

Does a psychoactive substance always affect a person in the same way? What factors are responsible for the subjective experience of a substance effect? Can it be controlled by the user? In western cultures there is a widespread conviction that controlled use of most psychoactive substances is beyond human agency. It leads to dependency or loss of control manifesting itself, inter alia, in criminal behavior. Such perception of the phenomena of psychoactive substance consumption is strongly influenced by the "War on drugs" policies as well as the discourse of addiction as a disease. Perhaps, changes in consciousness effected by drugs are not determined solely by the influence of individual substances on the human nervous system, but are also framed by culturally developed patterns of use of psychoactive substances and individual reasons for their consumption. This project is located within those critical studies of drug use, that challenge the notion that regular drug users are deprived of their agency in the interaction with psychoactive substances.

Ethnographically, the project focuses on processes of building and negotiating relations with ayahuasca and other psychoactive substances among the followers of Santo Daime religion in Brazil. Ayahuasca is a psychoactive brew containing DMT, which provokes so-called altered states of consciousness characterized by modified perception and intense visions. The brew was traditionally consumed in the areas of the upper Amazon in the practices of shamanistic healers (*vegetalistas*). With the ongoing process of globalization the traditional patterns of ayahuasca consumption began to undergo a transformation. At the beginning of the 20th century new syncretic religions in the area were formed, with the central ritual of consumption of ayahuasca. The Santo Daime church is the oldest of them, and it combines indigenous Indian traditions with Catholicism. The source of its doctrine, as well as the main tool used in the course of rituals is ayahuasca referred to by the faithful as Daime, recognized as the divine being, sacrament of communion and source of knowledge. The visions experienced during intoxication with ayahuasca form the basis of cosmological ideas of the believers. Although ayahuasca is illegal and treated as a drug in many countries, in the studied cultural context ayahuasca rituals are used in the treatment of addiction to other psychoactive substance like alcohol, opiates and stimulants.

My research will address the question of how a socio-cultural context may affect relationships between a psychoactive substance and the organism of the consumer. The study will analyse experiential substance use trajectories among Santo Daime followers as well as epistemic trajectories of concepts related to substance use. Through the anthropological exploration the researcher will trace how they move across the life-courses and cultural, political and institutional domains. The research will focus on the following relations: 1) relations between substances and users 2) social relations built around the substance use 3) relations between the construction of concepts related to substance use like 'drug', 'self-control', 'addiction' and their socio-cultural context. The data collected during ethnographic research will also become a starting point for consideration of the problem of agency and control in drug interactions as well as for the theoretical discussion with addiction as a brain disease model.