Studying social supply networks through the internet
Introduction

- Social supply as a concept
  - What is *social supply*?
  - Theoretical framework?
  - Analytical value?

- Research design
Social supply: definition

- Research end-use distribution cannabis
  - Social relationship
  - Non-monetary transaction
Social supply

- “the non-commercial (or non-profit making) distribution of cannabis to non-strangers” (Hough, 2003)

- However: no agreed definition (Potter, 2009)
Several theories of drug use pay attention to social context and social relationships

Two main viewpoints:
- Cultural separation
- Cultural integration

Social network theory?
Cultural separation:

- Social learning and subcultural theories (Becker, 1963):
  - Peers influence others into a form of “traditional” subculture

Cultural integration (Parker, 2002; Beck, 1992):

- Individualisation and risk management
Social network theory (Coomber & Turnbull, 2007)

- Social network analysis (Cotterell, 2007; Fuhse, 2009):
  - Social networks as building blocks for drug markets
Analytical value?

- Social supply:
  - a way to normalize drug use without normalizing drug dealing (Potter, 2009)

- Theoretical framework:
  - Situate social supply within the wider debate surrounding social relations at retail-level in drug markets
Research questions

› How does a user describe his relationship with his supplier?
› How is a user’s personal supply network structured?
› To what extent does a user gets his cannabis for free?
› How does a user position himself in the supply network he describes?
Research design

- Hidden population: young recreational cannabis users

- Mixed method approach (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Scott, 2011):
  - Study both structure and meaning of personal networks
  - Both online and face-to-face data collection
Quantitative
- Websurvey: fuzzy set social network analysis (Ragin, 2000):
  - Personal network structure
  - How does a respondent perceive himself within his networks?

Qualitative
- Semi-structured interviews
  - Study meaning structure, visualise social networks
  - Referral?
Virtual ethnography (Hine, 2000; Barratt, 2010):

- Structure of (virtual) networks
- Obstacles:
  - Access
  - Identity
  - Study meaning structure of networks
Thank you!

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