

# Call for Abstracts

## Drugs and digital technologies. Special issue of *Kriminologisches Journal (KrimJ)*

Edited by Meropi Tzanetakis, University of Vienna, and  
Bernd Werse, Goethe University Frankfurt

Illicit drug markets are undergoing a significant transformation: digital technologies have a profound influence on how illicit drugs are accessed, and they have also changed information-sharing about drugs. In addition, the proliferation of information and communication technologies has changed law enforcement activity. Digitalisation also comes with rapid changes in communicative environments across time and geographic location. While online forums and other internet resources have massively increased the amount of available information and discourse on psychoactive substances for more than two decades, mobile phones, encrypted platforms, cryptocurrencies, social media and messaging applications have recently diversified the ways in which illicit drugs are distributed. This diversity includes hybrid forms of distribution, e.g. using social media applications to make physical appointments.

The enhanced connectivity on the internet has blurred the distinction between open/public and closed/private markets, challenging established concepts for traditional drug markets. Some of the new digital marketplaces and social media applications can operate pseudonymously when used with care, disguising identifying information, including the physical and online location of buyers and sellers, thus altering the nature of the inherent risks of transactions. To those with digital literacy, access to digital drugs spaces is low-threshold. At the same time, law enforcement officials develop new strategies to disrupt digital distribution networks and use digital traces to prosecute people who buy drugs. Thus, the area of conflict between prosecution and protective measures is constantly developing: people who sell and buy drugs also adapt to law enforcement operations, shifting illicit activities to ever-changing digital spaces and introducing new socio-technical practices to organise the exchange of drugs.

While new technologies have generally changed ways of communication and cultures, expressions, aesthetics and other forms of drug cultures are heavily affected. Contemporary drug cultures are inconceivable without the possibilities of the internet. Therefore, the ways in which drug-related realities and identities are constructed via digital technologies are also an important subject for social researchers.

For this special issue, we particularly encourage submissions that deal with the following topics, but we are also open to other relevant contributions in relation to the intersection of illicit drugs and digital technologies:

- Organisation, maintenance and structure of online drug markets
- Relationships between buyers, sellers, administrators, police and digital infrastructures (hardware and software)
- Drug cultures on the internet
- Intersectionality of race, class, and gender in digital drug spaces

- Governance by and of online drug markets
- Impacts of drug control and law enforcement measures on the internet
- Coordination practices in digital drug markets
- Role of digital technologies in affecting drug trends and drug policies
- Effects of digitalisation on traditional drug markets and links between traditional and digital ways of drug trafficking
- Innovative methods to research digital drug spaces
- Digital drugs spaces and the COVID-19 pandemic

## **Timeline**

**Abstract submission deadline: January 31st, 2021**

**Notification of acceptance: February 5th, 2021**

**Deadline for full papers: April 1st, 2021**

**Scheduled publication: Issue 3, 2021**

**Submission Process:** Please submit your abstracts, in English (**250 words max.**), to [meropi.tzanetakis@univie.ac.at](mailto:meropi.tzanetakis@univie.ac.at) and [werse@em.uni-frankfurt.de](mailto:werse@em.uni-frankfurt.de). The authors of the selected submissions will be invited to submit a full paper (**5,500 words max.**). The submitted full papers will undergo a **double-blind peer review**. More information on author guidelines can be found at:

[http://www.krimj.de/images/Einreichungsmaterialien/202005\\_Manuscript%20Submission%20Guidelines%20KrimJ.pdf](http://www.krimj.de/images/Einreichungsmaterialien/202005_Manuscript%20Submission%20Guidelines%20KrimJ.pdf)

Potential contributors are welcome to contact Dr. Meropi Tzanetakis and/or Dr. Bernd Werse to discuss submissions in advance.

Scholars who attended the 31st Annual Conference of the European Society for Social Drug Research (ESSD), which was held online from 24 to 25 September 2020, are particularly welcome to submit an abstract for this special issue.