

narco-business with any other large company, Sidney Zabladoff argues that "each cell is organized somewhat along the lines of its headquarters in Colombia. Cells vary in number of personnel according to their responsibilities and the size of the market they serve. Some employ as many as 50 Colombians including a cell leader and several 'vice-presidents' in charge of specific tasks. . . ."⁸

Others simply discuss the issue in terms of the activities of "Colombian cartels" or "Colombian families"⁹ in the Netherlands. Some versions of this picture also include an "alien conspiracy" dimension. For example, Johan van Doorn claims that "close family ties at the top and a cell-structure characterize the cartels. . . . Arrival and further distribution in western Europe is in the hands of high-placed Colombian cartel members who take up residence, either permanently or temporarily. . . . There is a very realistic possibility that the cartels will try to expand their influence in Europe over the next few years by setting up import corporations of their own."¹⁰ Despite the fact that most economic roles and relations among Colombian dealers can indeed be compared with those of other legal markets, this perspective tends to institutionalize arrangements and businesses in a holistic way. Moreover, the exclusive stress on professional skilled managers and entrepreneurs simply ignores the reality of the mass of unskilled Colombian employees, often regarded as members and not as victims of the groups they supposedly belong to.

With a stronger accent in economic processes than in bureaucratic structures, Petrus van Duyne presents a less static picture of Colombian cocaine entrepreneurs and enterprises.¹⁰ Even though he talks about "mother organizations" and mentions cartels holding sections of the European market, he pays more attention to business forms, as well as to symbiotic relations with the legal economy. He describes "commercial bridgeheads" and "pioneer firms," which are both flexible and not always a model of professionalism. He also identifies enterprises of different size related through intermediaries or brokers. Since only significant detected cases are analyzed (through police and judicial dossiers), Van Duyne does not deal with smaller units, more informal coalitions, and especially with the labor market of his "criminal enterprises."

With a strong entrepreneurial approach, Robin Naylor criticizes the misleading use of economic categories by drug enforcers, pointing out that cocaine trafficking proceeds through a complex of arms-length commercial transactions.¹¹ Other researchers have sustained the same stress on fragmentation as well.¹² The material presented by Frank Bovenkerk,¹³ with a stronger focus on the socioeconomic and cultural context of those involved in large cocaine import operations, also reveals more fluid transactions, some levels of autonomy, and space for erratic behavior even among top *traquetos* (drug dealers).

Post-Fordist Cocaine

Labor and Business Relations among Colombian Dealers

Damian Zaitch

Colombian drug organizations that are active in Europe have been described either as mere representatives or cells of all-powerful Colombian enterprises, or as flexible criminal networks in which noncriminal roles and relations are, by definition, excluded from the analysis. These perspectives have produced distorted images of branches and professional businessmen or pictures of a chaotic web of international underground criminals. The analysis of drug enterprises and labor modalities within the drug economy,¹ in reference to Colombian dealers working in Europe, does produce a different image. Fieldwork among Colombian cocaine dealers in the Netherlands—a major entry point for drugs to the European market—does reveal very interesting forms of organization of the drug industry downstream.²

Branches, Criminal Networks, and Flexible Entrepreneurs

Although it is more or less agreed today that Colombian cocaine organizations have undergone a process of fragmentation and restructuring, most works mentioning Colombian groups or individuals involved in cocaine import and distribution in Europe still tend to describe them as branches, cells, representatives, or agents of the X Colombian cartel(s).³ These descriptions are usually fed by a combination of economic and bureaucratic definitions of organized crime: Colombians are in business, and they belong to certain organizations. Whether the emphasis rests in highly organized and stable structures,⁴ strict labor division, professionalism, or vertical integration,⁵ the model in mind is that of a transnational corporation. Even when the notion of cartel is avoided, Colombian dealers abroad are thought to be integrated in large organizational structures. In an interesting attempt to compare the

A second popular paradigm to conceptualize Colombian cocaine trafficking spins around the notion of social network.¹⁴ In the hands of crime analysts, this approach focuses on the social dynamics of criminal networks, trying to identify actors, connections, and the nature and intensity of criminal ties.¹⁵ Despite these promising aims, the approach has often been reduced to a (potential) law enforcement instrument: how to hit on vulnerable spots in a criminal network and how to "remove" a significant actor. It is, therefore, no wonder that most sympathizers of this view are police investigators, policymakers, crime managers or consultants, and ministerial researchers.¹⁶

For example, in their study on serious organized crime in the Netherlands, Edward Kleemans et al. describe Colombian-related cases in terms of "criminal networks," both facilitated and hindered by the social context.¹⁷ These researchers distance themselves from the economic view as theoretical departure, so they seldom talk about entrepreneurs or cartels. While they favor notions such as criminal networks or "cooperation agreements," they still refer to Colombian "groups" and "organizations." Their picture, sketched from some dossier-cases involving Colombian cocaine dealers, reveals flexible international cooperation, diversification to other illegal markets at distribution level, and, of course, different operational capabilities regarding contacts in Colombia and the Netherlands. Their view has the merit of recognizing flexible relations at the core of any drug transaction.

However, several risks and pitfalls are involved in the use of this approach for understanding drug economies and actors. Firstly, while some crime managers sacrifice relevant social questions about relations, they place all their emphasis on charting networks to present them as aesthetic devices in research appendixes or as tools in computer programs. Secondly, a tendency exists to view networks-as-things-in-themselves, and to refer to criminal networks as mere synonyms of criminal groups or organizations (coalitions, for network analysts). In these cases, the bureaucratic approach to organized crime is not challenged: flexibility is incorporated into the criminal organization paradigm as just another attribute of the structure. Thirdly, no attention is paid to the meaning that relations have for those involved in the "network." During my fieldwork, I met many people who, while knowing that they were engaged in illegal activities, did not consider themselves to be criminals. They saw themselves in first instance engaged in legal or informal activities, as workers, as adventurers acting under pressure, often blaming others for being the "true criminals." Illegality is a key factor, but should not be taken for granted when explaining the social behavior of *traquitos*. People engage in the drug economy because they are attracted by potentially large (illegal) profits, but are clearly conscious of the fact that cocaine is illegal. For example, during field research, many informants manifested the desire to end

their illegal activities as soon as possible; they supported drug legalization, or planned to enter legal activities that provided greater symbolic rewards.

Further, a problem with this approach is the exclusive focus on a priori isolated "criminal" relations. "Noncriminal" relations are considered secondary or analyzed as an external social context—as "upper world," as corrupt officials, as spoiled legal businesses, and so on. For crime network analysts, flexible relations inside these networks mean flexible criminal relations. Other dimensions of social linkages (familial, commercial, ethnic, labor, class, religious, gendered, geographical, political, legitimate, and so on) are only considered as context, as facilitators, as risk factors, but are isolated from what really matters: the criminal suspect and his criminal network.¹⁸ This view ignores that what is basically flexible around drug traffickers is the way in which money is made (flexible accumulation), the interactions among different types of legal and illegal economic units (businesses, enterprises, single entrepreneurs, brokers, facilitators, and financiers), and the way in which many sorts of employees work and divide tasks, risks, and responsibilities (flexible specialization). Behind flexible networks—whether they are criminal or not—there are flexible entrepreneurs, partners, brokers, and employees. Flexibility can be better explained—and compared—when the business and labor relations are the object of analysis.

Cocaine Distribution: Three Case Studies

We will discuss three cases of cocaine distributors working in the Netherlands. Their life stories give an interesting insight into the dynamics of the operations of the drug industry in consumer countries.

Riverito's Four Operations

At the time I visited him, Riverito was in his thirties and was serving four years in the Bijlmer prison of Amsterdam. Coming from a middle-class family living in Cali, he studied economics at the Universidad del Valle, where he graduated in 1992. After his studies he got a good job with a leading construction company in Cali, but found the work routine and boring. During his studies, he had been working as a waiter in a famous hotel in Cali, a place where top local cocaine entrepreneurs had been meeting for business and pleasure. In the hotel, Riverito got to know these people and their world of major cocaine producers and exporters. He learned their tastes, anticipated their wishes, and they invited him to more private events. "I was the private waiter of Pacho Herrera [a former major drug entrepreneur from Cali]. Once he gave me a 1,000 U.S. dollars tip at the end of a party. I had to share it with some other people."

Apart from this link and the fact that it gave him access to some cocaine

to distribute among friends, he did not become involved in the cocaine trade. However, his closeness to the entrepreneurs had a tremendous impact. "Brother, you don't imagine how it is until you come close to them. So much money! They impress the people around them because they are not so different than you or me. They are not old rich bastards, no; they speak the same language as normal people do. Some are gentle and jointly liable. And you wonder: Why not me?"

Things were not going well for him in Colombia. He had a serious alcohol problem and went through a divorce. "Very rarely I took a joint or a coke line; no, my true nightmare is the drink: beer, and especially whisky and *aguardiente*. I don't get aggressive, but I lose control. I ruined my marriage in December 1994 due to the drink."

In 1995, he decided to go to the Netherlands where a sister was living. He went looking for work and soon came to participate in the cocaine business. He was less motivated by the opportunity to earn big money quickly or to create a path for social improvement than by the possibility to make a new start in life. When he became involved in the cocaine business he had not been sent by any one, nor did he belong to any group or organization in the business. He went to the Netherlands alone and established contact with local importers and distributors using his former contacts within the *Calero* cocaine entrepreneurs.

Once in Amsterdam, Riverito shared a room with other Colombians, some of them were already involved in the cocaine business. He was contacted by a Colombian importer, and he started to work as *eucaléador*: the person responsible for safeguarding the cocaine loads before they are divided and delivered to wholesalers. After a couple of small operations through which he gained trust and demonstrated his competence, he was offered a more risky and profitable task: the unloading of several kilograms from a ship in Zeebrugge. He was rewarded with 30,000 U.S. dollars, an amount that he had to share with another Colombian who accompanied him.

Riverito's operation at Zeebrugge was successful. However, the 15,000 U.S. dollars that he was promised turned out to be just 10,000 U.S. dollars. He claimed the remaining amount for a while, but then settled and accepted.

"I wasn't going to create problems, I wasn't in a position to ask for the rest. You see, after all they paid me well. I bought a house in Cali with that money; for my ex-wife and my son." The unloading operation at Zeebrugge reveals some interesting aspects regarding the labor relations involved. The actual operation involved at least two small independent units, contrary to the idea that a single, well-organized group was controlling import and distribution with a manager dividing the tasks and paying "his own" people.

The Colombian importer had bought the cocaine load from the exporter at 20,000 U.S. dollars per kilo. He sold at a wholesale price of 24,000 U.S.

dollars per kilo, making 200,000 U.S. dollars on the entire load. He operated with two informal helpers. Both of them were given several thousand dollars. The importer would receive information about the *cruce* (sending), but would not be responsible since he would buy from the exporter at the port of entry. He would unload the shipment, transport, stash, and divide it; often he would deliver it—in this case, in three packages—to wholesale distributors. He would not do this all by himself. For the most dangerous task, the unloading, he would contract somebody else at a pay of 10 percent of his own profits (20,000 U.S. dollars). The contracted person in this case was Riverito.

Riverito and his companion constituted a separate economic unit, independent from the importer. They were not responsible for the merchandise, and their contract would end as soon as the operation had been completed. Riverito and his partner would plan and execute their operation with considerable autonomy, although in a less strict way than in legal subcontracting, since Riverito was not in a position to guarantee a refund if the unloading operation were to fail. In practice, the importer would work close to Riverito, keeping an eye on him and providing him with ideas, information, and even with transportation, although Riverito and his friend had to arrange the many technical aspects of the unloading by themselves. They were contracted as external labor to assume the high risks involved in the unloading. To the importer, they offered a highly priced service to complete this particular operation. In contrast to what happens in legal business, this subcontracting relationship had little chance of being repeated in future operations. Riverito wanted more and would enter the trade on his own account.

After the Zeebrugge operation, a year after his arrival in the Netherlands, Riverito was joined by his older brother William. Together, they began looking for a possibility to import cocaine from Cali. They had no capital to invest, but knew many people in the trade. This time they intended to keep things in their own hands. "You see, I work no more with those *paisanos* [Colombians]. Everything is fine with them, but I just tried with other people in Colombia. I knew this man from before. He promised to send something, so we waited. We waited, and waited, and nothing happened. He kept giving stupid excuses; I think he liked to talk and tell things he really could not do. Pure bullshit!"

Riverito got what Colombians call a *línea muerta* (dead line), a nonexistent cocaine line or one that is failing. For this operation, he planned to buy in Colombia and sell in the Netherlands, dividing the profits with his brother. They phoned many traffickers in Colombia, but nothing worked out. People promised things and then just disappeared. The brothers survived with small jobs as load keepers and internal couriers.

Finally, a new operation appeared. It was small, but rather easy and it promised a good profit. They could expect a markup of 4,000 U.S. dollars on

a kilo of cocaine that had been offered to Riverito by another Colombian, Riverito had become a wholesale distributor. He bought the cocaine, and his brother William and a *pariso*—a Colombian from Medellín—called Charley entered the deal as his helpers. Charley had just arrived and used to boast of his past as a bodyguard of Pablo Escobar. Charley told Riverito that a friend of his had a buyer for the cocaine kilo. This "friend," thought to be Colombian by Riverito, turned out to be an Aruban who gave Charley some money to ensure the deal. They went to meet the buyers, but things went wrong. Said Riverito, "Man, there was no buyer, there was only a gang of Antilleans who put two guns to our heads and stole the thing. It is a miracle we are alive. I know another *Caldoño* who was almost killed in the same situation but still walks around with a bullet in his neck."

The man from Aruba did not disappear, but pretended to have been fooled as well. He appeared to be a trafficker avoiding prison by informing the police on "Colombian criminal organization" stories. After a failed attempt to recover the package from the Arubans, Riverito and his companions were detained by the police and convicted. In his last operation, Riverito was the boss.

Riverito's four operations, which took place in a two-year time span, reveal two interesting phenomena. First, instead of stable and large organizations, a mutating interconnection of small units seems to be involved in trafficking. Second, this connection changes with respect to people, positions, linkage nature, and tasks along the four operations in which Riverito was involved.

Miguel's Many Bosses

Although Miguel prefers to present himself as an "intellectual mainly interested in philosophy and criminology," he was rather open about his involvement in the cocaine business for more than a decade.¹⁹ He almost made it as a criminal lawyer, but claimed having been expelled from the university. "I felt frustrated and I burned all the books. At that time, I was working in a small secondary school in Carrago as vice principal and philosophy teacher. I knew some people in Cali, but I did not enter this for the money, I suppose. I think it was out of bitterness."

He was first invited to work as a courier for a small organization in Bogotá, transporting small loads of between 3 kilos and 7 kilos. He made successful trips to the Netherlands, to France, and to a couple of Central American countries. After that, he made a trip to Portugal, where he was caught and he spent three years in jail. "It was terrible there, the law of the jungle, surrounded by 'garbage' that did not deserve anything. I survived because we have a name, I mean they think it is better not to mess with Colombians."

back in Colombia, he tried unsuccessfully to resume his law studies. He began work in a cocaine kitchen near Cali, a job generally considered as very dangerous. "The chemicals are very inflammable, we had to wear rubber shoes because the slightest spark could provoke an explosion. Everything is very precarious, once a certain amount is cooked the kitchen is dismantled and you are moved to a new one. It is risky, but you get paid monthly."

After the capture of his *patrón* (boss), Miguel returned to Bogotá to resume his job as a drug courier, but this time for another organization. He already had experience and was no longer regarded as a simple courier. In 1993, he was sent to Frankfurt as a baby-sitter (professional courier and controller). Although he himself was not caught, the cocaine was seized, some Italian importers were detained, and the cocaine remained unpaid for. Shortly after this operation, Miguel attempted to smuggle a few kilos through Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam, where he was caught. The impression that he had been punished for the failure and "demoted" from baby-sitter to *mala* (unskilled courier) had to be corrected. Things were more simple than that: a new operation for a single courier had appeared, and he was happy to clinch the assignment. With a false passport and more than 3 kilos of cocaine, he was sent on a journey via Venezuela and Curaçao to Amsterdam, from where he would have traveled south to deliver the merchandise in Geneva, Switzerland. Miguel explains: "You see, I worked for many groups and I never saw anything like a cartel. I don't feel part of a cartel. Every group is more or less independent. Some people know each other, yes, and sometimes a couple of *patrones* could meet and work together. There are also informal rules and codes, but nothing like the mafia; people don't really respect them. I believe that the only rule is to survive and get rich."

When asked about his plans after having completed his jail sentence, Miguel suggested that he first had to settle things with his last boss in Bogotá. After that, he would go back to Cali to "see who is there." He was, however, very skeptical about finding his old employers after such a long period of time.

Traffickers like Miguel cannot be connected with a particular group or cartel in Colombia. They move rather easily from one employer to another and combine drug smuggling with other jobs as cook (chemist), bodyguard, or baby-sitter.

Joel's Loneliness

Joel is a Colombian cocaine wholesaler who has been active in Amsterdam, and can be called a truly "discreet professional."²⁰ He has been buying from importers in Cali, his hometown, and has been selling to Turkish, Italian, and German groups in particular. He arrived in the Netherlands in 1996, leaving his family behind in Colombia. Previously, he had been distributing cocaine

in Chicago with varying fortunes, until an operation was busted and he had to "disappear." His brother, who had worked with him in the United States, had already settled in the Netherlands and convinced him to come. He introduced him to local and foreign buyers. These contacts at the import and export level helped him to do well in the business. "My family lives in Colombia and they tell others that I am on a 'business trip.' I really would like to see my sons. Here, you see, every day is the same. I miss playing football with them, or just a nice picnic. I think I will soon retire, so I go back."

He has tried to minimize risk by delegating cocaine collection and delivery, avoiding cash transfers or involvement in the actual transportation of the goods. He only negotiates the terms of the deals, handles the money, and seizes the cocaine. He usually buys and sells *escama de pescado* (fish scale) or *concha de nácar* (nacre shell), top quality cocaine known for its pink staining glazes.

Joel has an excellent reputation for being just and jointly liable, not only with business partners, but also among close friends and subordinates. In the words of Tano, one of his former employees, "He is incapable of killing a fly, and he keeps his word. . . . He lends money, invites [people to] dinners, and always asks if everything is okay. Once he helped a friend with 19,000 U.S. dollars and he never saw it back. He even helps unknown people. Last week, for example, he gave accommodation to a Bolivian woman, just because she was illegal and had nowhere to go. . . . I don't think these are interested favors, he might have his reasons to help, but he is just like that."

He is usually the boss of his own illegal enterprise. He is clearly what Nicholas Dorn et al. refer to as a number 1, "cut out" from delicate operational matters such as cocaine transportation and money transfers, but "hands on" in others such as stashing cocaine.²¹ In some cases, he will make Paisita, another Colombian, his partner. They will share a percentage of the profits but only when they sell to a couple of Paisita's clients. Joel has always been the investor, and he assumes the financial risk of the operations. His brother, who invited him to come to the Netherlands and gave him most of his initial business contacts, works independently from him, holding a different line. However, they used to work together in Chicago. Tano reveals: "Once he went to collect some money, I think a lot of money, and they told him that his brother had already received it. When Joel found him it was already too late, his brother had spent it all in Colombia. I believe they settled the score, but there is always some tension."

Joel only buys cocaine from other Colombians, but not always in the same way and from different people. He enters the game per operation. He may, for example, receive a message from exporter A from Cali, asking if he wants to play. Although Joel knows his nickname and a telephone number to contact him, he may never meet him personally. According to the price and

the quantity involved, he will say yes or no. In practice, he will almost always agree to buy at least a part of the load. Exporter A will arrange the shipment with importer B, mainly through Rotterdam. Joel will also agree to share the financial risks with importer B, who is also from Cali. In the event that the shipment is lost or seized, he will pay for half of its value, and he will invite the exporter to provide proof that no rip-off has taken place.

The three partners in this *línea* (line) or *flecha* (arrow) share financial risk, but are operating with great autonomy. They seldom repeat the same scheme. Importer B and Joel also receive cocaine from exporter C, who has closed a deal with exporter A and has been using his contacts in the Netherlands. Importer B also sells to other Colombian and non-Colombian distributors. Joel has been selling the cocaine to different groups including other local Colombians, some Turks and Italians in Amsterdam, and a number of retailers in Germany and Belgium. He will never deal with more than two or three clients at the same time. On one occasion, Joel was visibly irritated. He explained that "another group of *Calteños*, they sold the thing one point cheaper [a point, referring to the kilo price, is 500 dollars] but we had agreed to sell for 48. Therefore, they sold it and I didn't. I will speak with them."

These informal agreements appear to be common among two or three groups of distributors selling from the same bulk to the same groups. However, even under these circumstances, it remains difficult to enforce these price accords when excluding the use of force. Agreements with the importer are in general tacit and may include a gray zone of misunderstandings, discussions, and conflicts. For example, if the cocaine is not sold immediately, the importer can become rather impatient about the payment.

During the field research, I met six different Colombians working for or with Joel: Simona, Paisita, his brother, Tico, Chimo, and Tano. Except for Paisita, who has been his business partner on some occasions, none of the others has engaged in any stable criminal activity in relation to him. They are only offered jobs in relation to specific operations, and Joel decides what the assignment will be. One of the secrets of the success of the business in this case is that Joel has been operating all by himself. He hires people to move the cocaine inside Amsterdam, to receive it and deliver it, and to transfer the money. People like Tano are delegated tasks in all these phases. Paisita and Tico are able to project the violent image that Joel has been lacking and are useful to enforce compliance with the deals. Finally, Simona generally cooks and cleans for him, and, of course, provides in her house a place to stash the merchandise.

The money transfers to Colombia are arranged in a rather simple way. Sometimes Joel prefers to go to the office by himself, but most of the time he sends somebody else. He is actually aware of the presence of videocameras and of the content of financial regulations. The transfers are made in uneven

amounts of about 2,500 to 3,500 dollars by six different people, who will deposit the money through four or five well-known money transfer offices. For this work, peripheral people—for example, friends of Simona—may be recruited—get between 100 and 150 dollars for the job. This way, an amount of around 90,000 U.S. dollars each time will be sent to different accounts in Colombia. People will not repeat visits to the same office. Occasionally, cash will be sent with trusted travelers. Far from being part of a group—that is, Joel's organization—these people are just friends or acquaintances who often will not necessarily know each other very well. Tano describes how he delivered the cocaine for Joel. "I put the stuff in a big suitcase and I just went alone to meet the buyers. Paisita met me there and we delivered it. Joel paid me 100 dollars for each kilo transported." Finally, Joel was participating in "projects"—one in Japan and another one in France—in which none of the people mentioned above were involved.

Ways of Doing Business in Cocaine Trafficking

The three cases analyzed above show Colombian dealers engaged in different kinds of business and labor relations. In the following paragraphs we will elaborate the most common ways of organizing these relations. They are defined as ideal types. In empirical situations, mixed forms will occur (for instance partnerships among relatives) and they may mutate (that is, traffickers changing from one method to another). The types show the diversity of business forms and serve to systematize the most important elements involved in Colombian cocaine trafficking.

Individual Enterprises

Self-employment, a paramount feature of immigrant economies,²² is extremely rare among Colombian cocaine dealers. They usually tend to be employees of somebody else. The exceptions concern those involved in wholesale distribution. Joel, for example, acted in most of his operations as an individual entrepreneur hiring his assistants on an ad-hoc basis. Lupo, another distributor, combined in a rather erratic fashion cocaine dealing with a larger number of other informal or illegal activities in which he engaged alone.

Partnerships

Partnerships constitute the most common way of conducting business, especially at the level of import and distribution. Most partnerships concern no more than two people. Third parties tend to be non-Colombian associates providing local resources, infrastructure, or further marketing contacts. Some partnerships will last for several operations. Most of them, however,

are temporary coalitions of two persons assisted by a number of helpers, employees, and other subcontracted personnel. Riverito would work with a partner when importing and unloading. His case, like that of some other adventurers or "opportunistic irregulars,"²³ was to combine or switch from partnerships to wage labor. The partnerships often involved family, especially brothers and brothers-in-law.

In terms of the typology of trafficking "firms" proposed by Dorn et al., none of these Colombian committed to drugs) or "mutual societies" (drug exchange among users). Colombian *traquetos* combine characteristics of the other categories in a very flexible way.

In Colombia, "sideliners" (legal businesses that trade drugs as a sideline) are a common phenomenon. In the Netherlands, however, no traces of Colombian sideliners could be found. Legal Colombian entrepreneurship in the Netherlands has been lacking. Business in relation to the cocaine trade has always been an instrument designed to conceal trafficking. Colombians do associate at times with local sideliners, especially people with import or retail businesses suffering financial problems. In addition, a small number of Colombian prostitutes and ex-prostitutes also sidelined into cocaine through a relationship with a drug entrepreneur.

Dorn's category of "criminal diversifiers" (existing criminal business diversifying to include cocaine) is also uncommon in the Netherlands. Those Colombians who are active in burglary or shoplifting will enter the cocaine business as temporary workers, but never as entrepreneurs. For those Colombians who diversified to other criminal activities and markets in the Netherlands, cocaine was the first step and at the same time the most profitable activity. Many of these *traquetos*, engaged in partnerships with local entrepreneurs involved in illegal activities, have no criminal record in Colombia.

The categories of the opportunistic irregular (involved erratically in the illegal economy) and the "retail specialist" (with a boss employing people to distribute drugs to users) share a reference to retail levels in which Colombians are absent. Yet, these types are somewhat familiar to Colombian entrepreneurs. Most *traquetos* only manage two or three operations per year, and their involvement is more irregular than often thought. They react to short-term developments, acting as "jump-up merchants"²⁴ when a profitable business opportunity emerges. They will engage in temporary partnerships and recruit people for the project. The "groups" thus assembled in an ad hoc way will have a boss and employees or helpers performing specific tasks.

Finally, Colombian groups or partnerships, especially those involved in cocaine trafficking, run the risk of being approached by "state-sponsored traders," collaborating with enforcement agencies as informants, infiltra-

are rare for obvious reasons: many Colombian *traquetos* are not "locals" and have no family in the Netherlands. Of course, kinship relations are often involved in partnerships and in labor recruitment and provide the basis for solidarity and trust. Joel and Riverito sometimes worked with their respective brothers, and some couples cooperated in export-import operations. However, most of them have relatives who do not participate in the business. They most commonly deal with and employ nonrelatives. The idea of "family labor" is absent. As one trafficker explained: "Here in The Hague I met many family members: blood brothers and relatives-in-law. But also close friends, that can be almost the same. . . . I see here many Arabs and they look like one big family, they are close and help each other. But Colombians are more individualistic, I don't know why. . . . Yes, family is important, but money makes them blind."

Jairo, who was sent by the Grajales family from Cali, was not related to them. The Grajales family business was in fact a conglomerate of legal and illegal businesses run by different members of a large family and did not have a unified structure. Joel and his brother also ran separated businesses. In some cases, a relative would provide the know-how, human and financial capital, or infrastructure. This has been the case with "mixed couples" or Colombian couples in which the woman had a Dutch passport and provided local contacts. Tano emphatically denied that family ties were important amongst *traquetos* in the Netherlands. "Look, you can not do this for many years, so some people try to keep their relatives out of this." Paisita also insisted on Colombian over family ties: "We work with other *Calichianos* [Colombianos]. They won't do silly things, you know for sure because everybody has a family in Colombia. . . ."

The Centrality of Intermediaries and Brokers

This system of small and changing coalitions is certainly invigorated by the intervention of a specific type of entrepreneur: the broker. Social brokers connect people, either directly or indirectly, for profit.²⁷ The usual role of brokers in the cocaine business—also referred to as "go-betweens," "intermediaries," "criminal brokers," and so forth—is to link potential partners, potential buyers and sellers, and potential employees and employers. In this informal way, cocaine brokers combine some of the tasks usually performed by chambers of commerce, employment agencies, social clubs, or legal businesses. They also reproduce other linkages—among friends, relatives, colleagues, co-nationals, and so forth—participants in monetary or nonmonetary transactions.

Brokers tend to belong to the very social networks that are being connected. They are neither necessarily cocaine entrepreneurs or employees themselves, nor external powerful actors such as local politicians, *mafiosos*, or

Family Business

None of the cocaine enterprises found are structured along family lines in the style of the "crime families" or "family businesses"²⁵ discussed by the vast literature on middleman minorities and ethnic economies. Local family firms²⁶

Our field research could not find one single *sapo* (police informant), although many Colombian willing to make mistakes by dealing with the "wrong" people, complained of making foolish mistakes by dealing with the "wrong" people.

Joint Ventures

Many partnerships involve people already active in other projects with other people. These joint ventures are usually between people with access to the different resources that are required to put the operation together. One, for example, provides the money to invest and owns a front-store business, while the other provides the supplier in Colombia and the people needed to complete the operation. Some of these coalitions are "virtual." Potential partners spend a great deal of time thinking and talking about projects that in the end never materialize.

Percentage Commission

The partnerships do not necessarily divide profits in an even way. Participation is negotiated. During these negotiations, the reliability and profitability of each party is subject to discussion, focusing on three basic issues: financial risk, personal risk, and the material/human resources that have to be employed. The first and third are the key factors. Personal risk is often difficult to assess as it could be shared or completely passed on to helpers and laborers. When Paisita shared profits with Joel, he would only get 30 percent for providing the customer, putting up some money, and arranging the deal. As the main investor, Joel kept the other 70 percent.

A different picture would result in cases where the partners are very different in size and power: the project's offer would be split with little or no discussion. The smaller party would receive a percentage commission either in cash from the general profits or in kind from the total amount of cocaine moved. This arrangement is typical in export-import operations involving "envoys" (import agents sent by Colombian exporters) such as Jairo. Although he organized the import for a certain group in Cali—that is, working for them in that particular operation—he became involved as a partner since he provided essential infrastructure, marketing opportunities, and assumed high personal risks. The percentage commission system should be distinguished from the "sales on commission" method widely used among small wholesale distributors. As I will explain below, this contracting arrangement applies to a flexible labor force rather than to entrepreneurial partnerships.

migrant community leaders.²⁸ Brokers among Colombian *traquetos* include people occupying intersections of very different networks: illegal immigrants, musicians, frequent travelers, local dealers, local entrepreneurs, prosecutors, undercover police officers, and so on. Tico, for example, introduced Tano and Chino to Joel, who later helped them in many ways. Tano acknowledged, "Yes, I can work with Tico. He isn't selfish, he didn't know me very well, but he told Joel to trust me."

Silvio, a musician himself, indicated that some salsa musicians in Amsterdam will act as brokers, exchanging sales to their broad network of potential cocaine users for regular free cocaine supplies to their inner circle of friends. In The Hague, some Latino DJs also knew how to use their contacts with established *traquetos* and "second generation" Colombians. Additional cases of brokerage are to be found among telephone operators, restaurant workers and bartenders, coffee-shop owners, doormen in salsa discotheques, and non-Colombian inmates. Some members of these groups facilitate new contacts and transactions, earning a profit.

A broker's tariff (profit) is rarely defined directly in terms of money.²⁹ Cocaine brokers will obtain material as well as immaterial benefits. The most common among the latter are credit with *traquetos*; reputation and status; expectation to enter the business in the future; future possible favors or services; more clients; cocaine for consumption; and moral leadership. Credit and reputation are very important since they are key credentials for business success.

Many Colombians refused to perform as brokers when asked by non-Colombian drug dealers to connect them with the "big guys." They did not see any clear benefit in it. When Cabeza, a Colombian migrant, was learning Dutch, two Moroccans approached him at the language school. They wanted to get in touch with Colombian cocaine suppliers, and wondered if he could help them. Said Cabeza, "I thought why not, so I found a Colombian and I did the *cruce* [favor]. The Moroccans were real *desprolijos* [lit., sloppy, amateurs], and after two failed meetings I said: You know what? I cancel the thing and I step out." Manipulating *traquetos* with hopes and promises—recommending unreliable people, lying about their skills, making them wait, and so on—is for many the only way of getting close to a business with such large profits. Instead of focusing on building a career, cocaine brokers tend to rely on short-term thinking. The temporary status of cocaine enterprises—in terms of organization and staff—is reinforced continuously by the circulation and replacement of brokers when they run out of credit.

While explaining the diversification of markets and activities among Colombian drug entrepreneurs, Michel Koutourzis from the former Observatoire Géopolitique des Drogues (OGD) in Paris concludes that cocaine importing has become a part of a huge broker operation: "It is not the product

(cocaine), but the very network that is really at stake, that is the real merchandise. The present and future tendency is to buy and sell lines, routes, and networks. Internationalized criminal organizations will be able to provide any illegal product."³⁰ This process reminds us of the trends toward horizontal integration and flexible accumulation and consumption that we find in late capitalism.

Labor Relations

Most of the people contacted during the field research were selling a service to some *traqueto* or working for him. Both import and distribution activities can be organized as an enterprise, with cocaine entrepreneurs assisted by a wide range of helpers and employees. In the following paragraphs we will analyze this specific labor market, showing the most common contractual arrangements found and the logic behind them. When analyzing drug economies, too much emphasis on professionalism has obscured the fact that the "crime industry also needs a large number of unskilled criminal employees,"³¹ who at the same time pose a major threat to their employers. Peter Reuter argues that "the entrepreneur aims to structure his relationship with employees so as to reduce the amount of information available to them concerning his own participation and to ensure that they have minimal incentive to inform against him."³²

Traquetos try to solve this problem by segmenting units, subcontracting, using friends and relatives, avoiding fixed employees, relying on brokers, passing minimal information, providing personal incentives, and replacing, intimidating, or lowering the number of employees. In sum, they become flexible and relatively unorganized. When reviewing the specific labor market on which Colombian *traquetos* operate, it becomes clear that these solutions are part of a wider picture that goes beyond illegal markets. While illegality tends to intensify them, they touch core developments of current capital and labor markets under "disorganized capitalism,"³³ "flexible specialisation,"³⁴ or "post-Fordist" economies.³⁵

Skilled Subcontractors

Colombian cocaine entrepreneurs rely heavily on subcontracting to a variety of individuals and enterprises that provide infrastructure, knowledge, or skills for a particular operational aspect. These contractors are usually paid either in cash or kind per individual project. In this way, relatively small economic units are able to operate rapidly and efficiently, integrating flexible layers of contractors and subcontractors.

Subcontracting other illegal enterprises is a rare phenomenon in the Netherlands. It is very common though in Colombia. Cocaine exporters will con-

tract the services of organizations—some with two or three people—specializing in the recruitment and loading of small couriers, or in large scale transportation, or in the exercise of violence, the organization of private armies, the recruitment of *sicarios* (hired gunmen), and so on. Other subcontracted businesses have a much better reputation. Whether subcontracting concerned single corrupted employees inside a firm (import-export, freight or transport companies, chauffeurs, bank employees and managers, and so on) or small businesses (retail and distribution shops, restaurant owners, and so on), all had in common that they were paid to provide essential infrastructural services beyond mere know-how or labor power. Most operations will at a certain stage need services from legal companies. These so-called “facilitators” are essential for the cocaine business.

Much subcontracting takes place at an individual level, and at times the divide between wage labor and entrepreneurship is blurred. It concerns the more simple tasks, requiring a particular skill and a material resource not provided by the employer. I have explained, for example, how Riverito was contracted to unload cocaine, for which he had to arrange many things for himself. Some infrastructural services were subcontracted on a more permanent basis. Simona was regularly paid by Joel to stash cocaine in her flat. Some individuals will regard the contract as an extra-income, next to more stable sources of income from jobs or social benefits.

Professionals

Professional skilled workers also tend to be externally hired or recruited. Again, small and temporary enterprises do not allow for stable departments with specialized personnel. Some of these services come from legitimate professionals, who are often paid salaries or fees well above the average. A pool of local or Colombian lawyers specializing in cocaine cases has remarkable job stability compared to their clients. Travel and real estate agents are paid excellent prices and commissions. In contrast with Colombia and with local legal and illegal entrepreneurial circles, local accountants are not involved in laundering money. This professional service is directly provided by the institutions or the employees involved. In some cases, people with know-how in import-export bureaucracy and in information technologies are also involved, in particular when organizing large importing operations. Professional truck drivers were also hired or paid off to transport cocaine in their trucks.

Traquetos also will hire people with particular skills acquired by virtue of their full-time involvement in some illegal activity. They include professional smugglers of all sorts, routine burglars (for operations that involve breaking into warehouses, containers, or flats) or individual *sicarios* (though rare in

the Netherlands). The trend for these professional criminals is to diversify skills and become polyvalent multi-skilled workers. In due time, they may replace bosses or become their bosses' closest employees.

Managerial Bodies

The heavy use of subcontractors and external professionals discourages the organization of stable managerial bodies. In many cases, the *patrón* himself will directly control the performance of the contracted unskilled workers. When people are sent to the Netherlands to organize the import (envoys), they will combine the functions of managers and entrepreneurs. More specific organizers—sent, for example, to supervise a delivery, to assess risk, to make a collection, or “fix” a problem—are often focused on one particular operational aspect. They follow orders from the boss closely and are more busy with external relations and arrangements than with internal labor organization. These people, although highly trusted by the cocaine entrepreneur, do not behave so much as white-collar “company men” or “vice presidents.” They will often identify with subordinates in their expectations of taking over, changing *patrones*, or quitting the job altogether. Hierarchies are understood in terms of authority and leadership rather than as compartmentalized, vertical bodies of delegation and control. Superiors and chiefs are often respected for past events or deeds instead of present positions and current developments. In some cases, more horizontal relations may have developed as in the style of project crimes or crimes in association,³⁶ which involve mutuality beyond the business or labor relationship. Says Miguel, “It is not just pure business and cold contracts. Within the group you discuss your personal life, your problems with others or with women, you have fun together.”

This trafficking alternated between performing as a supervisor (babysitter) and as a worker (*mula*). There are also cases in which outsiders such as overseas partners, who recruit and deal with employees, have taken managerial functions. Sometimes tasks and arrangements were simply abandoned by those hired to execute them, with the bosses not having the will or the power to supervise while the task was being carried out. Finally, some cocaine entrepreneurs suggested that managers are important but also dangerous, since they know many things that could easily be used against them. Mary McIntosh made the point in her classic work *The Organization of Crime*: “In fact it is not easy to distinguish control over subordinates from control over rivals. A subordinate may at any point cut loose and become a rival; a rival may become a boss, or a subordinate.”³⁷ The use of relatives may offer only a partial solution. The pressures to be in charge will often be greater among close relations, regardless of the ability to manage people.

Unskilled Part-Time Employees

Unskilled irregulars, people who will perform multiple tasks with differing levels of complexity, form the final and extremely important category of employees. Their type of work and the absence of promotion prospects do not guarantee a high degree of job satisfaction. For some, the job means an extra income next to other legal or illegal occupations. For others, it is a last resort solution to tackle economic hardship, desperate conjunctures, or the absence of any other promising job perspective. Also, some employees dream of becoming a *traqueto* some day.

The category of unskilled irregulars includes people performing the tasks of body packers or small air couriers, local chauffeurs, divers, unloaders, load keepers, informal bodyguards, internal couriers, cash remitters and smugglers, flat hosts, helpers, and peddlers. These workers have no job security. As a protection buffer to the business, they are placed in the front line, and easily replaced when targeted by law enforcement agencies. Constant replacement not only restricts the flow of sensible information—weakening their bargain position—but also keeps labor costs lower than those cases with a need to construct stronger loyalties over time. Many people are waiting to be called by a *traqueto*. Others had done some job for the boss, and had been put on hold until the next operation. Waiting could take months. People often rotate through different tasks in one or several operations. They do “a little bit of everything” and are called *toderos*. Their occupational prestige is low. The workers are preferably not recruited from among established criminal milieus, such as relatives of cocaine entrepreneurs, illegal migrants, or local drug dealers. They tend to be drawn from external labor markets.⁴⁸ Only a few employees will receive a salary on a regular or irregular basis. Most of them, however, are given a flexible personal payment for each task performed. Load keepers, for example, are paid by the day. International unskilled couriers are either paid a fixed amount or an amount per kilo transported, depending on their experience and the financial resources of the exporter. This way, the payment may vary between 1,000 U.S. dollars and 10,000 U.S. dollars per trip. Internal couriers and cash remitters or smugglers are commonly paid a percentage of the amounts handled. Finally, the helpers of wholesale distributors are given a few kilos of cocaine, under the agreement that they can keep the difference above a certain price. Many of these salespersons on commission belong to this type of unskilled, interchangeable labor force.

Post-Fordist Arrangements

For the past twenty years, the Fordist-organization⁴⁹ of capitalist production has experienced a serious crisis, leading to significant changes. The Fordist

system basically implied, in the realm of production and work, the following (well-known) features: mass production and consumption of uniform and standardized goods; vertical integration; displacement of knowledge from labor to managerial bodies; disciplining of the labor force; “Taylorist” segmentation of tasks performed by single workers in a repetitive and alienating way; job specialization; payment by rate; little or no on the job training and learning; and functional as well as spatial division of labor.

The causes, the extent, and the prospects of this transformation have remained a matter of debate. However, the main characteristics of so-called post-Fordist conditions of accumulation are pretty well agreed upon.⁵⁰ Paul Hirsch argues that post-Fordist firms are “increasingly conceived as a ‘bundle of contracts,’ none of which requires elaborate headquarters, overhead, staff, hierarchy, slack, or much in the way of organizational memory. These organizational attributes are seen as irrelevant, if not unnecessary and wasteful. Managers are conceived of as interchangeable; specialized skills, if not available in house, can be purchased outside at market prices. . . .”⁵¹

Contrary to Vincenzo Ruggiero, who conducted research on drug economies in Italy and Britain,⁵² I find the way in which Colombian *traquetos* organize cocaine trafficking, from export to wholesale distribution, to represent a good example of such a post-Fordist firm. Ruggiero found their labor markets reproducing the Fordist model, in which “assembly-line delinquents” had clearly divided roles and tasks within a vertically integrated industry. He recognizes that the overwhelming presence of flexible work does not agree with his hypothesis, and that the industry is competitive rather than monopolistic. Strangely enough, he does not explain why such a dynamic business should follow a trend—that is, Fordist—contrary to other legal markets of the same kind that are comparable in terms of business organization and labor relations. Other authors have shown convincingly how developments in contemporary crime are shaped by ongoing processes of globalization, market liberalization, late modernity, and post-Fordism.⁵³ Table 8.1 shows how most of the characteristics of the cocaine business run parallel to more general trends of post-Fordist or flexible accumulation.

The illegal nature of the cocaine business gives an even greater impulse to post-Fordist trends. No taxes, large profits, no labor regulations and unions, no training costs, not even a company building: the utopia of the propagandists of market flexibility. The lack of a stable workforce, the massive use of subcontracting, or the reliance on brokers are obviously also risk-minimizing strategies to neutralize the effects of repression. The illegality of trafficking decreases the possibility that the actors involved will develop a stable business or labor relationship. It even will make it unlikely for them to be operating on the same deals more than once. The following factors will add to this effect:

Table 8.1. Post-Fordism and Cocaine Business Compared

Post-Fordism	Cocaine Business
Decline of hierarchical management and corporate structure.	No "branches." Small firms with arms length transactions. Flexible cocaine brokers.
Technical innovation.	New smuggling and packing methods. New communication technology.
No stocks.	No cocaine stocks.
Economy of scope in a global market. Flexible and small batch production and distribution.	No "pipe-lines" but specific operations. European market as a unity.
Differential, nonstandardized consumption. Demand driven.	New products (crack). Heterogeneous consumers. New markets.
Dual segmentation toward professionalization and de-skilling.	Criminal lawyers, legal businessmen, professional smugglers and unloaders versus <i>mulas</i> , <i>boleros</i> , <i>toderos</i> , <i>encaladores</i> , and helpers.
More horizontal labor organization.	Despite clear <i>patrones</i> (bosses) and separation of planning and execution: weak managerial structures, many project crimes, little supervision, vertical clashes, workers become bosses.
Worker's co-responsibility.	Workers take more risks and are expected to solve problems. Little information exchange.
No job security, poor labor conditions, temporary workers, hire-and-fire.	People hired per operation. Many unfulfilled promises. People "waiting" for an operation. Many alternating with legal and illegal jobs. Many arrests. Risk of hopeless imprisonment or death.
Dispersal, diversification of the spatial-territorial division of labor.	Cocaine consumers in Colombia and Colombian capitalists in the Netherlands. Less regional specialization.
(Quasi-)vertical integration through increased subcontracting and outsourcing.	Many skilled tasks subcontracted by <i>traquetos</i> : transport, unloading, legal aid and protection, violence, and so on.
Decline of blue-collar working class.	No stable employees, no bureaucracy.

On the job learning and training.

Many people with no "criminal record," improvisation and imitation.

- Changes in volumes and prices, production or consumption levels; marketing routes; smuggling methods; and developments in the legal business around the cocaine trade.
- Death of important actors or their need to move; imprisonment; bankruptcy; changes in expectations, interests, ambitions, or reputation.
- Disagreement on terms of the deal; "dirty play"; or dissatisfaction from the first transaction.
- Police intervention and undercover operations, creating mutual distrust and paranoia.
- Possibilities to corrupt law enforcement authorities; the room for new partners and alliances.

This "wild" flexibility may threaten individual entrepreneurs, increase their transaction costs, and expel first-time losers from the game. However, it also provides the overall cocaine business with a superb incentive and a competitive advantage. Although illegality shapes internal business and labor relations, these relations can also be found in other highly competitive legal markets that are struggling to survive under post-Fordist conditions.

Conclusion

Our research on the organization of Colombian cocaine enterprises operating in the Netherlands questions two dominant frameworks addressing the issue: the "economic-bureaucratic" and the "criminal network" approaches.

The economic-bureaucratic model tends to see the drug industry as operating through fixed branches of cocaine cartels. It has facilitated comparative analysis and research on the interwovenness of legal and illegal economies.

The model has not been able, however, to provide convincing evidence for the presence of Fordist organizational structures and monopolizing transnational corporations with rigid organizational hierarchies and a strict division of labor. Further, it does not agree with the reality of very competitive markets, and seems to underestimate the impact of illegality upon the cocaine business. Within this bureaucratic model, the notion of cells is often used. The drug industry and participating actors are viewed in terms of hyper-organized international conspiracies, feeding the rhetoric of the War on Drugs crusaders. These notions are in total contradiction with drug traffickers' daily practice of operations and their dealing with the broader socioeconomic context.

The criminal networks approach has the merit of capturing the flexible and dynamic nature of interpersonal interaction on the micro-level. However, it only relates the flexibility of trafficking to the illegal dimensions of the industry, isolating the cocaine business and its actors from the overall economy. It does not allow cocaine dealing to be understood within the broader picture of economic logic and profit making, and neglects the non-criminal aspects of social relations within the industry, such as internal conflict and collusion with legal structures.

The study of the internal business—and labor relations of cocaine trafficking—has given us good knowledge of the economic dimensions of these enterprises and the factors that determine their dynamics. We found Colombian cocaine firms to be informal, small, mutating, and decentralized. Some are individual enterprises; others function through temporary partnerships among two or three people. These arrangements are often formed solely for a single project. Some of the people involved may also be engaged in other partnerships or in activities in the legal economy. Often, a percentage system is used to divide profits, and payments in kind commonly happen. Despite the importance of kinship ties and the frequent use of relatives in business operations, none of the enterprises that we researched can be characterized as family businesses. Brokers (people with contacts) play a central role in bringing about the partnerships and transactions.

Labor relations are very flexible. Most people continuously change or switch tasks and employers. Many tasks are subcontracted in order to share financial risk and allow for (quasi-)vertical integration while keeping the business small. Subcontractors range from skilled professionals or legal enterprises selling their specialized services, to multi-skilled cocaine entrepreneurs who delegate particular risky operational tasks to unskilled, easily replaceable workers. These are hired, for specific or for multi-task operations (*toderos*) and are paid with some sort of flexi-wage. They have poor skills, no promotion perspectives, and face death or imprisonment with no security for them or their families. They are irregulars; some combine their work with

other legal, informal, or illegal activities. Many of them had no criminal record, and learned their tasks on the job.

These enterprises do not develop stable managerial bodies, contrary to what is commonly thought. Bosses often work "hand in hand" with their helpers, some of whom may have their own businesses or envision eventually replacing the boss in case he is caught. The division of labor is not rigid and compartmentalized along vertical lines. It has a more horizontal fragmented structure, despite a clear division between capital and labor, between bosses and subordinates with different power and status. Some people, especially subordinates, brokers, and subcontractors, switched roles in an ad hoc way between what Mike Davis has called "lumpen capitalists" and "outlaw proletarians."⁴⁴ Finally, the system of payments is very flexible and includes commission and bonus systems, gifts, or other incentives if things go as planned. Failure to comply with the job, conflicts, or even business delays or seizures usually mean payment cuts or no payment at all.

We conclude that these characteristics of the enterprise structure and labor relations resemble those among post-Fordist businesses in the legal sphere. Illegality only accentuates the flexibility regarding production, labor and service contracts, and capital accumulation. This, in fact, would be a normal feature of any other highly competitive market under contemporary forms of capitalism. These shared characteristics contribute to the overlap that we observe in the areas of organizational structure and labor relations between legal and illegal businesses.

Notes

1. Ethnographic studies on so-called "organized crime" with a focus on business and labor relations can be illuminating for several reasons. They can shed light on the reasons behind internal interaction, changing arrangements, conflicting interests, and risk transfer inside the illegal business. They can further help to understand the meaning of violence, secrecy, and trust for the actors involved. Finally, they can expose both similarities to and interconnections with broader social and economic arrangements—other labor markets, other legal and illegal businesses or entrepreneurs, and so forth. For studies with a focus on business and labor relations, see Perrus van Duyne et al., *Misdadondernemingen* (The Hague: WODC-Gouda Quint bv, 1990); Nicholas Dorn et al., *Traffickers: Drug Markets and Law Enforcement* (London: Routledge, 1992); Dirk Korf and Hans Verbrack, *Dealers en Dienders* (Amsterdam: Criminologisch Instituut Bonger, 1993); Vincenzo Ruggiero, "Drug Economics: A Fordist Model of Criminal Capital?" *Capital and Class* 55 (1995), 131–50; Dick Hobbs, "The Firm: Organizational Logic and Criminal Culture on a Shifting Terrain," *The British Journal of Criminology* 41 (2001), 549–60.
2. For a complete report, see Damián Zaitch, *Traquetos: Colombianos Involvidos in the Cocaine Business in the Netherlands* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001).

3. The notion of cocaine "cartel" was always a matter of controversy. Many scholars rejected or criticized the concept. See Francisco Thoumi, *Political Economy and Illegal Drugs in Colombia* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995); Rosa del Olmo, "Drogas: Discursos, Percepciones, y Políticas," in Xavier Ariana and Rosa del Olmo, eds., *Normal y Culturales en la Construcción de la "Cuestión Drogas"* (Barracón: Editorial Hater, 1996), 124–38; Alvaro Camacho Guizado, "Empresarios Ilegales y Región: La Gestación de Clases Dominantes Locales," *Delito y Sociedad 4/5* (1994), 163–82; Dario Betancourt and Martha Luz García, *Contrabandistas, Marimberos, y Maifosos: Historia Social de la Mafia Colombiana* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1994); Pierre Kopp, "Colombie: Traffic de Drogue et Organisations Criminelles," *Problèmes d'Amérique Latine* 18 (1993), 21–39; Ciro Krauthausen and Luis F. Sarmiento, *Cocaina & Co.* (Bogotá: Coediciones Tercer Mundo—Instituto de Estudios Políticos de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1991); Ciro Krauthausen, *Padrinos y Mercaderes: Crimen Organizado en Italia y Colombia* (Bogotá: Planeta Colombiana Editorial, 1998); R. Thomas Naylor, "Mafias, Myths, and Markets: On the Theory and Practice of Enterprise Crime," *Transnational Organized Crime* 3 (1997), 1–43; Hermes Tovar Pinzón, "La Economía de la Coca en América Latina: El Paradigma Colombiano," *Revista Nueva Sociedad*, no. 130 (1994), 86–111; Rodrigo Uprinsky, "Notas sobre el Fenómeno del Narcotráfico en Colombia y las Reacciones a Su Control," *Comisión Andina de Juristas, Drogas, y Control Penal en los Andes* (Lima: CAJ, 1994). Others have worked with the notion of cartel but with explicit reservations. See Alain Labrousse, *La Droga, el Dinero, y las Armas* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1993); Rensselael Lee III, "Colombia's Cocaine Syndicates," *Crime, Law, and Social Change* 16, no. 1 (1991), 339; Patrick Clawson and Rensselael Lee III, *The Andean Cocaine Industry* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); Umberto Santino and Giovanni La Fiura, *Dietro la Droga* (Turin: GISS-Centro Giuseppe Impastato-Edizioni Gruppo Abele, 1993); Frank Bovenkerk, *La Bella Bettien* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1995); and Petrus van Duynne, *Het Spook en de Dreiging van de Georganiseerde Misdaad* (The Hague: SDU, 1995).
4. Carl P. Florez and Bernadette Boyce, "Colombian Organized Crime," *Police Studies* 13, no. 2 (1990), 54–68.
5. Lee, "Colombia's Cocaine Syndicates," passim.
6. Sidney Zabuloff, "Colombian Narcotics Organizations as Business Enterprises," *Transnational Organized Crime* 3, no. 2 (1997), 20–49.
7. Ernesto Savona, *European Money Trails* (Singapore: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999); Observatoire Geopolitique des Drogues (OGD), *Où va la Cocaine en Europe?* (Paris: OGD, 1997).
8. OGD, *The Geopolitics of Drugs*, 1996 ed. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996), 67.
9. Johan van Doorn, "Drug Trafficking Networks in Europe," *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* 1, no. 2 (1993), 101.
10. Van Duynne, *Misdaadondernemingen*, 55; Petrus van Duynne, "Organized Crime in a Turbulent Europe," *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* 1, no. 3 (1993), 15, 80–85.
11. Robin T. Naylor, "Mafias, Myths, and Markets," 20.
12. Krauthausen and Sarmiento, *Cocaina & Co.*, passim; Thoumi, *Political Economy and Illegal Drugs*, passim; Kopp, "Colombie: Traffic de Drogue," passim.
13. Bovenkerk, *La Bella Bettien*, passim.
14. Jeremy Boissevain, *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators, and Coalitions* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974), passim.
15. Nigel Coles, "It's Not What You Know—It's Who You Know That Counts: Analyzing Serious Crime Groups as Social Networks," *The British Journal of Criminology* 41 (2001), 580–94.
16. See Van Doorn, "Drug Trafficking Networks," passim; Janet Jackson et al., "Examining Criminal Organizations: Possible Methodologies," *Transnational Organized Crime* 2, no. 4 (1996), 83–105; Peter Klerks, *Ondergrondse Organisaties in Vergelijkend Perspectief* (Rotterdam: Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, 1996); Edward Kleemans et al., *Georganiseerde Criminaliteit in Nederland: Rapportage op basis van de wooc-monitor* (The Hague: wooc, 1998); Edward Kleemans and Marius Kraussink, "Korte Klappen of Lange Halen? Wat Wekt bij de Aanpak van de Georganiseerde Criminaliteit?," *Justitiële Verkenningen* 25, no. 6 (1999), 99–111.
17. Kleemans, *Georganiseerde Criminaliteit*, passim.
18. *Ibid.*, and Klerks, *Ondergrondse Organisaties*, passim.
19. During our encounters in the prison of Veenhuizen, he commented upon Hegel, Kant, Russell, Bentham, and Foucault. He also referred to social utopists such as Owen, Fourier, Saint Simon, and Comte, and to authors such as Huxley and Orwell. Quoting Kundera, he finally thanked me for the unique opportunity to share thoughts about these thinkers, implying that he was an exception in that "criminal subculture." Upon this intimacy he also based his willingness to tell me his story.
20. Zatch, *Traquetos*, 157.
21. Nicholas Dorn et al., "Drugs Importation and the Bifurcation of Risk," *The British Journal of Criminology* 38, no. 4 (1998), 537–60.
22. Alejandro Portes, "Economic Sociology and the Sociology of Immigration: A Conceptual Overview," Alejandro Portes, ed., *The Economic Sociology of Immigration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1995), 64–82.
23. Dorn et al., "Drugs Importation," 540.
24. Dick Hobbs, *Doing the Business: Entrepreneurship, the Working Class, and Detachments in the East End of London* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), passim.
25. Francis Ianni, *A Family Business: Kinship and Social Control in Organized Crime* (New York: Russell Sage Basic Books, 1972), passim.
26. Hobbs, *Doing the Business*, passim.
27. Boissevain, *Friends of Friends*, 148.
28. Bovenkerk, *La Bella Bettien*, passim.
29. Boissevain, *Friends of Friends*, 158.
30. Interview with Michel Koutouzis, Paris, April 1997.
31. Vincenzo Ruggiero, "Organized Crime in Italy: Testing Alternative Definitions," *Social and Legal Studies* 2, no. 2 (1993), 137.
32. Peter Reuter, *Disorganized Crime: The Economics of the Visible Hand* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983), 115.