

But

What

About

Beer?

A FAQ on drug consumption at common activist spaces - camps, events, social centers etc.

Introduction

This zine was written because we felt that it might be important for people who have not encountered these issues before to have the opportunity to read through some of the common topics raised, so they can feel more informed and confident when discussing in a larger group. It is as well an act of solidarity with all the people negatively affected who don't want or can't get involved. We hope that by introducing these topics outside the discussion it will give people the option to read and reflect on what is written in their own time and space. We are not calling for total abstinence or for a drug-free world. We would be happy if this zine provokes some thoughts on the use of drugs at political events, common activist spaces etc. and how this might affect everyone.

Since these types of events are relatively anonymous, temporary and often include a large amount of people that have not met or lived together previously, it is unlikely that people feel safe to express

their feelings on this topic. For this reason it is safer to expect that there are people that are affected. This also takes off the pressure from the individual affected to have to speak up.

Below you will find some of the main questions and arguments in favor of drug use in common spaces and a basic response to them based on our own and other's experiences from activist/political camps and events.

FAQ

For clarification, we don't see a difference between legal and illegal drugs since this is a state definition. We also consider alcohol a drug. Whilst throughout this zine many of the examples we have included refer to alcohol or drinking, this can be easily substituted with any other substance. One of the reasons that we highlighted alcohol is that it's one of the most common drugs, and often its usage and affect on society and individuals isn't viewed as critically as other drugs.

Q/ *But I'm an anarchist/this is an anarchist site, why do we have rules?*

A/ Anarchy as we understand it is not simply about no rules, it's about not

having authorities and oppression, about not having leadership from people or over people. It's about creating an environment where everyone can feel and act free, without having anyone telling you what you can or can't do. In order to act more freely and push towards a different world one must feel safe. People who feel unsafe can't feel and act free. This creates the necessity for drug free spaces, especially spaces where one needs their full concentration and energy to complete common goals because if people are traumatised, scared or feel uncomfortable by the actions of comrades, then how do we work together?

Q/ *It's my right to have a beer if I want to.*

A/ It's your right to do whatever you want until it starts to negatively affect others. At that point you should consider the fact that using your freedom can in some cases limit the freedom of someone else. If you restrict someone's freedom by making them stay at home because of unsafe feelings around drugs then you put yourself in a power position and effectively set rules for the other person.

Q/ *We're all reasonable people here, I think it's safe to say nothing will get out of hand.*

A/ We don't know if everyone is reasonable, but also different people have different ideas about what reasonable is. For some it might be unreasonable to break things or get in fights. For others it might be unreasonable to be loud, tripping on people's tents or accidentally unzipping the wrong tent at night. Generally people under the influence of drugs get less sensitive for others borders. This can be part of the reason why people have traumatic experiences with people under drug influence crossing their borders. So even if you are able to control your behaviour after drinking and don't actively cross someones borders you can still affect people by reminding them of traumatic experiences they have experienced in the past.

It is also important to remember that everyone may be reasonable now, but different people are affected differently by substances. For some, one or two beers may drastically alter their behavior, for others, it could have no change in their behavior. There is no universal level of what is 'acceptable' or 'safe'.

Q/ *But what if I don't want to get drunk but just have a beer?*

A/ Some people have a problem with people getting drunk. Others have a problem with just seeing alcohol. This means that even one drink is not okay. People seeing you drink don't know if it's your first beer, or if it's your tenth. People who themselves have a problem with alcohol, or are ex-alcoholics can find it very hard to see alcohol.

Q/ *What if I drink offsite?*

A/ By leaving the bottle outside you still bring the alcohol back with you in your body. It's not about hiding your alcohol use, it's about being considerate that your actions may negatively affect others. Even if you don't drink in the common space but in a designated drug tent or offsite, you will eventually need to return to your tent in the common camping space. By entering this "safer space" under the influence of drugs, you are already crossing someone's boundaries who may feel unwell with the knowledge that someone is under the influence in the area that they are sleeping.

Q/ *Some people need to drink*

A/ Firstly it's good to consider what need really means. People who need to drink for medical reasons, should speak with the onsite medic or onsite support group if there is one, to set up a way in which everyone on site feels comfortable. It is important to treat medical issues such as chronic alcoholism as sensitively and with respect as we would other drug addictions. If people who don't need to drink would not drink on camps it would be much easier to create an environment where drinking for people with medical issues would be possible without making others feel unsafe.

Q/ *But we encounter drug use all the time in society, people must have learnt to deal with it?*

A/ It is not up to you to make this kind of assumption. Some people may have found ways to deal with it, others never do. It can be especially difficult for some people who see spaces like this as safer to encounter the recreation of patterns seen in wider society.

Q/ *Shouldn't we be focusing on political issues and not meetings about drug use?*

A/ Political camps are an opportunity to create a space where we get the chance to put our political ideas in practice, while focusing on a specific goal. It is important for people who are politically active to feel safe as feeling comfortable is a requirement to be able to concentrate, communicate well, work effectively and, if applicable, take risks. To involve as many people as possible we need to have an inclusive environment as possible. It is also important to remember that drug use is considered by many to be a highly political issue.

We would be happy to receive any feedback on aboutbeer@gmx.ch
Contact us if you need an online version for printing/editing/translating.