

From recreational to regular drug use: qualitative interviews with young clubbers

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Abstract

This article analyses the process of going from recreational use to regular and problematic use of illegal drugs. We present a model containing six career contingencies relevant for young people's progress from recreational to regular drug use: the closing of social networks, changes in forms of parties, intoxication becoming a goal in itself, easier access to drugs, learning to recognise alternative effects of drugs and experiences of loss of control. The analysis shows that these dimensions are at play not only when young people develop a regular drug use pattern but also when they attempt to extricate themselves from this pattern. Hence, when regular drug users talk about their future, it is not a future characterised by total abstinence from illegal drugs but a future where they have rolled back their drug use career to the recreational drug use pattern they started out with. Empirically, the article is based on qualitative interviews with young drug users contacted at nightclubs in Denmark.

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