# Development of structures and trends of anonymous online drug markets

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#### **Overview**

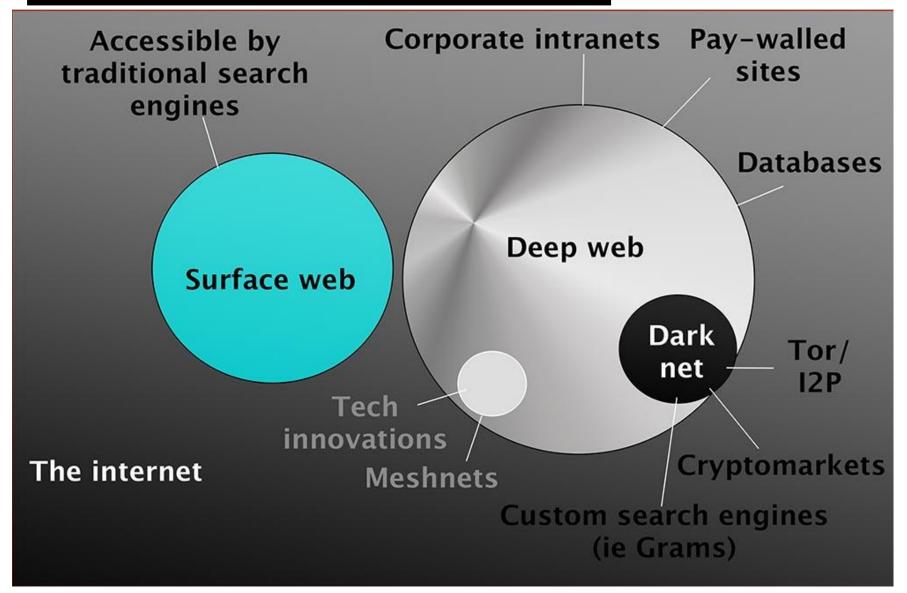
What are anonymous online drug markets?

How did we gather and analyse data?

What are the outcomes of our analysis?

Conclusion

#### Internet



#### What are anonymous online drug markets?



 = digital platforms that use anonymising software and virtual currencies to facilitate trade of goods and services, delivered by traditional postal services



 Innovative technological developments enable systematic drug trading the internet

- 3 actors are present on platforms:
- Administrator of a marketplace,
- Seller &
- Buyer

 Transactions are processed between seller and an intermediary in case of conflict.



#### Data & Methods

- Data were collected between July 2015 and September 2016 on five different darknet marketplaces
- For this presentation we will analyse data on the marketplace Alphabay
- Data generated by developing and applying web scraping-tools
- Data analysis was conducted by using the business-intelligence software Qlik Sense
- Detailed understanding of the development of types of goods being offered, number of deals and distribution of vendors

Browse Categories		Search Results [Save Search]	
Fraud	9654		
✓ ☑ Drugs & Chemicals	30745	[MS] [Sticky] ALL YOU HAVE TO KNOW TO BE SAFE! *FREE(TO MAKE THIS CC Item # 51105 - Cannabis & Hashish / Buds & Flowers - Nesquik7 (3315)	Buy price USD 0.00
Benzos	2442	Views: 5988 / Bids: Fixed price	(0.0000 BTC
Cannabis & Hashish	9009	Quantity left: Unlimited	
Dissociatives	634		
□Ecstasy	4526	☐ [FE 100%] [Sticky] 5g Amphetamine Paste 100%Speed 74%Pure A++	Buy price USD 33.62
Opioids	2303	Item # 16885 - Stimulants / Speed - DrugsFromGermany (857)	(0.1027 BTC
Prescription	2304	Views: 10241 / Bids: Fixed price Quantity left: Unlimited	
Steroids	966		
Stimulants	5209	■ [FE 100%] [Sticky] 3.0mg x50 Pfizer Xanax Bars // FREE SHIPPING	Buy price
Tobacco	149	Item # 36804 - Benzos / Pills - NorcoLorco (328)	USD 90.00 (0.2749 BTC
☐ Weight Loss	87	Views: 3946 / Bids: Fixed price	(0.2. 10 2.10
Other	606	Quantity left: Unlimited	
Paraphernalia	218	■ [MS] [Sticky] FB's MED. WEED - PURPLE KUSH (8.5/10) & PINK KUSH (9/10)	Buy price
Psychedelics	2292	Item # 12192 - Cannabis & Hashish / Buds & Flowers - ferrisbueller (212)	USD 62.00 (0.1894 BTC
Guides & Tutorials	4447	Views: 5882 / Bids: Fixed price Quantity left: Unlimited	
Counterfeit Items	1796		
Digital Products	3991		
➤ ☐ Jewels & Gold	536	[MS] [Sticky] GET YOUR OWN ITEMMAIL DROP TUTORIAL:USA UK EU INTERN/ Item # 43689 - Cannabis & Hashish / Buds & Flowers - Vinnie (286)	Buy price USD 15.00
➤ □ Weapons	570	Views: 4720 / Bids: Fixed price	(0.0458 BT
Carded Items	969	views: 47207 Blas; Fixed price Quantity left: Unlimited	
➢ ☐ Services	2178		
➤ ☐ Other Listings	764	□ [FE 100%] [Sticky] 10x Grüne Dominos 140mg MDMA Ecstasy Pills	Buy price
Software & Malware	482	Item # 45314 - Ecstasy / Pills - DrugsFromGermany (857)	USD 59.12 (0.1806 BTC
Security & Hosting	178	Views: 5513 / Bids: Fixed price Quantity left: Unlimited	
Search Options		■ [FE 100%] [Sticky] 3.0mg x100 Pfizer Xanax Bars // FREE SHIPPING	Buy price
Search terms:		Item # 40436 - Benzos / Pills - NorcoLorco (328)	USD 150.00

#### Data collection

- Number of listings
- Vendor names
- Number of vendors
- Quantities of products
- Prizes in UDS, EU, B
- Customer feedback ratings
- Drug category and sub-categories
- Number of views per listing
- Distribution of payment methods
- Bids
- Number of countries where products are shipped from
- Number of countries where products are shipped to

### What are the outcomes of our analysis?

- Measurement analyses: September 2015 August 2016
- Estimated total revenues for 12 months: 253 Million USD
- Vendors offering drugs for sale: 3,017
- Active vendors on AlphaBay: 1,151
- Drug listings total: 18,417
- 8,311 drug listings were sold

Escrow holdings (XMR) XMR 0.0000
Total sales USD 0.00

Note: Escrow funds are held in BTC / XMR. The USD amounts above are provided for your convenience only, at the current rate.

Bought items	
Items bought	0
Items with bid	0
Payments	
Paid	USD 0.00
In Escrow	USD 0.00

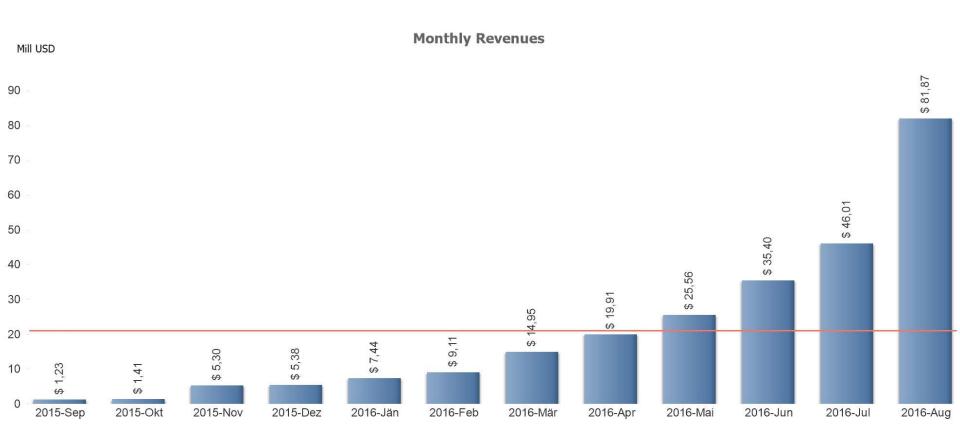
Bitcoin (BTC)	
United States Dollar (USD)	593.42
Canadian Dollar (CAD)	781.88
Euro (EUR)	532.12
Australian Dollar (AUD)	782.55
British Pound (GBP)	457.16
Deposits & Withdrawals	
Monero (XMR)	
United States Dollar (USD)	10.53
Canadian Dollar (CAD)	13.87
Euro (EUR)	9.44
Australian Dollar (AUD)	13.88
British Pound (GBP)	8.11
Deposits & Withdrawals	

)	5DD, good product  ★★FERRAGAMO' batch arrived 8TH June is 10/10 ★★ 1G ★ PURE QUALITY PERUVIAN COCAINE ★ UK	jk TO USD 79.9900	Sep 21, 2016 11:18 View Item
	UK ★ The HONEST Cocaine Company ★ FAST DELIVERY ★★		
Đ	Excellent stuff yet again. Top seller	hd	Sep 21, 2016 10:45
	$\star\star$ 'FERRAGAMO' batch arrived 8TH June is 10/10 $\star\star$ 0.2g $\star$ PURE QUALITY PERUVIAN COCAINE $\star$ UTO UK $\star$ The HONEST Cocaine Company $\star$ FAST DELIVERY $\star\star$	K USD 19.9900	View Item
Ð	Great Coke! arrive quickly aswell	a1	Sep 21, 2016 01:25
	$\star\star$ 'FERRAGAMO' batch arrived 8TH June is 10/10 $\star\star$ 1G $\star$ PURE QUALITY PERUVIAN COCAINE $\star$ UK $\star$ The HONEST Cocaine Company $\star$ FAST DELIVERY $\star\star$	TO USD 79.9900	View Item
•	2nd order and NDD delivery again. Great comms and great product, very strong	kx	Sep 21, 2016 00:12
	$\star\star$ 'FERRAGAMO' batch arrived 8TH June is 10/10 $\star\star$ 7G $\star$ PURE QUALITY PERUVIAN COCAINE $\star$ UK $\star$ The HONEST Cocaine Company $\star$ FAST DELIVERY $\star\star$	TO USD 500.0000	View Item
•	As always, perfect in every way.	d1	Sep 20, 2016 22:57
	$\star\star$ 'FERRAGAMO' batch arrived 8TH June is 10/10 $\star\star$ 7G $\star$ PURE QUALITY PERUVIAN COCAINE $\star$ UK $\star$ The HONEST Cocaine Company $\star$ FAST DELIVERY $\star\star$	TO USD 500.0000	View Item
•	Slightly under at 3.38	fr	Sep 20, 2016 20:54
	$\star\star$ 'FERRAGAMO' batch arrived 8TH June is 10/10 $\star\star$ 3.5G $\star$ PURE QUALITY PERUVIAN COCAINE $\star$ TO UK $\star$ The HONEST Cocaine Company $\star$ FAST DELIVERY $\star\star$	JK USD 280.0000	View Item
•	quick delivery, good stealth and decent product	s1	Sep 20, 2016 20:31
	$\star\star$ 'FERRAGAMO' batch arrived 8TH June is 10/10 $\star\star$ 1G $\star$ PURE QUALITY PERUVIAN COCAINE $\star$ UK UK $\star$ The HONEST Cocaine Company $\star$ FAST DELIVERY $\star\star$	TO USD 79.9900	View Item
0	all good as usual! thanks	tn	Sep 20, 2016 19:08
	★★ NEW PRODUCT PROMOTION★★ 1G ★ MDMA ★ UK TO UK ★ The HONEST Company ★ FAST DELIVERY ★★	USD 14.9900	View Item
•	Orderred NDD. Arrived Next day as always. Best sellers on AB	s7	Sep 20, 2016 18:38
	$\star\star$ 'FERRAGAMO' batch arrived 8TH June is 10/10 $\star\star$ 1G $\star$ PURE QUALITY PERUVIAN COCAINE $\star$ UK $\star$ The HONEST Cocaine Company $\star$ FAST DELIVERY $\star\star$	TO USD 94.9800	View Item
•	Fantastic as always	s7	Sep 20, 2016 18:38
	$\star\star$ 'FERRAGAMO' batch arrived 8TH June is 10/10 $\star\star$ 1G $\star$ PURE QUALITY PERUVIAN COCAINE $\star$ UK UK $\star$ The HONEST Cocaine Company $\star$ FAST DELIVERY $\star\star$	TO USD 79.9900	View Item
0	Amazing people!	tr	Sep 20, 2016 17:19
	A Liverent Annaly 17 Co. Committee of the Co.	TO 1100 70 0000	) (" II

View Item

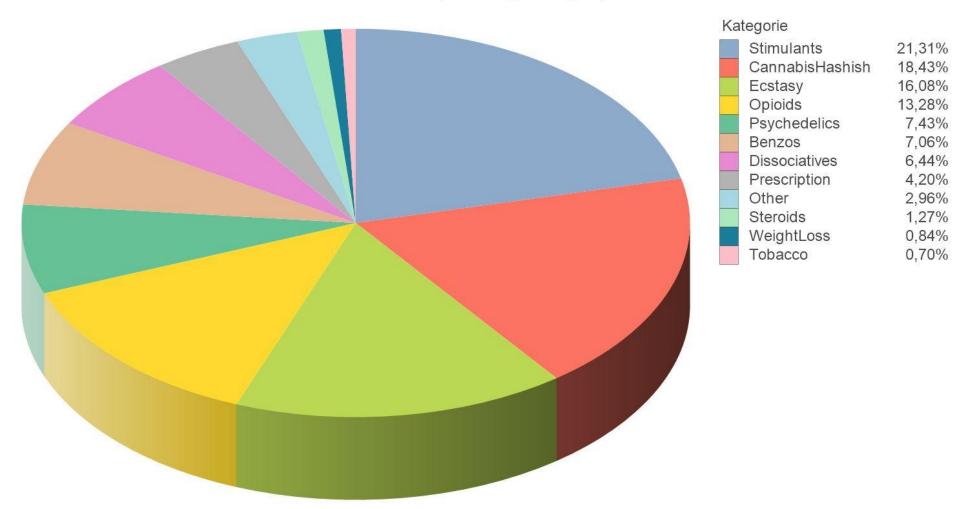
★★'FERRAGAMO' batch arrived 8TH June is 10/10 ★★ 1G ★ PURE QUALITY PERUVIAN COCAINE ★ UK TO USD 79.9900

# AlphaBay. Montly estimated revenues

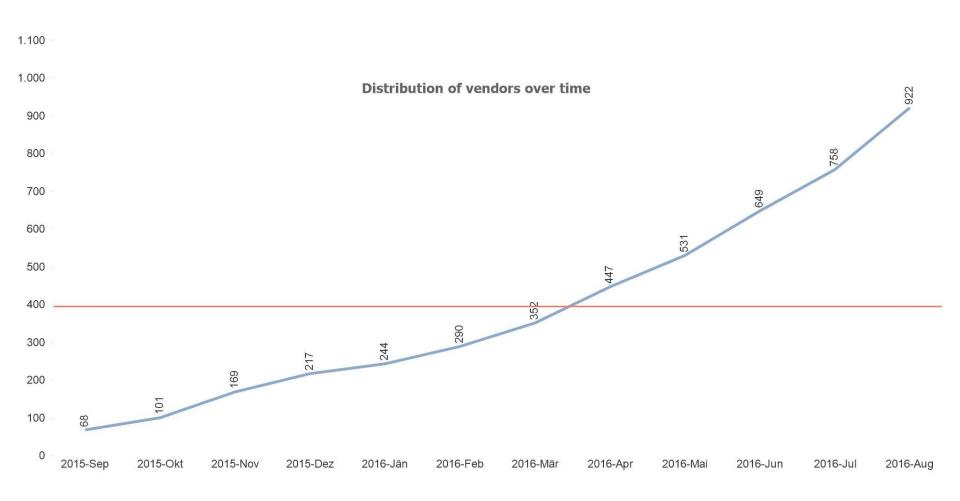


# Revenues per drug category for 12 months

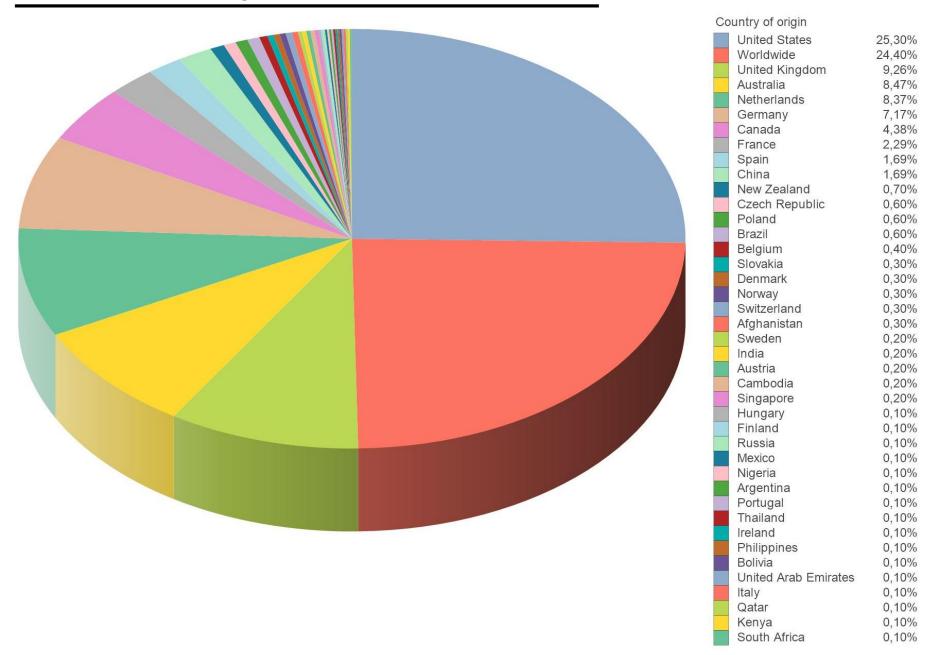
#### Revenues per drug category



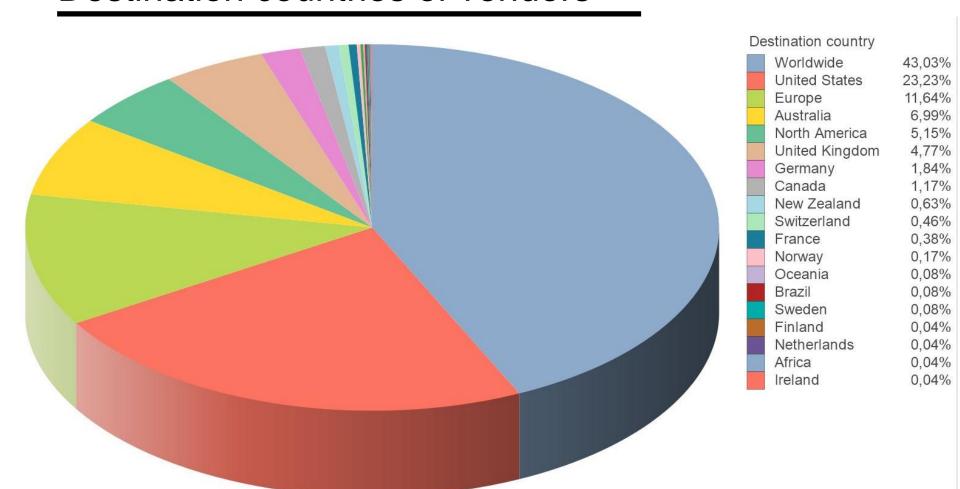
### Distribution of vendors over time



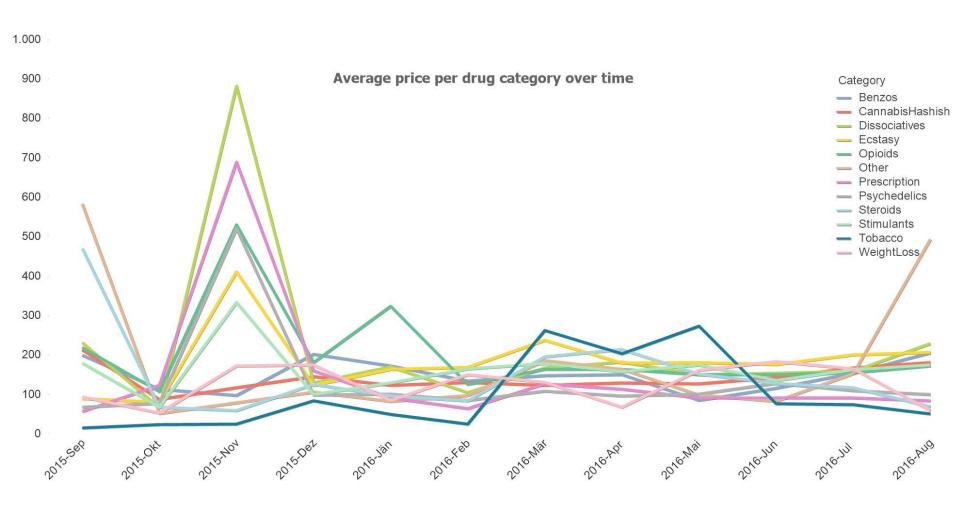
# Countries of origin of vendors



#### Destination countries of vendors



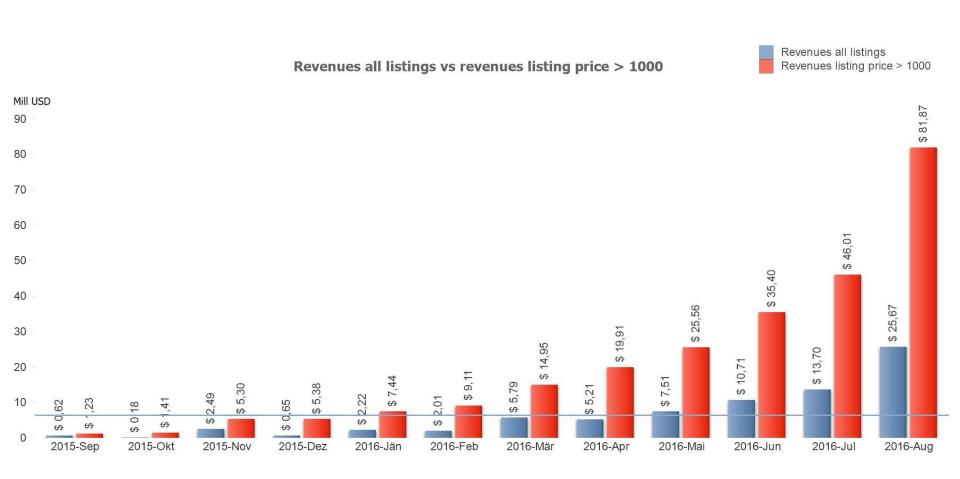
# Average price per drug category



### Revenues fer listings priced ever 1000 USD

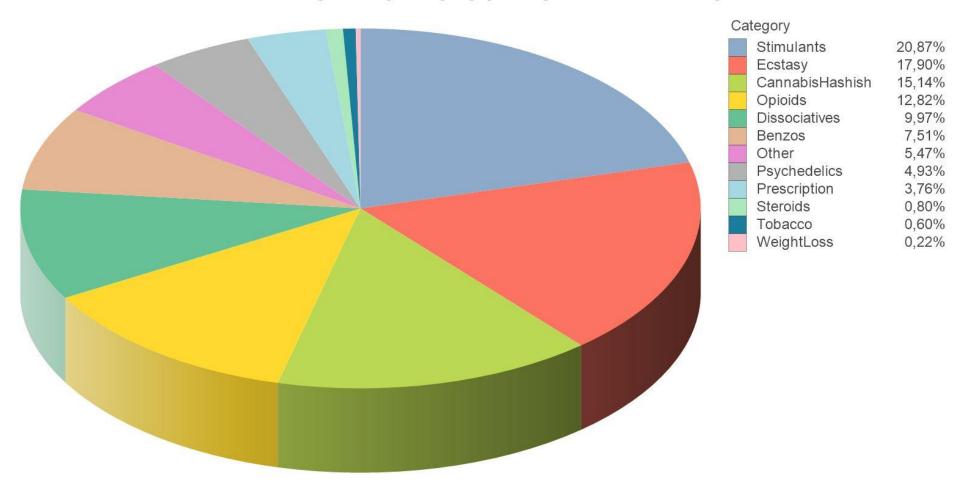


# Revenues for all listings compared to listings priced over 1000 USD



# Revenues per drug category for items priced over 1000 USD

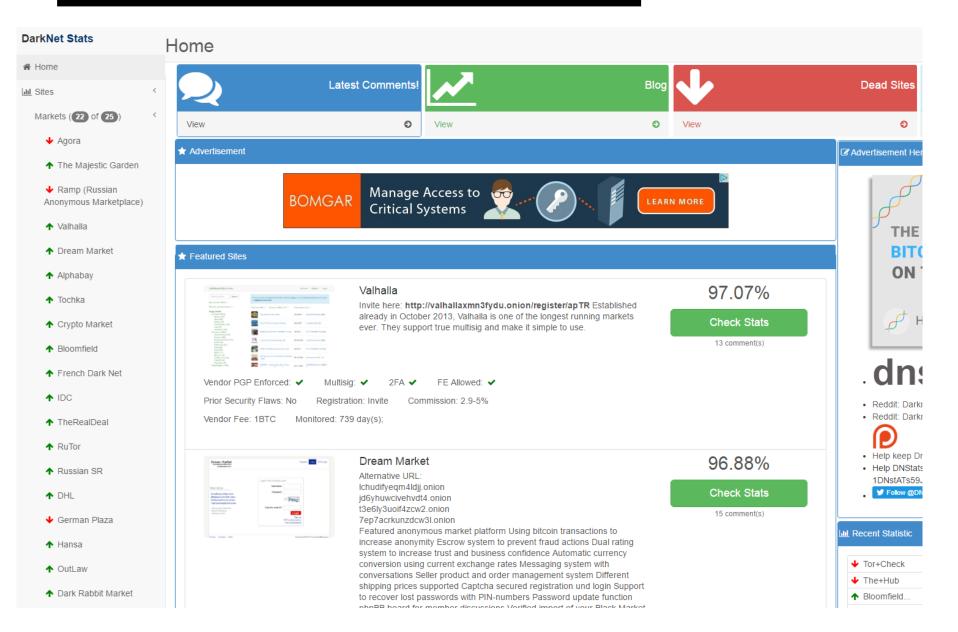
Revenues per drug category (Listing Price > 1000 USD)



#### **Conclusion**

- Anonymous drug markets: sell and buy (illicit) drugs of any kind globally, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week without any physical meeting
- Data were analyzed for the most popular marketplace. Many more competing are online.
- High fluctuation of cryptomarkets
- Revenues and vendors are increasing over time, peak during summer months
- Concentration on US followed by Europe and Australia
- Most popular drugs are stimulants, ecstasy and cannabis.
- Users have an unprecedented possibility to exchange and get information
- Detailed information available on vendors and products
- → Serves a bottom up harm reduction approach
- Practices and features do hardly differ from legal e-commerce companies

# Thanks a lot!



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- Why are drugs purchased on the darknet?
- (Barratt et al. 2014)
- Anonymous online questionnaire with customers
- 9.470 participants from UK, Australia and USA
- Why did you buy drugs on Silk Road 1?
- Wide range of drugs
- Better quality
- Anonymity
- Greater convenience when ordering online
- access to more information about the products & vendors
- Reliece on vendors with high ratings

V I C E S S E

- Why are drugs being sold on the darknet?
- (Van Hout & Bingham 2014)
- Anonymous online interviews with vendors
- Simplicity to set up a vendor account
- Lower risk
- High profits
- Secure and anonymous infrastructure
- Self-description:
- professional advertising of quality products
- professional communication and regular forum activity
- competitive pricing
- good stealth techniques
- speedy dispatch of slightly overweight products
- → positive feedback



#### Facts and figures

- Currently 22 marketplaces are online
- 70 % of all sales with cannabis-, ecstasy- and cocaine-related products (2013-2015) (Soska & Christin, 2015)
- Currently largest and most stable platforms: AlphaBay, Dream Market, Silkkitie (Valhalla), Outlaw

Name	Start	End	Duration	Drug offers
Silk Road	2011-01	2013-10	2,75 Jahre	24 422 (2012)
Silk Road 2	2013-11	2014-11	1 Jahr	1 834 (2014)
BlackMarket Rld	2011-06	2013-12	2,5 Jahre	~4 000 (04.2013)
Agora	2013-02	2015-08 (Pause)	2,5 Jahre	17 000 (06.2015)
AlphaBay	2014-12	online	1,4 Jahre	22 467 (02.2016)
Nucleus	2014-10	2016-04	1,6 Jahre	16 439 (02.2016)
Dream Market	2013-11	online	1,7 Jahre	9 937 (02.2016)



- Revenues
- Estimations of total market volumes
- 1,9 Million USD per month (Christin, 2013)
- annual revenue of over 22 million on Silk Road 1
- September 2013: significant growth in the number of sellers and customers (Aldridge & Décary-Hétu 2014)
- Increased revenues to approximately 90 million USD p.a.
- Silk Road 1: increase of annual sales volume to over 100 million USD for 2013 (Soska & Christin, 2015)
- Estimation of retail market for illicit drugs in the European Union at EUR 24.3 billion in 2013 (EMCCDA, 2016)
- Vendors: 87% of sellers were observed to sell less than 10,000 USD (2013-2015) (Soska & Christin, 2015)
- 2% of vendors managed to sell more than 100,000 USD

#### Why would you trust an unknown stranger?

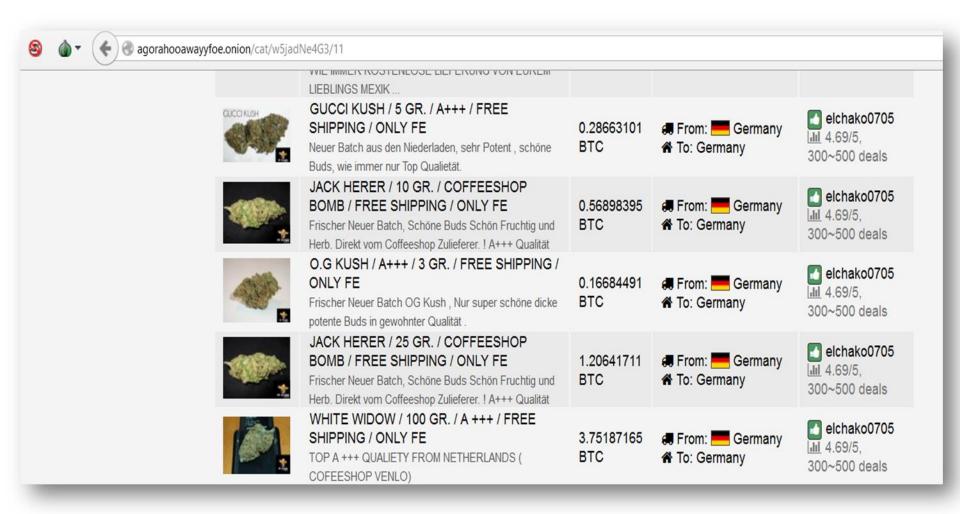


- Customer feedback system
- Buyer submits a review on the product and service of the transaction
- Feedback system enables trustworthy interaction between vendors and customers who do not know their identities and locations
- Source for conflicts between all actors
- Review includes numerical rating and a written feedback
- Cover: customer satisfaction with the quality and quantity of the drug,
- the shipping time,
- stealth techniques used to conceal the product,
- packaging when shipping or the responsiveness of the vendor, and communication with vendor
- Vendors seem to put great emphasis on receiving positive feedback

# V IC ES S E

# Customer feedback system

Profile page of a vendor



# Customer feedback system



• Positive and negative feedback

5/5	Fast domestic shipping, amazing stealth lol! Thanks guys!!	☆☆☆72% speed 10 gram 20 euro !!!	-	anon lill 6~10 deals
5/5	top vendor! will order againgot a little bit more :)	25 gram ☆ 72% SPEED ☆ 40 euro	3 days ago	anon <b>lılıl</b> ~5/5, 3~5 deals

received only 3g instead if 5. very slow

2/5 communication to resolve this, after almost a
month now he doesn't seem to care anymor

WHITE WIDOW / 5 GR. / A +++ / FREE SHIPPING / ONLY FE

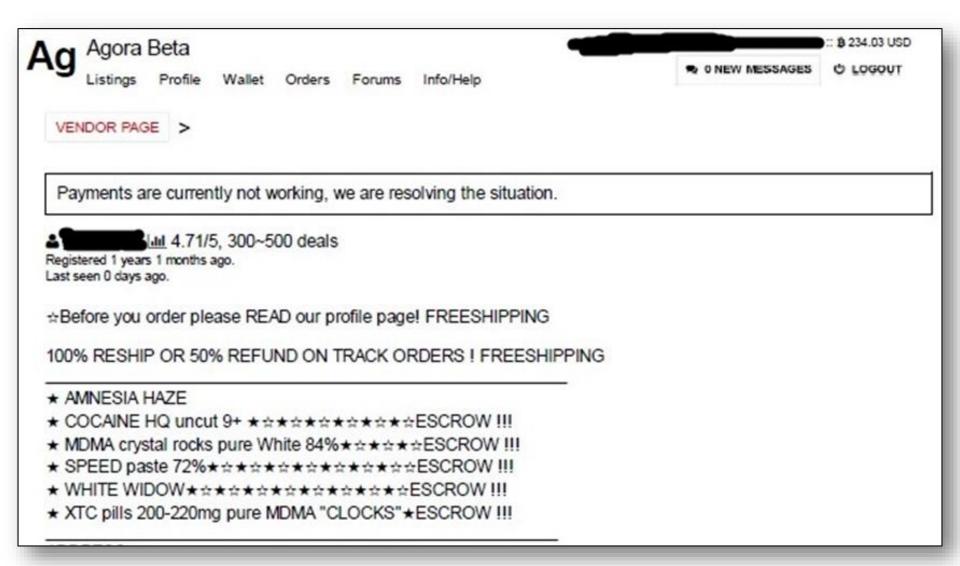
82 days ago anon [111] ~5/5, 15~25 deals

#### Third party conflict resolution



- No third-party conflict resolution with physical drug dealing
- Solve disputes and prevent fraud between all actors
- Aim: Increase both reputation and income
- Centralised escrow system was introduced on Silk Road 1
- A dispute resolution is offered by the third party to solve a conflict between buyer and seller if necessary
- Shortcoming: administrator is in a powerful position.

#### Centralised escrow system



#### Agreement by two out of three

- Multi-signature Escrow
- TWO OUT OF THREE PARTIES (OPERATOR, SELLER, BUYER) HAVE TO AGREE ON SIGNING A TRANSACTION
- Most secure transaction process available
- TECHNICALLY DEMANDING FOR ALL PARTIES INVOLVED
- Not many platforms offer multi-sig.

Loaistics







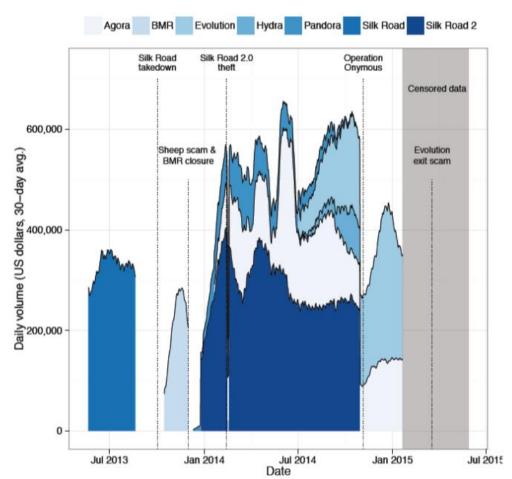
#### Harm Reduction



- Schadensminimierung (Harm Reduction) durch online Drogenmärkte?
- Erweiterung des Harm Reduction-Ansatzes um eine Bottom-up-Perspektive von Konsumierenden
- 1) Anonyme Bewertungssystem und Diskussionsforen:
- Neue Möglichkeiten zum Einholen von Informationen
- Erfahrungsaustausch über Substanzen und Händler
- Austausch über Wirkungsweisen und Dosierempfehlungen (wichtig bei NPS)
- 2) Konsumierende nicht dem Risiko auf der Straße ausgesetzt
- → Bottom-up-Technologie des Internets →
- Einbeziehen von Wissen und Erfahrungen von (erfahrenen) Peers

#### <u>Marktentwicklungen</u>

- Hohe Fluktuation der Marktplätze
- Steigende Umsätze
- Operation Onymous: kein Rückgang von Umsatzvolumen
- Technische Sicherheitsaspekte
- Bezahlsysteme
- Infrastruktur: dezentrale Marktplätze
- Erweitertes Sprachangebot
- Clearnet-Märkte
- Einzelshops von Anbietern



#### Wie funktionieren online Marktplätze?



#### Lieferung

- Keine persönliche Interaktionen
- Verkäufer bestimmt Länder, Kontinent
- Zustellung per traditionellem Postdienst
- → ohne deren Wissen
- Unterschied ob Versand international oder innerstaatlich: Zoll
- unauffällige äußere Verpackung

#### Customer feedback system

V I C E S S E

- How is trust incrased?
- dispatching illicit drugs of high quality
- stealth used to conceal the content of the delivery
- fast replies by the vendor and
- short shipping time

# Conventional Definition of Data Quality

- Accuracy
  - The data was recorded correctly.
- Completeness
  - All relevant data was recorded.
- Uniqueness
  - Entities are recorded once.
- Timeliness
  - The data is kept up to date.
    - Special problems in federated data: time consistency.
- Consistency
  - The data agrees with itself.