

ERC RATIMED Guest Lecture  
Vienna Dialogues in Medical Anthropology

**New Ayurvedic Pharmaceuticals,  
Hangovers and Society**

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Seminar room 1, 1030 Vienna, Apostelgasse 23

This talk will present three embedded episodes in the life of a polyherbal drug indicated as a preventative measure for hangovers. Invented and marketed in 2005 by a leading ayurvedic pharmaceutical company in India, PartySmart is a reformulated compound based on ayurvedic, biomedical and phytochemical sources. This creative process has involved multiple translations, resulting in hybrid pharmacological models, including, for instance, ayurvedic post-digestive tastes and biomedical effects on enzymatic activities. These modes of therapeutic action are conceptualizations of an active drug – i.e. a digested and metabolized drug. A problem arises, however, in the fact that the ingestion of this drug is linked to alcohol consumption in a country where it is widely considered in negative terms. For this reason, PartySmart was seen as an ambivalent presence in the firm's catalogue and thus a series of interventions aiming to uphold the image of this drug transformed both its social inscription and its materiality. This transformation also took a different, global trajectory as the drug gradually developed as a transnational pharmaceutical commodity and became a new object in new latitudes. By focusing on the social and material dimensions of this drug in these contexts, this paper calls upon science studies to expand the scope of pharmaceutical anthropology. It brings together various layers of analysis to offer new perspectives on contemporary herbal formulations as they traverse material cultures, medical epistemologies, sociopolitical borders, legal environments and social practices.



**Laurent Pordié** holds PhDs in both anthropology and pharmaceutical sciences, is a senior researcher with the CNRS, appointed to the Center for Research on Medicine, Science, Health and Society (Cermes3). He is also affiliated to the Center for South Asian Studies at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris, where he is teaching. He is the founder of the international NGO Nomad RSI, a founding member of the PharmAsia Network, and the recipient of numerous prizes. Laurent's works revolves around the social study of science and medicine in South Asia, among them the award winning book *Tibetan Medicine in the Contemporary World* (Routledge 2008 - ICAS BOOK Prize 2009) and the recent co-edited volume *Les nouveaux guérisseurs* (EHESS 2013).