Cultivating Cannabis in a Paraguayan Nature Reserve: Incentives and Moral Justification for breaking the law

Marcelo Moriconi (corresponding author)
marcelo.moriconi@iscte-iul.pt
ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), Centro de Estudos Internacionais,
Avenida das Forças Armadas, 1649-026, Lisbon, Portugal.
ORCID: 0000-0002-9220-7062

Carlos Peris
UNA - Universidad Nacional de Asunción
carlosperisc@gmail.com

Abstract

Paraguay has become the main cannabis producer in South America and one of the largest exporters in the world. Some investigations about the cultivation of marijuana in the country portray a cruel environment in which peasants are exploited in "almost feudal" conditions by intermediaries who buy their crops at unreasonably low prices. However, a group of peasants who use the Mbaracayú Forest Nature Reserve as their labour area have created a safe and profitable ecosystem for developing their business. Based on interviews with key informants and visits to the area, the article describes the constraints and incentives that lead those peasants to engage in criminal activities, the strategies they have used to establish protective barriers, and the moral justifications that emerge as a result of their success in doing business. Although there are violent practices and extortion, we claim that the decision-making process to get involved in illegal markets is a free action influenced by alternative moral understandings that provide reasons and justifications for breaking the law. The moral map of these cannabis growers goes far beyond the mere economic justification of generating material resources and is related to economic, institutional, and social premises linked to a generalized aspiration of dignity and a life worth living. The functioning of informal institutions learned through previous interactions with state and non-state actors who regulate and protect the market, the perceived social approval/legitimation of the activity by referent groups, and the awareness of the capacity and skills necessary to successfully conduct the business have a crucial importance in the moral reformulation.

Key words

Drug production; Moral justifications; Future perspectives; Life worth living; legitimate illegalities, illegitimate legalities.

1. Introduction

Paraguay has become the main cannabis producer in South America and one of the largest exporters in the world (Garat 2016). Even though scientific research on drug production in the country is very limited, some institutional and news reports have described the cultivation of cannabis as a cruel environment in which peasants are exploited in “almost feudal” conditions by intermediaries who buy their crops at unreasonably low prices (Miranda 2016). The belief is that peasants, coming from lower social strata and with many living in extreme poverty, are forced to work for cruel drug traffickers which is "risking their lives and freedom" (Russia Today 2019). Furthermore, as the most fragile links in the chain, farmers are left at the mercy of criminal organizations. These criminal organizations dispute control of the territory and have generated a significant increase in homicide rates in the main regions associated with cannabis cultivation, particularly the departments bordering Brazil (Moriconi & Peris 2019).

However, a group of peasants have successfully restructured the informal institutional arrangement of local marijuana production. Using the Mbaracayú Forest Nature Reserve as their labour area, those peasants have created a safe and profitable ecosystem to develop their business.

Based on interviews with key informants and visits to the area, this article describes the constraints and incentives that lead those peasants to engage in criminal activities, the strategies they have used to establish protective barriers, and the moral justifications that emerge as a result of their success in doing business. Although there are violent practices and extortion, we claim that the decision-making process leading to get involved in illegal markets is a free action influenced by alternative moral understandings that provide reasons and justifications for breaking the law. The moral map of the peasants that grow cannabis goes far beyond the mere economic justification of generating material resources, as various studies on the moral economy of drug agriculture have suggested (Vizcarra 2018, Grillo 2018), and it is related to economic, institutional, and social premises linked to a generalized aspiration of dignity and a life worth living. The functioning of informal institutions learned through previous interactions with state and non-state actors that regulate and protect the market, the perceived social approval/legitimation of the activity by referent groups, and the awareness of the capacity and skills necessary to successfully conduct the business have a crucial importance in the moral reformulation.

The work is of particular relevance for researchers interested in the drug production process in Latin America and in the social tolerance of illegality in the region. It presents clues that help understand the economic, social, and cultural processes by which legality is delegitimized and certain illegalities gain legitimacy. In the case of the farmers in the Paraguayan reserve, it shows what Moriconi (2018) has called "the collapse of legality as a categorical imperative" and the abrupt dislocation between the good life promoted by the State through the narrative of legality and a dignified life worth living.

The article is structured in seven parts. The first one discusses the theoretical framework. The second explains the methodology used for gathering data. The third part describes the ecosystem in which the cannabis market has grown and spread in Paraguay over the last decades. The fourth part describes the incentives for farmers to cultivate in the Natural Reserve and how they succeeded in restructuring the dynamics of the illegal market, creating protection walls for their activity and their security. In the fifth part, we present the moral map, divided into four premises. The sixth section discusses the results, and the final part presents some concluding remarks.

2. Theoretical framework: from legality to morality and life dignity

Studies on illegality in Latin America have overestimated the value of the State and of legality, while the importance of morality and expectations in illegal markets has gone almost unnoticed (Dewey 2019; Dewey and Thomas, *forthcoming*). The State, in this literature, is portrayed as the bearer of a positive morality intrinsically linked to the promotion of legality. What is legal is understood as legitimate in itself. The duality of State vs. crime led to the establishment of theories that justified the emergence and expansion of criminality due to the absence or weakness of the State (the supposed enemy of criminals) and its subsequent incapacity to enforce the rule of law throughout its territory (Brock et. Al 2012; Naím 2012; Dewey et. al. 2017).

In recent years, there has been a rise in research on criminal governance (Alda 2021), which is conceptualized as "the creation of rules regulating behaviour by criminal entities often with the collaboration of state actors" (Feldmann & Luna 2022). Those works are mainly based on local studies carried out in marginal areas of different countries (Sampó 2021, Arias 2017; Lessing 2017; 2020; Magaloni et al. 2020). They have sought to understand the relation of coexistence and/or cooperation between criminal organizations and state actors. However, this literature lacks an in-depth discussion about the legitimation of illegalities.

In other words, the emergence and consolidation of the concept of "criminal governance" focuses excessively on which the dynamics between state, non-state, and criminal actors are (the adjective of the concept) and pays little attention to the raison d'être of the existence of a good governance (the noun), that is, the institutional promotion of outcomes the make possible of a dignified life worth living.

Dewey et al. (2017) warns about the importance to understand the social dynamics of the hybrid orders and to pay attention to its logic of reproduction of identities, hierarchies, and alternative normative frameworks. The author has shown that legality and illegality can coexist and interact, and the legitimacy of their fusion and alternation lies in their effectiveness to produce relevant social, economic, and political outputs, such as job creation, supply of basic services and goods, alternative hierarchies, justice systems and citizen protection.

For his part, Schultze-Kraft (2018) considers that the legality-illegality dichotomy is no longer sustainable in the scenarios of public life in Latin America. The author introduces the concept of *crimilegal orders* and warns about the need to promote research that allows us to understand their moral and normative bases (Schultze-Kraft 2021). There is particularly a lack of studies that pay attention to the incentives and justifications that lead ordinary citizens to interact with criminal actors or engage in illegal practices.

Paraguay fits in a definition of a hybrid order established by both legal and extra-legal actors and regulated by a combination of rational bureaucratic norms and neo-patrimonial rules (InSight Crime. 2020)[1]. This brings to the fore the problem of the delegitimizing of legality as a moral categorical imperative. Moriconi and Peris (2019) showed how the negative results of the rule of law in the country are the basis for social tolerance, legitimation, and the consolidation of illegal practices and markets.

In practice, the legitimacy of formal norms is not established simply because of its legal nature or a “sense of a belief in the appropriateness of authority and rules”, but also because of the "tolerance, acceptance, or moral rejection associated” with a specific set of practices (Beckert & Dewey 2017). This is where the gap between formal and informal institutions becomes important. And this gap between formality and informality not only exists among the actors that must simply obey the norms, but also among the institutions and authorities that should enforce it. Legality, like crime, is a means, not an end. The end that legitimizes the action of the State and the rule of law is the sedimentation of a dignified life that is worth living.

[11] See for instance: https://es.insightcrime.org/noticias-crimen-organizado-paraguay/

Within this framework, the study of morality and future perceptions in illegal markets becomes important. According to Dewey and Thomas (2021):

> "the importance of analyzing futurity amidst illegal markets lies in the fact that hopes, fears, aspirations, and desires emergent in these contexts are supported largely by informal mechanisms, facilitated by less explicit agreements, and fueled or closed off by moralities that May be in tension with hegemonic notions of right and wrong".

The construction of the alternative moral map that arises from the involvement in illegal markets allows us to see that illegal practices "have their roots in the same hopes and aspirations as legal economic activities" (Bourgois 2002; Dewey & Thomas 2021). And those aspirations and hopes go further than mere economic incentives, as various studies on the moral economy of illegality have affirmed (Vizcarra 2018).

However, the hypothesis that peasants develop their own moral map through which they justify their engagement in drug cultivation contradicts the literature that considers them as the weakest actors of the production chain (forced to become part of the illegal activity due to coercion, exploitation and violence suffered at the hands of the superior actors of the market).

In this framework, it is important to determine which discourses circulate about the incentives of engaging in illegal activities, what are the cultural practices related to those discourses, and what are the moral justification for breaking the law. At the same time, it is crucial to understand what importance the actors who engage in illegal activities give to having a decent life and what is the relation they establish between being part of drug production operation and pursuing a life worth living.

3. Methodology

This article is built on testimonies and evidence gathered in different phases. Using the snowball technique in the first phase, interviews with institutional actors, such as high-ranking members of law enforcement, policymakers, parliamentarians, diplomats, journalists, and political actors were carried out. This preliminary phase allowed the authors to collect information about the national drug market, understand the regional features, and to establish contact with relevant informants in Canindeyú.

Members of two NGOs working in the region with local agricultures were especially beneficial. With their help, in the second phase, a two-week fieldwork mission in Canindeyú was carried

out. The mission was divided in a three-level strategy that allow the authors to understand the local ecosystem of illegal practices and its social awareness and tolerance.

First, interviews with local prosecutors and judicial actors were carried out. Three of those institutional informants explained the ecosystem of the local marihuana production and informed where the plantations are located. The practice is not a secret and actors from different social sphere openly talk about it.

On the side of the judicial and political authorities, it is recognized that they are aware of what is currently happening, but they see it as a practice of small producers who find in cannabis a source of subsistence. They assure that the small quantities produced, which can be transported by hand or without great logistical resources, are aimed at the Brazilian market. It is not, therefore, a national security problem and law enforcement are mainly interested in *big fish*es related to international organized crime groups.

In a second step, forest wardens of the Reserve were contacted and interviewed. They showed the area, explained the social dynamic in the borders and inside the place, and helped to identify and established contact with the peasants.

Finally, the contact with peasant was established in their settlement, and the leaders of the communities were interviewed. Those contacts included visits to their lands, their community, and some plantations in the Natural Reserve, located approximately an hour and a half walk from the entrance.

After a first analysis of the data and the systematization of the premises that built the moral map (Strauss and Corbin 1998), and already during the COVID pandemic, five new interviews were carried out via Zoom with a member of one NGO and local political actors. A total of 23 interviews were conducted between 2018 and 2020. Interviews were carried out mainly in Spanish and Guarani, the second official language of Paraguay. All the quotes used are translated to English by the authors.

Since criminal or illegal behaviour might be involved, any disclosure of sensitive information could have negative impacts on the lives and the security of the research participants. This, along with the "need to establish trust and rapport with the participants" (Bahn & Weatherill 2013), ensured that a high level of anonymity had to be guaranteed (Tolich 2004). In consequence, we do not specify the names nor the institutional affiliation of the informants.

4. The case: structural constraints and the path to illegal markets

Paraguay has been presented as a case of economic success in the last decades (Carámbula 2018, Guerrero 2006). Since 2003, Paraguay has maintained an economic growth rate of more than 4% per year, with a maximum historical growth of 14,5% in 2010. According to the ONG Development in Democracy (DENDE 2016), agriculture has been a key sector of economic success, going from 12.5% of the GDP (1995-2000) to 17.4% (2011-2015).

The soybean boom of the early 2000s was one of the main reasons for the achievement. Amid the aftermath of the economic crises at the end of the 20th century, and in the face of constant and increasing demand from China, the price of soybeans increased considerably, creating a major boom to the region's economies. In these years, while the development of soy plantations increased exponentially (see Table 1), the countries of the region had record growth rates. Paraguay not only followed this logic but also exported more soy than any other country in the region as percentage of its annual gross production (Ezquerro-Cañete 2016).

Table 1

SOYBEAN SOWN AREA AND PRODUCTION

Year	Sown land (Ha)	Commercial Production (Ton)
1998-1999	1.200.000	2.980.058
2008-2009	2.524.649	3.647.205
2018-2019	3,544,245	8,512,008

Source: Cámara Paraguaya de Exportadores y Comercializadores de Cereales y Oleaginosas *[Paraguayan Chamber of Export and Trade of Cereals and Oilseeds]* Year: 2019.

This situation had important social, economic, territorial, and political consequences (Correia 2019), generating a process that was described as *sojización* (Fogel 2015). Soybean production won a predominant role in Paraguay's economy and development. At the time, the State was promoting an agro-export production model that encouraged oilseed production which generated incentives for its producers and reconfigured the control of the land, and this led to the soy producers increasing their power and influence in the political sphere[2]. In consequence, the "soy boom" continued to expand in the context of increasingly concentrated land holdings

[2] Some authors (Correia 2019, Elgert 2016) have claimed that the power of the agrarian elite was key to promoting the removal of leftist president Fernando Lugo. In 2012, then-President Lugo's attempts to increase the export tax marginally to 6 percent were ''balked at'' by soy producers, and met not with debate, but with flat-out refusal (Desantis and Cristaldo 2011).

in a country already widely recognized as having one of the most unequal distributions of resources in the world (Dros 2004; Elgert 2016).

Conversely, however, the expansion of the soybean market also had negative consequences because its production is land consuming, technologically demanding and does not require traditional agricultural labour. Meanwhile, the prices of traditional agricultural products such as cassava, sesame, or corn fell dramatically. In communities where traditional agricultural work abounded, the bet on soy generated wealth for a few and unemployment for many (Moringo 2009, Garat 2016).

Moreover, Paraguay has a critical unequal distribution of land. There is a small group of people, several coming from Brasil, owning latifundiums which concentrate almost all the agricultural and livestock area, while the vast majority of peasant and indigenous families lack enough land to subsist (Guereña and Rojas Villagra 2017) doing traditional agriculture.

Interviewed peasants agree with this assessment and they consider that the State is, to a large extent, responsible for the situation because it promoted reforms and measures for adopting a new agro-industrial development model to adapt to the international market conjuncture.

> *The landscape is dominated by soy plantations. If you don't have the money to buy the necessary machinery you can't grow legal crops. We are farmers, we know how to work the land, but our traditional techniques are not adequate for the type of production the State requires* (CA1).

The State appears in the peasants' narrative as an actor whose legal practices and decisions generate negative externalities that create structural constraints, and those constraints consolidate representations and perspectives of the future that legitimize the path to illegality.

> *Historically we have always lived with the inaction of politicians; this is not new in the history of our struggle. But an opportunity always appeared: we could sow one or several crops at once and suddenly someone would appear to buy from us. Then we could either come out even, or maybe make a minimum profit. Today, that is no longer the case. The model has changed. Now, it is all about soya. And we can't get into this business* (CA2).

With the legal and profitable future of agriculture configured towards soybeans and involving mechanized production across large areas of land, cannabis, which had been grown in the country since the 60's, become another profitable option. According to Garat (2016), the lack

of agrarian policies, the poverty, the fragility, and the absence of prospects for the rural population meant that little by little, and with less and less dissimulation, younger peasants were opting for the cultivation of marijuana. This is relevant because young people are of paramount importance in Paraguay. The most numerous rural population is below 29 years of age, which accounts for six out of ten people (Garat 2016).

The characteristics of the Paraguayan soil, notably in the north-eastern region[3], make it ideal for growing high quality cannabis (Salazar 2016). Thus, in the last decade, Paraguay has become the main marijuana producer in South America, with a planting area of around 8 thousand hectares and a production of between 2 and 3 tons per hectare (Garat 2016). That means a production of around 17,000 tons per year, and more than 700 million dollars in exports.

Although the beginning of cannabis cultivation in the country dates back to the end of the sixties, the dynamics and structure of the market have now changed radically. It is no longer national elites, linked to State power, who control the business, but international organized crime syndicates.

The business is controlled by Brazilian criminal organisations, mainly the First Capital Command (PCC) and the Red Command (CR), which have been able to use the historical permeability of the borders to settle in the country. According to a National Anti-Drug Secretary (SENAD) estimation (2016), these organisations account for 80% of the national production.

The expansion of the business and the infiltration of foreign groups into the territory would not be possible without the participation of a network of state and non-state actors who establish a hybrid order (Dewey et al. 2017) in which legality and illegality merge (Moriconi & Peris 2019). According to Insight Crime, both national and international criminal syndicates benefit from "rampant, widespread corruption" at all levels of power (Insight Crime 2020). This corruption manifests itself through the sedimentation of various informal institutions that regulate relations between state agents and participants in illegal markets. The liberation of zones, the arbitrary application or even the suspension of the law in certain contexts, and the protection and regulation of illegal economies are some of the established practices that determine roles, hierarchies, practices, new knowledge, and moral understandings that provide reasons and justifications for breaking laws.

[3] Department of Concepción, Amambay, Canindeyú y Alto Paraná

This ecosystem of interrelationships and informal institutions became a source of insecurity and coercion for farmers, who were left at the mercy of both coercion from drug groups and abuse of power by state actors. While the former threatened them, forced them to plant marijuana and exploited them when selling the harvest, the latter demanded bribes and favours in exchange for protection (ONG1; CA2, 3).

In this context, a group of peasants understood that they should restructure the production and market and establish protection channels to continue cultivating cannabis in a profitable and promising way. They found in the *Mbaracayú Forest Nature Reserve* an ideal place to cultivate cannabis.

The Reserve is located in the Department of Canindeyú and borders the Cordillera del Mbaracayú on the northeast, the natural border between Paraguay and Brazil. On the Brazilian side, it is the neighbouring city Salto Carapá. The reserve has an area of 64,405 hectares and includes a well-preserved part of the Alto Paraná Atlantic Forest. In its wooded geography coexist 150 types of plants, 400 animal species, and member of two indigenous communities, achés and guaraníes.

The large size of the Reserve, with different entry and exit points throughout its territory, and its wooded geography, make total control of human movement impossible. Although it is easy to enter and leave the territory, internal circulation is only safe for those who know the place.

Being an area of environmental interest, it is a) protected by international conventions; b) seldom explored; and c) with little human intervention on its ecosystem. All those factors made it a suitable space for clandestine sowing in spaces that local people call "drug moles", that can only be identified through satellite images. Moles appears as little deforested spots and are located at least a two-hour-walk from the margins of the Reserve and surrounded by lush forests.

The activity is carried out by peasants living in neighbouring regions. They are not indigenous of the reserve. They come from different settlements located around the reserve, within a radius of 5 to 10 kilometres. All these communities have their own land, on which they historically grow crops. However, due to the geographical location and the risks involved, these lands are not used for illegal crops, but rather for subsistence and small-market crops.

Those small settlements are in an area where there are several large states for livestock and, mainly, soja production (Ávila and Monroy 2018). Canindeyú, together with the departments

of Alto Paraná and Concepción, is known as the "soybean nation". The region has a high poverty rate (56,30%) and 32,90% of the population live in extreme poverty[4].

According to the testimonies collected, the peasants work commissioned by Brazilian chiefs or under the orders of the zonal leaders located in the city Pedro Juan Caballero, the main drug trafficking urban centre in the region (Moriconi & Peris 2019).

Through interviews with key informant actors, this article analyses the dynamics and incentives that lead and allow peasants to reformulate the logic of the market and implement their own protection structures. It also analyses the moral justifications on which they base their decision to engage in illegal activities.

5. Bottom-up agency: (re)structuring the dynamics of informal institutions.

The case of the peasants of the Mbaracayú Forest Nature Reserve is particularly interesting to understand how the supposedly weaker actors in the chain of relationships within an illegal market has the capacity to redefine the dynamics and the informal institutions that structure the practices and transactions of that market. With the new organization of the production and commercial relationships, peasants aim to establish protection barriers and improve their prospects.

This example contradicts studies that describe illegal markets as arenas structured from strong hierarchical relationships in which subordinate actors have little agency and are often subjugated and enslaved by superior actors. According to these studies, weak actors might come from precarious social strata and might usually suffer coercion and even violence from other superior actors.

This does not mean that the cultivation and production of drugs is free from dangers and violence, but rather that there is a learning process about the threats and, once they are correctly diagnosed, farmers have the possibility of establishing protection channels based on a logic of maximizing the profitability and positive externalities that the illegal market offers them.

In this sense, geography offers them a source of protection. According to their own experience, it is important not to grow in their communities and territories to avoid exposing their families to the abuse and coercion of other actors of the business.

---

4 https://www.ine.gov.py/Publicaciones/resultados%20de%20la%20EPH/14.%20CANINDEYU/3.%20Principales%20Resultados%20de%20Pobreza%20y%20Distribucion%20de%20Ingreso.pdf

> *There are times when the police get angry, ask for too much money, or just need someone to arrest. If you grow on your own land, you are at risk because you cannot flee from where you live.* (CA2)

In this case, the nature reserve, due to its vast territory and difficult access, provides them with protection.

> *What makes (the business) so profitable is the land. It is hidden and it is very large. The police get tired when they go deep into the fields. They get lost, they are useless and there is not much they can do, but for small token actions every now and then. They do not bother us.* (CA1)

> *There is not much risk here, the area is exceptionally large and if you are discovered you can easily escape.* (CA3)

> *As we know the forest, we know how to get in and how to get out, we know where to put the load, we know how to run away, we know how to cross the border, we know everything, and they don't.* (CA2).

> *What can happen then is that Police officers or the National Anti-Drugs Secretariat come in, but it is complicated for them. They do not know the place well and we always hear them. If we get caught, it's easy to run and lose them. They come, they burn our crops, they watch for a while and then we come back.* (CA1).

The obstacles generated by the orography also affect police behaviour. The security forces acknowledge that they do not have the necessary resources or control of the area to combat plantations on public lands. According to a local prosecutor from the Court of Justice, the "moles" are numerous, "everyone knows about them, but no one does anything" (JA1).

This situation of disadvantage, according to the representative of an NGO (NGO1), determines that the security forces “avoid persecuting the peasants of the reserve and focus on the peasants who continue to cultivate on their own lands or focus on checking the double-bottomed trucks that transit by Route N ° 3”. According to the source, the objective of the police is not to prevent the production of marijuana, but to generate resources from regulating the market. Therefore, instead of entering the reserve, which requires a greater effort and has little guarantee of generating success, they focus on collecting bribes from those actors who are most exposed (NGO1).

Justice also recognizes that it is exceedingly difficult to prosecute the peasants who cultivate in the reserve and confirm that they prefer to focus their work on other types of objectives.

> *If we find out about a plantation within the Reserve, it is because we have an informant or a repentant worker, never on our own initiative. (…) Do you know how hard the work is there? This is why they are always ahead; they profit in every sense. However, it's not that bad because very few peasants grow crops there. We prefer to concentrate on the illegal loads that have a more nationwide profile, destined for the south of the country.* (JA2)

But despite being safe from the police and the justice, the peasants in the reserve must protect themselves from the forest rangers. According to the testimony of a local judge and of the prosecutor interviewed, the traffickers themselves are in charge of bribing the forest rangers. Thus, logging is permitted, allowing them to start preparing the land for their business.

> *After the trees are removed, the area must be dried, and the logs are cut. The area is then cleared, and this takes about 5 months. That is when the cultivation begins. The plantation itself needs about 6 months before the buds grow, and then the process begins. This whole process takes about a year in total.* (JA3)

This overview makes it possible to differentiate between two different groups of farmers who grow marijuana. On the one hand, there are those who do plant on their land and are at the mercy of the security forces and exposed to violence and extortion by drug organisations (NGO 1). According to judicial sources, they *are "usually those who live in extreme poverty" and "are forced to do so and their clients can be anyone who offers them a crumb for their cannabis"* (JA1 and 2).

On the other hand, there is a group of peasants who have the possibility to make the business more professional and establish protection frameworks. The professionalization of the market not only implies a relocation of plantations, but also a redefinition of the labour practices and commercial structures.

> *Those who do it in the Reserve are already part of a larger structure; they have an exclusive customer who is usually someone from Pedro Juan Caballero or another city on the border with Brazil. (…) They approach this activity in a professional way and therefore their profit margin is larger.* (JA2).

> *They are the real cannabis growers, working with the big drug lords in the area. They understand how this business works, and know that the more impersonal it is, the better it is for them and their families* (JA1).

An interviewed peasant confirms what the judicial source explains and describes their labour routine.

> *We come, we work, and then we go to sleep at our houses.* (CA1)

> *Every 4 to 6 months we harvest and sell our product to only one person. It's not as risky to carry on this way. Sometimes, what happens is that when we are about to harvest, others want to come and take away our production. We sort that by having one guard per shift.* (CA1)

In short, this case demonstrates the influence of initial social and structural conditions on the establishment and consolidation of people's own visions and expectations of the future. These visions are complex, incorporating both positive and negative variables based on the actors' understanding of the network of relationships and rules that enable the business. These visions have a dynamic logic and can be modified based on the agency of all the actors in the chain. In this case, the farmers sought to exacerbate the positive externalities and hinder the threats coming from the previous structures. The actors are the same; the dynamics of the informal institutions are modified.

This panorama increases their hope and security for a promising future and establishes a new moral map that provides more and better reasons to build, defend and continue their participation in the illegal market.

6. The moral map: ideological justification for engaging in illegal markets.

An interesting question when interviewing actors in illegal markets is the permanent search for moral justifications that socially legitimize their actions. According to Aldrich and Fiol (1994), moral legitimacy has an important influence on the positive normative evaluation of formal and informal institutional practices. Moral analyses identify links between traditions and informal institutions and provide reasons, incentives, and justifications for breaking the law.

In the case of farmers who grow cannabis in the reserve, the moral map is structured around three autonomous but complementary cognitive frameworks.

On the one hand are the economic incentives. Some studies on drug crops justify the practice based on a moral economy of illegality (Vizcarra 2018). Illegality, according to this bibliography, is legitimized by being the engine that provides the necessary economic resources for subsistence and which materializes aspirations for well-being. In Paraguay, Garat (2016) emphasizes that young people involved in the cultivation of cannabis perceive that, outside of this illegal market, the prospects of development, economic independence, and having their own home without parental guardianship are null (Solís & Bevilaqua 2014). Young people are trapped between a precarious rural survival, informality (Galeano 2014, 2010), and the absence of specific policies for youth in education and work.

In the case of the peasants of the Reserve, the profitability of the market appears in the moral map, complemented by the institutional frameworks, both formal and informal, in which the production and commercialization of marijuana takes place.

While the product is profitable, the sustainability of the market and the establishment of protection barrier channels are related to the institutional aspect. For this reason, economic morality is complemented by institutional morality which provides evidence and the pragmatic knowledge to understand what the state really is and to determine the legitimacy of the narrative of legality.

Finally, there are social motivations and incentives for eliminating blame and limiting perceived social damage.

6.1: Economic moral premises

Although the profitability of marijuana is one of the justifications that appears in the discourse of the farmers, the economic variable alone is not enough to understand the moral logic behind this type of agriculture. If the maxim of making money were everything, as some works have indicated, many farmers who would fight to become sellers and traffickers themselves. However, this is not the case.

The economic justifications for participating in an illegal market are supported by a series of ideas around work, tradition, and politics.

On the one hand, as explained above, the expansion of the soybean market generated the context of a lack of work for traditional farmers. In addition, this process was carried out in a framework in which the prices of traditional agricultural products fell dramatically. It is in this structural framework, generated by the legal development of the market economy itself, where

the profitability of the marijuana appears. And that profitability is directly linked to a key issue: the possibility of growing that product with the manual techniques that farmers already know.

Economic incentives must be analysed in parallel with the desire of the farmers to continue with their labour tradition: like all workers, peasants want to earn money, but they mainly want to do it by doing what they do best and what they have done for decades, and that is to cultivate in a traditional way while taking advantage of the qualities of their region.

> *Our land is fertile, we want to continue planting, and cannabis is the only thing that can earn us an income and give us hope for better times. What do you want us to do?* (CA2).

Knowledge and professional preparation are key when it comes to understanding the moral map. Not only do they know that they can do it, but by taking advantage of the Reserve, they have the conditions to do it well, and that empowers them.

> *We are doing well because we know the terrain and that makes it possible for us to set certain conditions. We have never set conditions, but now, with this, we can. Planting cannabis here, in a forest that we dominate, gives us too many advantages.* (CA4)

The choice is pragmatic and goes beyond mere economic profit. Considering the guarantees created by the social ecosystem in which they carry out their activity, the decision is linked to the logic of power that the new role generates, and that places them in a better negotiating position with other social and political actors.

The representative of a local NGO that has been trying for the past five years to encourage legal planting by promoting sustainable family production explains how this process of delegitimation was consolidated:

> *With cannabis, they have a sure thing. These people were lied to, told to go into wheat, cotton, or sugarcane, and that if they did it the authorities would fight to maintain international prices, but, and this is an irrefutable truth, nobody did anything. They starved and now they are tired of waiting.* (NGO1).

In short, the economic incentives to go against the law are not related to the simple premise of earning money, but rather to earning money doing what the person knows, and doing what the person knows in a way that is as profitable as possible to have better expectations of a the future.

6.2: Institutional moral premises

The market restructuring that led farmers to use the reserve as a safe place to continue cannabis cultivation took place against a background of threats and extortion by other market actors which were both state and non-state actors. These dangers followed a structured logic of interactions based on informal institutions recognised and accepted (in good faith or by force) by all the participants.

The logic behind the actions of the farmers was to seek a positive restructuring of relationships, creating protective barriers without affecting the sustainability of the business. The problem to resolve was not "illegality", but "danger". Illegality is understood by this group of actors as a tradition, something morally not reprehensible, or at least defensible.

This defence is structured in three dimensions.

In Paraguay there is a tradition of permanent institutionalised corruption. It is not the farmers who bring the illegal market to life, but they simply take on the primary tasks of a market whose horizon of possibility and existence is protected by a constant interaction between legal and non-legal actors. State actors appear as those who regulate the market and make it possible for the market to be sustainable. Legality has collapsed as a morsal categorical imperative. Its narrative loses any thread of verisimilitude.

> *Wealth in Paraguay is not made through the path of legality. This is a premise for any social class* (J1).

In this regard, a local prosecutor and a local judge (JA2 and 3) warn that analysing the moral legitimacy of farmers in defending their income and their continuity in the drug market is limited if all the other links in a business which necessarily includes the participation and tolerance of various social strata are not taken into account. March and Olsen (2006) understand that the legitimacy of a norm will be greater as soon as its existence is understood as something appropriate. For these authors, "appropriate" means a behaviour that is expected and seen as natural and rightful for members of a given collectivity playing a specific role in a given situation (Mayntz 2017). The farmers know that although they are the first link in the production chain, and therefore the weakest, the market could not survive without the bribes received by the park rangers, without the blind eye of the police, without the logistical support of the navy and the military, and without the participation of the executive and judicial powers of the State.

Everyone knows what we do, and we all know what others do. (CA2)

This collapse can clearly be seen in the historical choice of Paraguayan society to structure its economy based on smuggling, trafficking, and counterfeit products. By action or omission, there is a social tolerance for the breaking of the law, and in such a social framework, the obscene path of legality is an obstacle to personal development.

Consequently, illegality not only generates wealth and employment, but it also generates social recognition. There is no social cost for being recognised as someone who walks the path of crime.

Several public and political figures have been linked to illegal activities or practices. Despite these cultural characteristics, Paraguay maintains a democratic and social stability, its economy continues to grow (Tapia-Pérez 2013), and political figures who have even served a prison sentence maintain their political capital as well as their social and, above all, economic prestige.

In the specific case of the drug market, the different links in the production chain, distribution, and sale of the product are aware of the need for tolerance and the participation of state and non-state actors. Despite their tasks and weaknesses, each autonomous actor is part of a process only feasible through a joint and collective effort. This premise enables the eradication of moral prejudices opposing the illegal market.

> *Everyone in our community knows what we do. Everyone is free to do what they want. Marijuana has brought progress or, in other words, economic welfare. We earn money and that allows us to eat. Everyone knows and supports us, it is a community work of families, of farmers who are tired of waiting* (CA1).

This testimony shows how the moral reconfiguration of illegal activity is complemented by the cognitive framework around the benefits of drug cultivation and the awareness of the protection barriers imposed by the informal institutions that rule the local social ecosystem.

> *Why stop? This way, here in the forest, we earn money, we provide welfare to our people and we do not run the risk of entering into conflicts with the police. Everyone knows us and knows what we do, but there is no danger, they have no proof. If you start thinking, doing it in your own land, you will fall, because you expose yourself too much. Not here! As long as we keep going this way, it will always be profitable for us.* (CA3).

Cost-effectiveness, coupled with the protective frameworks that they have been able to impose and consolidate, create a practical framework that generates hope for a better and sustainable future.

> *This will never change. The state will never do much because it has no interest and no resources. Our boss sells to Brazil, which is always there, and we move on what we know, to plant cannabis in the land in the traditional way. This way we will always move without getting into big legal problems.* (CA2).

Once again, perceptions about the future, in this case around the security guarantees created by the informal institutions that regulate the local social order, are essential to establish cognitive frameworks and moral justifications to defend illegal activity.

6.3: Social moral premises

The legitimacy of an illegal practice depends, to a large extent, on the perception of harm caused (Griffith 2009). In their analysis of the social legitimation of cannabis trafficking in Pedro Juan Caballero, Moriconi and Peris (2019) showed how the fact that cannabis is mostly produced for export is emphasised as an important moral value when it comes to tolerating the permanence, reproduction, and protection of this illegal market. The production and commercialization of marijuana is considered a crime without local victims and whose potential for physical harm is quite limited for ordinary people, for those who are not part of the narco collective.

In this case, the cognitive frameworks that emphasise social awareness and the absence of social costs for illegal practices are repeated because the product is destined abroad. In other words, underlying the social imaginary of farmers is the idea that, despite the profitability, this is a perverse product whose circulation in local society is best avoided.

In this sense, the testimonies of the cannabis farmers repeatedly contain the premise that "what we produce goes to Brazil".

> *It is the Brazilians who are interested in cannabis; we sell only to them, so why worry. They will always ask us and as long as we continue here, there is no problem. We cultivate, harvest and transport it to the border crossing, and we don't even affect the Paraguayans. In addition, we have money, we are paid, we eat, and in short, we have better well-being, better things for all of us.* (CA1).

The prosecutors and judicial actors consulted agree that the market is handled by Brazilian patterns and that the bulk of Paraguayan cannabis goes to that country for local consumption or for subsequent export to other regions, especially Europe.
They understand that Brazil has been configured as a market that demands cannabis, a drug that is cultivated in the way the peasants know how to do it, obtaining a client who, not having the exact knowledge of where the production is since it is done within a Nature Reserve, cannot exert a strong pressure on them.

6.4: Dignity and a life worth living.

With the market restructured, protection barriers in place, and a set of moral justifications for engaging in illegal activities, the perception of the future is so positive that peasants try to bring their children into the market.

> *The future of our children is here in the forest. The important thing is that they know how to move through it.* (CA1).

A family learning process is developed to acquire the necessary skills not only to do the job well, but to stay safe and avoid the dangers inherent to the activity.

> *We teach our children how to move around here. To get to know the forest. (…) Here, there is a way out, there is a future, and we have to eat. To grow crops in the forest, to know the border points, to know how to escape, that is what we leave to our people.* (CA2).

> *They accompany us, we show them the land, the trees, and then we assign them tasks such as lifting the bags or patrolling in case someone comes. If something strange happens, they come running and warn us. That way they start to know the field and know what to do in every situation.* (CA3).

The choice to perpetuate the cultivation of marijuana does not have to do with a preference for illegality, but rather with a process of delegitimation of what is legal, including formal-legal work.

The peasants are aware of this collapse of legality as a categorical imperative and they perceive a great dislocation between what the State proposes as a dignified life and its reality.

> *If they (the rulers of the State) lie to us all the time, it's because they believe that with a primary school education or a job as a bricklayer our children will do better.*

In the local ecosystem, following and respecting the rules becomes an obstacle for having a decent life worth living. For peasants, this is not a dilemma about choosing a legal or illegal pathway, but a decision between failing and not failing.

> *I am not telling you that this is what we would like for them, but this is better than going to beg in some city. If we do what the State recommends, we condemn ourselves to poverty.*

In this framework, the farmers interviewed recognize that the process of verifying the collapse of legality as a categorical imperative must also be a learning process. For this reason, they leave full freedom of action to the members of their families, thinking that time and personal experiences will prove them right.

> *Our people can do what they want with their lives. Some migrate or go to work, not because they disagree with what we do but because they are curious about what is out there. Before they leave, we tell them that if they do badly, they should come back, that our work, what we know how to do, will always be needed. There is nothing wrong with this, it is cannabis. Many come back later and discover that there is more dignity in this than following the legal paths.* (CA2).

In short, the decision to move away from legality is not related to the preference of illegality and crime, but rather to the certainty that the path of the law (and formal legal work) is an obstacle to obtaining a decent life.

7. Concluding remarks

This article shows how a group of Paraguayan peasants managed to reformulate the marijuana production market. Based on their previous experiences and knowledge of the informal institutions that regulate it, the peasants created a profitable and safe work environment. The case study refutes those works that consider exploitation, coercion, and violence as intrinsic characteristics of marijuana plantations in the region. On the contrary, the case shows how the group of people use their agency to find a secure territory for the development of their labour tasks, redefine the inter-relations with the other actors of the market, and impose a set of

protection rackets. In this sense, the article brings up the importance of geographic variables and territorial limits when it comes to understanding in depth the study of drug production.

The article demonstrates the importance for research on illegal markets of paying attention not only to what is traded, but also to how the goods are traded (Anteby 2010). The *how* provides clues to understanding the legitimation of illegal practices. This legitimacy is closely related to the moral map that emerges from the actors' experience. According to Dewey (2019), "moral understandings expressed in declared aspirations, experiences, and perceptions serve as a source of moral justifications" in illegal markets. This article goes further and demonstrates how the moral map of the marijuana peasants is marked by evidence and experiences that delegitimize legality, producing the "collapse of legality as a categorical imperative". Legality, as a means to achieve a dignified life that is worth living, loses credibility and legitimacy, and it becomes an obstacle to social prestige.

This work is a call to attention to the extensive literature that sees the state as the leading figure of legality and calls for greater state intervention to solve the problems of crime in the region (Schultze-Kraft et al. 2018; Brock et. al. 2012; Naím 2012; Lessing 2020). In this case, the figure of the State appears as the engine of the delegitimation of legality. The State is not only absent as the rector of well-being, but it proposes unworthy life models and supports the consolidation of economic models that, while generating a lot of wealth for a few, radically modify the rural ecosystem and generate unemployment and exclusion for the most. In this context, growing marijuana emerges as a possibility.

In this case, the hopes and visions of the future do not arise merely from the means of subsistence generated by illegality, but also from the obstacles and constraints that legality itself (in this case expressed through the expansion of soy production) imposes. This possibility transcends the mere economic incentives, as different studies have proposed focusing on the moral economy of drugs in Latin America (Vizcarra 2018). In addition to the profitability of the product, marijuana enables this group to maintain its agricultural tradition: to do what they know to do and to do it well.

The most important thing here in terms of the construction of public policies is not the dignity that an illegal practice generates, but the resentment and misery generated by the sedimentation of legality following the market logic as the guide of social life.

On the other hand, the pro-state and pro-legality narrative collapses due to the evident participation of State actors as regulators and protectors of the illegal market. In this sense, the

State, understood as a cultural practice materialized by its actors, is a source of immorality or moral hypocrisy since those who must impose respect for the law do not do so and become key actors for the sustainability of the illegal market. In other words, legality is not a categorical imperative for those who must defend it: the State of law does not generate lives worth living.

We must not lose sight of the importance of the social in the moral maps that legitimize illegal practices. In a previous work, Moriconi and Peris (2018) emphasize that the legitimation of marijuana trafficking in Pedro Juan Caballero is related to the social perception that the activity offers social, economic, and political benefits, that marijuana is produced mainly for export, that innocent people are not attacked, that children and minors are left out of the drug trade and consumption, that children, women, and the elderly are left out of the circle of violence.

Other studies affirm that, in the case of coca cultivation, the activity is socially legitimized based on the assessment that the damages generated by coca cultivation do not affect local well-being, while its benefits are experienced in that sphere and they are used to achieve socially legitimate objectives (Vizcarra, 2018: 57; Grillo 2018).

In the case of the peasants of the Reserve, the fact that it is produced for foreign markets is a key factor in their moral map. The legitimacy of the illegality depends, to a large extent, on the perception of minimal social damage. Likewise, legality loses legitimacy if it generates social costs, such as those referred to in the expansion of soybean cultivation.

Finally, it is crucial to start debating the link between the idea of lives worth living with the quality of democracy and the legitimacy of the rule of law. Would the discussion be more or less legality, or more or less dignity? Should it discuss whether the governance is criminal or not, or what are the outputs of that governance and their relation with a decent life? In this sense, this article clearly identifies that dignity goes beyond the economic aspect and has to do with tradition, culture, identity, hopes and expectations for a better future.

To be a viable alternative, legality should be a procedure, a theory, and a practice for really achieving the goals which are effectively attained using illegality: empowerment, welfare, dignity, hope for the future. What are the existing effective means to get a life worth living and to achieve social recognition, and how are they connected to legality as an ethical value? Any program to combat illegality and crime in Latin America must have a good answer to this question. And in this debate, logically, the issue of legalization and decriminalization of drugs should have a prominent position. Maybe not as drugs, but as good and merchandise. Beyond the "drug", cannabis oil is beginning to have an important market around medical and aesthetic

products. On the other hand, the conflicts and violence that the illegal drugs market has created in the country, and in the region, are well known. Can legalization or decriminalization (with the pertinent control, protection, and regulation) be a way to solve this violence? The floor is open.

Acknowledgments

Authors would like to thank all the key informants that were interviewed. Their insight information was crucial for this research. They also want to thank the comments of the reviewers, that helped to improve the article and the theoretical perspective. The contents of this article reflect only the view of the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (FCT) under the framework of UIDB/03122/2020 and UIDP/03122/2020 projects. It was also supported with funding from the previous strategic programme of the Centro de Estudos Internacionais Iscte-Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (with the reference UID/CPO/03122/2019).

Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest

The authors declare no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, the authorship and/or publication of this article.

Research involving Human Participants and/or Animals and Informed consent

Authors have conducted their research in accordance with principles detailed by professional associations and treaties other than the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki such as the International Sociological Association's (ISA) Code of Ethics.

References

Alda Mejías, Sónia (coord.). 2021. *Los actores implicados en l gobernanza criminal en América Latina*. Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano & Friedrich Naumann Stiftung. Accesible onlien: https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/monografias/los-actores-implicados-en-la-gobernanza-criminal-en-america-latina/

Aldrich, H. C., and C. M. Fiol 1994 "Fools rush in? The institutional context of industry creation." Academy of Management Review, 19: 645–670.

Anteby, Michel. 2010. Markets, morals, and practices of trade: Jurisdictional disputes in the US commerce in cadavers. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *55*(4), 606-638. https://doi.org/10.2189/asqu.2010.55.4.606

Arias, E. D. 2017. *Criminal enterprises and governance in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Cambridge University Press.

Arias, E. D., & Grisaffi, T. (Eds.). 2021. *Cocaine: from coca fields to the streets*. Duke University Press.

Avila Schmalko, Claudia and Monroy Sarta, Airym. 2018. *Mapeando el agronegocio en Paraguay*. Asunción: BASA & Fundación Rosa de Luxemburgo. Accesible online: https://www.baseis.org.py/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2018Dic_Mapeando-el-agronegocio.pdf

Bahn, Susanne, & Weatherill, Pamela. 2012. Qualitative social research: a risky business when it comes to collecting 'sensitive' data. *Qualitative Research* 13(1): 19-35. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112439016

Beckert, Jens, & Dewey, Matias (Eds.). 2017. *The architecture of illegal markets: Towards an economic sociology of illegality in the economy*. Oxford University Press.

Bourgois, Phillippe. 2002. The Violence of Moral Binaries: Response to Leigh Binford. *Ethnography*, 3(2), 221-231. https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138102003002005

Brock, Lothar, Holm, Hans-Henrik, & Stohl, Michael. 2012. Fragile states. *Violence and the failure of intervention*. Cambridge: Polity. https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12047_6

Cámara Paraguaya de Exportadores y Comercializadores de Cereales y Oleaginosas. 2019. *Statistics of the year 2019.* Asuncion: *CPECCP*.

Carámbula, Ernesto. 2018. Un enfoque cualitativo del crecimiento económico paraguayo. *Población y Desarrollo ISSN-L 2076-054X*, *24*(47), 9-20.

Correia, Joel. 2019. Soy states: resource politics, violent environments and soybean territorialization in Paraguay. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 46(2), 316-336. https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2017.1384726

DENDE - Desarrollo en Democracia. 2016. La economía paraguaya en los últimos 20 años. Online in: https://www2.deloitte.com/py/es/pages/about-deloitte/articles/la-economia-paraguaya-en-los-ultimos-20-anos.html

Desantis, Daniela, & Cristaldo. Mariel 2011. Paraguay wants 6 pct soy export tax, farmers balk. Reuters, August 25th, 2011. Online in: http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/08/25/paraguay-soy-tax-idUKN1E77O0HS20110825

Dewey, Matías & Thomas, Kedron (forthcoming): Futurity beyond the State: Illegal Markets and Imagined Futures in Latin America, unpublished manuscript.

Dewey, Matías, Míguez, Daniel & Saín, Marcelo. 2017. The strength of collusion: A conceptual framework for interpreting hybrid social orders. *Current Sociology*, *65*(3), 395-410. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392116661226

Dewey, Matías. 2019. "'This Market Changed My Life': Aspirations and Morality in Markets for Counterfeits." In *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, edited by Simone Schiller-Merkens and Philip Balsiger, 67–84. Emerald Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X20190000063012

Dros, Jan Maarten. 2004. Managing the soy boom: Two scenarios of soy production. Amsterdam: AID Environment.

Elgert, Laureen. 2016. 'More soy on fewer farms' in Paraguay: challenging neoliberal agriculture's claims to sustainability. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, *43*(2), 537-561.

Ezquerro-Cañete, Arturo. 2016. Poisoned, dispossessed and excluded: A critique of the neoliberal soy regime in Paraguay. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 16, no. 4: 702–10. https://doi.org/10.1111/joac.12164

Feldmann, A. E., & Luna, J. P. 2022. Criminal Governance and the Crisis of Contemporary Latin American States. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *48*.

Fogel, Ramón. 2015. "Clases sociales y poder político en Paraguay". *Novapolis*. Revista Paraguaya de Estudios Políticos Contemporáneos 8: 103-116.

Galeano, L. 2010. Potential and future of Paraguayan family farming. In Losing ground in the employment challenge: The case of Paraguay, ed. A. Berry, 101–22. New Brunswick and London: Transaction.

Galeano, J. 2014. "Bañado Sur, un territorio excluido en Paraguay". En J. Galeano (comp.). *Exclusión social y pobreza urbana: experiencias y análisis desde el Bañado Sur*. Enfoque Territorial. Asunción.

Garat, Guillermo. 2016. Paraguay: la tierra escondida. Examen del mayor productor de cannabis de América del Sur. *Policy*.

Guereña, Arantxa and Rojas Villagra, Luís. 2017. *Yvy Járra: Los dueños de la tierra en Paraguay*. Asunción: OXFAM.

Grillo, Luciana. 2018. Coca, café y cacao: lucha contra las drogas y estrategias de vida en agricultores del valle del Monzón. *Debates en Sociología*, (47), 101-130. https://doi.org/10.18800/debatesensociologia.201802.004

Guerrero, Juan Carlos. 2016. Crecimiento económico y distribución del ingreso: una perspectiva del Paraguay. *Población y Desarrollo*, (43), 54-61.

Griffith, David. 2009. "The Moral Economy of Tobacco". *American Anthropologist* 111(4):432–42. Recuperado (http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1433.2009.01153.x).

InSight Crime. 2020. Paraguay – Organized Crime. InSight Crime. Online in: https://www.insightcrime.org/paraguay-organized-crime-news/

Lessing, Benjamin. 2020. Conceptualizing Criminal Governance. *Perspectives on Politics*, 1-20.

Lessing, B. 2017. *Making peace in drug wars: Crackdowns and cartels in Latin America*. Cambridge University Press.

Lupsha, Peter. 1996. Transnational organized crime versus the nation-state. *Transnational Organized Crime*, 2(1), 21–48.

March, J.G. & Olsen, J.P. 2006. 'The logic of appropriateness', in M. Rein, M. Moran and R.E. Goodin (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 689–708.

Magaloni, B., Franco-Vivanco, E., & Melo, V. 2020. Killing in the slums: Social order, criminal governance, and police violence in Rio de Janeiro. *American Political Science Review*, *114*(2), 552-572.

Mayntz, R. 2017. Illegal markets: Boundaries and interfaces between legality and illegality. In Beckert, J., & Dewey, M. (Eds.). *The architecture of illegal markets: Towards an economic sociology of illegality in the economy*. Oxford University Press. (37-47)

Miranda, Boris. 2016. Las terribles causas y consecuencias de que Paraguay sea el mayor productor de marihuana de Sudamérica, BBC online 26/10/2016. Online in: https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-37791983?fbclid=IwAR10f_XS-uFxeq5EK2AD2OooXGrI9lWlv7yVJOKowzukiKgr2lPRJ5aPIN4

Moriconi, Marcelo & Peris, Carlos. 2019. Merging legality with illegality in Paraguay: the cluster of order in Pedro Juan Caballero. *Third World Quarterly*, *40*(12), 2210-2227. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2019.1636225

Moriconi, Marcelo. 2018. Reframing illegalities: crime, cultural values, and ideas of success (in Argentina). *Crime, Law and Social Change*, *69*(4), 497-518.

Morínigo, J. N. 2009. *Auge de la producción rural y crisis campesina.* Fondo de la Cultura y las Artes. Asunción.

Naím, Moisés. 2012. Mafia States. *Foreign Affairs*, 91(3), 100–111.

Russia Today. 2019. Hierba de la discordia: la batalla perpetua contra el cultivo de marihuana en Paraguay. In RT online, 26/07/2019. Online in: https://actualidad.rt.com/programas/rt_reporta/322238-hierba-discordia-paraguay-marihuana?fbclid=IwAR1MELkqDcdKK1L79E9HxjshdQl6m-IfiwNldLjsRW4-5ZrzOIAuYiG5aAI

Salazar, Antonio. 2016. *El Narcotráfico de Latinoamérica*. Santacruz: SVM Editores.

Sampó, Carolina (2021) Una aproximación teórica, el concepto de Gobernanza Criminal en América Latina. In Alda Mejías (coord.) (2021): Los actores implicados en l gobernanza criminal en América Latina. Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano & Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, pp. 9-20.

Schultze-Kraft, Markus. 2021. "Las bases morales y normativas de la "connivencia" entre los órdenes políticos legal e ilegal: una aproximación desde el concepto de la crimilegalidad". In Alda Mejías (coord.). *Los actores implicados en l gobernanza criminal en América Latina*. Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano & Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, pp. 51-64.

Schultze-Kraft, M. 2018. Making peace in seas of crime: crimilegal order and armed conflict termination in Colombia. *Crime, law and social change*, *69*(4), 475-496.

Schultze-Kraft, Markus, Chinchilla, Fernando, & Moriconi, Marcelo. 2018. New perspectives on crime, violence and insecurity in Latin America. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, *69*(4), 465-473.

Secretaria Nacional de Antidrogas. 2016. Informe de Gestión. Asunción: SENAD.

Solís, B. A. y J. A. Bevilaqua. 2014. “Produçâo de cannabis em Amambay – Paraguai: o envolvimento de jovens rurais”. En Paulo Cesar Pontes Fraga (ed.). *Plantíos ilícitos na América Latina*. Letra Capital. Rio de Janeiro.

Solís Delgadillo, Juan & Moriconi, Marcelo. 2018. Atlas de la Violencia en América Latina. Universidad Autónoma de San Luis Potosí. Online in: https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Atlas-de-la-Violencia-en-Am%C3%A9rica-Latina-Juan-Mario-Sol%C3%ADs-Delgadillo-2018.pdf

Stratfor. 2015. Paraguay: South America’s economic bright spot. Stratfor Analysis. Online in: https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/paraguay-south-americas-economic-bright-spot

Strauss, Anselm e Corbin, Juliet, 1998. *Basics of Qualitative Research: techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, Inc. 2.º edition, original edition, 1990.

Tapia-Perez, Jose. 2013. “La inseguridad pública: causas y consecuencias.” *El Cotidiano* 180, julio-agosto: 103–112.

Tolich, Martin. 2004. Internal Confidentiality: When Confidentiality Assurances Fail Relational Informants. Qualitative Sociology 27: 101–106. https://doi.org/10.1023/B:QUAS.0000015546.20441.4a

Vizcarra Castillo, Sofia Isabel. 2018. La economía moral de la ilegalidad en la ciudad cocalera: significados y prácticas legitimadoras del narcotráfico en la ciudad de Pichari (2000-2017). Escuela de Posgrado, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. Accessible online: http://tesis.pucp.edu.pe/repositorio/handle/20.500.12404/12532