



From criminals to citizens: The applicability of Bolivia's community-based coca control policy to Peru



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ABSTRACT

Between 2006 and 2019, Bolivia emerged as a world leader in formulating a participatory, non-violent model to gradually limit coca production in a safe and sustainable manner while simultaneously offering farmers realistic economic alternatives to coca. Our study finds that not only has this model reduced violence, but it has effectively expanded social and civil rights in hitherto marginal regions. In contrast, Peru has continued to conceptualize 'drugs' as a crime and security issue. This has led to U.S.-financed forced crop eradication, putting the burden onto impoverished farmers, generating violence and instability. At the request of farmers, the Peruvian government has made a tentative move towards implementing one aspect of Bolivia's community control in Peru. Could it work? We address this question by focusing on participatory development with a special emphasis on the role of local organizations and the relationship between growers and the state. Drawing on long-term ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, focus group discussions and secondary research, we find that for community control to have any chance of success in Peru, grassroots organizations must be strengthened and grower trust in the state created. The study also demonstrates that successful participatory development in drug crop regions is contingent on land titling and robust state investment, which strengthens farmer resolve to participate so as to avoid a return to the repression of the past.

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1. Introduction

Lack of opportunities, marginalization and state neglect typify drug crop production worldwide. But while confronting these issues is at the heart of economic and social development, drug crops are primarily conceptualized as a crime and security issue (Alimi, 2019, p. 39). In the Andes over the past 40 years, policies have prioritized the forced eradication of the coca leaf, the principal raw material in refined cocaine, under intense pressure from the U.S. government. This has undermined local economies, criminalized poor farmers, and triggered human rights abuses (Youngers & Rosin, 2005).

The world's main coca leaf producers are Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia with Colombia by far the largest and Bolivia a distant third (UNODC, 2018b, 2019a, 2020). In Peru and Colombia, as was the case in Bolivia until 2004, coca cultivation is concentrated in

marginalized rural areas, characterized by minimal civilian state presence, lack of secure land tenure, limited access to credit, poor infrastructure, and significant levels of poverty (Grimmelmann et al., 2017, p. 76). In most zones, coca complements subsistence farming and is one of few economic pursuits available that provides cash income (Grisaffi & Ledebur, 2016, p. 9). Drug policy makers often disregard how farmers make what is for them an economically rational choice and "...see drug crop producers simply as profit-motivated criminals" (Csete et al., 2016, p. 1458).

Since the mid-1980s successive U.S. governments have promoted a militarized and prohibitionist drug control strategy, consistently limiting any debate on alternatives. This security-oriented approach has generated violence and undermined democratic practices while failing to achieve its objectives (Arias & Grisaffi, 2021; Rodrigues & Labate, 2016).¹ Eradication has not reduced coca crops, it has simply displaced them, often through widespread replanting, contributing to deforestation (Dest, 2021;

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¹ The adverse impacts of crop eradication fall disproportionately on indigenous communities, ethnic minorities, women and children (Burger & Kapron, 2017; Pieris, 2014).

Reyes, 2014). Global cocaine manufacture in 2017 reached its highest level ever, more than double the level recorded in 2013 (UNODC, 2019b, p. 13).

These outcomes have provoked a regional debate focused on supply reduction's impact on violence, corruption, and institutional instability (Collins, 2021, p. 5; GCDP, 2016, 2018; LSE IDEAS, 2014).² Against this backdrop, Bolivia has emerged as a world leader in promoting a previously untested, supply-side harm reduction model that is participatory and non-violent. Since 2004, growers have been allowed to cultivate a restricted amount of coca leaf, regulated by local grower unions. This program had its greatest impact in the Chapare coca growing region east of Cochabamba where it received European Union funding from 2009 to 2014.³

While the results have been uneven, we argue that not only has Bolivia's model proven more effective in reducing violence by working to gradually limit coca production in a safe and sustainable manner, but it has expanded social and civil rights in hitherto marginal regions. Government investment, combined with gender equity policies, and the 2013 international recognition of Bolivians' right to consume coca leaf domestically, have contributed to stability and stimulated economic diversification away from coca (Grisaffi et al., 2017, p. 146).

Bolivia's program has received widespread praise as a "best practice" from the Organization of American States (OAS) (Briones et al., 2013, p. 6) and the Lancet-John Hopkins Commission on Public Health and International Drug Policy (Csete et al., 2016, p. 1467). In 2019, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reported that, "By recognizing coca cultivation as a legitimate source of income, the government has helped stabilize household incomes and placed farmers in a better position to assume the risk of substituting illicit crops with alternative crops or livestock. The program has also played an important role in empowering women coca growers" (UNDP, 2019, p. 9).

While drug crop policy was undergoing profound change in Bolivia, neighbouring Peru remained formally committed, as it has for the past 40 years, to US-designed and - until 2011 - funded, eradication-based strategies, although this has varied substantially in different regions, following a pattern of trial-and-error (Paredes & Pastor, 2021). Success in reducing coca cultivation, particularly in the Alto Huallaga, resulted in a shift in the locus of coca cultivation to the VRAEM (an acronym for the Apurímac, Ene and Mantaro river valleys).⁴

Peru's history of armed insurgency makes its circumstances dramatically distinct from Bolivia's. The internal armed conflict in the 80s and 90s weakened Peru's indigenous and peasant organizations, causing a fragmentation that endures to the present (Yashar, 2005, pp. 248-278). Nonetheless, Bolivia's model has captured the imagination of some Peruvian coca growers' organizations. In 2019, three delegations from six regions visited Bolivia

² The Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy, a panel of Latin American leaders and intellectuals, in 2009 put out its main findings: to treat drug use as a public health issue; to reduce consumption through information and prevention actions; and to focus law enforcement efforts on organized crime (Sorj et al., 2009). In 2013 the Organization of American States published a report that prioritizes public health and harm reduction strategies OAS (2013). Some countries have made unilateral changes to drug policy - for example Uruguay legalized recreational cannabis use in 2014 (Von Hoffmann, 2018).

³ Bolivia's other principal coca-growing region, the Yungas region east of the city of La Paz, has far more complex geographical, organizational and historical dynamics than the Chapare. Community control's success in the Chapare has not been matched in the Yungas, because coca grower organizations are less unified, farmers (in what was from 1988 to 2017 a permitted zone of coca production) have resisted, growers have little loyalty to now ex-President Evo Morales (Pellegrini, 2016), and the region does not have the legacy of forced eradication that forged cohesive unions in the Chapare. In the Chapare, unions were far more open to any option that offered to prevent the return of repression (Farthing & Ledebur 2015).

⁴ It was originally called the VRAE, with the M for the Mantaro river added in the 2000's.

and subsequently requested that the Peruvian government consider implementing parts of the Bolivian model in some areas of Peru.⁵ This interest echoes the OAS's 2012 assessment of the Bolivian model as worthy of "replication" (Briones et al., 2013, p. 6), and a UNDP finding that "Bolivia's experience [...] could inspire and inform supply-side interventions and development policies in other countries" (UNDP, 2016, p. 14).

This article considers coca control and development strategies in Bolivia and Peru through the lens of participatory development with a particular focus on the role of local organizations and the relationship between growers and the state. Drawing on long-term ethnographic fieldwork, farmer-to-farmer workshops, interview data and focus group discussions in both countries, combined with secondary research, the article makes two substantive contributions.

First, we tease out the unique factors that made the community-based approach viable in Bolivia and why Peru is locked into longstanding and counterproductive drug war policies. Second, we identify the multiple challenges of implementing Bolivia's approach in Peru, including the distinct organizational trajectory and identity formation of coca farmers, as well as differences in government investment and the history of prevarication by Peruvian drug control authorities.

Questions about how to manage drug crops in a sustainable manner are more pressing than ever. While Covid-19 has led to a short-term drop in the price of cocaine, discouraging farmers from planting coca, the looming economic crisis will likely push yet more people into the illicit coca-cocaine economy (Me et al., 2021, pp. 21-23).

2. Participatory development, local organizations and state legitimacy

Economic and social development within drug crop cultivation zones, which is known as "alternative development" in U.S. War on Drugs terminology, faces the same challenges confronting any other effort to improve rural living standards, with the added challenge of the violence, distrust and insecurity linked to the drug trade. Fragile institutions, interventions that discount local organizations, structural issues such as land tenure and short project cycles, have plagued alternative development much as they do other development initiatives (Buxton, 2020; Grimmelmann et al., 2017).

In the 1990s, a 'new development agenda', aimed to put local knowledge and participation at its core (Chambers, 1997; Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991). In this participatory development cannon, "...Development is understood as an inclusionary process, sensitive to gender, cultural traditions and human rights norms with measurable impacts on poverty and exclusion" (Buxton, 2015, p. 33). At the same time, neoliberal governments introduced state decentralization accompanied by a multiculturalism discourse (Faguet, 2014). This directed more resources to the local level and promoted increased, if contested, cultural recognition of marginalized ethnic groups through greater self-management and validating indigenous identity (Chartock, 2013).

Subsequent participatory development policies have differed along ideological lines. The mainstream approach employs an instrumentalist view of participation focused on achieving a particular, usually short-term, development goal.⁶ The alternative view

⁵ Between 2018 and 2020, researchers from the Andean Information Network collaborated with DEVIDA to carry out studies on legal coca markets in Peru, organize farmer to farmer exchanges and, at DEVIDA's request, elaborate proposals for how the Bolivian model could be applied in Peru.

⁶ Mainstream development agencies often promote greater participation to better achieve project goals. The involvement of local people in planning and implementation lends credibility to plans of action that are set by external agencies like the World Bank (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002).

sees participatory development as a long-term process of empowerment that seeks to transform society in the direction of greater economic and social justice (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Mohan & Stokke, 2000). It is within this second conception - that emphasizes the power of social movements to define their own future and that values the state as a responsive and responsible actor - that we examine community coca control.

Some scholars voice caution about participatory development's goal of serving to 'empower' local communities. They argue that the biggest drivers of poverty are not readily tackled locally and that participatory development is no substitute for redistributive measures and sound economic policies (Mohan & Stokke, 2000; Veltmeyer & Delgado Wise, 2018). While global market integration can contribute to reducing illicit crops, this shift can also portend new forms of precarity as greater engagement with global markets often disadvantages peasant farmers (Buxton, 2020; Meehan, 2020).

Gradually alternative development became more closely aligned to participatory development, particularly after the 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs (Alimi, 2019; UNODC, 2016a, 2016b). The data presented there, backed by ongoing research, resoundingly indicated that working with grassroots organizations alongside social investment, is the most effective way to limit coca cultivation (Ceron et al., 2018; Dávalos & Dávalos, 2019).

Participatory development research has frequently focused on the role of outside agents, rather than local actors. But not only do impoverished rural peoples tend to have little voice as individuals, development cannot be participatory if local people are not organized (Shigetomi & Okamoto, 2014, p. ix). Weak, elite controlled or externally introduced local organizations often hinder successful community participation and development project ownership (Shah, 2010, pp. 66-98), while horizontal, autonomous local organizations play a vital role across diverse settings worldwide (Fouepe et al., 2017; Molosi-France & Dipholo, 2017; Rahman & Akter, 2020; Wahid et al., 2017).

The issue of trust between governments/non-governmental organizations and those targeted by development projects has also not been fully considered, although some researchers have found that faith in public institutions increases the probability of positive development outcomes (Bratton & Gyimah-Boadi, 2016; Handberg, 2018; Wong, 2016). Once governments lose legitimacy, Robinson, Stoutenborough, and Vedlitz (2017, p. 4) argue, participatory development is weakened. As Chavez (2018) found in Peru, conflict like that found in drug crop regions exacerbates this loss of legitimacy.

3. Coca, cocaine and the war on drugs in Peru and Bolivia

Andean indigenous people have consumed coca leaf for over 4000 years;⁷ chewing the leaf is a shared rite, essential for building trust and community (Allen, 1988). Present in every ritual from birth to death, the leaf is commonly used to combat fatigue, upset stomach, altitude sickness and hunger (Carter & Mamani, 1986). Celso Ugarte, director of Bolivia's Sacaba legal coca market, told our research team in 2019: "We call it the sacred leaf: it was used by the Incas and was given to us by god." Peruvian coca union leader Serafin Lujan recounts how authorities thought of coca chewing as an out-dated practice that would disappear with his grandparents' generation "... but it hasn't ... they still chew coca, I chew coca, even my children chew coca!"

⁷ Some studies date the beginning of coca chewing to 8000 years ago (Dillehay et al., 2010).

Studies have established that in leaf form, coca does not generate toxicity or dependence (Weil, 1981), rather it can provide an important source of nutrition (Duke et al., 1975; Penny et al., 2009), and represents an untapped resource for high-value plant-derived products (Restrepo et al., 2019). A 1995 World Health Organization (WHO) study, stressed coca's positive therapeutic uses, but, as a result of US pressure, the WHO never officially published the research (Jelsma, 2003, p. 189).

Coca's path from a central component of Andean culture to a banned substance accelerated in 1961 with the adoption of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. The convention, which both Bolivia and Peru signed in the 1970s, established a government obligation to end non-medical and non-scientific consumption of coca. It provided the justification and legal framework for subsequent US-backed coca eradication campaigns (Bewley-Taylor & Jelsma, 2012, p. 76).

In the 1960s and 1970s, Colombian, Peruvian, and Bolivian governments initiated agricultural resettlement programs for impoverished highland peoples in their sparsely populated Amazonian lowlands. The failure to provide technical support and open out markets inadvertently fuelled the expansion of coca cultivation especially after the U.S. cocaine consumption boom during the early 1980s. Thousands more farmers, urban dwellers and in Bolivia's case, former miners, migrated specifically to grow coca leaf because increased demand provided them better economic opportunities. Despite their divergent histories, argues Gootenberg (2018), all three countries ended up with remarkably similar illicit frontier economies.

Coca is almost the ideal crop: it yields up to four harvests per year, is easy to transport and generally pest resistant. While often growers' main cash crop, it is complemented with products such as bananas, coffee, cacao and citrus fruits. In Bolivia, coca was grown on 25,500 ha in 2019, 15.9 percent above the amount permitted under a 2017 coca law (UNODC, 2020). The latest figures available for Peru showed an increase of 12 percent or 10,755 ha between 2016 and 2019, reaching a total of 54,655 ha (DEVIDA, 2020c).

The 237,000 coca growing families in Colombia, Peru and Bolivia, function in an uneasy and unstable relationship with the cocaine economy.⁸ A varying amount of their coca crop is diverted into the illicit market to be processed into cocaine - which totalled 470 MTs in Peru and 275 in Bolivia in 2017 (Economist, 2018). Where growers are involved, their participation is almost always limited to the first rudimentary stage where shredded coca leaf is soaked in solvents to extract the cocaine alkaloid. This creates a low value product called cocaine base paste (Grisaffi, 2021; Van Dun, 2016).

While coca is consumed in both Bolivia and Peru, its status differs. In Bolivia coca is grown close to major cities and can be bought at kiosks everywhere. It is a defining marker of national identity and is widely consumed by the urban middle classes and indigenous farmers alike (Ehrinpreis, 2018; Gootenberg, 2017).⁹ By contrast in Peru, coca cultivation takes place far from large cities, is widely associated with drug trafficking, and consumption is less prevalent.¹⁰ According to Gootenberg (2017, p. 29): "Coca chewing in Peru is still disdained as a backward 'vice', without the national aura the leaf emits in Bolivia".

⁸ According to the UN World Drug report there are an estimated 75,000 coca farmers in Bolivia, up to 121,000 in Peru and a further 67,000 in Colombia (UNODC, 2016b).

⁹ An EU funded study confirmed that 30 percent of Bolivians regularly chew coca, and almost the entire population consumes coca in some form, mostly as a tea (CONALTID, 2013).

¹⁰ A 2019 study put adult coca consumption at only 14.3 percent (INEI, 2019).

4. Bolivia: coca/cocaine and alternative development

Coca leaf has been grown in Bolivia for centuries in the La Paz and Yungas¹¹ (Klein, 1986; Meruvia, 2000). During 1960s colonization projects, cultivation expanded into the Chapare lowlands (Millington, 2018). Without local state institutions, strong rural unions, which combine indigenous concepts of reciprocity, mutual dependence and care for people and place with western union traditions, arose to handle everything from granting land and resolving boundary disputes to building schools and disciplining antisocial behaviour (Spedding, 2004, pp. 93–94). Grower Elias Castro explains: "... we had to organize and do it ourselves like little states. If we wanted roads, we made them, if we wanted a schoolhouse, we built it."

This bedrock of Chapare society now encompasses close to 1,000 unions that are organized into six federations. Like most rural unions throughout Bolivia, coca-growing unions have both male and female chapters, although males generally retain greater authority, with power concentrated in the leadership (Ramos Salazar, 2013). Nonetheless, they remain broadly participatory and, like unions elsewhere in Bolivia, the grassroots have pushed leadership out of the way when they have not fulfilled their duties (Bjork-James, 2018).

To this day, unions are responsible for collecting taxes from coca, organizing collective work parties, resolving disputes, setting transport fares and managing community coca control. For growers, full community membership is dependent upon participation in union assemblies that prioritize personal responsibility, consensus building, and the direct accountability of leaders (Grisaffi, 2019, pp. 152–162).

U.S. policy hinged on the 1988 Bolivian Law 1008, which delineates which coca would be slated for eradication, distinguishing between "traditional" areas in the Yungas east of La Paz, and the 'surplus' Chapare and frontier Yungas production, which was to be destroyed or replaced with legal crops (Durand Ochoa, 2012, p. 56). The bulk of U.S. drug control funds were directed towards violent interventions by special police and military units in the Chapare, rather than economic assistance programs (Ledebur, 2005).

Unions spearheaded cyclical, and often national, protests under the leadership of Evo Morales, and they played a critical role in his rise to political power as opposition to U.S. policy forged them into a formidable political force (Gutierrez Aguilar, 2014, pp. 73–96) They challenged dominant representations of themselves as producing an illicit good by emphasising coca's link to indigenous culture (Durand Ochoa, 2012, p. 180). In the face of what most Bolivians perceived as imperial posturing by the U.S., defending coca became synonymous with defending sovereignty (Grisaffi, 2010).

In 1997, in a move designed to please the U.S. Embassy, former dictator President Hugo Banzer (1997–2001) introduced forced eradication by the military which threw the Chapare into severe economic crisis and led to 33 coca grower and 27 military and police deaths and 570 injuries (Farthing & Ledebur, 2004). While the growers' relationship with four previous governments had been antagonistic, the forced eradication period represented a low point that extended into Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada's second term (2002–3). The experience destroyed any remaining vestiges of trust in the state and radicalized grower demands (Ledebur, 2002).

The majority of Chapare coca grower families have participated in at least one of the four major U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) "alternative development" programs that spent approximately \$270 million dollars between 1983 and 2003 (Lifsher, 2003). Earliest efforts sought to replace coca, but when that failed, programs focused on decreasing incentives to

migrate, while concurrently increasing risks to growers through repression in the Chapare. When that also failed, the focus switched to bananas, passion fruit and other crops for export. Growers could only participate if they first eradicated their coca, and U.S. policymakers generally perceived this conditionality as key to success (Veillette & Navarrete-Frias, 2005, p. 21; USAID, 2003, p. 5).

These programs, imposed on Bolivian governments reluctant to provoke conflict or to cut off the social safety valve that coca growing provided, functioned without any participation of the coca growers' own representatives, the unions. Instead, USAID created parallel "associations," generating suspicion and local conflict (Marconi, 1998; Recasens, 1995). When coca growers' unions won the 1995 elections in all the Chapare's newly formed municipalities, USAID refused to work with the new governments, although it initiated projects with a third of the country's other municipalities. USAID often called union and municipal leadership drug traffickers or terrorists, generating deep distrust (Farthing & Ledebur, 2004).

By 1998, Chapare Mayors and councillors enacted decisions made at union assemblies, they were regularly held to account at coca grower meetings and if the rank and file disapproved, were removed from office. Coca growers speak of the local government, as an institution they own and control as a collective (Grisaffi, 2013).¹²

Policy orientation began to shift when the European Union funded a municipal strengthening program, PRAEDAC, between 1998 and 2005, that focused on poverty reduction involving coca grower organizations and land titling without requiring prior coca eradication. Felipe Cáceres, former Villa Tunari mayor, said in 2004: "In eight years, with one fourth of the money, the municipalities have achieved ten times what USAID has accomplished in twenty [years]" (Farthing & Kohl, 2005, p. 193). Chapare unions formally announced they would no longer work with USAID in 2008 (AIN, 2008), and Morales expelled the agency in 2013 (Achtenberg, 2013).

4.1. Community coca control in Bolivia

In response to grower pressure, President Carlos Mesa (2003–2005) signed the *cato* accord in 2004, permitting growers to cultivate a limited amount of coca. The *cato* diminished state-led external coercion and ensured growers some basic income. Once adopted, protests, violence and human rights violations in the Chapare ceased almost immediately and the accord evolved into a central pillar of Evo Morales' 'coca yes, cocaine no' policy when he was elected President in 2006 (Ledebur & Youngers, 2006).

For the next fourteen years Morales' Movimiento Al Socialismo (MAS)-led government advanced redistributive policies built around the notion of 'buen vivir' ('to live well') to transform the country.¹³ Political participation increased through enshrining elements of direct democracy, indigenizing the political sphere, rewriting the constitution, nationalizing strategic economic sectors, and investing in public services (Postero, 2017).¹⁴

¹² Coca growers think of the national MAS party, which has its roots in the Chapare, in much the same way. They speak about the MAS in terms of 'we built it', 'we suffered for it' and 'it belongs to us' (García Yapur et al., 2015). During Evo Morales' administration, government ministers and the President himself regularly visited the Chapare to attend coca grower meetings where the government's performance was evaluated (Grisaffi, forthcoming).

¹³ Buen Vivir received less emphasis post 2014.

¹⁴ While Bolivia has undoubtedly moved towards a 'post-neoliberal' era of more equitable development, it has been uneven, particularly in relation to environmental issues and lowland people (Anthias, 2018; Laing, 2020), challenging the MAS administration's professed commitment to building cultures of participation and inclusion (Fontana & Grugel, 2016; Marston & Kennemore, 2019).

¹¹ In the Yungas coca production is undertaken according to a reciprocal mode of labor organization known as *Ayni*, which reinforces community bonds and with it indigenous identification (Spedding, 1994).

Bolivia's coca control in the Chapare builds on forms of pre-Hispanic indigenous organization which privileges collective over individual rights. Anti-social behaviour is discouraged through scorn, shame, criticism, censure and sarcasm, and in particularly egregious situations, social exclusion (de la Cadena, 2013; Rivera Cusicanqui, 1990).

At the core of community control's effectiveness lies a trust that if the rules are broken, the violator will be punished – often in the Andes this involves reparations rather than imprisonment (Farthing, 2016; Goodale, pp. 64–68, 2019). The system depends on granting agency to the individual as well as responsibility for the group's wellbeing (Kohl et al., 2011, p. 9). The system is reinforced by coca growers' fear of returning to the repression they suffered under previous governments (Grisaffi et al., 2017, p. 142).

These concepts are bolstered by the constant affirmation of the millennial relationship with the coca leaf (Vargas, 2014). The Morales government deployed the coca leaf as one of the most potent symbols of Andean identity, eventually incorporating protection of coca in a 2017 law. 'Development with coca' involves high levels of government investment in local infrastructure, crop diversification and the industrialization of legal coca leaf products such as tea, toothpaste and liquor¹⁵ (Grisaffi et al., 2017, pp. 145–146).

Beginning in 2007, the coca unions collaborated with the government to develop a sophisticated monitoring, control and coca reduction system with European Union support (Farthing & Ledebur, 2015). To be eligible for a *cato*, growers first had to obtain an official land title and register their plot with the state coca monitoring institution, the Unidad de Desarrollo Económico y Social del Trópico (UDESTRO), which carries out on the ground checks every two years. This is complemented by a biometric register of coca producers and grower identity cards.

Local level unions draw on their long history of self-governing to ensure compliance. Each union organizes regular inspections of coca plantations; and if excess coca is found, they can level fines, order community service and restrict access to municipal public works projects. They can also eradicate the entire crop and prohibit replanting for one year.¹⁶ If a farmer violates the limit more than once, the union imposes a life-time ban. Grassroots unions that fail to comply are criticized at regional union meetings and on the union-operated radio station, and fines are levelled.

Grisaffi (2019, pp. 137–141) describes how community control is a shared responsibility, which involves the entire community and appears on the agenda of every monthly meeting. Growers often spend hours hashing out compliance issues with internal debate and disagreement playing a critical role as the policy is continuously contested and reconstituted (Grisaffi, 2016, p. 162).

Consistent with Andean cultural norms, informal social control mechanisms of pride and shame play a powerful role (Grisaffi, 2019, pp. 137–145). Getting ahead is viewed negatively as it is thought to come at the expense of others (Grisaffi, 2019, pp. 100–102). Felipe Martinez, a union leader stressed, "It does not matter if we only have ten plants, we must all have the same." Growers have a strong sense of ownership of the program, often calling it "theirs". These farmers repeatedly told us that they respect the program because coca growers run it and participated in its design (Farthing & Ledebur, 2015, p. 27).

Farmers have economic motivations to respect the agreement as well: they understand that if coca cultivation is restricted, leaf

prices increase. Union leader, Eliseo Zevallos explains: 'Before... we had maybe ten or even fifteen hectares of coca, but it was worth practically nothing... Today we only have a *cato*, and maybe for that reason it is worth a bit more.'¹⁷

Access to crop diversification assistance is no longer conditional on eradication. "We allow coca cultivation -- but the idea is to gradually reduce reliance on coca crops," explained John Cornejo – the Chief of the technical unit at the National Fund for Rural Development (FONADIN) in July 2019. The sequencing of assistance is important because the *cato* income – which averages just over \$400 dollars per month, \$100 more than the current minimum wage- allows farming families to experiment with crops such as banana and pineapple, as well as bee keeping and fish farming.¹⁸

In August 2019, Eusebio Rubios explained, 'Today, the *cato* of coca is not enough [to survive on], we have to be honest about that. But it is not like the previous governments that spoke a lot about alternative development but did nothing... Our president is actively looking for markets for coffee. When did other governments ever think to do that?' The government has invested in cold supply chains for dairy products, supported vaccination for livestock and built fruit, honey and fish processing plants. Bananas, citrus fruit and palm hearts now cover more cultivated land than coca in the Chapare (Grisaffi et al., 2017, p. 145).

Cornejo explained that beyond investment in productive capacity the government also expanded health, education, and physical infrastructure. During 2017, FONADIN in collaboration with municipal governments, channelled over \$2.7 m to 38 projects in the Chapare, benefitting 15,172 families (FONADIN, 2018, p. 112). These efforts have led many farmers to describe their *cato* of coca as a 'savings account' rather than their main source of income.¹⁹ Extreme poverty has fallen and access to basic services like fresh water, sanitation and electricity has grown (Grisaffi et al., 2017, p. 148).

Leaders of grassroots organizations meet regularly with FONADIN officials to set out their priorities, government officials regularly attend coca union meetings, and coca growers work in UDESTRO. Leon de la Torre Krais, the EU ambassador to Bolivia, contends: "FONADIN ... does not promote projects born on the desks of technicians but helps to bring to life initiatives that come from the communities" (FONADIN, 2018, p. iii).

However, a minority of farmers refused to comply. In these situations, UDESTRO workers negotiate with community leaders for the coca to be forcibly eradicated by government troops. In contrast to past Drug War policies (1989–2005), eradication rarely involves violence. One middle-aged grower said: "These days we don't rebel when the coca cutters enter our plots; we just show them where the coca is and let them get on with their work" (Grisaffi et al., 2017, p. 143). During fourteen years of the MAS government, there were four coca grower deaths, compared to ninety-five unionized coca growers killed by state forces between 1980 and 2004 (Oikonomakis, 2019, p. 152).

¹⁷ The average price of coca in Bolivia in 2017–18 was almost four times the average price in Peru: in Bolivia in 2018, it was US\$12.5 and in Peru in 2017, it was US\$3.4 (UNODC, 2018b).

¹⁸ This figure is based on one *cato* producing five fifty-pound sacks of dried coca every three months and assuming the price of coca is \$5 per pound as was the case in April 2021. A legal *cato* also gives farmers access to credit as they can use it as a guarantee for bank loans.

¹⁹ The benefits of government-backed development projects are uneven, however. Most of the government investment has focused on areas close to main roads. In areas of newer settlements located towards the Isiboro Secure region of the Chapare, crops do not grow well on the steep slopes, sandy soils lower coca yields, and the lack of roads and bridges makes marketing produce all but impossible. Given these challenges, some farmers in these regions have demanded two *catos* of coca. As the original agreement is built on farmers' trust that they are all making the same sacrifices, if some feel they are paying a higher price than others, this undermines the program's viability.

¹⁵ With a population of only eleven million people, there is limited demand for these products and despite Bolivia's successful modification of the Single Convention, coca leaf remains a controlled substance and there is no clear indication that international markets for coca products will open in the foreseeable future (Farthing & Ledebur, 2015). Coca processing plants in both the Yungas and Chapare are either not operational or only function occasionally (Pomacahua, 2019).

¹⁶ Because of the time it takes for coca to mature, the one-year ban on re-planting effectively means two years without any coca income.

John Cornejo expressed in 2019 the need for constant vigilance and promotion of the program's advantages given the pressures for cultivation to expand. Older leaders throw the blame at newcomers and the younger generation. Ugarte of the Sacaba legal coca market told us, "Look, we need our children to really understand what it was like before, because maybe some of them, they think that it was always like this - but we suffered to get here."

Morales's sudden forced resignation in November 2019 was the biggest threat to the program to date. When the transition government unleashed repression that killed 10 coca growers on November 15, 2019, the Chapare population once again came to view the police and the military as 'enemies'. Coca growers damaged local police installations and strung up mannequins dressed as policemen bearing placards that read: 'police caught, police lynched'. Soon after, the police abandoned the region.

During a December 2019 trip, coca farmers told our team that with no police presence, the trafficking of drug precursor chemicals has surged and that the enforcement of the *cato* has dropped (see also Me et al., 2021, p. 19). One grower said, 'why should we respect the *cato* - when the government does not respect us?' Team members observed coca plants for sale in the streets, something outlawed by the community coca control program and not seen for many years. With MAS candidate Luis Arce's landslide electoral victory in October 2020, Bolivia resuscitated community control, but it remains to be seen if the past lessons can be reinvigorated after a year of state repression, reduced eradication and expansion of coca cultivation (Peredo, 2021).

5. Peru: coca/cocaine and alternative development

As in Bolivia, traditional coca leaf consumption in Peru has a long history (Lloréns, 2004; Mayer, 1993). From the early 1900s until the 1961 Single Convention, part of Peru's coca was destined for the international legal cocaine market (Gootenberg, 2008, p. 94). Today, legal sales are handled through the poorly functioning state coca company, ENACO (Empresa Nacional de la Coca), which only commercializes around two percent of the total national production (DEVIDA, 2020b, p. 30).²⁰

With the 1980s U.S. cocaine boom, coca cultivation and cocaine paste production exploded in the subtropical central valleys of the Alto Huallaga-Monzón rivers, which grew to 145,000 ha of coca by 1988 (Cotler, 1999, p. 119). Although coca production plunged by 70 percent throughout Peru in the 1990s,²¹ leading cultivation to surge in Colombia, it shot up again after 2000 when cocaine consumption skyrocketed in Europe and Brazil (Van Dun, 2009). Successful forced eradication under U.S. pressure intensified violence in the Alto Huallaga-Monzón, propelling cultivation to spread to fifteen additional regions (Felbab-Brown, 2010; Grillo, 2018), including protected forests and indigenous territories (UNODC, 2018b).²²

The Belgium-sized VRAEM, which extends over five of Peru's 24 departments (Apurímac, Junín, Cusco, Huancavelica and Ayacucho), currently has 48 percent of total coca cultivation, but high local yields mean it produces 71 percent of the national crop

²⁰ ENACO carries out business-to-business activities, including supplying Coca-Cola with the de-cocainized leaf it uses as a flavouring agent (Gootenberg, 2004), and the remainder is marketed as coca leaf tea within Peru under ENACO's own brand, *Delisse*.

²¹ The drop is generally attributed to a widespread fungal infestation combined with a state policy to shoot down drug flights.

²² Between 2000 and 2019, the state led intense eradication campaigns in the Alto Huallaga-Monzón and the Bajo Amazonas regions destroying more than half of all coca production, 64 percent and 56 percent, respectively (CORAH, N.D.) The Peruvian government considered the Alto Huallaga eradication a success that should be replicated (DEVIDA, 2017). Eradication in the VRAEM was taken at a slower pace because of the capacity of the FEPAVRAE to mount protests which are backed by transporters, traders, and actors indirectly linked to the coca economy (Vizcarra, 2018).

(DEVIDA, 2020a). The region differs markedly between the north and south: in 2019, only 17 of 69 districts cultivated coca, and only 10 had more than 1000 ha (DEVIDA, 2020a, 2020c). The two other principal crops are coffee and cacao (Mendoza & Leyva, 2017).

Growers in the southern VRAEM are largely Quechua-speaking migrants from the impoverished central highlands (predominantly Ayacucho), who retained strong ties to their original communities after moving during the 1970s (Durand Guevara, 2005, p. 106). Of the region's approximately 108,000 farmers, 15,074 were identified as coca growers in 2016, with average farm size at 2.6 ha (6.4 acres) (Heuser, 2019, p. 26). Forty percent lives in poverty, lacking electricity, sanitation or potable water, which is twice the national average,²³ but levels of poverty vary significantly from district to district and within the same province (INEI, 2018).²⁴

This inequality is manifested by a minority of growers with larger landholdings, primarily in the central VRAEM regions of Pichari and Llohegua. Here, land costs as much as 15,000 to 20,000 Soles (\$4,000 - \$5,300) per hectare, a substantial amount for local farmers. Several growers with more land and higher incomes told us that they do not live locally but rather use the VRAEM as a temporary operating base, preferring to construct houses in cities like Ayacucho, where their children receive a better education.

In 2014, MINAGRI (2016, p. 19) estimated that a VRAEM coca farmer could make gross earnings of US\$13,000 per hectare. Evidence we gathered from three Pichari growers indicate that each hectare of coca, not including production costs, generated between 42,000 and 54,000 soles per year (US\$12,600 to \$16,200).²⁵ At the lowest black-market price reported to us - the net earnings per hectare after deducting production and labor costs generates a monthly income equivalent to twice the national minimum wage.²⁶

Farmers, particularly those with larger holdings, harvest using teams of poor itinerant workers, who mostly come from nearby highland communities and are paid by the kilo (El Peruano, p. 11, 2018; MINAGRI, p. 28, 2016).²⁷ A hectare can take one person between 20 and 30 days to harvest, depending on the incline, density of plants and ability of the worker (Mejía & Posada, pp. 3-4, 2008; Ocampo Buitrago, p. 66, 2016). The day rate is as much as triple other similar local work,²⁸ creating a severe labor shortage for farmers growing licit crops such as coffee and cacao (MINAGRI, p. 28, 2016; Novak et al., p. 30, 2011).

Ashaninka indigenous people live mainly in Junín and Cusco, and similar to patterns throughout the Andes, have been steadily pushed off their traditional lands by highland colonists and the internal armed conflict (CVR, 2003b p. 245; Durand Guevara, 2005, p. 106). They are the region's poorest residents, surviving by mixing farming, including small amounts of coca, with occasional wage labor and hunting and fishing (Killick, 2019). Migration by highlanders into Ashaninka-controlled territory (UNODC,

²³ Peru's Centro Nacional de Planeamiento Estratégico (CEPLAN) calculates that in the VRAEM forty-six percent of children between six and thirteen have anaemia and seventeen percent of the population suffer from malnutrition (Villasante, 2018b).

²⁴ The Convention (Cusco) districts of Kimbiri and Pichari have the lowest levels of poverty, 25 and 28 percent respectively. In contrast, La Mar (Ayacucho) districts, Chungi and Anchiway exceed 50 percent with 62 and 64 respectively (INEI, 2018). These very different levels of poverty denote the growing inequalities within the VRAEM due to the coca market's greater dynamism compared with the sluggish legal agricultural economy.

²⁵ One hectare of coca produces around 100 arobas of coca (12 kilo bag) and the harvest is three to four times per year.

²⁶ In 2020, the minimum wage was 930 soles (US\$286 dollars) per month.

²⁷ The teams of coca harvesters' number between 10 and 20, these 'cuadrillas' as they are known, are run by an overseer who holds contracts with local landowners. The overseer organizes transport to and from the farms, often in their own pickup truck. These harvesting teams often spend up to a week on a property before moving to the next farm.

²⁸ Farmers told us that workers could earn between 70 and 120 Soles per day (\$21 - \$35).

2018b, p. 79) has provoked conflict and indigenous leaders complain that they are regularly threatened by coca growers and drug traffickers (Andina, 2019; Vera, 2021).²⁹

The legacy of the war initiated in the early 1980s by Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) around Ayacucho, which eventually engulfed one-third of the country, is still keenly felt. Of the 72,000 people killed, 74 per cent were of rural, peasant, and indigenous origin (Thorp & Paredes, 2010, p. 2). Political violence weakened indigenous and peasant organizations leaving them fragmented and disarticulated both locally and at a national level (Yashar, 2005).

The one exception were the peasant “*rondas*” - armed self-defence organizations that proliferated to defend against the cross-fire between Sendero, the military and drug traffickers (Starn, 1999). In the VRAEM, beginning in 1984, peasants formed autonomous organizations that eventually became known as Comités de Auto-Defensa (CADs) (Castillo & Durand, 2008).³⁰ In the 1990s, the Peruvian military recognized them as “peacemakers” and provided them arms in a bid to contain the insurgency (McClintock & Vallas, 2005). This contrasted with the Alto Huallaga where coca growers were consistently criminalized and suspected of subversive ties (Van Dun, 2012, p. 446).

Sendero fled to the VRAEM in 1982 as part of their tactical retreat from Ayacucho (CVR, 2003a, p. 442), in stark contrast with their shift into the Alto Huallaga to profit from the flourishing coca economy (CVR, 2003a, p. 440). Until they were defeated in 2015,³¹ Sendero imposed its own brand of order over the Alto Huallaga population which resulted in high levels of violence and undermined grassroots organizing (Paredes & Manrique, 2021). In the Monzón Valley in 2019, several interviewees told us that because of this legacy, many area farmers are suspicious of efforts to organize agricultural unions, especially when linked to coca.

This difference inevitably shaped coca growers’ organizational trajectories, especially as the coca economy was still incipient in the VRAEM when Sendero retreated there (Durand Ochoa, 2014). As Sendero did not exert the control over VRAEM growers that they had in the Alto Huallaga, stronger organizations developed there although Sendero’s presence decidedly weakened them (Villasante, 2018a). Their arrival also limited marketing local crops, which fuelled the expansion of coca.

Fears about actual or potential armed conflict convinced successive Peruvian governments to sidestep forced eradication in the VRAEM for decades. As of January 2020, remnants of insurgent groups, estimated at 300 to 400, continue in the VRAEM, protecting principal drug-trafficking routes and launching attacks against security forces (Machacuy & Atilano, 2019).³²

Civilian state presence, particularly in rural areas, is minimal and not well articulated between national, departmental and municipal governments (MINAGRI, 2016, p. 13). Union leader Marianne Zavala from the northern VRAEM told us “the government has never provided any help; they only talk about eradication.” This has driven the deep distrust of the state that coca growers and indeed most rural Peruvians express (Heuser, 2019, p. 31). Villagers explained to our team that the sand-bag fortifications visible in some villages are maintained to prevent state eradication attempts. Grower Abdon Quispe explained that the largest local

coca grower organization, the Federation of Agricultural Producers of the VRAE (Federación de Productores Agropecuarios del VRAE - FEPAVRAE) had determined that ideally each member should own one high calibre rifle, primarily to protect themselves against state eradication forces.

This reflects that in the VRAEM, the CADs served as FEPAVRAE’s organizational base when it began in 1975 as a small producers’ association (FECVRA) with 103 member organizations before becoming the FEPAVRAE in 1995.³³ Although the CADs later received military support, Sendero’s incursion in 1982 created an impossible situation for the FECVRA as the military considered it Sendero’s ally, assassinating its leader and imprisoning the remainder of its leadership. This attack shifted local growers’ priorities away from agriculture to self-defence (Durand Guevara, 2005, p. 111).

Patrolling requirements meant that growing time-consuming crops like coffee or cacao was almost impossible, making coca the obvious alternative as it requires so little care and investment. Even after the violence subsided, the bloodshed continued to profoundly influence local farmers’ identity as defenders of their land rather than coca per se (Durand Ochoa, 2011, p. 113). The coca farmers in the CADs consider themselves to be the ‘defenders of the VRAEM’ (Paredes & Pastor, 2021), exemplified by the large statue of a CAD foot soldier holding a rifle aloft in the main plaza of the VRAEM town of San Francisco.

Decades of repression strengthened farmers’ resistance to any form of government imposition. Structural issues further compounded their distance from a consistently coercive state: the past failures of colonization schemes, the lack of government-financed transportation infrastructure, low international prices for coffee and cacao, and entrenched and persistent neoliberal government policies that further reduced the profitability of small-scale agriculture all played a role (Durand Guevara, 2005, pp. 112–113).

The Toledo (2001–06) administration announced renewed forced eradication nationwide in 2002, spurring coca growers from different regions to work together (Durand Ochoa, 2014, pp. 65–69). In 2003 FEPAVRAE led a “march of sacrifice” of 6000 growers from the VRAEM, Aguaytía and Alto Huallaga valleys that culminated in the formation of the national coca grower organization the National Confederation of Agricultural Producers of the Coca-growing Basins of Peru (Confederación Nacional de Productores Agropecuarios de las Cuencas Cocaleras del Perú -CONPACCP) which brought together 25,500 coca growers from nine valleys (Durand Ochoa, 2011, p. 113).³⁴

But the confederation was an uneasy alliance. CONPACCP came under strain as the FEPAVRAE leadership took a radical stance under the banner ‘coca or death’- while other valleys adopted a more flexible approach to negotiations (Durand Ochoa, 2014, p. 196; Rojas, 2005, p. 219). The Confederation’s failure to develop broader alliances with Peru’s peasant and labour organizations, which have often characterized coca growers as drug-traffickers and subversives, never allowed it to attain the strength of its Bolivian counterpart (Castillo & Durand, 2008).

²⁹ Since the national lock down due to Covid-19 seven indigenous leaders have been killed by drug traffickers in the Ucayali region (Collins, 2021).

³⁰ Some local drug traffickers curried favour with coca growers by paying them upfront so that they could buy arms to defend themselves (CVR, 2003a).

³¹ In 2012, Camerata Artemio, the most important Sendero leader in Alto Huallaga, was captured. Three years later the Ollanta Humala administration lifted the state of emergency in Alto Huallaga after thirty years (DEVIDA, 2017; RRP, 2015).

³² Although the VRAEM emergency zone under military control has varied over the years in size and scope, fifty-two of the 69 districts in the VRAEM currently remain under military control with between 8,000 to 10,000 troops deployed (Saffón, 2020).

³³ The base level organizations that form the FEPAVRAE are Agricultural Producer Committees (Comités de Productores Agropecuarios COPAS) which number approximately 300. Ten to twenty COPAS make up fifteen district level organizations (Comités Distritales de Productores Agropecuarios -CODIPAS).

³⁴ CONPACCP groups growers from the valleys of the Alto Huallaga, VRAEM, Selva Central, Sandia, and Aguaytía. Growers from the Valley La Convention-Lares did not join as they accused coca growers in the other valleys as having links to drug trafficking (Durand Guevara, 2007). Further, the radical position of the FEPAVRAE led by Nelson Palomino, provoked divisions among coca growers which last until today (Durand Ochoa, 2014). The other largest coca grower organization, the 12,000 member FEPCACYL, from the Cusco valleys also chose not to join (Durand Ochoa, 2011).

Peru's coca grower organizations also do not exercise the same degree of control as the Chapare organizations over their bases as governing responsibilities and therefore political influence is split between different organizations. On the one hand are the CADs which continue to exercise a role in administering justice, resolving internal conflicts and protecting communities from external threats and on the other, producer associations and cooperatives that work to market specific agricultural products = ³⁵ (Heuser, 2019, p. 30).

Peruvian state intervention has been erratic, shifting between negotiated gradual reduction with alternative development to forced eradication. Since 1981, US-backed forced eradication has occurred in six Peruvian departments through the state eradication agency, CORAH (Special Project for the Control and Reduction of Coca crops in the Alto Huallaga - *Proyecto Especial de Control y Reducción de los Cultivos de Coca en el Alto Huallaga*) which works in consort with the police.³⁶ In 1994, CORAH was expanded to work in the entire country.

Since the creation of DEVIDA (the National Commission for Development and Life without Drugs - *Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo y Vida sin Drogas*) in the early 2000s, the bulk of alternative development work in the VRAEM has been the responsibility of local governments, NGOs, or private consultants. While the U.S. was always the largest international funder, from 2000 on, the European Union (EU), provided financial and technical support. Since 2007, alternative development projects have been financed mainly with public funds but with some support from international cooperation (DEVIDA, 2017, pp. 77-78). Implemented under the *Programa Presupuestal de Desarrollo Alternativo Integral y Sostenible*- PIRDAIS are productive projects, local road infrastructure investments, technical and financial assistance to farmers, and the strengthening of local government capacity (DEVIDA, 2017).

Alternative development agencies repeated the same mistakes observed in Bolivia. For the most part, development was an afterthought - between 2012 and 2016, it comprised only 17 percent of DEVIDA's budget (DEVIDA, 2017, p. 64). Projects introduced new coffee varieties and other crops not suitable for local soils and rice that wilted for lack of irrigation (Durand Guevara, 2007, p. 155). Cacao and pineapple fared better but lacked a coherent marketing strategy (McClintock & Vallas, 2005, p. 224). Paralleling U.S.-funded projects in Bolivia, DEVIDA set up their own producer associations (DEVIDA, 2017, p. 24).³⁷

Coca farmers note DEVIDA's repeated failure to promote alternative livelihoods and the way it has side-lined and divided coca grower organizations. During November 2019 fieldwork, leaders described DEVIDA to us as an "enemy." In the words of one farmer, "DEVIDA spends 80 percent of the money they get on salaries and

cars for themselves. By the time it gets to us all we receive is a sack of fertilizer and a machete - that's not development!" He went on to say "...DEVIDA divides us - that's its job, it's a scam, a scam run by the gringos".

There was no consistent policy between the governments of Presidents Humala (2011-2016) Kuczynski (2016-2018), Vizcarra (2018-2020) and Sagasti (2020-) as they all tended to vacillate between promoting development and supporting eradication.³⁸ Signalling a possible policy opening at least on the discourse level, Vizcarra launched a "VRAEM 2021 Development Strategy" in 2018 that focused on development without forced eradication while Sagasti promoted an increased harm reduction focus in its December 2020 New Peruvian Drug Policy (DEVIDA, 2017; PCM, 2020, pp. 52-53).³⁹

A watershed moment came in 2019, when the Vizcarra government expanded forced eradication to two new areas. In April 2019, it began eradication in San Gabán, in Puno's Carabaya province, claiming it was necessary because coca farmers were illegally planting in Bahuaja-Sonene National Park. Two coca farmers were killed (Romo, 2019). In November, despite protests by hundreds of growers, CORAH began eradication in Satipo on the border between the central jungle and the northern VRAEM, arguing that it was imperative as Ashaninka indigenous leaders wanted coca on their land eradicated. The national government failed to consult with local authorities as they had previously agreed (DEVIDA, 2018), and in fact, the eradication did not occur on Ashaninka lands (SERVINDI, 2019). Even though CORAH only eradicated 116.7 ha, less than 0.5% of VRAEM's coca production (DEVIDA, 2020a, 2020c), the move was significant because the region had been off limits to eradication for decades (Vanguardia, 2019). In a sign of continuing U.S. pressure, Ambassador Krishna Urs appeared in Satipo, congratulating CORAH at the conclusion of its 2019 eradication campaign (CORAH, 2019).⁴⁰

5.1. Sharing the community coca control program

In Peru repeated cycles of forced eradication, failed development, replanting, and violence by the state, insurgents and drug traffickers have created an inordinately difficult situation for coca farmers. Demonized by the broader society, growers make their living in an insecure, hostile environment fraught with violence.

Despite their weaknesses in articulating themselves as a national movement, VRAEM farmers have demonstrated considerable agency in embracing alternative models for coca control. "We want to be part of the solution," union leader Marianne Zavala told a United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs seminar in April 2021, which was organized by our team, "All we want to do is keep our traditions alive" (CND, 2021).

Inspired by their admiration for coca grower Evo Morales's presidency and Bolivia's constitutional recognition of the leaf, some Peruvian leaders have pushed to adopt the community control initiative. Two factors facilitated this process: First, Morales developed a positive rapport with President Vizcarra, leading to regular bilateral meetings and agreements which Peruvian farmers read as a strategic opening. Second, after two decades of productive collaboration in Bolivia, the European Union expressed an interest in exploring adapting the community control model to Peru.⁴¹ After DEVIDA officials shared experiences with their Bolivian

³⁵ Ellis (2016) reports that security officials told him that some CADs are also involved in protecting the production and movement of cocaine paste.

³⁶ Funding from international cooperation has been reduced, but has not disappeared (DEVIDA, 2017). Since 2013, the U.S. has provided funds for training and research, while Peruvian government eradication funding has increased from 14.3 m soles (US\$4.3m) in 2014 to 110 m soles (US\$33.1m) in 2019 (MEF, 2019).

³⁷ The DEVIDA associations are the Communal Neighbourhood Boards (Juntas Vecinales Comunales -JVC), and Communal Management Boards (Juntas Directivas Comunales- JDC), for indigenous communities.

³⁸ In February 2014, President Ollanta Humala (2011-2016), who had until that point backed alternative development in the VRAEM, launched eradication operations (Koven & McClintock, 2015). FEPAVRAE responded with a five-day strike, forcing the government to adopt the gradual reduction of coca through crop substitution. Growers agreed to the voluntary reduction of one hectare of coca per affiliate over the first three years, in exchange for a monthly cash transfer of US\$180 (MINAGRI, 2016, 15). In practice, there was little coordination between the elevated number of Ministries and government agencies involved (Mendoza & Leyva, 2017). Which meant payments to farmers were too little too late, exacerbating their distrust of the state (Correo, 2017). Growers complained that the program failed to maintain stable cacao and coffee prices (Congreso de la República (2017).

³⁹ The budget for PIRDAIS operations in the VRAEM increased from 20 million soles (\$5m) in 2012 to 53m Soles (\$14m) in 2019 (PCM, 2021).

⁴⁰ CORAH eradicated a total of 25,500 ha of coca during 2019 in Aguaytía and Pucallpa (Ucayali); Ciudad Constitución (Huánuco); Pebas/San Pedro and Caballococha (Loreto); San Gabán (Puno/Cusco); and Mazamari y Alto Anapari (Junín) (CORAH, 2019).

⁴¹ Information courtesy of the Andean Information Network, 8th April 2021. See also (FIAPP, 2017).

counterparts, DEVIDA, with EU funding, commissioned two studies to research legal coca markets in Peru, and one study to explore how the Bolivian model could be implemented in the VRAEM (DEVIDA, 2019a).⁴²

In June 2018, CONPACCP President, Serafín Lujan, sent letters advocating community control to Vizcarra, Morales and the European Union in Bolivia. In 2019 two delegations from the southern VRAEM and one from the Selva Central (central jungle) region (Northern VRAEM, but not affiliated with FEPAVRAE) and Alto Huallaga spent a week to ten days in Bolivia.⁴³ Each group incorporated 8 and 28 growers, who spoke with farmers, observed state-led projects and met with members of Bolivia's congress, government ministers, and the head of the anti-narcotics police. The Peruvian farmers also accompanied the security forces on a negotiated crop reduction mission.

Delegation participant Ruben Leiva stressed that he could not believe he had had such positive engagements with lawmakers and the security forces: "This would never happen in Peru," he said. Veteran union leader, Lujan, explained that he and other farmers who visited the Chapare want to "... learn from these processes and implement an agreement with the Peruvian Government that would allow integrated development and community control just like in Bolivia" (FONADIN, 2019).

The delegates from the Selva Central shared their experiences with two-hundred coca growers in Mazamari, Satipo province on October 30, 2019 during a meeting on the impending threat of crop eradication, with our team in the audience. Lujan outlined elements of the Bolivian model and explained to growers that if they wanted to avoid the proposed eradication, they would have to offer something in return. A dozen farmers said that if they had a guarantee that their coca would not be entirely eradicated, then they would respect cultivation limits. They also voiced community priorities, including more assistance in marketing legal crops like cacao and coffee.

In January 2019, FEPAVRAE leaders, former CONPACCP presidents, technical advisors, and representatives from Puno's coca growing zones, met with DEVIDA and European Union representatives.⁴⁴ FEPAVRAE leaders agreed in principle to restrict coca cultivation to one hectare per union member and pushed for completion of the new study of legal coca use by the National Statistics Institute, funded by the EU (INEI, 2019). They argued that the study could provide the basis for redesigning coca policy including expanding ENACO's ability to purchase coca from regions beyond Cusco, and to roll out a coca farmer registry and licensing program.

DEVIDA agreed in principle, and after sending a consultant to study Bolivia's coca marketing, ENACO set up two offices in previously off-limits areas in the VRAEM. FEPAVRAE urged its members to sell coca to the agency, which, beginning in March 2019 offered an increased price of 120 soles (\$36) per 12-kilogram sack. After taxes, farmers received 100 soles (about \$30), around two-thirds of the black-market price of 140 to 180 soles (\$40 to \$55). But ENACO's ability to control the coca economy in the VRAEM is incipient. "ENACO does not collect more than 0.5 percent of coca, the rest goes to the informal market and drug production," the ENACO official responsible for the VRAEM offices in Pichari, Llochegua and Santa Rosa told us in February 2020.

Internal friction within FEPAVRAE has hindered progress as representatives from regions with larger extensions of coca are vehemently opposed to any state involvement and coca reduction. They

took over FEPAVRAE leadership in mid-2019 and ultimately rejected the proposal. However, the recently formed Selva Central Association (Satipo, Pangoa, Pichanaki) formally embraced it. "We could do a pilot project of the Bolivian model here. ... I know it would work well; we are willing to do this," explained Marianne Zavala. Farmers in this region mostly plant under one hectare, which makes them less dependent on coca than growers further south. Another advantage is the area's strong tradition of coffee, cacao and pineapple production (Mendoza & Leyva, 2017, p. 31).

Selva Central growers asked DEVIDA for an arrangement with ENACO similar to the one in the VRAEM, but with typical inconsistency, the government first accepted dialogue and then on October 2, 2019 backed away. Shortly afterwards, CORAH launched forced eradication, wounding four coca growers by gunshot in Mazamari, Selva Central. After their repeated attempts at dialogue, this violent state intervention enraged farmers (Ledebur & Grisaffi, 2019).

6. Challenges to implementing community coca control

Two principal challenges confront any effort to adapt Bolivia's model to Peru. First, Peru's rural union structures lack the grassroots cohesion that has proven critical in implementing Bolivia's community control (Durand Ochoa, 2011). The model depends on the power that the grassroots union exerts over its members, reinforced by a shared sense of purpose and collective identity.

Bolivia's rural unions have a deep tradition of local governance that was strengthened by a state decentralization program in the 1990s (Gordillo, 2000; Kohl, 2002). In contrast, while historically communal institutions functioned in Peruvian peasant communities with communal landholdings, these have declined propitiously with extensive migration (Vincent, 2014). Municipal governments have been in place since 1980, but rural municipalities remain poor and technically inept. In addition, fierce wrangling between rival municipal candidates often results in dividing rural unions (Burneo & Trelles, 2019; Paredes & Došek, 2020).

The Chapare unions are able to exert so much control because they regulate access to land.⁴⁵ Strict rules limit union membership to people who are already part of existing social networks, making grassroots unions mostly composed of kin and fictive kin (Grisaffi, 2019, pp. 89, 145). Failure to pay required subscription fees, participate in communal work parties, and take part in protests result in fines and sanctions backed by the threat of expulsion and the forced re-sale of land (Grisaffi, 2019, pp. 89-91).

In contrast, the Peru federations are less embedded in growers' sense of identity and lives. Ruben Leiva explained that in his district of Satipo, a person can own land and plant coca but not be affiliated to a pro-coca organization. Joining is a personal choice, and consequently, these organizations have little control over their membership. In contrast, our team found that growers in the southern VRAEM express a robust sense of collective identity, that permits unions to discipline their members, particularly when protecting themselves from DEVIDA, which as they see it, is constantly trying to divide them (Paredes & Pastor, 2021).

Alvino Pinto, a Chapare union leader, explained that the Peruvians lacked the commitment to service that the Bolivians have, which makes obligation to one's community a central component of leadership: "We are obedient (to community defined demands). They have to learn to work like us. ... not with the aim to get something out of it - but to help everyone in their community." The Peruvian farmers who visited Bolivia, expressed astonishment at the discipline and loyalty of Chapare union members. Lujan recog-

⁴² The first two delegations were organized via DEVIDA and Andean Information Network researchers and funded by the European Union, the third delegation was self-financed (Andean Information Network, 6th April 2021); see also (DEVIDA, 2019b).

⁴³ Information courtesy of the Andean Information Network, 8th April 2021.

⁴⁴ Information courtesy of the Andean Information Network, 8th April 2021.

⁴⁵ Recent land titling programs mean almost all Chapare growers own their land but only ever with the agreement of the local union

nized that they would have to promote these traits for community control to work.

While collective identity for Bolivian growers is constructed around coca leaf, Peruvians who chew coca, are considered backward by middle class society (Durand Ochoa, 2014, pp. 19–20; Gootenberg, 2017, p. 29). At the meeting in Mazamari, union leaders spoke of the need to ‘re-valorize’ coca in Peru through expanding activities such as the annual international coca festival held in Pichari by FEPAVRAE in collaboration with local government since 2006 (Vizcarra, 2018). However, in both countries, a legal domestic market is not large enough to absorb all production and international markets for coca products are unlikely to open in the foreseeable future (Jelsma, 2016). As a consequence, the community control model realistically is not a mechanism to prevent drug trafficking but rather a harm reduction strategy (UNODC, 2018a).

The building blocks for strengthening coca grower organizations in Peru are present through farmer organizations and their intertwined relationship with self-defence committees, which are perceived as ‘an essential factor for local order and enjoy high levels of trust’ (Heuser, 2019, pp. 30–31). To reinforce local government capacity, a municipal strengthening program, like the one PRAEDAC executed in the Chapare, is critical although difficult to achieve given the current weaknesses of municipal administration.

Currently, in Peru, many cultivators have only de facto rights to the land they cultivate: the 2012 Agrarian Census shows that half of farmers in the southern VRAEM, 40% in the northern VRAEM and 60% in the Alto Huallaga do not have titles and are not in the process of obtaining them, in contrast with only 18% in another principal coca growing region, La Convención (Mendoza & Leyva, 2017, p. 154). These figures contrast with the almost 100 percent of coca union members in the principal Chapare colonization zone who have clear title, highlighting how dependent successfully legalizing some amount of coca cultivation is on secure land rights (Lerch, 2014, pp. 150, 161).⁴⁶

Despite criticisms that land titling introduces market relations into rural areas thereby increasing stratification (Nacimiento, 2016, pp. 53–54), its concrete benefits are an essential part of any community control program. First, land titles make the region ‘legible’ (Scott, 1998), allowing the state to register the amount and location of legal coca. Second, a land title offers farmers security, which means they are more likely to buy into the community control program as they have more to lose if they break the accord.

The extension of agricultural credit –another key component in Bolivia’s program – is essential not only to allow farmers to diversify their crops, but also to diminish the influence of drug traffickers who often pay for coca in advance. An investment like the EU made in Bolivia for land titling, registration, and credit (Lerch, 2014, p. 150), is essential to jump start Peru’s partial or modified adoption of a Bolivia-style approach.

A second major obstacle that community control faces is the inordinately high levels of distrust towards the state, particularly DEVIDA and the security forces. This suspicion is recognized within the state itself: the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI) puts considerable emphasis on the need to address this issue in its 2016 proposal for the VRAEM (MINAGRI, 2016).

The issue of political will, both from the government and growers is crucial. The Peruvian government has vacillated during more than 40 years of contradictory policies, making promises it was unable or unwilling to complete, very often under pressure from the U.S. government (Manrique, 2018; Vizcarra, 2018). Growers express doubt about government support for community control with central jungle union leader Carlos Chavarria describing the

Bolivian model as no more than ‘a dream’. He argues that change will only come via electing new political leaders. To that end and inspired by their Bolivian counterparts, Chavarria won a congressional seat in Peru’s January 2020 elections with a platform including the ‘Ley General de la Coca’ – a direct copy of the 2017 Bolivian coca law. In April 2021, Serafin Lujan stood as a candidate for Congress in the region of Huánuco, although he lost the election.

Nonetheless, Peru’s growers’ unions remain deeply divided between themselves. Marianne Zavala and the Satipo growers cannot count on the support of the national coca union (CONPACCP), despite the backing of five previous presidents for community coca control. Current CONPACCP leader Brittner Corichahua argues, “we need a solution for all coca growers – we cannot just fight for one Cuenca [Valley],” he explained.

Leaders we interviewed in the VRAEM have attempted to build support for the idea of gradual reduction with their grassroots as they fear that if crops continue to expand, they will be unable to dodge eradication as they have done until now. At meetings they rhetorically ask the rank and file “Do you prefer two or five hectares, or none at all?” But our team witnessed the difficulty these leaders have convincing their bases that this proposal can work. The major stumbling block expressed is mistrust: growers are convinced that the government will backtrack, and attempt forced eradication. These qualms are bred from repeated failed official dialogues set up between coca growers and government when, as several leaders told us, the issue of coca leaf was never addressed.

It is uncertain how non-state armed actors might respond to community coca control. The Quispe-Palomino faction of Sendero in the VRAEM has limited reach and only controls a relatively small and remote area around Vizcatán in eastern Junín department, taxing coca cultivation and securing drug trafficking routes (Ellis, 2016; Villasante, p. 197, 2018b).⁴⁷ However, in our interviews in 2019, VRAEM coca grower leaders never mentioned armed actors (apart from drug traffickers).

Despite this, some local farmers see Sendero as ‘...a useful (although problematic) ally in the struggle to defend coca cultivation’ (Taylor, 2017, p. 113). Sendero has expressed ambitions to expand its operations by working with rather than against coca farmers (América Noticias, 2019, pp. 113–114; Taylor, 2017) and they could attempt to deny local growers the freedom of manoeuvre necessary to adopt a Bolivian-style model, even if the government were willing.

7. Conclusion

Collaborative coca reduction in Bolivia is paying off when measured in terms of the welfare of those dependent on illicit crops. Since the 2004 inauguration of the *cato* accord, the Chapare’s economy has strengthened and diversified, human rights violations have decreased, and living standards have improved (Grisaffi et al., 2017). Thanks to community control, farmers are no longer treated as criminals but citizens. By addressing the underlying causes of coca cultivation, including the lack of state presence, poverty, and social exclusion, crop reductions in community control program areas could prove to be more sustainable than those achieved under forced eradication.

Simply integrating marginal rural areas into markets is insufficient, because as Meehan (2020) shows, for many households the decision to cultivate drug crops responds to the very processes of market-led rural development, which has contributed to immiseration and precarity. Thus, improvements in the standard of living

⁴⁶ This figure does not include the Isiboro Secure region where coca cultivation is illegal. Information courtesy of a former legal advisor at the Villa Tunari town hall, 20th April 2021.

⁴⁷ The Quispe-Palomino faction recently rebranded itself as the Militarizado Partido Comunista del Perú – MPCP and alongside drug trafficking makes money by taxing illegal logging and informal mining and extorting petroleum companies (Ellis, 2016).

witnessed in the Chapare over recent years cannot only be attributed to community control, but rather must be understood as part of a wholesale transformation of the economy and of representative democracy. Between 2006 and 2019 Bolivia experienced high rates of growth, and the government invested this windfall in national level infrastructure, productive capacity, direct cash transfers and other social spending (Farthing & Kohl, 2014). If Peru implemented community coca control policies like those in Bolivia - but maintained its current neoliberal economic trajectory, then Bolivia's advances would be difficult to replicate.

This article has identified the links between successful community control and participatory development. Almost thirty years since Arturo Escobar (1992) identified social movements as the only legitimate development actors, Bolivia has shown what grassroots development can really mean. It is not just about harnessing 'social capital' to advance agendas that are overwhelmingly defined elsewhere. Rather, it is about building trust through community involvement from the very beginning - grassroots control over the project - and trust in the actors carrying out the project. Significantly in Bolivia, the coca growers' felt a strong sense of ownership and control over the MAS-led government - occupying positions in municipal, regional and national governments and in agencies that enact development and crop control.

To be clear, this is no silver bullet. We are not arguing that collaborative crop control will do away with the drug trade (but neither has forced eradication), nor are we saying that this model can or should be applied directly to all coca growing regions of Peru. Our argument is that some elements of Bolivia's program - increasing grassroots control, integrated development, and expanded state presence - can inform drug policy design elsewhere - and that this approach has the potential -when implemented alongside broader social and economic investments, to gradually bring down coca cultivation while stressing respect for human rights and providing farmers with realistic economic alternatives.

Growers from Peru but also from Colombia⁴⁸ - have expressed interest while recognizing that Bolivian style community coca control would need to be adapted to meet their specific requirements (Mortensen & Gutierrez, 2019; Troyano Sanchez & Restrepo, 2018). Two key areas are critical for it to work - namely the ability of grassroots organizations to self-police and building trust in the state through grassroots incorporation into policy decisions and institutions. The Bolivian experience provides pathways for how these challenges can be addressed.

The November 2019 destabilization of Bolivia highlights how dependent community coca control is on the commitment of the government in power. When the interim Ñez government (2019–2020) threatened a military takeover of the Chapare and a return to forced eradication, the trust that coca growers had in government evaporated and with it the underpinnings of community control, something which the Arce administration (2020 -) is seeking to recover. This holds an important lesson for Peru. If the government continues to treat coca growers as enemies - people whom policies should act upon rather than collaborate with - then the cycle of violence, failed development projects and coca growing will continue.

This article has highlighted what is needed on the ground to implement elements of the Bolivian model. But other high-level barriers remain. The U.S. Government exerts an overwhelming influence on Peru's counter-narcotics policies, far greater than it has done in Bolivia for the past 15 years (Koven, 2016). Ponce (2016) describes how the U.S. uses preferential access to its markets- the so-called 'certification process' to shape Peruvian drug

policy. Bolivia has loosened U.S. influence by diversifying its economic and political allies (McNelly, 2020, pp. 432–434), which has given it more scope to experiment with innovative drug policy (Pineo, 2016, p. 433). Barring deep political changes, it will be difficult for Peru to 'nationalize' its drug policy in the way Bolivia has, but without the ongoing push from organized growers, it will be impossible.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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⁴⁸ In February 2017, a delegation of 8 coca growers from across Colombia visited community coca control projects in Bolivia (Mortensen & Gutierrez, 2019).

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