

## **TURNING OVER A NEW LEAF: REGIONAL APPLICABILITY OF INNOVATIVE DRUG CROP CONTROL POLICY IN THE ANDES**

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**ABSTRACT:** This article considers coca control and development strategies in Bolivia and Peru through the intersection of participatory development, social control and the relationship between growers and the state.

Bolivia has emerged as a world leader in formulating a participatory, non-violent model in confronting the cocaine trade. Between 2006-2019 the government limited coca production through community-level control. Our study finds that not only has Bolivia's model proven more effective in reducing coca acreage than repression, 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 focus has led to U.S.-financed forced crop eradication, putting the burden of the 'War on Drugs' onto impoverished farmers, and generating violence and instability. At the request of farmers, the Peruvian government is currently considering the partial implementation of the Bolivian model in Peru. Could it work?

We address this question by drawing on long-term ethnographic fieldwork, interview data and focus group discussions in both countries, combined with secondary research drawn from government, NGO and international agency reports. We find that for community control to have a reasonable chance of success in Peru key areas need to be strengthened. These include the ability of grassroots organizations to self-police, building trust in the state through increased collaboration and incorporating coca growers into development and crop control institutions. More broadly, this study shows how the success of participatory development is contingent on two elements. The first is strong and functioning grassroots organizations that are reinforced through a clear sense of collective identity. The other is trust in the state, and the extent to which the state is committed to enabling rural, indigenous and poor sectors of society to improve their lives.

**Key words:** Coca, Cocaine, Peru, Bolivia, Drug Control, Participatory Development

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Lack of opportunities, marginalization and state neglect typify drug crop production worldwide. But while these issues are at the heart of economic and social development policies, drug crops are primarily conceptualized as a crime and security issue (Alimi 2019, 39). In the Andes, this has led to policies over the past 40 years that prioritize 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 provoked human rights violations through legitimizing militarized crop and drug control (Youngers and Rosin 2005a).

The main coca leaf producers are Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia with Colombia by far the largest, followed by Peru, with Bolivia a distant third (UNODC 2018a, 2019a, b). 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 high rates of poverty (Grimmelmann et al. 2017, 76). In most zones, coca complements subsistence farming and is one of few economic pursuits available that provides cash income (Grisaffi and Ledebur 2016, 9). Even though planting coca is economically rational, drug policy makers often disregard how

farmers make this choice and “...see drug crop producers simply as profit-motivated criminals” (Csete et al. 2016, 1458).

Since the mid-1980s successive U.S. governments have promoted a militarized and prohibitionist drug control strategy in the Andes. The U.S. has consistently dictated the terms of the ‘War on Drugs’ limiting any debate on alternatives. This security-oriented approach has generated violence and undermined democratic practices (Youngers and Rosin 2005b).<sup>1</sup> It has also failed to achieve its objectives: eradication has not reduced coca crops, it has simply displaced them, often through widespread replanting, contributing to deforestation (Rincon-Ruiz and Kallis 2013, Rincón-Ruiz et al. 2016, Reyes 2014). Global cocaine manufacture in 2016 reached its highest level ever: an estimated 1,410 tons (UNODC 2018b, 8) and the flow of drugs northward continues unabated (Mejía 2017).

These outcomes have provoked a regional debate over the past ten years focused on supply reduction’s impact on drug fuelled violence, corruption and institutional instability (GCDP 2018, LSE IDEAS 2014).<sup>2</sup> 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, the Bolivian government has allowed growers to cultivate a restricted amount of coca leaf, which is controlled and managed by local coca grower unions themselves. This program has had its greatest impact in the Chapare coca growing region east of Cochabamba<sup>3</sup> where it received European Union funding from 2009-2014.<sup>4</sup>

While the results of this experiment have been uneven, we argue that not only has Bolivia’s model proven more effective in reducing coca acreage than repression, but it has effectively expanded social and civil rights in hitherto marginal regions. The community coca control

policy has contributed to regional stability which in turn has stimulated economic diversification away from coca (Grisaffi, Farthing, and Ledebur 2017, 146). The policy was complemented by government investment in the Chapare, gender equity policies for the coca-growing sector, and the 2013 international recognition of Bolivians right to consume the leaf domestically.

Bolivia's program has received widespread praise as a "best practice" from the Organization of American States (Briones et al. 2013, 6) and the Lancet-John Hopkins Commission on Public Health and International Drug Policy (Csete et al. 2016, 1467). A 2019 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report notes 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, 9)

Throughout this period when drug crop policy was undergoing profound change in Bolivia, neighboring Peru remained formally committed, as it has for the past 40 years, to US-designed and until 2011, funded, eradication-based strategies. While Peru has had success in reducing coca cultivation, particularly in the Alto Huallaga region, yield per hectare has increased as the locus of coca cultivation has shifted to the VRAEM (an acronym for the Apurímac, Ene and Mantaro river valleys).<sup>5</sup>

Peru's history of armed insurgency and continued forced eradication makes its circumstances distinct from its neighbor. Nonetheless Bolivia's community control program has captured the imagination of some Peruvian coca growers' organizations. In 2019, three delegations of

leaders from six regions visited Bolivia to learn more. Their interest echoes the OAS's 2012 description of the Bolivian model as worthy of "replication" (Briones et al. 2013, 6), and a UN Development Programme finding that "Bolivia's experience [...] could inspire and inform supply-side interventions and development policies in other countries" (UNDP 2016, 14).

This article considers coca control and development strategies in Bolivia and Peru through the intersection of participatory development, social control and the relationship between growers and the state. Drawing on long-term ethnographic fieldwork, interview data and focus group discussions in both countries, combined with secondary research drawn from government, NGO and international agency reports, the article gives special emphasis to efforts at social and economic development in coca growing regions, including Bolivia's experience with community coca control. At the request of farmers, the Peruvian government is currently considering the partial implementation of the Bolivian model in Peru. The multiple challenges ahead include the distinct organizational trajectory and identity formation of coca farmers between the two countries, as well as the differences in government investment in rural areas and the history of prevarication by Peruvian authorities.

## **PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AND STATE LEGITIMACY**

The framework underlying the coca control program introduced by Evo Morales' government (2006-2019) is built on transformative participatory development rather than the mainstream approach that employs a more instrumentalist view of participation (Mohan and Stokke 2000, Cooke and Kothari 2001).<sup>6</sup> Also critical to its success was the trust between the Morales government and local coca growers organizations (Grisaffi 2019).

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 living standards for impoverished and marginalized populations, plus promoting development goals in a context that almost always entails elements of violence, distrust and insecurity linked to the drug trade. Limitations such as fragile institutions, interventions that discount local organizations, structural issues such as land tenure and short project cycles focused on immediate goals, have plagued alternative development in drug crop regions much as they do other development projects (Grimmelmann et al. 2017, Buxton 2015, Mansfield 2011).

However, a conception of alternative development more closely aligned to up-to-date thinking about development policy has gradually gained traction, particularly after the 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs (UNODC 2016a, Alimi 2019, Brombacher and Westerbarkei 2019). Awareness is growing that addressing drug crop cultivation requires a sustainable, integrated and participatory focus on the underlying problems (UNDP 2015, 2016, 2019, Alimi 2019, 39). Research confirms that working with grassroots organizations alongside social investment in education, health and infrastructure, is the most effective way to limit coca cultivation (Davalos 2016, Ibanez and Klasen 2017, Dávalos and Dávalos 2019, Ceron, Rios-Carmenado, and Fernández 2018).

In the 1990s, the ‘new development agenda’, aimed to put local knowledge and participation at its core (Chambers 1997, Fals-Borda and Rahman 1991). In this 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, 33).

Participatory development began to be emphasized at the same time as neoliberal governments introduced state decentralization (Faguet 2014) accompanied by a multiculturalism discourse. These changes directed more resources to the local level and implemented increased, if contested, cultural diversity (Hale 2005, Sieder 2002). Within this broader shift, ethno-development emerged as a participatory policy that targets poverty among marginalized ethnic groups with a focus on strengthening their sense of identity and self-management (Chartock 2013, Andolina, Laurie, and Radcliffe 2009).

Ostensibly the move towards participatory development serves to ‘empower’ local communities. Some have viewed it as acting as a bulwark against rampant free markets (Bebbington 2004, Bebbington et al. 2004) and strengthening indigenous culture (Healy 2000, Stephen 1991). But others voice caution, that the biggest drivers of poverty like structural adjustment, debt, tax evasion, labor exploitation, financial crisis and corruption, are not readily tackled at the local level. Local participatory development is no substitute for policies designed to achieve more social integration through redistributive measures and sound economic policies (Mohan and Stokke 2000, Veltmeyer and Delgado Wise 2018)

Since 2000, some left-leaning governments have moved in exactly this direction, prime among them is Bolivia (Kennemore and Weeks 2011, Acosta 2013). Between 2006 and 2019, the Movimiento Al Socialismo (MAS)-led government forwarded the notion of ‘buen vivir’ (‘to live well’) to transform the state and nation<sup>7</sup>. In practical terms this has meant increasing participation in politics through enshrining elements of direct democracy, indigenizing the political sphere, re-writing the constitution, developing new community owned media, nationalizing strategic economic sectors, and investing in public services (Farthing and Kohl 2014, Anria 2018, Postero 2017).<sup>8</sup>

In addition to increasing political participation, key to community control's success is trust in the actor carrying out the project (Green and Haines 2015, Lachapelle 2008)<sup>9</sup>, an issue with limited consideration in the prevailing literature (Handberg 2018, 435). Researchers agree that trust in public institutions increases the probability of citizen engagement and participation, and therefore positive program outcomes (Bratton and Gyimah-Boadi 2016, Wong 2016). Once governments lose legitimacy, Robinson, Stoutenborough, and Vedlitz (2017, 4) argue, participatory development is weakened, while specific to Peru, Chavez (2018) found that conflict, such as that experienced in the VRAEM, correlated negatively with trust in government institutions.

It is within this broader conception of participatory development, 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. We contend that in this context, success is largely contingent on two elements. The first is strong grassroots organizations that are reinforced through a clear sense of collective identity. The other is trust in the state, and the degree the state is committed to enabling rural, indigenous and poor sectors to improve their lives

## **COCA, COCAINE AND THE WAR ON DRUGS IN PERU AND BOLIVIA**

Indigenous people in the Andes have grown and consumed coca leaf for over 4000 years,<sup>10</sup> chewing the leaf is a shared rite, essential for building trust and community (Carter and Mamani 1986, Allen 1988). The leaf is present in every ritual from birth to death and is commonly used to combat fatigue, stomach problems, altitude sickness and hunger. 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 speaks of the "millenarian" qualities of coca leaf, recounting how the 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!"

Coca's path from a central component of Andean culture to a banned substance began with the isolation of the cocaine alkaloid in 1855. Its controlled status was codified into international law in 1961 when, alongside cocaine and heroin, the leaf was deemed a dangerous drug in the most important piece of international drug control legislation, known as the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. The convention, which both Bolivia and Peru signed in the 1970s, established that governments must uproot all coca bushes, even those that grow wild, and abolish local coca leaf consumption within 25 years (Metaal 2014). The 1961 convention provided the justification and legal framework for subsequent US-backed coca eradication campaigns.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the governments of Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia initiated agricultural settlement programs for impoverished highland peoples in their sparsely populated Amazonian lowlands, but the program's failures contributed to the expansion of coca cultivation. When the boom in cocaine consumption in the U.S. began in the early 1980s, thousands more farmers, urban dwellers and in Bolivia's case, former miners, migrated to these regions to grow coca leaf because it provided them better opportunities to support themselves and their families. Gootenberg (2018) demonstrates that despite their divergent

histories all three countries ended up with similar illicit frontier economies - largely due to the state's inability to foster legal agricultural livelihoods.

Coca is almost the ideal crop: it can be cultivated in diverse conditions, yields up to four harvests per year, is easy to transport and generally pest resistant. The leaf has often served as growers' main cash crop, complemented with products such as rice, bananas, coffee, yucca, and citrus fruits. In Bolivia, 23,100 hectares were under coca cultivation in 2018, a decline of 1,400 hectares, from 24,500 hectares in 2017, and 5% above the amount permitted under a 2017 coca law (UNODC 2019b, Farthing 2017). The latest figures available for Peru showed an increase of 14% or 6,000 hectares between 2016 and 2017, reaching a total of 49,900 hectares (UNODC 2018a).

The 237,000 coca growing families in Colombia, Peru and Bolivia,<sup>11</sup> function in an uneasy and unstable relationship with the cocaine economy. 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 of cocaine production where shredded coca leaf is soaked in solvents to extract the cocaine alkaloid. This creates a low value product called cocaine base paste. Given the high cost of inputs, including precursors and coca leaf, the profit margins are low (Grisaffi 2014).

While coca is consumed in both Bolivia and Peru, its status differs. In Bolivia coca is grown close to the capital city La Paz, it can be bought at kiosks everywhere, it stimulates national pride and is widely consumed by the urban middle classes and indigenous farmers alike (Ehrinpreis 2018, Gootenberg 2017). 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). By contrast in Peru, coca cultivation takes place far from the capital city, is widely associated with drug trafficking, and consumption is less prevalent. According to Gootenberg (2017: 29): "Coca chewing in Peru is still disdained as a backward 'vice', without the national aura the leaf emits in Bolivia".

## **BOLIVIA: COCA/COCAINE AND ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Coca leaf has been grown in Bolivia for centuries in the La Paz and Vandiola Yungas<sup>12</sup> (Klein 1986). During 1960s colonization projects, coca cultivation expanded into the Chapare lowlands east of Cochabamba (Millington 2019). Without local state institutions, strong rural unions, which combine indigenous concepts of reciprocity, mutual dependence and care for people and place with union traditions, arose to handle everything from granting land and resolving boundary disputes to building schools and disciplining antisocial behavior (Grisaffi 2019, 98). Grower Elias Castro explains: "Back then there was nothing, 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."

The Chapare's base level unions now number close to 1,000 and are organized into six federations that form an umbrella organization. Like most rural unions throughout Bolivia, coca-growing unions have both male and female chapters, although males retain greater authority, with power concentrated in the leadership. Nonetheless, they remain broadly participatory and, like unions elsewhere in the country (Bjork-James 2018), they have pushed leadership out of the way when they felt they were ineffective or unresponsive.

To this day, the unions are responsible for collecting taxes from coca, organizing collective work parties, resolving disputes, setting transport fares and managing the community coca control program. For growers, full membership in their community is dependent upon political rights that far exceed the right to vote. The culture of their union assemblies is highly participatory, prioritizing personal responsibility, consensus building, and the direct accountability of leaders to their community (Grisaffi 2019, 152-62).

U.S. Drug War 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, which were permitted to grow 30,000 acres (12,000 hectares) of legal coca, and the ‘surplus’ Chapare and frontier Yungas production, which was to be destroyed or replaced (Lessman 2005). The bulk of U.S. drug control funds were directed towards violent intervention 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 (Gutierrez Aguilar 2014, 73-96). They challenged dominant representations of themselves as producing an illicit good by emphasising coca’s link to indigenous culture. Growers staged public events, such as coca chew-ins in city plazas, public rituals, and awarding garlands of coca to visiting dignitaries. In the face of what most Bolivians perceived as imperial posturing by the U.S., defending coca became synonymous with defending Bolivian sovereignty (Grisaffi 2010).

In 1997, forced eradication by the military threw the Chapare into severe economic crisis and

led to 33 coca grower deaths and 570 injuries, along with 27 military and police killed (Farthing and Ledebur 2004).<sup>13</sup> While growers' relationship with four previous governments had been antagonistic, the forced eradication period under former dictator President Hugo Banzer (1997-2001) represented a low point that extended to Gonzalo de Lozada's second term (2002-3). The experience destroyed any remaining vestiges of trust in the state and radicalized grower demands going forward (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 eventually USAID administrators realized that this was almost impossible. By the late 1980s, programs focused on creating alternatives so that impoverished Bolivians had less incentive to migrate to the Chapare, while concurrently increasing repression there. When that approach failed, the focus switched back to the Chapare, with the promotion of bananas, passion fruit, palm hearts, black pepper and pineapple for export. Growers could only participate if they eradicated their coca, and U.S. policymakers generally perceived this conditionality as the key to success (USAID 2003, 5, Veillette and Navarrete-Frias 2005, 21).

These programs, imposed on Bolivian governments reluctant to provoke conflict or to cut off the social safety valve that coca growing provided to impoverished migrants, functioned without any participation of the coca growers' own representatives, the unions. Instead they created parallel "associations," generating suspicion and local conflict (Recasens 1995, Marconi 1998, Rivera 1990a). When coca growers' unions won the 1995 elections in 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 the leadership of the tight-knit unions and municipalities drug traffickers or terrorists, generating deep distrust (Farthing and Ledebur, 2004).

In 1998, the orientation of development programs in the Chapare began to shift after coca grower unions won control of all the Chapare municipalities. They run the municipal government as an extension of their agricultural unions: they select Mayors and councillors from their ranks whose duty it is to enact decisions made at union assemblies. Just like a union leader, public officials are held to account at coca grower meetings by presenting regular reports. If the rank and file disapprove, they are removed from office. Coca growers speak of the local government, not simply as an institution that they trust, but one that they own and control as a collective (Grisaffi 2013, 2019, 163-8).<sup>14</sup>

The European Union funded a municipal strengthening program, PRAEDAC, between 1998 and 2005, that focused on poverty reduction involving coca grower organizations, land titling and strengthening local governments 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 and Kohl 2005, 193). Chapare unions formally announced they would no longer work with USAID in 2008 (AIN 2008), and Morales expelled the organization from the country in 2013 (Heilman 2017).

## **COMMUNITY COCA CONTROL IN BOLIVIA**

Bolivia's coca control emphasizes informal mechanisms which encourage behaviors to ensure societal stability. In the Chapare, the concept builds on forms of pre-Hispanic indigenous community organization which privileges collective over individual rights. Anti-social behavior is discouraged through scorn, shame, criticism, censure and sarcasm, and in particularly egregious situations, social exclusion (Rivera 1990b, de la Cadena 2013).

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 Andean case this involves reparations for damage done rather than western imprisonment (Goodale 2019, 64-8, Farthing 2016). The system depends on internal controls, granting agency to the individual as well as responsibility for the group's wellbeing. It operates through a highly participatory form of group decision-making, evident in social organizations from the community to the union (Grisaffi 2019, Kohl, Farthing, and Muruchi 2011, 9, Rivera 1990b)

These concepts are bolstered by the constant affirmation of the millennial relationship with the coca leaf (Vargas 2014). The indigenous renaissance promoted for 14 years by the Morales government deploys the coca leaf as one of the most potent symbols of Andean identity, not just within Bolivia but also at the national and international level, eventually enshrining protection of coca in a 2017 law (República de Bolivia 2007). Grower confidence is reinforced by high levels of government investment in local infrastructure and crop diversification.

The grower demand for community coca control led President Carlos Mesa to sign the cato accord in 2004, permitting growers to cultivate a limited amount of coca. Eusebio Rubios Uchasara, ex-general secretary of the Chimoré Federation contends: 'A lot of people say,

“Carlos Mesa gave us the cato of coca,” ...lies! It was our sacrifice, it cost our blood, our lives.’ The cato allowed growers to self-regulate as a way to diminish state-led external coercion and ensure some basic income. Once it was adopted, protests, violence and human rights violations in the Chapare ceased immediately (Ledebur and Youngers 2006). When Evo Morales became president in 2006, he made the accord a central pillar of his ‘coca yes, cocaine no’ policy.

Beginning in 2007, coca unions collaborated with the Morales government to develop a sophisticated monitoring, control and coca reduction system with support from the European Union (Farthing and Ledebur 2015). To be eligible for a cato, growers first had to gain an official land title and have their coca plot measured and registered by 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 that farmers respect the limit. Each union organizes regular inspections of coca plantations; and if the commission finds coca above one cato, 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<sup>15</sup>. If a farmer violates the limit more than once, then the union imposes a life-time ban. Grassroots unions that do not exercise adequate levels of control are criticized at union meetings and on the union-operated radio station, and fines are levelled by higher instances of the union.



Grisaffi (2019) details how this participatory decision-making process functions. Social control is perceived as a shared responsibility, which involves the entire community and appears on the agenda of every monthly meeting. Growers often spend hours hashing out issues around compliance and non-compliance with internal debate and disagreement playing a critical role. Although social control's effectiveness depends on loyalty to the government (and in particular to ex-President Morales, who began his political career as a coca grower) combined with a strong fear of returning to the repression of the past, it is also contested and reconstituted on a regular basis (Grisaffi 2016, 162).

Consistent with Andean cultural norms, Grisaffi notes that the informal social control mechanisms of pride and shame play a powerful role in growers' compliance (Grisaffi 2019, 137-45). There is a strong emphasis on equality; getting ahead is viewed negatively as it is thought to come at the expense of others (Grisaffi 2019, 100-2). Felipe Martinez, a union leader stressed, "It does not matter if we only have ten plants, but we must all have the same." Successful participatory development is evident in the sense of ownership that growers often expressed about the social control program, calling it "theirs". Growers repeatedly told us that they respect the program because it is headed by coca growers and because they participated in the program's design (Farthing and Ledebur 2015, 27).

Farmers have economic reasons to respect the agreement as well: they understand that if coca cultivation is restricted, then prices will increase. Chapare 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.' The policy seems to work, the average price of coca in Bolivia in 2017-18 was almost four times the average price in Peru.<sup>16</sup>

Access to assistance to diversify crops is no longer conditional on the prior eradication of coca. “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 guaranteed income from the cato– which is around \$200 dollars per month, equivalent to the minimum wage- allows farming families to experiment with alternative crops, such as banana, pineapple, honey but also fish farming. In an August 2019 interview, 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?’

Cornejo explained that collaborations between various branches of the state and other development actors led to investment in productive capacity but also expanded health, education and physical infrastructure. During the 2017 project cycle, FONADIN in collaboration with municipal governments, channelled over \$2.7m to 38 projects to the Chapare, benefitting 15,172 families (FONADIN 2018, 112). These efforts to reduce dependence on coca has led many farmers to describe their cato of coca as a ‘savings account’ rather than their main source of income.<sup>17</sup>

According to Cornejo, grassroots organizations leaders 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, which has worked with FONADIN for 13 years, has praised this approach: “FONADIN is in

constant contact with the population. It does not promote projects born on the desks of technicians, but helps to bring to life initiatives that come from the communities” (FONADIN 2018, iii).

The program did confront challenges because a minority of farmers quite simply refused to comply. In these situations, workers from UDESTRO 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 involved violence. One middle-aged female 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, Farthing, and Ledebur 2017, 143).

In light of creeping coca cultivation, John Cornejo expressed in 2019 the need to keep up the momentum about the program’s advantages. Older leaders throw the blame for coca expansion 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 is the biggest threat to the program to date. As a result of the transition government’s repression that caused 10 coca grower deaths on November 15, 2019, the Chapare population once again views the police and the military as ‘enemies’. Coca growers damaged local police installations and have hung up mannequins dressed as policemen bearing placards that read: ‘policia pillado, policia linchado’ (Police identified, Police lynched). Soon after, the police abandoned the region but two months later, in January 2020, a military contingent returned, provoking farmers fears of repression.

Uncertainty about the future of licit coca and community coca control has led to a 50% drop in leaf prices since Morales's resignation.

During a December 2019 trip to the Chapare, coca farmers told our team that with no police presence, the trafficking of drug precursor chemicals has increased. Reflecting the change in the relationship with the state from partnership back to enemy, in the words of one grower 'why should we respect the cato - when the government does not respect us?' Team members observed coca plants for sale in the streets of the main towns, something the community coca control program outlaws and not seen for many years. This turn of events demonstrates how critical a positive relationship with the state is for effective community coca control.

## **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, 94). Today, legal sales are handled through the poorly functioning state coca company, ENACO (Empresa Nacional de la Coca), which in 2016 only controlled 17% of legal coca leaf sales (DEVIDA 2017). Some of it is sold to Coca-Cola as a flavoring agent and the remainder is marketed as coca leaf tea within Peru (Ledebur 2016).

With the 1980s northern cocaine boom, the principal coca growing, and cocaine base paste production zone became the subtropical central valleys of the Alto Huallaga-Monzón rivers. Although coca production plunged by 70% throughout Peru in the 1990s as cultivation burgeoned in Colombia, it grew again after 2000 when cocaine consumption skyrocketed in

Europe and Brazil (Van Dun 2009). After forced eradication under U.S. pressure intensified violence, and alienated farmers in the Alto Huallaga-Monzón,<sup>18</sup> cultivation spread to fifteen additional regions (Felbab-Brown 2010, UNODC 2018a).

The Belgium-sized VRAEM, emerged as the most important after 2010. Extending over five of Peru's 24 departments (Apurimac, Junin, Cusco, Huancavelica and Ayacucho), it has 43% of total coca cultivation, just over 21,646 hectares in 2017, but high yields mean it produces 67% of the nation's crop (UNODC 2018a, 8-10). The region has marked differences between the north and south, with varying dependence on coca, the other two principal crops are older plantings of coffee and cacao (Mendoza and Leyva 2017). In 2016, only 19 of the region's 69 districts cultivated coca, and of these only nine had more than 1000 hectares (DEVIDA 2017, 60).

In contrast to the Alto Huallaga, which has migrants from all over Peru, the majority of growers in the southern VRAEM are Quechua-speaking migrants from the impoverished central highlands, who retained strong ties to their original communities after moving to the VRAEM during the 1970s (Durand Guevara 2005, 106). The population is just over 654,000 people including approximately 108,000 farmers, with an average farm size of 2.6 hectares (6.4 acres) (Heuser 2019, 26). Of these 15,074 were identified as coca growers in 2016. Half the population is impoverished (three times the national average) and three of the VRAEM departments are among the four most unequal in Peru (Gootenberg 2017, 28).

This inequality is manifest by a minority of growers with larger landholdings, primarily in the central VRAEM regions of Pichari and Llochegua. Grower Javier Rojas explained to our team: 'the poorest among us has one hectare, some have three, four hectares. Some even have

twenty.” Several growers with more land and higher incomes told our team that they don’t live locally but rather use the VRAEM as a temporary operating base, preferring to construct houses in regional cities like Ayacucho, where their children receive a better education.

In 2014, MINAGRI (2016, 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).<sup>19</sup> At coca’s lowest black market price reported to us as US\$3.50 dollars per kilo - the net earnings per hectare after deducting production and labor costs is equivalent to twice the national minimum wage.<sup>20</sup>

Farmers, particularly those with larger holdings, harvest using teams of often poor itinerant workers<sup>21</sup>, who mostly come from nearby highland communities and are paid by the kilo (El Peruano 2018, 11, MINAGRI 2016, 28). A hectare can take 240 days of labor, and the day rate is as much as triple other similar local work,<sup>22</sup> creating a severe labor shortage for farmers growing licit crops such as coffee and cacao (MINAGRI 2016, 28, Novak et al. 2011, 30).

Ashaninka indigenous people live in Junin and Cusco, and similar to patterns throughout the Andes, have been steadily pushed off their traditional lands by highland colonists (Durand Guevara 2005, 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 to plant coca (UNODC 2018a, 79) has provoked conflict with their organizations and with environmentalists (Andina 2019).

The rise of the insurgent group Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) in highland Ayacucho starting in 1980 profoundly limited marketing the VRAEM's crops, which contributed to the expansion of coca. It also impacted its organizational structures, creating a politics and culture of violence (Villasante 2018). As coca expanded, fears about actual or potential armed conflict with local insurgencies convinced successive Peruvian governments to avoid forced eradication. As of January 2020, remnants of insurgent groups (estimated at 300) continue to launch attacks against security forces along principal drug-trafficking routes (Machacuay and Atilano 2019). Thirty-four of the 69 districts in the VRAEM are controlled by the military under a state of emergency (Mendoza and Leyva 2017).<sup>23</sup>

Civilian state presence, particularly in rural areas, is minimal and not well articulated between national, departmental and local district (municipal) governments (MINAGRI 2016, 13). Many rural communities lack access to electricity, sanitation or potable water (Koven and McClintock 2015, 3-4)<sup>24</sup>. This has driven the deep distrust of the state that coca growers and indeed most rural Peruvians express (Heuser 2019, 31). Villagers explained to our team that the sand-bag fortifications in some villages are maintained to prevent state incursion. Abdon Quipse, who has lived in the VRAEM since 1982, said that the largest coca growers 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 eradication forces.<sup>25</sup>

FEPAVRAE got its beginnings in 1975 as a small producers' association (FECVRA) with 103 member organizations before becoming the FEPAVRAE in 1995.<sup>26</sup> Sendero's incursion

in 1982 created an impossible situation for the FECVRA as the Peruvian military considered it Sendero's ally, assassinating its leader and imprisoning the remainder of its leadership. This attack stymied organizing and shifted local growers' priorities away from agriculture to self-defense (Durand Guevara 2005, 111).

Even though they were trapped between Sendero attacks, state repression and drug traffickers, growers formed autonomous Anti-subversive Civil Defense Committees (Defensa Civil Anti-subversiva -DECAS) from 1984 on (Castillo and Durand 2008). 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. Temporary alliances developed with local drug traffickers who paid growers upfront allowing farmers to buy arms to protect themselves. Even after the violence subsided in the early 1990's with the arrest of Sendero's national leadership, the bloodshed continued to profoundly influence local farmers' identity as defenders of their land rather than coca per se (Durand Ochoa 2011, 113).

The repression strengthened farmers' resistance to any form of government imposition. Structural issues 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 (Durand Guevara 2005, 112-3, Gootenberg 2017).

In 2003 FEPAVRAE led a "march of sacrifice" of 6000 growers from the 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, 113).<sup>27</sup> The Confederation however, failed to develop broader alliances with Peru's peasant and labor organizations, which have often characterized coca growers as drug-traffickers (Castillo and Durand 2008).

Unlike the Bolivia unions, Peru's coca grower organizations do not exercise similar controls over their bases with governing responsibilities split between different organizations. The self-defense committees (CAD) continue to exercise a role in administering justice, resolving internal conflicts and protecting communities from external threats (Heuser 2019, 30), and producer associations and co-operatives work to market specific agricultural products. One middle-aged farmer told us “we have different organizations for different purposes.”

Peruvian state intervention in coca growing regions has been erratic, shifting between negotiated gradual reduction with alternative development to forced eradication. Beginning in 1981, US-backed forced eradication of coca crops<sup>28</sup> has taken place in six Peruvian departments through the state eradication agency, named the 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 -CORAH) who are accompanied by police.<sup>29</sup>

Since the creation of DEVIDA (the National Commission for Development and Life without Drugs) in the early 2000s, the bulk of alternative development work in the VRAEM has been carried out by local governments, NGOs, or consultants. While the U.S. has always been the largest international funder, from 2000 on, the European Union (EU), has provided financial

and technical support. Alternative development agencies repeated the same mistakes observed in Bolivia. For the most part development was an afterthought - between 2012 and 2016, it comprised 17% of DEVIDA's budget (DEVIDA 2017, 64). Projects introduced new coffee varieties and other crops not suitable for the soils and rice that wilted for lack of irrigation (Durand Guevara 2007, 155). Cacao and pineapple fared better but lacked a coherent marketing strategy (McClintock and Vallas 2005, 224). Paralleling U.S.-funded projects in Bolivia, DEVIDA set up their own producer associations to participate in alternative development projects (DEVIDA 2017, 24).<sup>30</sup>

Coca farmers express a negative view of DEVIDA: they note its 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 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 divide us - that's its job, it's a scam, a scam run by the gringos".

The Ollanta Humala administration (2011-2016) followed by Kuczynski (2016-2018) and Vizcarra (2018-) had no consistent policy between governments - vacillating between promoting development and supporting eradication.<sup>31</sup> The latest iteration is Vizcarra's "VRAEM 2021 Development Strategy" launched in 2018, which focuses on development and public works assistance primarily through municipal governments, without forced eradication (DEVIDA 2017). In spite of their contentious relationship to the national state and complaints of corruption, newly elected local governments became actively involved in administering the program beginning in January 2019.

The next 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 the buffer zone of the Bahuaja-Sonene National Park. Two coca farmers were killed (Romo 2019). In November, after thousands of growers had protested, CORAH began eradication in Satipo in the VRAEM, arguing that it was imperative as Ashaninka indigenous leaders wanted coca that had encroached on their land eradicated. The national government used this reasoning to proceed with forced eradication without consulting with local authorities as they had previously agreed (DEVIDA 2018), and in fact, the eradication did not occur on Ashaninka lands (SERVINDI 2019). The move was particularly significant because the VRAEM had been off limits to eradication for decades (Vanguardia 2019). In a sign of the continued U.S. pressure on Peru's government, U.S. Ambassador Krishna Urs was present in Satipo congratulating CORAH for its work at the conclusion of the 2019 eradication campaign (CORAH 2019).<sup>32</sup>

## **SHARING THE COMMUNITY COCA CONTROL PROGRAM**

There is an urgency to try something different in Peru where the 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 growers. Demonized by the broader society, even when they make a living from coca, they do so in an insecure, hostile environment fraught with violence. Despite the suffering they have endured, curbing cocaine production has been a resounding failure since the 1980s. It is past time for a new approach.

Inspired by their admiration for coca grower leader Morales's presidency, their recognition and respect for Bolivian coca farmers, and the constitutional recognition of the leaf, some Peruvian coca leaders have sought to adopt the community control initiative. Two factors facilitated this process: First, Morales developed a positive rapport with Peruvian President Vizcarra (2018- ), leading to regular bilateral meetings and agreements. Peruvian farmers perceived this as a strategic opening to approach Vizcarra, who appeared open to policy innovation after unexpectedly becoming president. Second, after two decades of productive collaboration on Bolivia's community control program, the European Union expressed interest in promoting what they conceived of as an effective and cost-efficient model, in Peru.

In June 2018, CONPACCP President, Serafin Lujan, sent letters advocating community control to Vizcarra, Morales and the European Union in Bolivia. This was followed by three 2019 delegations from Peru's coca-growing regions - two from the southern VRAEM and the third from the Selva Central (central jungle) and Alto Huallaga, which spent a week to ten days in Bolivia. Each group numbered between 8 and 28 growers, who spoke with farmers, observed state-led projects to promote alternative crops and fish farming 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 - who took part in the August 2019 mission - stressed that he could not believe he had had such positive engagements with lawmakers and members of 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 social control just like in Bolivia” (FONADIN 2019).

The delegates from the Selva Central region (Northern VRAEM, but not affiliated with FEPAVRAE) shared their experiences at a community meeting in Mazamari, Satipo province on October 30, 2019. Two-hundred coca growers met to discuss the impending threat of crop eradication, with our team in the audience. Lujan explained that if they wanted the state to halt the proposed eradication, they would have to offer something in return. He presented a draft document outlining elements of the Bolivian model including limits to coca, negotiated reductions and state investment in rural communities. The audience enthusiastically embraced this proposal. A dozen farmers who we spoke to said that If they had a guarantee that their coca would not be entirely eradicated, then they would respect cultivation limits. They also took the opportunity to voice the community priorities, including more assistance in marketing legal crops like cacao and coffee.

In January 2019, leaders of CODIPAS, FEPAVRAE, former CONPACCP presidents, technical advisors, and representatives from Puno’s coca growing zones, met with DEVIDA and European Union representatives to formally request consideration of the model. FEPAVRAE leaders agreed in principal to restrict coca cultivation to one hectare per union member and They also requested a new study of legal coca use by the National Statistics Institute, to be funded by the EU. They hoped that the study would 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 principal, and after sending a consultant to see Bolivia's coca marketing model, ENACO set up offices in previously off-limits areas such as the VRAEM<sup>33</sup>. For its part 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.<sup>34</sup>

Internal friction within FEPAVRAE hindered progress on this policy shift, however.

Representatives from regions with larger extensions of coca and opposed to state intervention and reduction, took over the leadership of the Federation in mid-2019. But while the new FEPAVRAE leadership ultimately rejected the proposal, the recently formed Selva Central Association (Satipo, Pangoa, Pichanaki) formally embraced it. In Satipo, most farmers plant less than one hectare, which makes them less dependent on coca than growers further south. Another advantage is that the area has a strong tradition of coffee, cacao and pineapple production (Mendoza and Leyva 2017, 31). Growers from Satipo consider their province a good testing ground. "We could do a pilot project of the Bolivian model here.... I know it would work well; we are willing to do this," explained leader Marianne Zavala.

Selva Central growers asked DEVIDA for a similar arrangement, but with the typical inconsistency that DEVIDA has long displayed, the government first accepted dialogue and then on October 21 backed away. Shortly afterwards, on 1st November 2019 CORAH launched forced coca eradication in the zone, wounding four coca growers by gunshot in Mazamari, Selva Cenra. After their repeated attempts at dialogue, this violent state intervention enraged farmers (Ledebur and Grisaffi 2019).

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. He worried he could not convince areas of the VRAEM with larger farms to accept a reduction.

After financing their own delegations to Bolivia, Peruvian coca leaders have a solid understanding of the community control and the advantages it could bring. Grower organizations have demonstrated their commitment by convening community congresses to socialize the model, and coordinating meetings with the EU, DEVIDA and central government.

## **CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTING COMMUNITY COCA CONTROL**

While some resistance is to be expected, the Southern VRAEM, Alto Huallaga, the Central Jungle are actively demanding community control. To adapt Bolivia’s model to Peru, there are two principal challenges. First, Peru’s rural union structures lack the grassroots cohesion that has proven critical in implementing Bolivian style community coca control. Because community coca control is dependent on grassroots union members meeting regularly, having a shared sense of purpose and forging collective identity through shared culture and the broader goals of the movement, the power that the grassroots union has over its members is crucial (Durand Ochoa 2011).

The Chapare union governs almost every aspect of a person’s life. Significantly, they control access to land, which means that owning land requires membership.<sup>35</sup> The unions put strict

controls on who can join, usually only allowing people who are already part of their social networks to become members, meaning that grassroots unions are mostly composed of kin and fictive kin (Grisaffi 2019, 89, 145). Membership entails many duties that prioritize the group including paying subscription fees, participating in communal work parties, and taking part in protests. To ensure compliance, fines and other sanctions are backed up by threat of expulsion and the forced re-sale of land (Grisaffi 2019, 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 – it is possible for a person to own land and plant coca but not be affiliated to a pro-coca organization. Joining the coca growers' association is a personal choice, and consequently, these organizations have very little power over their membership.

Alvino Pinto, a Bolivian coca union leader, explained that the Peruvians lacked the idea of service Bolivians have, a central component of leadership as an obligation to one's community: "We are obedient (to the 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." For their part, the Peruvian farmers who visited Bolivia, were astounded at the discipline, loyalty and commitment of Chapare union members. Lujan commented that these were traits that they would have to promote if community control were to work.

Collective identity for Bolivian growers is constructed around the critical role coca leaf plays in Andean culture. In contrast Peruvians who chew coca, are considered backward by middle class society which does not recognize the leaf as a positive representation of indigenous identity (Gootenberg 2017, 29). Durand Ochoa (Durand Ochoa 2014, 19-20) illustrates that



defending a good of questionable legitimacy - namely coca - is difficult. At the meeting in Mazamari, union leaders spoke of the need to 're-valorise' coca in Peru and drew lessons from the Bolivian experience. Since 2006, the FEPAVRAE in collaboration with local government, has held an annual international coca festival in Pichari, where traditional coca use and coca-based products, including soaps, teas and liquor, are promoted (Vizcarra 2018). Changes to the broader debate on drug policy in Latin America, could potentially open space that legitimizes coca use in Peru (Jelsma 2016, Labate, Cavnar, and Rodrigues 2016).

Both local and national coca grower organizations in Peru require extensive training and capacity building, as well as support in developing regional and national consensus. The building blocks are there through farmer organizations and their intertwined relationship with self-defense committees, which fulfil law enforcement and function in many ways as do the Chapare grassroots unions. They are perceived as 'an essential factor for local order and enjoy high levels of trust' (Heuser 2019, 30-1). Peruvian farmers then, have skills and knowledge that could be used to support community control. To reinforce local government capacity, especially in human services and economic development in rural areas, a municipal strengthening program, like the one PRAEDAC executed in the Chapare, could fulfil a critical role.

A second major obstacle that community control faces is the inordinately high levels of distrust among Peru's rural populations, including coca growers, towards the state, particularly DEVIDA and the security forces. This distrust is acknowledged within the state: the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI) puts considerable emphasis on the need to repair broken trust in its 2016 proposal for the VRAEM (MINAGRI 2016). This is a very different situation to Bolivia, where coca growers not only had high levels of trust in the state but felt

as if they were in control of it. Coca growers themselves staffed state institutions tasked with coca control, including UDESTRO and FONADIN, as well as headed Vice-Ministries.

The issue of political will, both from the government and growers is elemental. The Peruvian government has vacillated repeatedly, making promises it was unable or unwilling to complete, very often under pressure from the U.S. government to push eradication forward (Durand Guevara 2005). Some grower leaders believe there is minimal government support for community control. Leader Carlos Chavaria described how in the current climate it was only a 'dream'. He argues that change will only come via electing leaders into positions of power. In August 2019, Bolivian union leader Felipe Martinez advised his Peruvian counterparts, "You have to have a new politics. We could never have reached as far if we had only worked as a union." Chavaria 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. CONPACCP head Brittner Corichahua told our team: "Evo Morales had to topple the neoliberal system before he could pass his coca law".

The gains witnessed in the Chapare over recent years cannot simply be put down to social control, but rather must be seen within the context of a wholesale transformation of the economy and the functioning 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 and Kohl 2014). If Peru implemented community coca control policies like those in Bolivia - but maintained its current neoliberal economic trajectory, then the advances that have been witnessed in coca growing regions of Bolivia would be difficult to replicate.

## CONCLUSION

Collaborative coca reduction in Bolivia is paying off: coca acreage is holding steady at approximately 23,100 hectares, less than 10 percent above the 22,000-hectare limit that the 2017 Bolivian coca law permits. But perhaps a more appropriate metric for success is the welfare of those dependent on illicit crops, and on this score Bolivia has excelled. 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, Farthing, and Ledebur 2017). By addressing the underlying causes of coca cultivation, including the lack of state presence, poverty, and social exclusion, coca crop reductions may prove to be more sustainable than those achieved under forced eradication.

This article has focused on the importance of community control and participation. Sixteen years since Arturo Escobar (2004) 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 actor carrying out the project. Significantly in the case of Bolivia, the coca growers' felt a strong sense of ownership and control over the MAS-led government - at both local and national levels. At the local level coca union members occupy positions in municipal and regional governments and in agencies that enact development and crop control in the region.

Elements of Bolivia's program - including grassroots control, Integrated development, and

expanded state presence - can inform drug policy design elsewhere. Growers from Peru but also from Colombia<sup>36</sup> - have expressed interest while recognizing that Bolivian style community coca control would need to be adapted to meet their specific requirements (Mortensen and Gutierrez 2019). Two key areas are critical for it to work - namely the ability of grassroots organizations to self-police and the building of trust in the state through increased collaboration and incorporating coca growers into the institutions that are responsible for development and crop control. The Bolivian experience provides pathways for how these challenges can be addressed.

The destabilization of Bolivia in November 2019 highlights how dependent social control of coca is on the commitment of the government in power. As of January 2020, the Añez government has threatened a military takeover of the Chapare and a return to forced eradication. The trust that coca growers had in government has vanished and with it the underpinnings of community control. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> The adverse impacts of crop eradication fall disproportionately on indigenous communities, ethnic minorities, women and children (Burger and Kapron 2017, Pieris 2014)

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<sup>2</sup> 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, Labate, Cavnar, and Rodrigues 2016).

<sup>3</sup> 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. Social 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, 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 and Ledebur 2015).

<sup>4</sup> The future of a new program, that was slated to begin in 2020, is up in the air with the end of the Morales government in November 2019.

<sup>5</sup> It was originally called the VRAE, with the M for the Mantaro river added in the 2000's (Koven and McClintock 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Mainstream development agencies often promote greater participation by the target population as a means 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 (Mohan and Stokke 2000, Cooke and Kothari 2001).

<sup>7</sup> Buen Vivir received less emphasis post 2014.

<sup>8</sup> 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, Canessa 2014), challenging the sincerity of the MAS administration's commitment to building cultures of participation and inclusion (Fontana and Grugel 2016, Marston and Kennemore 2019).

<sup>9</sup> In the organizational behavior literature, Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks (2001) argue that the three factors necessary for ownership in a project are a sense of control, a high degree of knowledge and understanding of the project goals, and personal investment in the projected outcomes.

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<sup>10</sup> Some studies date coca chewing to 8000 years before present (Dillehay et al. 2010).

<sup>11</sup> 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).

<sup>12</sup> In the Yungas coca production is undertaken according to a reciprocal mode of labour organization known as Ayni, which reinforces community bonds and with it and indigenous identification (Spedding 1994, Pellegrini 2016).

<sup>13</sup> Bolivian coca growers calculate that between 1980 and 2004 the security forces killed ninety-five unionized coca growers and incarcerated over 4000 union leaders (Oikonomakis 2019, 152).

<sup>14</sup> 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’ (do Alto 2007, García Yapur et al. 2015). During the MAS administration (2006 -2019) Government ministers and even President Morales regularly visited the Chapare to attend coca grower meetings where the government's performance was evaluated (Grisaffi 2019, Anria 2018).

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> The UNODC reports that the average price per kg in Bolivia in 2018 was US\$12.5 (UNODC 2019b, 40). In Peru in 2017 it was US\$3.4 (UNODC 2018a, 84).

<sup>17</sup> 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 make coca yields far lower 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.

<sup>18</sup> The Peruvian government considered the Alto Huallaga eradication a success that should be replicated (DEVIDA 2017, 77).

<sup>19</sup> One hectare of coca produces around 100 arobas of coca (12 kilo bag), each arroba is sold for between 140 (US\$42) to 180 Soles (US\$54). The harvest is three times per year.

<sup>20</sup> The minimum wage is 950 soles (US\$286 dollars) per month.



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<sup>21</sup> 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. Given the extensions of coca in the VRAEM these harvesting teams often spend over a week on a property before moving to the next farm.

<sup>22</sup> Farmers told us that workers could earn between 70 to 120 Soles per day (\$21 - \$35).

<sup>23</sup> The VRAEM emergency zone has varied in size and scope, with the number of districts under the emergency today, 34, the lowest in years.

<sup>24</sup> In the late 2000s, when poverty was declining in most of Peru, 65 percent of the VRAEM's population lived in poverty (double the national average) and 26.6 percent in extreme poverty (triple the national average) (Koven and McClintock 2015, 3-4).

<sup>25</sup> Many of the weapons used by the VRAEM framers today date back to 1989 when the state began to arm the peasant-formed self-defense groups (DECAS) to fight Sendero. The security forces changed their name to the Committees for Self-Defense (Comités de Auto-Defensa -CADs).

<sup>26</sup> The base level organizations that form the FEPAVRAE are Agricultural Producer Committees (Comités de Productores Agropecuarios COPAS- approximately 300) Ten to twenty COPAS make up fifteen district level organizations (Comités Distritales de Productores Agropecuarios -CODIPAS).

<sup>27</sup> CONPACCP groups growers from the valleys of the Alto Huallaga, VRAEM, Selva Central, Sandia, and Aguaytía. Growers from the Valley La Convención-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, 119). The other largest coca grower organization, the 12,000 member FEPCACYL, from the Cusco valleys chose not to join (Durand Ochoa 2011).

<sup>28</sup> Since 2013, the U.S. has provided funds for training and research, but 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).

<sup>29</sup> Colombia is the only Andean country to allow the aerial fumigation of illicit crops, although accusations of the use of aerial spraying in the Alto Huallaga are widespread

<sup>30</sup> The DEVIDA associations are the Communal Neighborhood Boards (Juntas Vecinales Comunes -JVC), and Communal Management Boards (Juntas Directivas Comunes -JDC), for indigenous communities.

<sup>31</sup> In February 2014, President Ollanta Humala (2011-2016), who had until that point backed alternative development in the VRAEM, launched eradication operations (Koven and McClintock 2015). FEPAVRAE

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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 and 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, 14-8) (Congreso de la República 2017, 14- 18).

<sup>32</sup> CORAH eradicated a total of 25,500 hectares 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).

<sup>33</sup> ENACO now has offices in Santa Rosa and San Francisco - both are in the VRAEM (ENACO 2020).

<sup>34</sup> On the black market, a 12-kilo sack of coca sells for between 140 to 180 soles (\$40 to \$55).

<sup>35</sup> Recent land titling programs mean almost all Chapare growers own their land.

<sup>36</sup> In February 2017, a delegation of 8 coca growers from across Colombia visited community coca control projects in Bolivia.