

Institution: The University of Oxford
Unit of Assessment: UOA27
Title of case study: Informing Policy on the Stimulant Drug Khat
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Carrier's research and publications have had a strong impact on UK public and policy debate surrounding the stimulant drug khat – the stems and leaves of the shrub 'Catha edulis' that have been consumed for centuries in East Africa and the Middle East and are now imported in large quantities to the UK. In particular, this research has been influential in shaping the UK Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs' recommendations to the Government, published in January 2013. The Oxford research has played a significant role in highlighting the potential negative impact of the ban on farmers in East Africa, and though the government announced in July 2013 that it would not be following the Council's recommendations that khat not be prohibited, an argument remains urging the generation of ameliorative measures to mitigate this negative impact of UK policy.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Neil Carrier's research at the African Studies Centre, Oxford, into khat and appropriate policy towards it was inspired by the debates and concerns among Somali diaspora groups that the consumption of khat is harming their communities, while other commentators feared that earnings from the crop are funding terrorism in the Horn of Africa. Though the UK government decided not to legislate against it in 2006, various lobby groups continued to pressure the government to ban it, with further influence from other countries in the West (especially the USA) for the UK to ban its import (as the UK is a major transit hub for khat smuggled to North America and Scandinavia). Most countries in Europe and North America had already banned its import and consumption, making the UK, Australia and Netherlands out of step with these countries. This pressure led the UK government in 2009 to undertake new reviews of khat in which Carrier participated. The circumstances surrounding khat are complicated, as many commentators oppose a ban on various grounds, while consuming communities in the diaspora are far from unified on the need for prohibition or of its harm potential, and producing regions in East Africa are likely to suffer from changes to legislation in the UK and Netherlands in particular.</p> <p>The research underpinning this impact was undertaken at the African Studies Centre, Oxford, as part of a large, cross-institutional AHRC / ESRC-funded project entitled <i>The Khat Nexus: Transnational Consumption in a Global Economy</i>. Neil Carrier – now Departmental Lecturer in African Anthropology at Oxford – was the postdoctoral researcher on the project, which was based in Oxford, but also involved scholars from other institutions (David Anderson, University of Oxford, Susan Beckerleg, University of Warwick, Degol Hailu, SOAS, and Axel Klein, DrugScope). It examined the growth of khat's importance as a cash crop in East Africa, its growing consumption in that region, and the transnational trade that has emerged in recent decades to feed demand in diaspora communities of Somalis, Yemenis and Ethiopians in the West. Its findings helped inform the UK government's decision not to prohibit the substance in 2006 after a review of its potential harms. Carrier continued his research into the substance as an ESRC postdoctoral Fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford (2005-6), and more recently as a Research Fellow and Departmental Lecturer at the African Studies Centre (2009 onwards). Carrier has produced two books resulting from the research - <i>Kenyan Khat: The social life of a stimulant</i> (Brill: 2007) and <i>Africa and the War on Drugs</i>, published by Zed in October 2012 - and a number of single and co-authored articles, as well as a co-authored Home Office report (see below).</p> <p>The research insights and findings relating to the case study's impact derive from ethnographic and historical research carried out on the production, consumption and trade of the substance in East Africa and the west. These insights relate to the economic importance of the crop for African livelihoods, its cultural and social significance for consumers around the world, and the impact of policy, in particular legislation against the substance in Europe, North America and Australia. First, this research uncovered the economic significance of the khat economy for farmers in East Africa, as well as for exporters and importers around the world. While the crop has its economic</p>

downsides, in the main it has provided livelihoods for farmers and traders at times when other cash-crops have failed them. Second, the research has emphasized the social and cultural significance of khat consumption. While khat is blamed for many social ills affecting diaspora communities in the west, our research has shown that it is too simplistic to attribute these problems to khat alone. Our analysis of the social effects of khat in the UK suggests that evidence for khat being the cause of a range of social harms is mixed and contradictory. Third, this research shows that policy enacted to prohibit the commodity in various European and North American countries has not been evidence-based, and has led to a thriving trade in smuggled khat. These research findings are crucial to the khat debate, and informing the public and policy debate in the UK and elsewhere of these findings is the key aspect of the research impact.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Neil Carrier and Gernot Klantschnig, 2012, *Africa and the War on Drugs*, Zed Books. Available on request.

“Everyone working on drugs in Africa should read Neil Carrier and Gernot Klantschnig’s short but insightful new book, *Africa and the War on Drugs*. It brings sorely needed nuance, evidence and historical context to a debate from which too often they are conspicuously absent.” – James Cockayne (former Co-Director of the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation in New York and former Senior Fellow at the International Peace Institute.) on *African Arguments* (<http://africanarguments.org/2012/10/19/africa-and-the-war-on-drugs-the-west-african-cocaine-trade-is-not-just-business-as-usual-by-james-cockayne/>)

Neil Carrier, 2007, *Kenyan Khat: The social life of a stimulant*, Brill: Leiden.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004156593.i-288> (Peer reviewed book published by a reputable academic publisher).

“Neil Carrier makes an important contribution to the ethnography of the drug trade” – Sasha Newell, review in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 41:2 (2008): 348–50

David Anderson and Neil Carrier, 2009, ‘Khat in Colonial Kenya: A History of Prohibition and Control’, *Journal of African History* 50. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0021853709990752> (Peer reviewed article published in a high-ranking (17/55) history journal).

Neil Carrier, 2008, ‘Is Miraa a Drug? Categorising Kenyan Khat’, *Substance Use and Misuse* 43 (6). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10826080701739016> (Peer reviewed article in high-ranking substance-use journal (impact factor: 1.104)).

Neil Carrier, 2006, ‘Bundles of Choice: Variety and the Creation and Manipulation of Kenyan Khat’s Value’, *Ethnos* 71. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00141840600902737> (Peer reviewed article in respected anthropology journal).

Neil Carrier, 2005, ‘The Need for Speed: Contrasting Timeframes in the Social Life of Kenyan Miraa’, *Africa* 75 (4). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3556960> (Peer reviewed article in respected African Studies journal.)

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

By informing the debate concerning khat policy in the UK and elsewhere, Carrier’s research affects a wide range of beneficiaries. Firstly, the report for the Home Office, *Khat: Social Harms and Legislation, a Literature Review*, has benefitted the UK Home Office and ACMD (UK Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs), providing much needed context for the question of khat policy. Secondly, the publication of this Home Office report has given the general public free access to material vital to the debate. Thirdly, by informing policy, his work will potentially impact the lives of many, both in the UK and in East Africa. Regarding the former, his work highlights the need for policy makers to focus on the wider social context in which problematic khat consumption is embedded. Regarding East Africa, by emphasizing the importance of khat as a cash crop in East Africa Carrier’s work has ensured policy makers are aware of the implications of UK policy for farmers and exporters in Ethiopia and Kenya. While the government has announced a ban on khat to be enforced in the near future, Carrier’s research and its impact on the recommendations of the

ACMD played and continue to play a major role in the debate.

On the basis of their track record of researching the substance, Carrier and Professor David Anderson (the PI of the *Khat Nexus* project who has recently moved from the African Studies Centre to a new post at the University of Warwick) were contacted by the Home Office in 2009 with regard to writing a review of the available literature regarding khat's purported 'social harms' and the history and impact of legislation in European and North American countries. The Home Office were focusing on social harms, as medical harms connected to khat were well covered in the existing literature. Carrier and Anderson tendered a bid for the literature review and were commissioned to write it: the review was published by the Home Office in 2011^[1, i].

This was the first piece of research to conduct in-depth analysis of the history of khat prohibition in European and North American countries. It highlights the lack of evidence-based policy in these countries and the mixed and contradictory nature of the evidence for social harm, as well as the lack of attention given to the wider social problems faced by the Somali population in the UK that are crucial in understanding the impact of khat. It also drew the attention of policy makers to the government's revenue collection from the import of khat, which now amounts to over £2 million annually.

This report allowed the findings of Carrier's long-term research on khat to be placed at the heart of the khat policy debate in the UK. The review has been cited in other publications, has been reposted on several websites, and its findings have even been translated into Norwegian. Its coverage in newspaper articles and approaches made to Carrier by journalists suggest that it is circulating widely. Most importantly, the report has directly informed the recently published Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs recommendations on khat^[ii]. These recommendations cite the literature review substantially and draw upon many of its findings. Carrier's research into khat is therefore of great significance in informing the khat debate in the UK. It has enabled the ACMD to make much more informed recommendations to the Home Office. Professor Les Iversen, the Chair of the ACMD^[2], is prepared to corroborate the strong role the literature review played in the ACMD's recommendations, while Will Reynolds^[3] (Head of the Home Office Advisory Bodies) corroborates the research thus:

Dr Carrier and Professor Anderson provided, to the Home Office, a report: Khat: Social harms and legislation - A literature review. The review was integral to the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs' consideration of khat which was directly commissioned by the Home Secretary. In requesting the review the Home Secretary indicated particular interest in better understanding the social harms of khat. The report therefore provided policy makers, through the ACMD's consideration of the wider evidence base in its report, with key evidence that has supported the Government's decision making process. The final decision, made by Ministers, will have high media profile – irrespective of outcome. If the decision is taken to control khat, it is likely that there will be significant consideration and reference to the social harms of khat and the ACMD report at Parliamentary level.

Without the literature review, policy makers would have been unaware that much legislation against khat around the world was actually based on little evidence, while also being ill-informed on much of the context surrounding the khat issue in the UK. Carrier and David Anderson also addressed the ACMD in February 2012 and presented their findings to the review committee, which Anderson has subsequently joined. Furthermore, Carrier has liaised with journalists regarding the literature review, most recently being contacted by a BBC radio producer regarding a documentary being made about khat. Carrier was interviewed and quoted by Howard Swains in an article about the current khat debate in *The Independent* (30th June 2012)^[iii]. This article was discussed in the House of Lords, with specific remarks by Lord Avebury on 19 July 2012^[iv].

A blog post by Carrier on the nature of claims that khat proceeds are funding terrorism has also drawn much internet traffic^[v]. In June 2012, Carrier was interviewed by Italian film-makers^[4] producing a film about khat^[vi]. Carrier has been recruited by the Independent Scientific Committee on Drugs onto a team of experts monitoring the response of the UK government to the ACMD's

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recommendations. Finally, Carrier's work has had policy impact beyond the UK, e.g. it was cited in an Australian report on khat in the state of Victoria, which successfully advised the state government not to ban the substance^[vii].

Following the announcement in July 2013 of the government's intention to ban khat, Carrier published an online article for Think Africa Press further emphasizing the need to consider the impact on East African farmers and traders^[viii]. Kenyan khat farmer organisations are now seeking to bring a case against the British government's decision with funding from the Kenyan government: Carrier has been approached by the legal firm developing the case to offer advice. Thus, the government's decision to ban the substance does not mark the end of the debate, and Carrier's research continues to be of relevance. Furthermore, by going against the ACMD advice, the government has sparked a wider debate on the role of expert advice and government policy: Carrier's research has helped facilitate debate beyond the single issue of khat.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Testimony

- [1] Corroboration of work with the Home Office available from Home Office Drug and Alcohol Unit
- [2] Corroboration of strong role the literature review played on the ACMD's recommendation available from the Chair of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs.
- [3] Statement from Head of Home Office Science Advisory Bodies, UK Home Office
- [4] Corroboration of involvement with film on khat available from Filmmaker, 101 Films

Other Evidence Sources

[i] David Anderson and Neil Carrier, *Khat: Social Harms and Legislation, a Literature Review*, Home Office Occasional Paper 95, (Peer-reviewed report commissioned by the UK Home Office, available online at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/crime-research/occ95>)

[ii] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/144120/report-013.pdf

[iii] Howard Swains, freelance journalist who interviewed and quoted Carrier in his article 'Khat Fight: Harmless recreational drug or recruitment tool for terrorists', *The Independent*, 30th June 2012. Hswains@gmail.com Link to article: <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/features/khat-fight-harmless-recreational-drug-or-a-recruitment-tool-for-terrorists-7893373.html>

[iv] See Hansard for remarks by Lord Avebury, citing an article in the *Independent* quoting Neil Carrier: HL Deb, 19 July 2012, c422. <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/lords/?gid=2012-07-19a.422.0>

[v] <http://focusonthehorn.wordpress.com/2012/06/11/khat-and-al-shabaab-views-from-eastleigh/>

[vi] <http://www.leavesofthehorn.com/>

[vii] J. Fitzgerald, 'Khat: A Literature Review', Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health, 2009: http://www.ceh.org.au/downloads/Khat_report_FINAL.pdf

[viii] <http://thinkafricapress.com/legal/uk-khat-ban-missed-opportunity>