drugs
(counter)
mapping

collective book project

imagine a beautiful coffee table book of alternative maps about drugs
Cartographic representations contribute to these imaginaries, for example with streams of trade between global south and global north or hotspots of dangerous urban areas. These representations raise concerns, since drugs are a nexus of multidimensional power relationships. The very idea of mapping drugs is rejected by many drug users and advocates.

This book will share alternative knowledge about drugs, from production to consumption. Experimenting with new visualisations and new graphic languages, it will foster other imaginations and understandings of this global phenomenon. Compiling case studies in text and graphic form, it promotes a better understanding of the complexity behind the word, "drugs".

Drugs are fascinating, because of their effects on mind and body, but also because of our ideas and images of them. A part of human culture for millennia, psychoactive substances have been celebrated and widely integrated into society on the one hand, and framed as evil and prohibited across the world on the other. From local production and use to global trade, they are often tied to crime, vice and discourses of fear.
Essays, analyses, scientific texts, narrations of collective and individual experiences...
We consider drug practices (production, trade, consumption) and practices related to drugs (illegalisation, prevention, harm reduction, repression, therapy, stigmatisation, discrimination) as socially produced. They depend on historical, ideological and spatial contexts. We prefer to consider drugs as a social and political issue rather than an individual issue. We also encourage systemic approaches involving material, cultural and social contexts of drug use, as well as intersectional approaches.

We aim to visually challenge hegemonic narratives about drugs from global to local and micro scales.
The term includes a wide variety of psychoactive substances, illegalised, legalised or even prescribed. Often, the same substance can be regarded as medicine, stimulant, delicacy or addictive narcotic, depending on the context.

So what do we mean by drugs?
While drug trade and use are often attributed to specific places, a closer look shows that this happens almost everywhere: at home, at work, in all kind of venues, in the streets... The geography of drugs is therefore often structured by polarisations between private and public spaces, or privileged and marginalised users. Drugs raise multiscalar questions that range from bodies to the global order of our contemporary world, through neighbourhoods and regions.
The worldwide prohibition of drugs is quite a recent phenomenon, rooted in colonial histories and surveillance of "dangerous classes" – often targeting racialised communities. Such historical and political contexts are crucial to understanding the dynamics behind why (some) drugs are constructed as dangerous while others are not.
Since maps are instruments of power, they can become instruments of counter-power.

This book will build on and contribute to an emerging tradition of atlases of alternative mapping, such as “An Atlas of Radical Cartography” by Mogel and Baghat (eds.); “This Is Not An Atlas” by Orangotango Collective (ed.); the electronic “antiAtlas of Borders” by Cédric Parizot (ed.) or the “Atlas of Migration in Europe” by Olivier Clochard (ed.).

Counter-mapping seeks alternative data sources; self-representation of dominated or marginalised voices; reflexivity and transparency about map production processes; an intervention into public debates; and also aesthetic experimentation as well as reflexion on the role of visuality.

an activist tradition of alternative mapping practices
Central to our project is methodological reflexivity about the (carto)graphic process and its actors.

Instead of fetishizing maps as objects, counter-mapping understands them as the result of a production process that should be openly discussed and reflected upon. It attempts to look at the power relationships within the map and drawn by the map – even maps produced with counter-mapping approaches.

Reflexivity encompasses the actors involved, origin of the data, selections of information, choices of visualisation, means of dissemination, etc.
Particularly important is the position of the author(s) in relation to their subjects.

Counter-mapping is rooted in creativity: while some mappers work with Geographical Information System and exact coordinates, others prefer to work with objects, finding inspiration in arts and crafts.

Projections, proportions and measure do not always matter. More important are the meanings conveyed by the tools chosen – and the interpretations they allow.
Based on historical documents, quantitative data, (collective) experiences, policy analysis, interviews...

The book will bring together many different disciplines:

- Anthropology
- Criminology
- Critical cartography
- Critical theory
- Cultural studies
- Decolonial studies
- Disability studies
- Economics
- Ethnography
- Feminist & queer studies
- Geography
- Geopolitics
- Health studies
- History
- Rural studies
- Sociology
- Urban studies
- Urbanism, etc...

Looking for (carto) graphers, writers, activists and others

- Counter-mapping
- GIS
- Graphic arts
- Drawing
- Design
- Infographics

- Social justice movements
- Global justice movements
- Community advocates
- Agricultural workers' unions
- Drug users' organisations
Since the book project has some funding, we can collaborate with freelance workers or associations from any country, with a VAT if in Europe – within the limits of our budget.

Payment for authors and creators (for texts, maps, designs) published in the book will also depend on the negotiations with possible publishers.
We are gathering proposals.

We welcome all kinds of proposals, visual sketches and texts (max. 500 words), in English, French or Spanish, until 30 September 2021.

Please don’t forget to include all relevant information about what you aim to do (who, what, where, when, how, style...), your contact information, and also a realistic schedule to complete your work.

Final contributions (submitted around February 2022) will include maps or visual material, a text related to the topic and a reflexive explanation of the actors, sources or production process of the visual material (max. approx. 3500 words).

Any question?

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We are three editors. The idea of the book emerged from the editors working together on two international research projects. The book project draws on our international experience and on broad support from research institutions, collectives and an advisory board.

**Editors**

Dr. Mélina Germes, CNRS PASSAGES, Bordeaux, France
Is a social geographer working on topics such as security, drugs and ableism. She practices critical cartography as an analysis of how, why and with what effects police or drug experts produce maps, and as counter-mapping research using participative and emotional mapping methods together with Luise Klaus.

Luise Klaus, University of Frankfurt, Germany
Is a geographer. She studies drug users’ everyday lives within the urban context. Together with Mélina Germes, she works on emotional mapping interviews and participative mapping workshops with people who use drugs.

Dr. Stefan Höhne, KWI, Essen, Germany
Is a cultural and urban historian working on the relations of technology, the built environment and everyday life. He is currently studying the narcotic history of Berlin during the Cold War, between Eastern and Western Europe.

**Funding and Institutions**
French-German Drugs and Urban Security Project (DRUSEC, ANR/BMBF), dir: Mélina Germes
European Governing the Narcotic City Project (HERA), dir: Stefan Höhne
French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS)
University of Frankfurt am Main (Germany)
Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI) Essen, Germany

**Advisory Board**
Collective Orangotango+, counter-mapping, Berlin
Prof. Bernd Belina, Critical geography and cartography, Frankfurt, Germany
More to be announced
The book does not seek to be exhaustive; it picks heterogeneous small case studies from all over the world, which together form a broader picture.
about us

drugscountermapping.wordpress.com

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DRUSEC project

Drogen und Stadt online exhibition

Narcotic City project