



THE RESULTS OF THE “ILLEGAL FLOW OBSERVATION” PROJECT

DRUG TRAFFICKING AND STRATEGIES OF INTERVENTION



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PALERMO



VNIVERSIDAD
D SALAMANCA

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“ILLEGAL FLOW OBSERVATION” PROJECT*



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In the cover *Les Coquelicots* Claude Monet (1873) Musée d'Orsay Paris

The processes of social definition help to identify drugs as a social problem (drugscares) when the following conditions are met: dramatization of the media; epidemic proportions; a substance that produces high dependency and portraying the worst case scenarios associated with its use, generate or exaggerate the public alarm with respect to the substance, lobbying the legislator to intervene; existence of powerful interest groups, such as doctors, pharmacists, professionals that treat addictions to alcohol, the control agencies, and/or churches who claim professional and specialist knowledge and who claim to have the best remedy to the problem (which means, and does not seem to be a coincidence, that the public sector will have to grant him ample resources). The third phase is related to the moment when the drug emerges or is widely used in a context where there is evidence of significant a cultural or social conflict. For example, the alarm of drug during 60s (marijuana as a “grass killer”) was caused in part by the public anxiety for the participation of young people in the political struggles of that time (civil rights battles, the Vietnam War).

We also consider the association between drugs and dangerous classes: the drug use is associated with a “dangerous class” (considered as a threat mainly by powerful elites). For example, it was not the alcohol problem in itself that had animated the push for Prohibition, but the behaviour and the morality of those that the dominant groups considered as the dangerous class of immigrants, class workers, Catholics, of the urban areas. Similarly, the problems associated with cocaine use were not the only factor that gave rise to the alarm during the 80s. Rather, a type of cocaine which might have been smoked made his way through the African-American and Latino underclass. When the elites establish a conceptual connection between a given drug and groups that are considered dangerous or discredited, they find easy scapegoats. By inducing public opinion to focus on the use of drugs that occurs within specific groups, they divert the attention from some of their troubled assets (e.g. corporate crime or government corruption).

II.1.3 Toxicological problems related to drugs, with particular reference to chemical precursors

Antonina Argo *

This presentation comes from a process of scientific collaboration, research and didactics with a laboratory of medicinal chemistry, in Milan. Since this collaboration is part of the allocation of resources that we shared among universities of our cities, for the comparison of data, I felt, with the permission of the head of that laboratory, professor Veniero Gambaro, to your attention. Seized material arrive and each laboratory is organised according to

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a traceability path that has already been transfused, because that is what the international legislation prescribes and also relates to a process of scientific credibility and further provability in retrospect. It is not only the traceability of the path that the material seized, arrived at the laboratory, will follow, but also the insurance of a chain of custody. This is a very important issue: the laboratory undertakes the majority of its resources in trying to make transparent, fluid and reportable the management of the chain of custody. Whatever the act of lab that has a value in medical and legal purposes must fulfill a documented traceability. The assessment of the laboratory, however, often entails, and cannot be otherwise, the destruction of a portion of this sampled material. So, the observant lab technician, according to the guidelines, which then become validated protocols, must be able to manage wisely the rate of the sample. When there are large batches of material seized, it should be possible to assess the homogeneous assessment, a distribution as much more capillary and representative of the whole corpus.

First of all, we proceed to the description of the "case", the material seized, i.e. everything that is transported by the law enforcement in the container, with a brief description of the case/cases. After this first passage, which is very important, as soon as the sample is developed, we proceed to a sort of a preliminary test, which is an introductory analysis, used to verify how to proceed: powder, leaves, solid material, which allows immediately approaching the analysis. The path of transformation, of material camouflage, means that there is not a correspondence between the case appearances and that we would expect as a result of the analysis. In the assessment of drug seized is always extremely useful this first stage of the laboratory analysis, which is the qualitative analysis by TLC. After this first stage of the analytical path, the further moment of critical assessment is that of the qualitative analysis of the possible sample which contains the drug through chromatography on gaseous layer. It indicates, in this case, a tool (the chromatograph) with revealing columns, while the transport system of the chromatography is given by gas, although is still chromatography, based on a principle of distribution of an acidic or basic substance that is conveyed through a conductor system, by sharing it between different phases: if the chromatography is liquid, the conductor system is liquid, if it is gaseous - the substance is distributed in one or in the other part - it goes there because of the entered carrier gas (helium, nitrogen, etc.). Forensic chemical-toxicological analysis of qualitative type is the first investigation as it allows saying that in the material seized there is a specific substance, it detects the quality of the substance; the subsequent stages will have then to identify with certainty which one is that substance. Obviously, as the law identifies some steps that are numerical coefficients, it will be necessary to proceed at a rate of identification, of qualitative assessment: it then makes a quantitative determination of the substance that is the active principle to which the law gives relevance.

The identification of the support material, represented by substances

carrying the active principle which the law gives relevance, is constituted by diluents or adulterants. The diluent is a material, mostly inert, which enriches and helps to compose the overall involucre of the substance for sale in the illicit trafficking. It is inert, but it is not said that it is not harmful to human health, because it can carry many elements of different nature, organic or inorganic, which biologically damaging the human being. Then, there are the adulterants: they are substances that interfere with the drug and enhance the effects of the drug itself, ready to be sold. The effects are varied and the trafficking is enriched by all the different areas of medicine, veterinary medicine, biological substances: from strychnine to levamisole which is very harmful to the human lung. In order to create the drug in the laboratory, are often used substances that evaporate: the process is amplified to the maximum in the new techniques of preparation of synthetic cannabinoids. These carriers and solvents allow identifying the purity and tracing the possible geographic location of origin. The seized material is photographed and then the first packaging is removed. This is therefore the first stage, i.e. the description of the case with the most varied forms: sometimes all the packaging is – per se – the drug. The packaging materials are varied. Let's examine a case (see slide no. 10). The drug is in the wrapping paper. Under the wrapping paper, there is a vacuum polythene bag and then a film; and again under it a layer of dark-grey fat made up of calcium soaps, starch and black pepper. This type of casing is inert substance that had to prevent the leakage of the effluvium and, at the same time, create such a conditioning to hide and protect the substance present inside it. We see that it is adhesive tape, transparent film, a layer of black rubber and again transparent film.

This is another case (slide no. 11): in this case was a suitcase. We find a layer of black polyethylene, carbon paper that carries with it the ink material which makes it more difficult the chemical-toxicological analysis, transparent film, fat layer, and again transparent film and heat-sealed polyethylene bag. This is another type of seizure (see slide no. 12), much more frequently, they are small pills, small tablets of the most different calibre, size, weight, packaging, often placed on the market for young people in recreational settings, which may contain everything. Sometimes, the powder material is bunched up in fanciful shapes (see slide no. 12) that make it difficult to recognise the origin of the powder. After the description that must be the most comprehensive and complete for the future use, comes the organoleptic test. After the preliminary tests, the first real analytical step dating back to the last century, but still absolutely valid: the chromatographic plates, the assessment essay with liquid chromatography. For the routine two types of plates are used: the indicator plates of fluorescence for adulterants drug, plates without fluorescent indicator for adulterants and diluents. The fluorescence indicator is a chromophore, a chemical compound that binds to some part of the molecule of the drug and then it is viewed with a UVA light system (see slide no. 16).



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The University of Palermo – Department of Law, Society and Sport

The department of Studies on Politics, Law and Society was born on 30th December 1987. It brings together academics of political, legal and social phenomena, belonging to different disciplines, in order to promote and develop research that explore the connections between these phenomena, their foundations and in order to promote and coordinate the training of operators on cultural, political, legal and social issues. The Department takes care of the promotion of culture in the various fields, related disciplines well beyond the university. The Department organises seminars, conferences and conventions of a scientific nature, in connection with similar organisations in Italy and abroad, and provides for the dissemination of research results. The Department is a library open to the public, structured so as to encourage the study of the interrelationships between disciplines, political science, law, sociology and philosophy.



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The University of Salamanca - CISE (Ciencias de la Seguridad) Department

CISE (Ciencias de la Seguridad) is an academic project that brings together at the University of Salamanca the training on Security, Research and Emergency. Teaching is delivered through Diplomas (Specialist in Security, Private Investigator Diploma, Diploma in Criminology, Criminalistics), Continuing Education Courses (Management and Administration of Safety, Superior University Course Management and Civil protection Coordination) and Special Courses. Over eighty teachers and professionals from various fields (Members of the Security Forces, Private Detectives, judges, prosecutors, Prison Officers, Brokers, Security Managers, Civil Protection Technicians and Emergencies, etc..) are committed to the educational work. The qualifications are endorsed sixteen years of work and are offered with less attendance for class and most of it can be done online.

“I believe in young people. I believe in their strength, their clarity and their integrity. I believe in young people, because maybe they are better of mature people and because they start to feel higher and dramatically true moral incitements. And in any case, it is the young people who will take the destiny of the society in their hands, and so it is right that they have clear ideas.

When I speak to young people of the need to fight drugs, in reality I indicate them one of the most powerful ways to fight the Mafia. In this historic moment, in fact, the drug market is undoubtedly the most important instrument of power and profit.”

Rocco Chinnici (1925-1983)



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