believe is that more comprehensive sociological and psychological studies should be conducted to answer the question of why XTC, even after 30 years, is still so popular?



Now I'm gonna skip to the hard data in the next few slides. Starting with the stimulants used in Amsterdam nightlife. Followed by psychedelics and anesthetics, with a highlight on GHB. We have conducted 6 surveys amongst clubbers and ravers over the last 25 years. The first was in 1995.

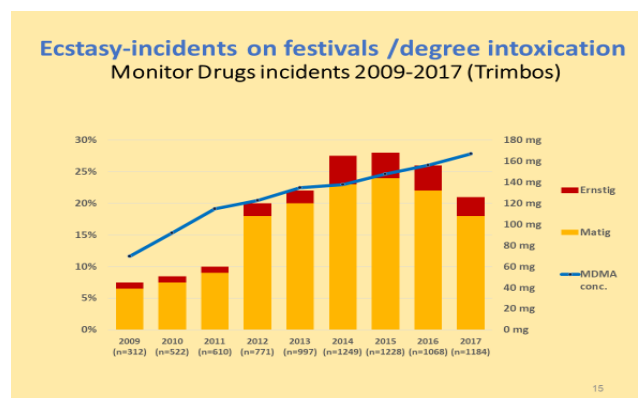
The use of XTC fluctuates over the years but is consequently party drug number 1. Even after 30 years I've never heard the next generation say that ecstasy is 'so nineties...'

**Amphetamine and XTC** both show a remarkable increase between 2008- 2013. A wild chapter in which the millennials took over the arena and a range of new rave communities were blooming. In aid of social media it was easy to organize rave flash mobs on new locations that were less regulated.

Historically amphetamine was mostly related to scenes like punk, rock and grunge. Since the birth of dance music this shifted to hardcore (gabber), raves and techno.

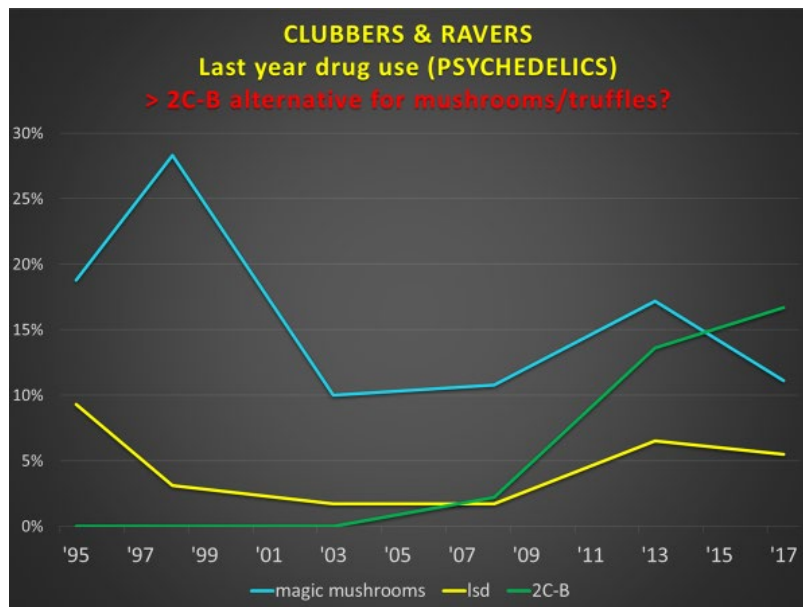
**Cocaine** was commonly used in more private settings like pubs or afterparties. Some user groups made a switch, as they got older, from speed and XTC to cocaine. Which is regarded as more sophisticated in relation to other stimulants.

**4-FA** made its introduction to our survey in 2013 and immediately showed as a very popular drug. A possible explanation is the many XTC-incidents which may people look for a more mellow alternative.



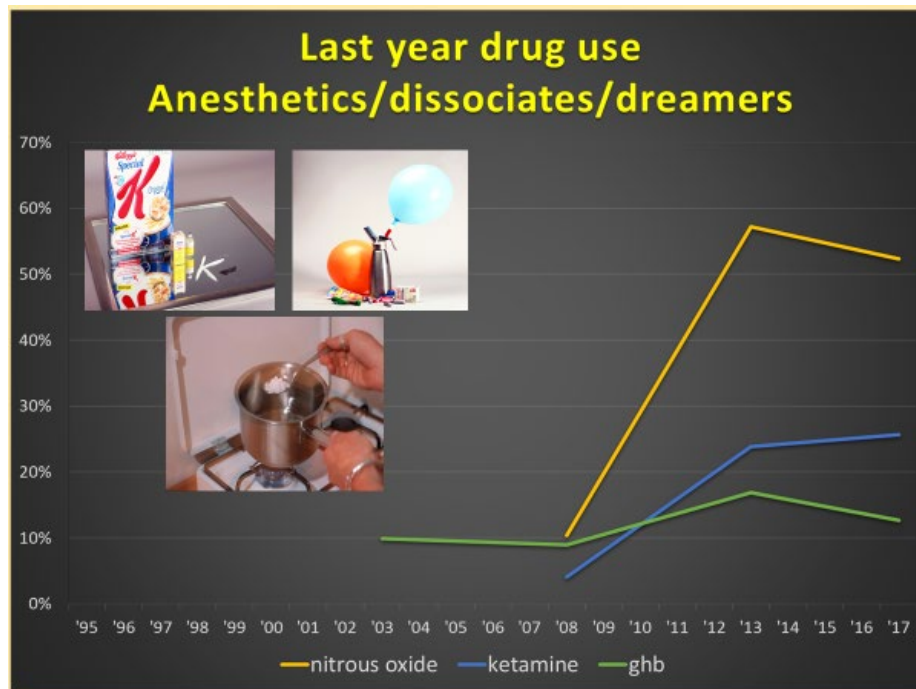
In despite of the joy, ecstasy brings, we can't deny that there are also health incidents. A couple times a year, researchers, prevention workers, medical professionals and law enforcers join in a discussion on drug markets and current trends. Like, strength, adulteration of drugs, incidents etc. In particular the XTC market had our attention with the increase in strength of pills. As shown in this graph, in 2009 the market was at the lowest point. With an average of 65 mg per pill. In nearly 10 years it shifted to an average of 170 mg. We've even seen exceptions of 300 mg. It is striking that the stronger pills have not even become more expensive.

This graph shows a clear link between the increase in strength (the blue line) and an increase in health incidents. The red bar reflects serious incidents and yellow shows the moderate. The explanation of the tipping point in 2017, for the decrease of incidents is still a cliffhanger. I assume that in the course of this event the subject will be discussed.



The use of psychedelics is less predominant in nightlife, especially in clubs. However its fluctuation over the last 25 years is interesting. It seems that 2C-B has replaced mushrooms and truffles as the most popular hallucinogenic drug. In the beginning of the nineties 2C-B was sold legally in smartshops like mushrooms. It was banned in 1997 (schedule I) but made a comeback 10 years ago.





How did anesthetics like GHB or ketamine emerge in clubs where usually only uppers were used?  
Why is nitrous oxide so popular?

In the nineties anesthetics were especially popular in the underground and more isolated scenes like travelers, psytrance and kinky networks. With the disappearance of the underground at the end of the nineties, the anesthetics slowly made their way into the new upperground. Their popularity raised with increased popularity of techno music with its accompanied afterparties. Specifically in that setting, anesthetics were able to gain a strong foothold.

Another influential factor is the convenience by which it can be obtained.

- GHB was the first Do-It-Yourself drug on the internet. You could order the precursor GBL, mix it with sodium -hydroxide and water, and make it at home in 15 minutes.
- The legal status of nitrous oxide has made a shift under EU law from a pharmaceutical status to consumer goods in 2017. Since then it is legally available for over the counter sales. New entrepreneurs and nitrous cowboys are now also able to flood the market with large gas tanks.
- Ketamine originally entered the scene through travelers, and is now widely available through delivery dealers.



If there is one drug that has led to controversy the last decennia then it is GHB. Right from the beginning I was intrigued by its rise in popularity.

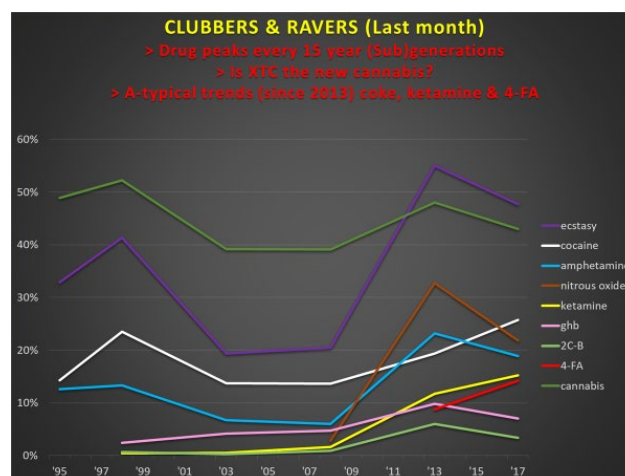
It can be explained by different motives like a desire for a short high, as a comedown at an after party, to counteract stimulants or as an addition to intensify the mix.

The effect is euphoric, relaxing, sociable, sensual. Users tell us that in contrast to XTC it doesn't have a bad come down.

But the growing popularity also has a down side with a rising number of health incidents since 2000. Especially GHB is regarded as a 'problem child'. A slight increase in dosage for a nice high can cause passing out into a short term coma, physical spasms and panic attacks. Only after 10 years in the scene it became clear that it can result in a physical dependence like with heroin. Right now, nationally, over 1000 people are admitted in rehab clinics an addiction to GHB.

Resulting from this is a more stringent control on possession and use in the party environment. Some clubs use a zero-tolerance policy on use and possession of GHB. Since its appearance there are ongoing discussions in user networks about the 'reckless coma kids'.

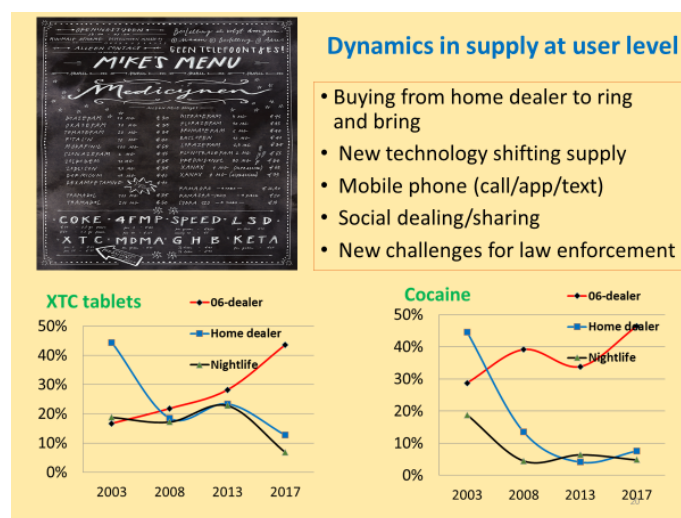
In user circles we also see a form of control through self-regulation. Examples are agreements like not to combine it with alcohol, time intervals between intake and maximum dosages.



Now putting it all together. For me, this is the most exiting slide, because we can see in one blink that drug use goes in waves over time with rise and falls and periods of stabilisation. This slide shows the recent use of the most popular drugs among clubbers and ravers. The data collected through our drug use surveys generally correspond to the information retrieved from our panel study interviews.

I'll mention a few striking developments:

- The prevalence rates shown two peak periods in 1998 and 2013 (reflecting a complete new generation). The uppers (purple xtc and blue speed) in the second peak in 2013 were on a higher level than the first peak.
- The use of new drugs doubled since 10 years ago since the introduction of anaesthetics (yellow K, brown Nitrous and pink GHB) but actually used on a lower prevalence level than the uppers.
- In 2013 when drug use declined there were 3 exceptions: red 4-FA which was a brand new drug since 2012 and the choice of a new sub generation; the second one, white cocaine, also reflects the booming economy; the marketing of yellow ketamine is professionalised in the last 5 years which resulted in a growing availability.
- For the first time in 2013 ecstasy is more popular than cannabis. From this perspective we could speak of normalization.

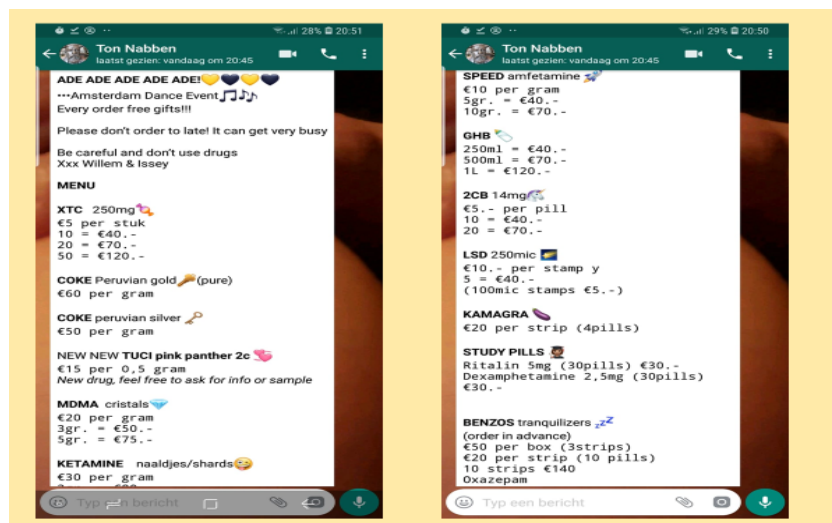


In the next two slides I will talk about the market and its influence on drug use. After the arrival of XTC, the Dutch drug market has become increasingly complex. Besides the prevalence of classical drugs like XTC, cocaine and amphetamine, the market for anesthetics and NPS has expanded. Generally these new substances do not necessarily hold foot. Nevertheless there are a few exceptions like Mefedrone, 4-FA and now 3-MMC.


Following the example of Great Britain and Belgium the Dutch authority is working on a generic-based-law for specific chemical-compound-groups. Preventing any substance in these groups to enter the market legally.

The internet and new technology have drastically changed the market. In this graph we can see that the market has changed from a pick-up to a delivery market. And dealers in clubs have become a thing of the past.

Through WhatsApp, users receive elaborate advertisements and updates on what's available, presented like a restaurant's menu.



The wide range of substances offered this way is remarkable. From uppers and steroids to anesthetics, psychedelics, tranquilizers and study pills. Most of our panel members are satisfied with their high service. They are trustworthy, friendly, discrete, and sometimes even offer discounts or bonus gifts. But above all they are reliable and deliver high quality.



### Paradigm shift: from outcast to scheduled hedonism

- Drug use shift from underground to mainstream
- Liquid networks and rise of social media
- Tightly planned work, study, sport, party time, drug use

Normalization of recreational drug use



Now I am closing in to my conclusions.

The drug use of marginal subcultures in the past (punks, hippies, rockers, rasta's etc.) has made a shift to the mainstream youth culture of today. The current generation of millennials shows an ambivalent lifestyle. The use of drugs, and sustaining a healthy lifestyle, do not necessarily Exclude each other. These so called time scheduled hedonists embody a 'wellness paradox' in which work, study, sport and leisure time, including drug use, are tightly planned.

Drug use is increasingly seen as normal, and is becoming an uncontroversial aspect of Dutch youth culture.



### Highlights

#### 25 years of drug monitoring

- Fluctuations in drug use with interval peaks of 15 years
- Important gamechangers are music styles, internet and social media
- Complexifying and expanding drug market
- Normalization of mainstream drug use
- Studying set and setting is crucial
- Best policy is pragmatic approach
- Users also responsible for a vibrant nightlife

**On to the next 25 years!**

To finalize my story I will highlight some of the outcomes of our ongoing research. The party scene is a difficult terrain to map. The landscape is constantly changing and expanding. One important conclusion is that the fluctuations in drug use seem autonomous from repressive policy. We've detected 2 major peaks with a 15 year interval. And in between we see a fall, stabilization, and rise. Each with the introduction of a new sub-generation, following shifts in music styles, technology and drug markets. Every new sub-generation creates a unique blueprint of a momentum in history.

In this postmodern society, drugs are no longer seen as an opposite of working life but is integrated in lifestyles. Nowadays we live in a Pick 'n Mix consumption society and users can choose which drug will fit their mood: for work, for dance, for sex, for dreamlike states etc.

The Antenna has grown to be an important tool, because we include dynamics of set and setting, for a more comprehensive understanding of drug use and risk behavior.

Best prevention policy is a pragmatic approach. Defining problematic substances, user groups or settings. And base policy on cooperation between authorities, institutions and actors in the scene.

But at last we should not forget the responsibility of the users themselves to not shit in their own back yard. The best risk management is taking care of yourself and each other! With thanks to Jellinek and the city of Amsterdam, who supported the project. It is the longest running monitor on drug use in the Netherlands, and probably in Europe too. I sincerely hope we'll be able to continue it for at least another 25 years!