



## Mobilizing drug policy activism: conferences, convergence spaces and ephemeral fixtures in social movement mobilization

Cristina Temenos

To cite this article: Cristina Temenos (2016) Mobilizing drug policy activism: conferences, convergence spaces and ephemeral fixtures in social movement mobilization, *Space and Polity*, 20:1, 124-141, DOI: [10.1080/13562576.2015.1072913](https://doi.org/10.1080/13562576.2015.1072913)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562576.2015.1072913>



Published online: 11 Aug 2015.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 341



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 22 View citing articles [↗](#)

## **Mobilizing drug policy activism: conferences, convergence spaces and ephemeral fixtures in social movement mobilization**

Cristina Temenos\*

*Humanities Center, Northeastern University, Boston, MA, USA*

*(Received 8 August 2014; accepted 6 July 2015)*

This paper explores the role of conferences as “convergence space”: temporary events with lasting material effects. Drawing on three harm reduction conferences occurring between 2011 and 2012, I argue that conferences are both ephemeral fixtures in the landscape of policy activism, and are important nodes through which policy mobilization occurs. Conference spaces provide opportunities for ideas to be shared, produced and advocated. They serve as important sites for the construction of relationships that are required to form and maintain policy advocacy networks and harness political opportunity structures for drug policy reform.

**Keywords:** convergence space; policy mobilities; social movements; drug policy; harm reduction; conferences

### **1. Introduction**

Contestation over the best way to regulate psychoactive substances is not new. The rules and regulations that have governed substances, from caffeine and sugar, to alcohol and tobacco, to cannabis and opium, are as myriad as the ways in which the substances are found and used. Socio-cultural norms have always dictated the prevailing attitudes towards psychoactive substances. Contemporary debates over the management of illicit drugs and the people who consume them are no exception. From 2006 until 2013, 40 US states introduced legislation to ease drug laws, including the legalization of the production, sale and consumption of cannabis in the states of Washington and Colorado (Desilver, 2014). In 2000, Portugal decriminalized all drugs for personal use, leading to what has widely been seen as a successful drug policy (Hughes & Stevens, 2012). In 2013 Uruguay became the first nation state to legalize the production and sale of cannabis. These policy trends are the culmination of ongoing efforts in the drug policy reform movement that focuses on: increasing access to health services for people marginalized through drug use; reducing violent crime surrounding the production and sale of illicit substances; decreasing governmental funds spent on the policing of psychoactive substances, their producers and consumers; and decreasing the overall social costs that the “war on drugs” approach has wrought on people across the globe.

Drug policy reform is a movement supported by diverse interest groups with diverse values and ideologies. Neoliberal think-tanks, public health advocates, religious movements, celebrities, business magnates and human rights activists have all called for reform of drug laws, from the UN

---

\*Email: [c.temenos@neu.edu](mailto:c.temenos@neu.edu)

Single Convention on Controlled Substances all the way to municipal by-laws governing the possession of sterile syringes (Branson, 2012; Easton, 2004; Pugel, 2013; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014). While the ways in which such diverse groups of policy activists learn from each other are equally numerous, the importance of face-to-face meetings as a social movement strategy is often seen as crucial to long-term success. They are important for the production and exchange of knowledge, as well as for building and maintaining inter-personal ties across localities (Davies, 2012; Della Porta & Andretta, 2002; Haug, 2013; McAdam & Paulsen, 1993; Routledge, 2003, 2009).

This paper explores the role of conferences as a particular type of face-to-face meeting, in order to better understand the ways that knowledge exchange and interpersonal experience come together to affect drug policy activism. Using data collected from mixed qualitative methods including: participant observation at three harm reduction conferences; media and documentary analysis of drug policies, policy debates and conference media coverage; and 73 in-depth interviews with conference organizers, attendees and activists, I focus specifically on harm reduction conferences within this movement because harm reduction is becoming more common at all levels of governance. Harm reduction is a set of “policies, programmes and practices that aim primarily to reduce the adverse health, social and economic consequences of the use of legal and illegal psychoactive drugs without necessarily reducing drug consumption” (International Harm Reduction Association, n.d.). It is accepted and present throughout UN and World Health Organization documents, and many city governments, such as Toronto, Frankfurt and New York have implemented harm reduction drug policies. While the medical community regards harm reduction as best practice (Marlatt & Witkiewitz, 2010; Ritter & Cameron, 2006; Strike et al., 2011), and harm reduction policies are generally successful when implemented (Marlatt & Witkiewitz, 2010; Percival, 2009), they remain highly contested. They are often pitted in direct opposition to the war on drugs, and criminalization approaches to illegal substances and the people who use them. As a result, harm reduction is also a global social movement that is focused on equitable access to health care, social justice and human rights. The conferences discussed here emerge from, and are important events in this social movement.

I argue that conferences are both important spaces for the social reproduction of advocacy movements through the production and dissemination of knowledge, and for the encounters that contribute to creating and strengthening relationships among people. Further, I argue that the physical infrastructures that affect the placing of conferences in turn implicate cities in the production of social movements and policy mobilization. Conferences are both ephemeral fixtures in the landscape of policy activism, and are important nodes through which policy mobilization occurs. Conference spaces provide opportunities for ideas to be shared, produced and advocated. They serve as important sites for the construction of relationships that are required to form and maintain policy advocacy networks and harness political opportunity structures for drug policy reform.

In the discussion that follows, I explore work on urban social movements and their attendant spatialities together with recent work on policy mobilities to illustrate the relational and mundane aspects of where policy gets conceived, advocated for and mobilized in particular, situated ways. My aim here is to focus on the *process*, rather than the effects of policy mobilization. The focus on processes involved in movement mobilization are understood as processes of assemblage, the deliberate drawing together and territorialization of “globally mobile resources, ideas, and knowledge” (McCann & Ward, 2012, p. 43). I will do so by drawing on examples from three harm reduction conferences occurring between 2011 and 2012. Harm Reduction Canada, held in Ottawa, Canada in 2011, and the 2012 Harm Reduction Coalition’s (HRC) National Conference held in Portland, USA, were both national level conferences attracting international attendees. Harm Reduction Canada had about 150 attendees, and the HRC National Conference had over

800 (personal communication with conference organizer; <http://harmreduction.org>). The Euro-Harm Reduction Network conference, in Marseilles, France in 2011 was a regional conference that hosted about 170 attendees from Europe, North America, and the Middle East (personal communication with conference organizer).

The next section of this paper reviews recent relevant literatures on urban policy mobilities, urban social movements, assemblage and informational infrastructures. I then go on to look at empirical data on the role of conferences in the reproduction of social movements through their contribution to and maintenance of informational infrastructures. The subsequent section considers the relationship between conferences and physical urban infrastructures. The conclusion provides some insight into how these relationships contribute broadly to informational infrastructures, and specifically to drug policy reform.

## 2. Policy mobilities

Policy mobilities research has, from its inception, been about the movement of policy knowledge and technologies. Concerned with the ways in which policies are made up, moved around and reterritorialized in places elsewhere, policy mobilities research emerged from a discomfiture with static theorizations of policy transfer that produced narrow and hierarchical models of the policy process which neglected individual actors, agency, policy mutations and local contingencies (for a full critique, see McCann & Ward, 2013). Policy mobilities holds that the mobilization of policy is simultaneously in motion and fixed in place – whether it is being pieced together so as to be successfully implemented (or marketed) in a particular place or whether it is mutating as it travels – through multiple people and knowledge networks or informational infrastructures. This relationality is present when policy is *in the process* of being implemented, and changing as it is realized on the ground. Questions about the who, how and why of these processes make up the essential approach of trying to understand, more holistically, how policies are made, mobilized and mutated. This research is attentive to the micro-spaces of policy process, in the form of: embodied and local perspectives (Keil & Ali, 2011; McCann, 2008, Temenos & McCann, 2012), the “structuring fields” of policy mobilization (Cook & Ward, 2011, 2012; Peck & Theodore, 2010; Ward, 2006), policy tourism (Cook, Ward, & Ward, 2014; González, 2011), and the historical contingencies of policy learning and change (Clarke, 2012; Cook et al., 2014; Cook & Ward, 2011; Harris and Moore, 2013; Jacobs & Lees, 2013).

McCann (2008, 2011b) has charted the importation and transformation of drug policy from cities in Europe to Vancouver, Canada. This work highlights the local contingencies of policy model making, such as the public health crisis around HIV rates that was declared in Vancouver (see also Boyd, Macpherson, & Osborn, 2009; Wood et al., 2004) and which required an alternative policy solution to the then-current drug policy (McCann, 2008, 2011b). This work also pays attention to the situated histories of drug use and its management that preceded the model in cities in Europe, especially Frankfurt, Germany, the city that Vancouver’s current drug policy primarily echoes (McCann, 2008). In understanding how urban drug policy is made mobile, McCann (2008, p. 9) identifies three primary elements: the learning strategies employed by local actors intent on instigating policy change; the role of experts in spreading policy ideas; and the labour of institutions and organizations that work to provide information and *spaces* that facilitate policy mobilization. It is this last element, these spaces of encounter, with which this paper is concerned.

Conferences as sites of learning and exchange have long held value for diverse communities such as; political conferences, academic conferences, business conventions, and I would add to this, activist conferences (Adey, 2006; Craggs & Mahony, 2014; Diani, 2000; DiPetro, Bretter, Rompf, & Godlewska, 2008; England & Ward, 2007; McLaren & Mills, 2008; Tanford,

Montgomery, & Nelson, 2012). Early work on policy mobilities has noted the importance of face-to-face communication in the form of conferences and policy tourism (González, 2011; McCann, 2008; Ward, 2006). Cook and Ward (2012) use ethnographic methods to explicate the ways a single conference becomes part of an informational infrastructure focused on importing a particular form of learning and operation, Business Improvement Districts, into cities in Sweden. Through this ethnographic focus on a conference they demonstrate the path-dependencies through which policy ideas travel. This work highlights the process of importing policy experts as architects of policies and programmes deemed successful elsewhere, and the value of conferences for localized individuals to educate them about best practice and benchmarking strategies of policy making and implementation.

Building on this work, my aim is to expand the understanding of informational infrastructures' roles in policy advocacy by charting a series of conferences and analysing how conferences build on each other, and how they build a movement for policy mobilization over time. Understanding how a series of harm reduction conferences sustain and build knowledge and momentum for a public health drug policy model is useful for several reasons. First it demonstrates the ongoing advocacy work done by multiple constellations of actors. Focusing on a series of event spaces helps to articulate the complex spatial vocabularies in and through which policies are made. Second, this focus helps us to chart the shift in attitudes and ideas about best practice approaches to drug policy, and by extension shifting understandings of governance practices, human rights and health over a period of time. Finally, analysing a series of conferences within a particular social movement aimed at policy change is important because it draws together different and particular geographies of drug policy by territorializing ephemeral practices and fragments of memory that shape the actions and thinking of policy makers and mid-level bureaucrats, those in powerful positions who make and enact policies that govern drug use and treatment. "Ideas and practices arrive from elsewhere or emerge in particular contexts in all sorts of ways – through forgotten conversations at meetings, long-distant reading of publications or reports, unpredictable friendship and collegial networks, as well as formal or informal association in which taken-for-granted understanding might be confirmed. It is important to consider," Robinson (2013, p. 9) argues, "that the infrastructure of policy transfer ... is significantly immaterial" (see also Bunnell, 2015; Jacobs, 2012; Prince, 2012). This work renders visible the paths connecting topological spaces of policy-making and advocacy work.

### 3. Convergence space

Placing our understanding of conferences within the wider context of political opportunity structures helps to uncover the spatiality in policy activism. As discussed above, there are numerous examinations of the role of conferences, mass demonstrations and mega events as occurrences that work to catalyse social movements (Davies, 2012; Della Porta and Andretta, 2002; Diani, 2000; Routledge, 2003, 2009; Wainwright, Prudham, & Glassman, 2000). While much of this work interestingly engages the ways that these events function temporally within the history of a social movement, it is only recently that they have begun to be spatially conceptualized. "Place, space, territory, region, scale and networks", Miller (2013, p. 285) notes, "have each been placed front and centre by a variety of social movement scholars and each spatiality-specific approach has yielded valuable insights, yet there has been little progress toward a more integrative approach". Drawing on Jessop et al.'s (2008) theorizations of sociospatial relations, Miller (2013) and others have worked to move beyond the typological and nested scalar hierarchies that much of this work produces to extrapolate the co-scalar production of social movements and advocacy networks (Davies, 2012; Leitner, Sheppard, & Sziarto, 2008; Nicholls, 2009; Nicholls, Miller, & Beaumont, 2013).

In one such understanding, Routledge (2003, p. 346) puts forward the notion of a convergence space, which I draw upon here. Convergence spaces can be understood as dynamic systems: “constructed out of a complexity of interrelations and interactions across all spatial scales”. Convergence spaces come into being for delimited times, so in this sense they are fleeting, or ephemeral. Yet they also have lasting effects because of their facilitation of encounter – people being able to meet and network, as well as to strengthen existing relationships – maintaining weak ties. Convergence space can be understood as relational space. It facilitates the production, exchange and legitimation of knowledge, by convening people from varying interest groups and resources in a particular place at a particular time, and at the same time, place-based ideologies and differences are negotiated within convergence spaces. Drawing on Massey (1994), Routledge (2003, p. 346) argues that places where “collective political rituals” like conferences are held, “become ‘articulated moments’ ... in the enactment of global [social movements]”. That is, convergence space constitutes the space of mobility within an advocacy movement. It allows the drawing together of people and resources to engage in knowledge production, exchange, planning and actions to address specific issues of contention, such as drug policy.

There are three attributes of convergence space: First, they are collections of diverse interest groups with shared values and/or goals. Convergence spaces comprise diverse social movements that articulate collective visions. Second, they allow for variegated forms of spatial interaction between individuals and groups, they bring people and groups into contact who might not otherwise meet. A convergence space is an assemblage, a deliberate drawing together of people, resources and ideas. Third, these “spaces facilitate multi-scalar political action by participant movements” (Routledge, 2003, p. 345). Convergence spaces make room for diverse social movement organizations to come together, and therefore facilitate ongoing spatialized relationships, imparting meaning on the ephemeral.

For example, it is not uncommon, when referring to annual or biannual gatherings that people will refer to them by place. “Were you in Seattle?” in the context of discussing North American social action, needs no explanation. The question clearly refers to the anti-globalization protests and other forms of collective action surrounding the World Trade Organization meetings in 1999. Similarly, harm reduction advocates refer to conferences by the city in which they were held: Toronto, Portland, Liverpool. The relational “articulated moment” of a convergence space facilitates movement mobilization and simultaneously disambiguates roles of places elsewhere within social movements, canonizing certain places as pivotal within a particular struggle. The relationality of conference space as convergence space allows for the place-based event to have lasting and far-reaching effects on a social movement, and its attendant mobilization geographically across space. As I will show below, they also facilitate social movements’ ability to move forward to affect political change in specific places elsewhere. Expanding the notion of convergence space through an examination of conferences works towards also expanding our understanding of the spatio-temporal production of social movements as multi-scalar networks.

Similarly, recent work on urban social movements has engaged the notion of the productive city through understandings of relationality. Uitermark, Nicholls, and Loopmans (2012, p. 2) understand the city as

a generative space of mobilizations ... the frontline where states constantly create new governmental methods to protect and produce social and political order, including repression, surveillance, clientelism, corporatism, participatory and citizenship initiatives, etc. These techniques combine in different ways ... [making cities] the places where new ways of regulating, ordering and controlling social life are invented.

I argue that the city’s role in the making up of conference space as convergence space can be usefully understood as an “assembling agent” (McFarlane, 2009), contributing its particular, situated

logics to a broader multiplicity of ideas in the making up of a movement, such as harm reduction, or drug policy reform. The urban, in this sense brings about particular mobilities that produce material effects in both policy and politics, as well as the technical underpinnings – the infrastructures that help to bolster social life.

The value in conceptualizing social movements through assemblage is the concepts' ability to deepen territorialized understandings of site-specific contingencies and their connections to other places. Assemblage is not used here in the DeLuzian sense of the creation of flat ontologies, rather the opposite, its value is in helping to trace difficult, ephemeral events and the uneven geographies through which they are produced. In this sense assemblage is a methodological tool as much as a conceptual one. It highlights territorialized contingencies "in terms of ... [assemblages'] histories, the labour required to produce them, and their inevitable capacity to exceed the connections between other groups or places in the movement" (McFarlane, 2009, p. 562, see also Davies, 2012). Here, the notion of convergence space is useful to understand not only why a particular event, such as a conference, is important in the life-span of a social movement.

It helps to situate such a fleeting event in the material histories of place. A convergence space acts to create a mooring point within an assemblage. Conceptualizing convergence space through assemblage highlights that these spaces are not simply a "resultant formation" (McFarlane, 2009, p. 562), they are also constitutive of particular configurations. These spaces mediate ongoing power dynamics, the labour and pre-established processes that work to facilitate social movements. People, resources and knowledge coalesce in specific constellations that operate through pre-defined networks and pathways. The previous processes of assembling these networks have in turn created a series of informational infrastructures, to which this next section turns.

#### 4. Informational Infrastructures

As spaces through which knowledge around specific policy models are produced and transferred, informational infrastructures are not inherently territorial. Rather, they exist and operate through interpersonal networks linked through the socio-technical landscapes of policy work. Informational infrastructures can be defined as "institutions, organizations, and technologies, that frame and package knowledge about best policy practices, successful cities, and cutting-edge ideas for specific audiences" (Temenos & McCann, 2013, 805, see also McCann, 2008, 2011a; Cook & Ward, 2011). They can be understood as agentive, power-laden entities that are made up of at least four subsets of actors and institutions: states, educators, media, and professional and activist organizations (Temenos & McCann, 2013)<sup>1</sup>. Informational infrastructures serve to produce, present, propose and propel best practice policy models via conduits such as: research, publications, media, accreditation processes, policy tourism and of course conferences. Table 1, which is by no means comprehensive, highlights some of the major technologies, actors and processes of informational infrastructures that are operationalized by policy activists.

It is with this understanding, of conferences – as a convergence space, and as a part of the broader informational infrastructures of policy mobilization that we consider the specific processes of siting conferences, and how this placing has a lasting affect on both the city as well as the policy movement. Within health geography, there has been much work done on the siting of health services in cities (cf. Pierce, Martin, Greiner, and Scherr (2012)). However, work has not focused on the siting of health-related events and health social movements in the same way (for exceptions see Brown, 1997; Klawiter, 1999). Paying attention to the site selection of convergence spaces in the policy activism of public health drug policies, I argue, is important both for understanding the infrastructural form of the city, and for understanding how urban spaces of public health are constructed. Pierce et al. (2012, p. 1086) maintain that: "attention

Table 1: Informational Infrastructures.

Institutions	Actors, Technologies, Processes
States	All scales; State actors (politicians, bureaucrats, etc); State power of implementation; Legitimacy.
Educators	Educators & trainers formally educating policy actors; Legitimation/certification practices; Power to frame knowledge.
Media	Repetition of narratives; Frame policies, actors, cities as ‘good’/‘bad’; Social media facilitates knowledge exchange between publics and institutions.
Professional & Activist Organizations	Frame, value, facilitate transfer of policy knowledge; Mobilize through: publications, websites, site visits, conferences.

to “politics” in research on health can help better answer questions about the locus of decision making that produces health landscapes and outcomes such as definitions of well-being and health in urban social life”. This ‘locus of decision making’ is often black-boxed, and the processes by which decision-making occurs are rarely transparent, because, as Robinson (2013) notes, ideas are often formed through fragments of documents, fleeting conversations or remembered conference presentations. Thus there is rarely a clear place-based understanding of where policy comes from. Looking to conferences as convergence space however, these loci are rendered tangible. The places where those fragments, conversations and presentations were encountered come to the foreground. These impermanent gatherings facilitate knowledge exchange and influence decision-making processes. In focusing on conference space as convergence space attends “to practices and the multiple modalities through which power is executed” (Miller, 2013, p. 289, see also McFarlane, 2009). A government office where a policy is signed into law, for example, is then understood as relationally extended, assembled from other actions, meetings and places, rather than as an isolated and black-boxed locality where power “happens”.

Cook and Ward (2012) note that informational infrastructures have grown in recent years because of an increase in activities and processes associated with making “good policy” – which makes it more likely that specific policy models will be made mobile and implemented in places elsewhere. They have also argued for a deeper understanding of the role of conferences as temporary, or time limited, events that draw people together, allowing for people with shared values and interests the opportunity for face-to-face communication and knowledge exchange. They are advocating for the consideration of the technical as political in policy making. This is echoed by Miller (2007, 2013), who advocates for a re-inscription of Foucauldian technologies of power into spatial understandings of social movements. Those spatial technologies that operate in a co-scalar sense, technologies making up convergence space, informational infrastructures and even urban form, work to bring about an assemblage within contentious spatial politics and sites of urban public health.

In the remainder of the paper I draw on these concepts to explore three harm reduction conferences to argue that conference spaces contribute to the ongoing production of informational infrastructures within the harm reduction movement. Serving as space for best-practice knowledge exchange, they also operate as political space where certain ideas, practices and technologies are re-inscribed through face-to-face encounter. Conferences as convergence space are both ephemeral fixtures in the landscape of policy activism, and are important nodes through which policy mobilization occurs. Conference spaces provide opportunities for ideas to be shared, produced and advocated for and they serve as important sites for the construction of relationships required to form and maintain policy advocacy networks and harness political opportunity structures for drug policy reform.

As noted above, this research entailed participant observation at three conferences on harm reduction drug policy in North America and Europe. The regional and national conferences attendance ranged from 150 to 800 attendees from local activists and service providers to international advocates and experts. They were held in Ottawa, Marseilles and Portland, respectively. Participant observation in attendance at the conferences was augmented by face-to-face and telephone interviews with conference organizers and attendees before, during and after the events. The paper now goes on to illustrate the role of conference space as convergence space through observation and analysis.

## 5. Spaces of learning and exchange

### 5.1 *Locating convergence space*

Harm reduction drug policies, such as those legalizing syringe exchange, are often contested on moral grounds by those who argue that they enable illegal activity (drug use), yet local public health officials often understand that harm reduction approaches to drug consumption contribute to healthier communities. Simultaneously, healthier communities contribute to remaking urban spaces by for example, reducing public drug consumption, in turn rendering the city more attractive to economic development interests. Conference organizers often took these local political debates into account when choosing the site of their conferences. Political alliances, or alternatively, clear conflict with city governments was something that organizers were acutely aware of, and affected their choice. In Marseilles, the conference organizer spoke of deliberately siting the conference there because the local government supported harm reduction, while the federal government was still sceptical of the approach. One respondent put it this way:

Well you know, that [decision] was interesting, but we always try and go where there's conflict, so we can raise the profile locally ... this year its Marseilles. If the French government sees all these people coming to their cities ... well, that's a good thing. If they're seen as being a leader in this, well it only helps the mayor. (Interview, Conference Organizer, 2011)

In this sentiment, one can see a clear deliberation, focused on awareness raising and harnessing political opportunity structures to raise public and governmental awareness, using the convergence of people to extend the social movement locally. The respondent went on to explain that when governments see people travelling to conferences on harm reduction, it helps the social movement. Pro-business governments are more likely to act favourably towards harm reduction practices such as implementing needle exchange or drug consumption rooms.

In all three cases, interviews revealed a selection of the conference sites as both political, and practical. There is a balancing act, of siting the conference in a place that might do good – but also ensuring that the conference is a success. One organizer put it this way:

... first we went to Oakland and there were thousands of people. Then we thought lets go to Cleveland – they have a needle exchange that's in trouble, let go there. Well, no one came! Who wants to go to Cleveland? So we had like 700 people there. So we weren't building on what we had started in Oakland. So we thought ok well we have to go to locations that people like. No help in Miami for local people, but there were tonnes of people there, because they loved Miami. Portland is somewhere where we have a lot of support from the health department, they're really invested ... so it's a place that people want to go to because its trendy, Portlandia, you know? (Interview, Conference Organizer, 2012)

Building a yearly following of conference goers maintains weak ties – relationships garnered by shared goals and values, though not a shared identity – making the relationships and the

movement stronger. Conferences constitute the sort of purposeful convergence space that, as Nicholls (2009, p. 85) notes, provide “favorable conditions for diverse activists to initiate and strengthen ties in areas of common interest. As these ties strengthen over time, they become important generators of rich social capital”. In this case, in Oakland, the intent to create a localized political opportunity structure, using the conference as a tool to raise awareness and show support of the health service, created tensions between the ongoing effort to maintain and build transnational advocacy networks, and to intervene at an acutely local level.

Portland it seemed, was a happy medium. The county health department was characterized as supportive of harm reduction services, and for harm reduction practitioners from small and mid-sized cities, places where harm reduction was perceived to be under threat, and/or unsupported, having officials from the health department speak at the conference lead to many in-depth discussions about practical strategies to gain support from government and health agencies, as well as the wider public. The presence of supportive officials in Portland both maintained movement momentum and lead to small scale movement strategizing. Conference organizers were able to help leave “a legacy ... [of] something that’s improved” (Interview, Conference Organizer, 2012) through the media attention and political engagement that the event helped to catalyse. As Uitermark et al. (2012, p. 2546) state: “Contention and movements emanate from cities but also stretch outwards as activists broker relations between local and their more geographically distant allies.” In the case of the HRC National Conference, it was able to broker those relations in place by bringing activists, advocates, health care professionals, social service workers, and people who use drugs to Portland, while simultaneously bringing government officials, mid-level government bureaucrats, and local media to the conference. Cities then serve to anchor movements, such as harm reduction, while also increasing inter-urban connections between activists from elsewhere and local stakeholders. The city, whether it is Oakland, Portland or Marseilles, works to anchor memories of encounter around a territorialized point. This effect deepens the relationality of the event, the conference, by expanding its influence both topologically and intellectually within the broader social movement.

## 5.2 *Encounter and maintaining ties*

Conferences are mobilized in several ways. Not only do they bring people together, engendering an embodied mobility – discussed above – but conferences also facilitate the transfer of knowledge and the construction and maintenance of weak and strong ties. This translation is almost always the main purpose of any conference, be it activist or academic in nature (Craggs & Mahony, 2014). And it is the intent that the assembling of people and ideas, the creation of such a convergence space will contribute to the production of policy change through advocacy. Moving people shifts technical and ideological understandings of drug policy. For example, the HRC National Conference theme was “From Social Justice to Public Health.” Meant to both highlight the grass roots history of harm reduction – the first needle exchanges were begun by people actively using drugs – and to simultaneously refocus attention to the way in which harm reduction had become a public health initiative, the conference theme itself connotes mobility over time. It does not merely mean change over time, rather it highlights the understanding that mobilities are historically situated and path-dependent. The drawing together of public health and social justice in the same theme also highlights the ongoing work to acknowledge collectivity, in terms of collective action as a social movement as well as collective practices such as peer-lead syringe exchange, in the Harm Reduction movement. Public health, a population level medical intervention is presented as a next step in the Harm Reduction movement, following from the social justice momentum that had previously animated the movement. Indeed the next HRC Conference theme, “Intersections & Crossroads: Doing Together What We Can’t Do Apart,”

similarly evokes mobility. It also carries on the normative understanding of harm reduction as a collective practice and movement.

Collective action is often operationalized through transnational associative processes, looking to groups elsewhere who share similar values for political and resource support. “These connections are grounded in place- and face-to-face based moments of articulation” (Routledge, 2003, p. 344). The work of searching for alternatives, protocols and technical practices sometimes comes from an Internet search. However the value of encounter – physical meetings – was something that almost all of the people I spoke with emphasized. One conference organizer noted:

You forget how much people get out of physical connections because we do so much online. People forget there is so much value in meeting face-to face ... we’re more likely to follow things up once we’ve physically met them. Its difficult to get the momentum going only online, you need the face-to-face contact. I think it’s really easy to ignore emails if you haven’t met someone. (Interview, Conference Organizer, 2011)

The face-to-face meeting creates ties because the encounter is physical and embedded in a specific place. It enhances the experience through a sensory engagement of sights, sounds, smells and proximity. At the same time that conferences produce meaningful opportunities for face-to-face meetings, they also re-produce certain hierarchies within the social movement. Later in our interview, the same conference organizer discussed these tensions, which highlighted those able to engage in conference mobility:

We aimed to offer people a platform to have discussions that were important to them. I think they appreciated the opportunity to have those contentious conversations. At the international levels, which is where people have the privilege to talk about it all the time, it’s often policy people, and its us [professional advocates] having those conversations. So there was a lot of front line workers, and that went really well ... I’m hoping they went away with a sense of ownership. That was the main objective. (Interview, Conference Organizer, 2011)

There is both a hope and a concerted effort on the part of conference organizers to facilitate connections between professional policy activists and front line harm reduction practitioners, including people who use drugs and access harm reduction services. Harm reduction as a movement maintains a debate about its medicalization, and a concern that the movement has become too institutionalized. Drug user activists in particular, as well as many front line workers are vocal within discussions during conference sessions as well as outside of the formalized spaces, such as at a lunch break, or over a drink. Ensuring that there are the resources and space for such movement members to attend the conference was important for the organizers, a point I will return to below.

It is important to note that a conference acting as a space of encounter does not magically create connections, spur mobilization or change people’s thinking. There is an ongoing massaging of ideas and meetings that occur in the orchestrated spaces that constitute convergence spaces such as conferences. Unstructured events, such as coffee breaks, and evening receptions are as important as the scheduled plenary sessions (Cook & Ward, 2012; Craggs & Mahony, 2014). In the evenings, there were several different events that were scheduled, such as the Canadian debut of a documentary, *Raw Opium*. While not a “mandatory” part of the conference, it was a highly promoted event where several conference keynote speakers were also scheduled to speak on a panel. Most of the audience that night was made up of conference goers. Conference participants had made plans before and after to go for meals or drinks. These informal meetings and gatherings were not merely a place to unwind after a long day of sessions, but also served as a space to reinforce and foster relationships among conference participants (Nicholls, 2009;

Routledge, 2003). It was here that many discussions between drug user activists and professional policy advocates were able to extend into longer, drawn-out debates. This opportunity allowed the extension of the conference space out of the convention centre and into the city. Further, it extending the influence of the conference as a fleeting event further into the informational infrastructure of harm reduction as a social movement.

Professional advocates were present at all of the conferences I attended. In many cases this group of people, which for example included the Drug Policy Program Coordinator at the Hungarian Civil Liberties Association, the Director of the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition, and board members of the International Network of People Who Use Drugs, were in attendance at several of the same conferences – as well as other meetings and events throughout the year. During conferences meetings were set, and the normally geographically dispersed group of activists were able to come together, renewing their ties. Often, their co-presence on panels contributed to a sense of camaraderie, connectedness and shared values throughout the room. Participants often joked with each other, and referred, in conference sessions to previous meetings and encounters with each other. The continuity of key figures within the movement appearing over time is another key component that functions to build the advocacy movement itself (Craggs & Mahony, 2014; Nicholls, 2009). The co-presence of policy activists in official conference sessions, together with informal meetings contributes to the formalization of knowledge transfer within harm reduction, as well as to the socio-spatiality of the informational infrastructure within the drug policy reform movement.

## 6. Conferences, path dependencies and physical infrastructures

Beyond building the informational infrastructures on which drug policy advocacy is predicated, attention to the physical infrastructures that enable conferences as successful convergence spaces is also a key consideration. Is the conference accessible? Location and accessibility was a major point of consideration in all three conferences, from both the city where the conference is held, to the conference hall itself. One conference organizer noted the importance of having activists and traditionally marginalized groups, in this case, people who use drugs, feel comfortable in the space.

That's why we had it at the uni[versity], because people with records – people who live on the street – they don't want to walk into a conference hall. "Spruce room, what ... is Spruce room?" They're not going to ask a security guard for directions. Campus – well there's still barriers and all, but at least it's a public space – supposedly ... so it makes it better for them, you know? (Interview, Conference Organizer, 2011)

As McCann (2011, p. 120) observes, "decisions about how and where to hold meetings are strategic, offering benefits to the organizing institutions, the attendees, and the local hosts". This is important from the broader global, national or city scale, right down to the microspaces of a convention centre, hotel, university or public park. Another conference organizer spoke to the geographic location of conferences. Referring back to a now disbanded organization that ran a large international harm reduction conference, they complained: "They were always picking islands off of islands – you couldn't get there! Forget scholarships! And who can afford it? They had one token drug user" (Interview, Conference Organizer, 2011). This quote highlights the social justice nature of the conference, and the politics of including the people affected by drug policy in spaces and processes of knowledge production, the economics of attending the conference – the costs are often prohibitive – and even more so if they are not held in large urban centres that have planned economic strategies around attracting the business of conferences and mega

events. The connection between the economic viability, conference sustainability and physical infrastructures came up with two of the three organizers. One noted that they chose locations based on: “East, West, Central [United States]” (Interview, Conference Organizer, 2012) specifically so that local harm reduction practitioners and local people who use drugs were able to garner the resources necessary to attend the conferences.

Additionally, each of the three conferences held pre-meetings specifically for drug user organizers. By providing a deliberate space occurring before the “main event”, social movement organizations such as EuroHRN, attempted to ensure that they lived up to their political commitments, taking the mantra of drug user organizers, “Nothing about us without us,” seriously. Meeting in advance of other policy advocates and harm reduction practitioners enabled drug user activists to take a meaningful leading role in shaping subsequent conference discussions around advocacy techniques and priority issues. The pre-conference in Marseilles for example was:

... part of a wider recognition within the harm reduction movement that it is no longer possible for the global discussion on drug policy to continue without the full involvement of those most acutely affected i.e. people who use drugs. As such, this dual network building process has been a concrete example of the meaningful participation of people who use drugs in all policies and programmes that concern them. (Albers, 2012, p. 1)

Throughout the conference, self-identified drug user activists played a prominent part in the speakers’ lists, panels and discussions. EuroHRN and many of the organizations for whom drug user activists worked also provided substantial scholarships to people who use drugs to be able to attend the conference. The prominent presence of people who use drugs at the event signified to both people who use drugs and the wider harm reduction community that: “There is every expectation that the two networks will maintain, build and strengthen ties by engaging in joint campaigns, that will both boost capacity and act as conduits for mutual learning and cooperation” (Albers, 2012, p. 1) The EuroHRN conference, coupled with the pre-conference meeting of the European Network of People Who Use Drugs is an example of the ways in which the conference served to build the informational infrastructure around the harm reduction movement, tapping into a co-production of convergence space. “Broadening the geographical and social base of a political insurgency necessarily introduces a wide range of *diverse* actors into the mix ... While broadening the alliance provides activists with access to new resources and sources of legitimacy ...” (Nicholls, 2009, 86 italics original) The two meetings, happening in tandem and drawing on the same physical infrastructures serve to build inter-personal relationships between people and to build trust among different social movement organizations.

### 6.1 *Extended relationality – material and ephemeral*

Mobilizing policy activism through convergence space both reterritorializes and extends it through personal mobility and over time. When convergence space is assembled into being in a city, there is, in the words of Mayer (2013, p. 183): “fresh momentum to the local movements, helping them overcome their fragmentation, and supporting their consolidation as well as their professionalization”. Reterritorializing a global social movement such as harm reduction, in cities simultaneously contributes “to the transfer of repertoires associated with the work of trans-nationally oriented organizations, such as professional public relations work, conscious media orientation, and a flexible action repertoire utilizing pragmatic as well as militant action forms” (Mayer (2013, p. 183). Therefore the informational infrastructures, the public relations work and media orientations, for instance, are also deliberately spatialized. One organizer put it thus:

Paris and Marseilles are kind of the two big focal points in terms of drug use. And both are kind of pioneers of harm reduction [in France]. The city of Marseille is a big supporter of harm reduction, and you could see that throughout the conference, with the municipal support and the fieldtrips. And they really want to open an injection room. The problem of course is that Sarkozy doesn't want to see injection rooms in France, however, if anywhere is going to do it, it will be Marseille. (Interview, Conference Organizer, 2011)

In this case, there is a sense of showcasing local success of harm reduction, and co-operation of transnational social movement and advocacy organizations with local government, with the intent of pushing back against an unfriendly national government. Holding the conference in Marseilles, the second largest city in France, rather than Paris, the largest and the capital, signals two strategic spatial tactics on the part of social movement organizations. Marseille, an industrial port city, has long had an association with the illegal drugs trade. It was a major node through which heroin was transported to North America from the 1950s to 1970s. The opening scenes of the 1971 film, *The French Connection* – loosely based around the smuggling ring – feature the narrow winding streets of the city, and zoom in to focus on the Mediterranean port, highlighting the movement of drugs through the city. Holding the conference in this city highlights a tension between the geographical imagination of Marseilles as a place of drug trade and hoping to help combat the stigma that this very reputation engenders. Second, there is the rationale that the conference impact will be amplified by calling it into being in a city that has the potential for achieving successful drug policy reform, and a city that is already advocating for increased harm reduction measures.

Indeed, as Miller (2013, 293) argues,

Successful collective action – in most cases – involves building and shaping relationships not only among significant numbers of like minded activists, but also with apparatuses of states, corporations, or other powerful institution or groups in positions of authority in order to make meaningful claims upon them.

In the case of the EuroHRN conference, this was obvious from the venue, a municipal building in the downtown core. An examination of the welcome package provides further insight into the relationship between the state and EuroHRN. Beyond the conference schedule, the package contained an invitation from the city's deputy mayor; the welcome reception was hosted by the city. Rather than the usual pen and paper for taking notes, conference goers found the city's logo emblazoned on male and female condoms, a nod to the subject – harm reduction – of the conference. As well, the field trips, to needle exchanges and a local housing squat, were led by city employees.

Support and advocacy for harm reduction in the city of Marseilles was made evident through a continual branding process on the part of the city, and the frequent acknowledgements by EuroHRN conference organizers, of municipal support. This acknowledgement served two purposes. First EuroHRN helped bolster the image of the city government. Second, the knowledge of mutual support, the city's support for harm reduction, helped establish the feeling of community with harm reduction networks. This action, in turn, helped combat the isolation that is often felt among local social movements, and which is often cited as occurring among harm reduction practitioners (Pauly, 2008); something often mentioned in interviews. On another level, funding for the conference came from sponsorship of the European Commission, who also funded the international translation between French and English that was available in all of the conference plenaries. Financial and organizational support also came from the local municipal government of Marseille, and a local harm reduction organization, R'eduisones des Risques Lies a l'usages de Drouges (AFR). The conference served as a convergence space assembled through multi-level

government support of harm reduction in a city advocating for intensified health services to treat some of its most marginalized populations.

## 7. Conclusion

Arguing that conferences play a role in building and sustaining political opportunity structures around drug policy reform, I have shown that they are important social movement strategies that help to maintain interpersonal and organizational ties. In the process of assembling a social movement around harm reduction and drug policy reform, conferences as convergence space also draw the city into this assemblage as topological fixture for movement mobilization. Physical urban infrastructures are enrolled in the production of a social movement, while having lasting effects that contribute to ongoing informational infrastructures among and within the cities where conferences occur. Conferences then, are important in building and maintaining informational infrastructures. They increase the relational work that is crucial for success within global social movements such as harm reduction, rendering cities such as Ottawa, Portland and Marseilles important to drug policy reform in cities like Regina, Austin or Bari.

The point of this paper is not to illustrate a specific corollary between a conference happening in one place and a clear policy shift in that place or elsewhere. Rather, my objective is to show that understanding how conferences are ephemeral fixtures, assemblages of transnational advocacy networks also helps us to understand the spatialities of policy mobilities and social movements, in the process uncovering the material and multiple territorializations that produce relational networks. By this, I mean that places elsewhere are not just held up as some ideal model, some geographic imaginary, but that some places serve as physical space where policy advocacy occurs. Indeed, sitting down to speak with conference organizers and participants about specific conferences, those in Ottawa, Portland and Marseilles, the conversation was never restricted to just those places. Every person I spoke with discussed each of these conferences in relation to others, in other places, and at times to each other. This indicates particular trajectories. Each of the conferences that are focused on here came, in part, from elsewhere, and in so doing are illustrative of how they build on both meaning and momentum. Conferences are implicated in social movements, and also cities are implicated in conferences. Therefore it is not only that conferences as convergence space are important to assembling social movements and policy activism, and that conferences are urban events, but also that understanding informational infrastructures through the lens of policy mobilities highlights the meanings, motives and processes by which infrastructures form and flow. Policy making “from below”, advocacy for policy change, is an important empirical object through which to understand the spatial effects of mobilizing policy change, sometimes in ways which have the potential to resist dominant forms of urban neoliberalization.

Further interrogation of these convergence spaces has the potential to yield deeper and more nuanced insight into the role of conferences within the drug policy reform movement. This paper used three conferences occurring within a two-year period. During this time there were countless other conferences and meetings held that focused on drug policy reform. Two annual meetings of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), for example, happened over this time. This institutional space also acts as an important convergence space within not only the drug policy reform movement, but within broader networks that are concerned with the legal geographies of psychoactive substances. Within the context of drug policy reform, the CND often came up in my interviews with organizers and activists. One organizer and activist said of the CND:

To change drug policy in this country you need to have the top cop and the top drug people. You need to have that relationship. So I discovered, I can meet these people if I go to Vienna the same time as

they do ... Now I can pick up the phone and they'll take my call, because of the work I did in Vienna. (Interview, Conference Organizer, 2012)

The organizer went on to link attendance at CND meetings with the conference which was being organized, highlighting the importance of face-to-face interaction over time. An examination of convergence spaces over time can help to more fully understand the ways in which advocacy work is built up to effect real political change at various scales. The CND's constant location in Vienna, for example, acts as a guidepost in a policy process of international drug policy. It is both an important event for transnational and national drug policy makers, and the realm of international diplomacy (Craggs, 2014; Kuus, 2011), and it is an important convergence space for drug policy reform activists to meet each other, encounter those in powerful positions, and to engage in contentious social action (Craggs & Mahony, 2014; Wainwright et al., 2000).

Policy advocacy happens in many forms, and is always a part of the mobilization of specific policy models. This paper addresses a fundamental, grassroots form of policy activism by considering the place of harm reduction conferences in the informational infrastructures of advocacy and implementation of urban public health. Harm reduction as a social movement encompasses a tripartite identity of policy, practice and philosophy. Its identity is fluid and politically contested, while its status as a best-practice public health approach to providing health services has a strong evidence base.

If we are to understand mobility as “a social process operating through and constitutive of *social space*” (McCann, 2011, p. 117, italics original), rather than as “desocialized movement” (Cresswell, 2001, 14), then examining a series of conferences over time begins to territorialize the ephemeral spaces of policy making and knowledge exchange. This territorialization creates *ephemeral fixtures* in the landscape of policy activism, thus helping to further interrogate the ways in which policy is “arrived at” (Robinson, 2013, p. 1) and to make clear the recent and often obscured histories of particular assemblages. In a world in which embodied mobility is often taken as fact, looking at who is able to be mobile, such as elite policy advocates, and how mobility is achieved, that is, though the support of social movement organizations or governments is a key question for the geographies of social movements. Further, examining the micro-spaces of where people are mobilized to, such as cities, universities, hotel ballrooms or needle exchange “fieldtrips”, brings into focus the complex relationships of policy activism in general and drug policy reform efforts in particular.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank those organizers, activists and others who took the time to speak with me for this work. I would also like to thank Eugene McCann, Byron Miller, Ian Cook, and Tyler McCreary for comments on an earlier draft. Thanks to Ronan Paddison, Stewart Williams, and Barney Warf for their editorial guidance. And to the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments. Responsibility for the argument is of course entirely my own.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

### Note

1. These four subsets of actors are in no way considered static or hermetically sealed. There can be overlap and actors may change roles over time.

## References

- Adey, P. (2006). If mobility is everything then it is nothing: Towards a relational politics of (im)mobilities. *Mobilities*, 1(1), 75.
- Albers, E. (2012). *European network of people who use drugs project final report*. London: European Harm Reduction Network.
- Boyd, S., Macpherson, D., & Osborn, B. (2009). *Raise shit! social action saving lives*. Fernwood: Halifax.
- Branson, R. (2012). Its time to end the failed war on drugs. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/9031855/Its-time-to-end-the-failed-war-on-drugs.html>
- Brown, M. P. (1997). *Replacing citizenship: AIDS activism and radical democracy*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Bunnell, T. (2015). Antecedent cities and inter-referencing effects: Learning from and extending beyond critiques of neoliberalization. *Urban Studies*, 52(11), 1983–2000.
- Clarke, N. (2012). Urban policy mobility, anti-politics, and histories of the transnational municipal movement. *Progress in Human Geography*, 36(1), 25–43.
- Cook, I. R., & Ward, K. (2011). Trans-urban networks of learning, mega events and policy tourism: The case of Manchester's commonwealth and olympic games projects. *Urban Studies*, 48(12), 2519–2535.
- Cook, I. R., & Ward, K. (2012). Conferences, informational infrastructures and mobile policies: The process of getting Sweden "BID ready". *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 19(2), 137–152.
- Cook, I. R., Ward, S. V., & Ward, K. (2014). A springtime journey to the Soviet Union: Postwar planning and policy mobilities through the Iron Curtain. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 38(3), 805–822.
- Craggs, R. (2014). Postcolonial geographies, decolonization, and the performance of geopolitics at Commonwealth conferences. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 35, 39–55.
- Craggs, R., & Mahony, M. (2014). The geographies of the conference: Knowledge, performance and protest. *Geography Compass*, 8(6), 414–430.
- Cresswell, T. (2001). Mobilities. special issue. *New Formation*, 43, 7–157.
- Davies, A. D. (2012). Assemblage and social movements: Tibet support groups and the spatialities of political organisation. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 37, 273–286.
- Della Porta, D., & Andretta, M. (2002). Social movements and public administration: Spontaneous citizens' committees in florence. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 26, 244–265.
- Desilver, D. (2014). Feds may be rethinking drug war but states have been leading the way. Retrieved from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/04/02/feds-may-be-rethinking-the-drug-war-but-states-have-been-leading-the-way/>
- Diani, M. (2000). Social movement networks virtual and real. *Information, Communication & Society*, 3(3), 386–401.
- DiPietro, R. B., Bretter, D., Rompf, P., & Godlewska, M. (2008). An exploratory study of differences among meeting and exhibition planners in their destination selection criteria. *Journal of Convention and Event Tourism*, 9, 258–276.
- Easton, S. (2004). *Marijuana growth in British Columbia*. Vancouver: The Fraser Institute.
- England, K., & Ward, K. (Ed.). (2007). *Neoliberalization: States, networks, peoples*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- González, S. (2011). Bilbao and Barcelona in motion. How urban regeneration "models" travel and mutate in the global flows of policy tourism. *Urban Studies*, 48(7), 1397–1418.
- Harm Reduction Coalition. Retrieved April 12, 2014, from <http://harmreduction.org/our-work/national-conference/>
- Harris, A., & Moore, S. (2013). Planning histories and practices of circulating urban knowledge. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37(5), 1499–1509.
- Haug, C. (2013). Organizing spaces: Meeting arenas as a social movement infrastructure between organization, network, and institution. *Organization Studies*, 34(5–6), 705–732.
- Hughes, C. E., & Stevens, A. (2012). A resounding success or a disastrous failure: Re-examining the interpretation of evidence on the Portuguese decriminalisation of illicit drugs. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 31, 101–113.
- International Harm Reduction Association. (n.d.). What is harm reduction? Retrieved April 1, 2014, from <http://www.ihra.net/what-is-harm-reduction>
- Jacobs, J. M. (2012). Urban geographies I still thinking cities relationally. *Progress in Human Geography*, 36(3), 412–422.
- Jacobs, J. M., & Lees, L. (2013). Defensible space on the move: revisiting the urban geography of Alice Coleman. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37(5), 1559–1583.

- Jessop, B., Brenner, N., & Jones, M. (2008). Theorizing sociospatial relations. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 26(3), 389–401.
- Keil, R., & Ali, H. (2011). The urban political pathology of emerging infection disease in the age of the global city. In E. McCann & K. Ward (Eds.), *Mobile urbanism: Cities and policy making in the global age* (pp. 123–146). Minneapolis: Minnesota Press.
- Klawiter, M. (1999). Racing for the cure, walking women, and toxic touring: Mapping cultures of action within the bay area terrain of breast cancer. *Social Problems*, 46, 104–126.
- Kuus, M. (2011). Policy and geopolitics: Bounding Europe in Europe. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 101(5), 1140–1155.
- Leitner, H., Sheppard, E., & Sziarto, M. (2008). The spatialities of contentious politics. *Transactions of the Institute for British Geographers*, 33, 157–172.
- Marlatt, G. A., & Witkiewitz, K. (2010). Update on harm-reduction policy and intervention research. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 6, 591–606.
- Massey, D. B. (1994). *Space, place, and gender*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Mayer, M. (2013). Multiscalar mobilization for the just city: New spatial politics of urban movements. In W. Nicholls, B. Miller, & J. Beaumont (Eds.), *Spaces of contention: Spatialities and social movements* (pp. 163–198). Ashgate: London.
- McAdam, D., & Paulsen, R. (1993). Specifying the relationship between social ties and activism. *American Journal of Sociology*, 99(3), 640–667.
- McCann, E. (2008). Expertise, truth, and urban policy mobilities: Global circuits of knowledge in the development of Vancouver, Canada’s “four pillar” drug strategy. *Environment and Planning A*, 40(4), 885–904.
- McCann, E. (2011a). Urban policy mobilities and global circuits of knowledge: Toward a research agenda. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 101(1), 107–130.
- McCann, E. (2011b). “Points of reference: Knowledge of elsewhere in the politics of urban drug policy”. In E. McCann & K. Ward (Eds.), *Assembling urbanism: Mobilizing knowledge & shaping cities in a global context* (pp. 97–122). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- McCann, E., & Ward, K. (2012). Assembling urbanism: following policies and “studying through” the sites and situations of policy making. *Environment and Planning A*, 44, 42–51.
- McCann, E., & Ward, K. (2013). A multi-disciplinary approach to policy transfer research: geographies, assemblages, mobilities and mutations. *Policy Studies*, 34(1), 2–18.
- McFarlane, C. (2009). Translocal assemblages: space, power and social movements. *Geoforum*, 40(4), 561–567.
- McLaren, P. G., & Mills, A. J. (2008). “I’d like to thank the academy”: An analysis of the awards discourse at the Atlantic Schools of Business conference. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences/Revue Canadienne des Sciences de l’Administration*, 25, 307–316.
- Miller, B. (2007). Modes of governance, modes of resistance. In Peck Leitner & Sheppard (Eds.), *Contesting neoliberalism* (pp. 223–249). New York: Guilford Press.
- Miller, B. (2013). Spatialities of mobilization: building and breaking relationships. In W. Nicholls, B. Miller, & J. Beaumont (Eds.), *Spaces of contention: Spatialities and social movements* (pp. 285–298). Ashgate: London.
- Nicholls, W. (2009). Place, networks, space: theorising the geographies of social movements. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 34(1), 78–93.
- Nicholls, W., Miller, B., & Beaumont, J. (2013). *Spaces of contention: Spatialities and social movements*. Ashgate: London.
- Pauly, B. B. (2008). Shifting moral values to enhance access to health care: Harm reduction as a context for ethical nursing practice. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 19(3), 195–204.
- Peck, J., & Theodore, N. (2010). Mobilizing policy: Models, methods, and mutations. *Geoforum*, 41(2), 169–174.
- Percival, G. (2009). Exploring the influence of local policy networks on the implementation of drug policy reform: The case of California’s substance abuse and crime prevention act. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 19(4), 795–815.
- Pierce, J., Martin, D. G., Greiner, A., Scherr, A. (2012). Urban politics and mental health: An agenda for health geographic research. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 102(5), 1084–1092.
- Prince, R. (2012). Metaphors of policy mobility: Fluid spaces of “creativity” policy. *Geografiska Annaler Series B, Human Geography*, 94, 317–331.
- Pugel, J. (August 14, 2013) Why I’m lobbying to repeal the federal ban on needle exchange funding. *The Stranger*. Retrieved from <http://slog.thestranger.com/slog/archives/2013/08/14/this-police-chief-says-lift-federal-ban-on-needle-exchange-funding>

- Ritter, A., & Cameron, J. (2006). A review of the efficacy and effectiveness of harm reduction strategies for alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs. *Drug and alcohol review*, 25(6), 611–624.
- Robinson, J. (2013). “Arriving at” urban policies/the urban: Traces of elsewhere in making city futures. In O. Söderström, et al. (Eds.), *Critical mobilities* (pp. 1–28). Lausanne: EPFL and Routledge.
- Routledge, P. (2003). Convergence space: Process geographies of grassroots globalization networks. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 28(3), 333–349.
- Routledge, P. (2009). Transnational resistance: Global justice networks and spaces of convergence. *Geography Compass*, 3, 1881–1901.
- Strike, C., Watson, T. M., Lavigne, P., Hopkins, S., Shore, R., Young, D., & Millson, P. (2011). Guidelines for better harm reduction: Evaluating implementation of best practice recommendations for needle and syringe programs (NSPs). *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 22(1), 34–40.
- Tanford, S., Montgomery, R., Nelson, K. (2012). Factors that influence attendance, satisfaction, and loyalty for conventions. *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism*, 13(4), 290–318.
- Temenos, C., & McCann, E. (2012). The local politics of policy mobility: learning, persuasion, and the production of a municipal sustainability fix. *Environment and Planning A*, 44, 1389–1406.
- Temenos, C., & McCann, E. (2013). Policies. In P. Adey, D. Bissell, K. Hannam, P. Merriman, & M. Sheller (Eds.), *The routledge handbook of mobilities* (pp. 575–584). New York: Routledge.
- Uitermark, J., Nicholls, W., & Loopmans, M. (2012). Cities and social movements: Theorizing beyond the right to the city. *Environment and Planning A*, 44(11), 2546–2554.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2014). Fifty-seventh session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs high-level segment, 57(1). 1–15.
- Wainwright, J., Prudham, S., & Glassman, J. (2000). The battles in seattle: Microgeographies of resistance and the challenge of building alternative futures. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 18, 5–13.
- Ward, K. (2006). “Policies in motion”, urban management and state restructuring: The trans-local expansion of business improvement districts. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 30, 54–75.
- Wood, E., Kerr, T., Small, W., Li, K., Marsh, D. C., Montaner, J. S., & Tyndall, M. W. (2004). Changes in public order after the opening of a medically supervised safer injecting facility for illicit injection drug users. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 171(7), 731–734.