Sharon Sznitman is an Associate Professor of Public Health at the University of Haifa in Israel. She received her B.A. in sociology from the University of Manchester and her M.A. and Ph.D. in sociology from Stockholm University. She then completed a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship at Annenberg Public Policy Centre at the University of Pennsylvania.

In her research, Dr. Sznitman builds on her training in sociology to investigate issues of substance use and abuse and how this impacts people’s lives and society at large. Her research also focuses on medical and non-medical cannabis use and policies. Specifically, her research focuses on reaching a better understanding for how social structures (attitudes, ideology, economics) influence cannabis policy development and implementation, and in turn how cannabis policies (mainly through the media) influence the general population. Dr. Sznitman’s research also focuses on different patterns of cannabis use among medical and non-medical cannabis users and how cannabis is used to ease mental and physical symptoms in everyday life.

**Social forces affecting the production of scientific evidence in the realm of cannabis legalization: the case of the Swiss pilot trials**

Health policies, like cannabis regulations, are commonly thought to follow a linear process: identifying a problem, gathering knowledge to understand its causes and solutions, devising policies and practices, and evaluating outcomes. However, real-world processes are likely to deviate from this ideal as evidence-production may be influenced by social factors that in turn influence policy making. This presentation will focus on results from a qualitative study examining the underlying social forces affecting knowledge production related to cannabis policy in Switzerland. In May 2021, the Swiss federal government enacted innovative legislation that allows Swiss institutions to launch interventional studies to test the social, health, and economic effects of cannabis sale for non-medical purposes. We collected data through semi-structured qualitative interviews with stakeholders (scientists, policy makers, pharmacists, physicians, cannabis producers) engaged in cannabis policy implementation in Switzerland. The data was used to examine three key factors affecting the production of evidence within the Swiss cannabis pilot studies: values/ideology, politics/power, and economics.

**Join the lecture on Thursday, 12 Octobre 2023 at 4:00 pm online on zoom**

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