

Seminar

iBrain



Friday, March 27th

11:30-12:30

Faculté de Médecine, TO salle 3.4 E.D

Psychopharmaceuticals and the Brazilian anti-drug-law of the 1970s



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During the 1950s and the 1960s, the development of the first neuroleptics, antidepressants, and tranquilisers transformed not only the treatment of mental disorders but also introduced ambivalent substances into society. On the one hand, psychopharmaceuticals were seen as helpful medication and on the other hand as dangerous intoxicants. Especially tranquilisers like the benzodiazepine Valium of the Suisse company Roche were established in the medical realm as well as in the illegitimate drug milieu.

In this context it is interesting to analyse how Valium as well as other psychopharmaceuticals were integrated into the governmental anti-drug discourse and the political efforts to fight against drug abuse. Brazil, a country ruled by a military dictatorship from 1964-1985 and influenced by the US-American “War on Drugs”, stands out as an excellent example for the entanglements of psychopharmaceuticals, intoxicants, and politics.

Throughout my talk, I will, first, present my ongoing research project on the history of psychopharmacology and the perception of psychopharmaceuticals in Brazil from the 1950s to the 1980s. Second, I will discuss the legal handling of Valium by focusing on the Brazilian anti-drug-law of the 1970s. I will demonstrate how it was possible for the government to classify psychopharmaceuticals as illegitimate intoxicants and outline the resulting consequences..

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