Spring 2010: Comparative Approaches to Drug Policy Amsterdam Research Trip

Day 1 Arrival and Orientation

Day 2 Overview of drugs policy in the Netherlands and Amsterdam. Lecture by Janhuib Blans, social psychologist and epidemiologist and in the field of addiction studies.



Briefing at Cannabis College by Hans van Duijn, Retired Dutch Police Union

His career has given him contact with all aspects of alcohol and drug interventions (research, training, management) as a fieldworker, journalist and Assistant Professor at the University of Amsterdam. He works for (inter-) national and local organizations and policymakers.





President and senior advisor to the Minister of Interior and President of the Dutch Police Union.

Day 4 State medical approaches to harm reduction. Amsterdam Public Health Service.

We had a fantastic q and a session with the inspiring and knowledgeable Dr. Nelda de Grave, as well as a nurse and client of the heroin prescription program. They were boundlessly generous with their time and willingness to answer even the most difficult and personal of questions. We were also able to see the Service's safe injection and use areas, and to learn how the government vets participants in the methadone and heroin prescription programs. Patients must attempt methadone maintenance for five years before being eligible for heroin prescriptions. All use is closely supervised and bound by an extensive set of rules. As we were told, these are the patients that for one reason or another have been determined to be unlikely to ever successfully be weaned from heroin; therefore they are given ways to use that are safer and less likely to spread disease and crime.

Dr. de Grave told us, after years in the public health service, that 'methadone is cheap; heroin is more expensive but far cheaper than the costs of all the trouble [crime and secondary health problems] of obtaining heroin on the streets.'

The treatment center we visited was in a southeastern suburb, very different from the city centre where we are spending most of our time. There's a large immigrant population and the area has little pedestrian traffic, being far more industrial than the

city centre where we have spent most of our time thus far.

Day 5 Approaches to harm reduction I. Coffeehouse tour and activism discussion with medical activist Jackie Woerlee.

Day 6 Approaches to harm reduction II. University of Amsterdam for seminar with Dirk Korf from 3-430. We were pleased to have a solid two hours with one of the most-published researchers in drug policy in the Netherlands, Dirk Korf. He heard from each of the students their particular interests and then reflected on each topic in turn. It was interesting to put a face with

so much of the reading we've done. (From his bio on the University website: http://www.english.uva.nl/news/professorappointments.cfm/E365A294-1321-B0BE-68104F37D3B27D38) Dr Korf is Professor by Special Appointment in Criminology, and in particular criminal policy research, in the Faculty of Law of the University of Amsterdam (UvA). His research is focused on the investigation of developments and patterns in

recreational drug use and drug trafficking in the context of drug policy and from an international perspective. He is particularly fascinated by cultural aspects of modern-day society, such as the ways in which changing ethnic make-up of populations and the resulting shift in perspectives on substance use influence trends in recreational drug use.

Besides his academic appointments, he was head of the Deviance and Social Control section in the Municipality of Amsterdam's Department for Research and Statistics, Director of the Amsterdam Ecumenical Centre (Amsterdams Oecumenisch Centrum),

and a drug addiction for the Rainbow Foundation in Amsterdam. In addition, Korf appointments as Chairman of European Society for Social Research, and Vice Chairman Scientific Council of the Dutch Drugs Monitor.



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Day 7 Approaches to Harm Reduction III. Seminar at Mainline. I cannot thank Mainline enough for their generosity with their very tight staff time. This visit was one of the most profound experiences of the trip thus far. Project Manager (and ex-Marine) Jeannot Schmidt changed the way many of us view drug use and drug users. Mainline's holistic approach shifts the focus from punishing a particular behaviour to providing the means and motivation for users to reduce harm to themselves and those around them.





Day 8
Parties
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stances. Lecture & discussion with Diederik Boomsma of the CDA (Christian Democratic Appeal Party - current ruling party).

Day 9 Departure

Our big event the next month, sharing the results of our research with community leaders.

