

Disruption in the ceremonial, the coercive in health¹

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In august 2011 in Valle de Punilla, Cordoba, Argentina; there was a violent police raid into an Ayahuasca traditional ceremony. 50 policemen from different departments were present and brutally interrupted, broke apart an ancestral therapeutic work.

It was torn apart something that was built in a long time within the treatments of people with a dependency to illegal and legal substances. Patients addicted to highly toxic substances were left without the possibility to review their internal personal aspects. They were left without the chance to rebuild their life and the projection of being themselves.

Our confusion and instability during that time made us look for legal advice. We were told at the beginning not to spread our work and not to defend ourselves in the media. We had to wait until the media-circus stopped. A month after the raid, I received the imputation of “Supply against payment of narcotics”. The court case started to move a little but then it became stagnant for three years, waiting for the technical examination of what was confiscated.

During the police raid there was physical and psychological mistreatment on everyone present. There didn't have a qualm regarding the sensitive state that the group was going through and the consequences caused. The situation could have led to irreparable life events.

¹ Presented at the 2014 World Ayahuasca conference 25-27 september 2014, Ibiza, Spain.

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They stayed for nearly 5 hours, they confiscated a bottle and no one was arrested. 48 hours later we appeared in several graphics media, radio stations, TV programs and webs. The version of the facts that was spread was totally out of context, sensationalist and biased by the police's xenophobic view with a clear intent of damage.

Many people gave me their support, others who I thought I could rely on didn't even show up. I also received the unexpected and unconditional support from people I wasn't counting on. There were people who had to be by my side but they weren't.

A raid of this magnitude generally involves significant preparation to be justified. Despite that fact, the research time to execute the search warrant was only 48 hours. A provincial prosecutor was responsible for ordering it.

Few days after the occurred you could read in a small box of a local newspaper that 30kgs of cocaine were found hidden in an abandoned room inside the neuropsychiatric hospital of Valle de Punilla.

In the year 2013 a media scandal erupted in the epicenter of the drugs department of the Cordoba police, it was called "La Narcopolicia" (narco police). Many officials and heads of the police department were removed from their positions. The federal prosecutor that investigates this cause is the same one that is in charge of mine.

We should rethink which were the interests behind this police raid never given before in Argentina. The report to the police was anonymous, so it's hard to prove who did it, who were responsible for the violence we suffered. It's hard to prove but isn't hard to know who were the ones who did the report and who supported them. It's really disappointing to know that they are related to something as important as our work, actually that fact is more disappointing than the fact they reported us to the police.

The hard task of carrying out a serious and successful activity in the field of ethno medicine requires a strong and proper training. It's hard and risky to sustain this activity over time without the support from a guarantor entity. The fact of being far from the origin of the traditional medicine and to be perceived as an outcast by most of the academic population keeps surrounding our work with uncertainties and prejudice.

We have to make a global and critical analysis about what is being risked. Which are the implications of integrating different cultural knowledge. We have to rethink the meaning of the work related to the master plants, seek understanding and evaluate the possibilities of what can be and what should be offered and when we should be exempted.

The solitude that concerns the work of the occidental medicine men shouldn't be something to be proud or brag about. The work with master plants outside its primary origin it's a discipline that requires many skills from the one leading the sessions, and also needs an important institutional support able to stand for successes and mistakes.

My therapeutic work in the field of the master plants has been interrupted. Currently I'm standing at the crossroads. I have to choose between waiting several years for the court case to prescribe and in the while stop working, or in another instance, go to jail because the gravity of what is charged against me doesn't contemplate the release. Both options have risks and uncertainties. More for some and less for others.

A week ago, in the month of August 2014, the phytochemical report showed the presence of Harmine and Harmaline. Both substances are found in the List 1 of the Argentine penal code. This is enough to be charged within the drugs law. About a year ago the designated lawyer passed away. She was a fighter for humans' rights. I had to appoint a new lawyer, in this case the Public Defender. The process continues and doesn't seem to be easy.

Reality showed me that the one who is thoroughly and seriously trained in the field of ethno medicine enters a field where the usual is to be helpless and to be considered an outcast, having to develop this work in secrecy.

Key Words: Ayahuasca, Addictions, Legal, Health, Police Raid.