



universität
wien

MASTERARBEIT

Titel der Masterarbeit

„Transnational Organized Crime and the Production of
Space: The Long Journey of the Archipelago of San
Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina from Pirates’
Haven to Drugs’ Heaven“

Verfasser

Andrea Geranio

angestrebter akademischer Grad

Master (MA)

Wien, 2015

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:

A 067 805

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt:

Individuelles Masterstudium:
Global Studies – a European Perspective

Betreuerin / Betreuer:

ao. Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Friedrich Edelmayer, MAS

UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG



universität
wien

MASTERARBEIT / MASTER THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit /Title of the master thesis

Transnational Organized Crime and the Production of Space: The Long Journey of the Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina from Pirates' Haven to Drugs' Heaven

Verfasser /Author

Andrea Geranio

angestrebter akademischer Grad / acadamic degree aspired

Master (MA)

Wien, 2015

Studienkennzahl :

A 067 805

Studienrichtung:

Individuelles Masterstudium:
Global Studies – a European Perspective

Betreuer/Supervisor:

ao. Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Friedrich Edelmayer, MAS

Acknowledgments

An illustrious fellow countryman of mine, Umberto Eco, once wrote that a thesis is a fascinating process of self-realization. I could not agree more on a definition. However, I must not forget to devote a tiny part of my intellectual endeavor to thank all the people who accompanied me throughout this long process. My girlfriend Petra, who has always found the right words to encourage me, even in the darkest and most pessimistic hours. My parents, who have patiently funded my studies and invested in my future. My friend and fellow student Luka, with whom I shared liters of coffee during our sessions of mutual support and advices. My supervisor Prof. Edelmayer, who believed in my project since its first, embryonic form. Finally, a special thanks goes to Prof. Wardenga from the Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde, who mentored and provided me with the intellectual tools to venture into the (until then) unexplored realm of critical cartography.

Table of contents

Abstract	3
1. Introduction	5
2. Thinking crime “spatially”	9
2.1 Researching crime “spatially”: clarifications on the methods	13
2.2 Significance, potentialities and limits of the research: some reflections	15
3. The iconography of transnational organized crime	20
3.1 The global octopus.....	25
3.2 Transnational borderless crime	30
3.3 Global disease	35
3.4 The balloon effect	39
4. The Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina: from pirates’ haven to drugs’ heaven	44
4.1 The golden age of piracy: Providencia as “a den of thieves and pirates.....	47
4.2 Smugglers’ islands: contraband as a means of livelihood.....	52
4.3 <i>Sanandresitos</i> and <i>transportistas</i> : the islanders’ embroilment in the drug trafficking networks.....	57
5. Conclusion	62
Bibliography	68
Curriculum Vitae	80

Abstract

Die vorliegende Arbeit dient der Untersuchung von Räumlichkeit des grenzüberschreitenden organisierten Verbrechens sowie der illegalen Zuwanderung, die von kriminellen Gruppierungen gefördert wird, welche länderübergreifend agieren. Die räumliche Dimension und die grenzüberschreitenden Loci der sogenannten dunklen Seite der Globalisierung werden allerdings bei der umfangreichen Literatur zu organisiertem Verbrechen übersehen. Um die entscheidende Beziehung zwischen Verbrechen und Raum auf transnationaler Ebene zu verstehen, ordnet diese Abschlussarbeit organisiertes Verbrechen in die geistige Tradition des *spatial turn* ein, insbesondere Henri Lefebvres Theoretisierungen von Raum als sozialem Produkt. Im ersten Teil der Abschlussarbeit wird eine Ikonographie von grenzüberschreitendem organisiertem Verbrechen bestimmt und dekonstruiert, um durch offizielle Karten die Fehldarstellungen von Räumlichkeit darzulegen. Der zweite und letzte Teil widmet sich dem kolumbianischen Archipel San Andrés, Providencia und Santa Catalina. Eine Fallstudie zeigt auf, wie ein differenzierterer Ansatz für die Untersuchung von grenzüberschreitenden Verbrechen und seiner Räumlichkeit von Nutzen sein kann, um die gegenwärtige Situation eines Knotenpunkts für Drogenhandel zu verstehen.

Abstract

The present work aims to investigate the spatiality of transnational organized crime and the illegal flows engendered by criminal groupings operating at a transnational level. The geographical dimension and the transnational loci of the so-called dark side of globalization are indeed guiltily overlooked by the vast literature on organized crime. In order to understand the critical relationship between crime and space at the transnational level, this thesis inserts organized crime into the intellectual tradition of the spatial turn, in particular Henri Lefebvre's theorizations on space as a social product. In the first part of the thesis, an iconography of transnational organized crime is identified and deconstructed so as to lay bare the misrepresentations of its spatiality through official maps. The second and last part will be devoted to the Colombian archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina, a case study that will illustrate how a more nuanced approach to the study of transnational crime and its spatiality can be helpful to understand the present condition of a drug trafficking hub.

1. Introduction

Throughout the last three decades, organized crime has undoubtedly gained momentum as a security concern of the international community.¹ Particular attention has been devoted to drug trafficking, one of the most profitable criminal activities.² However, organized crime and its globalized topographies are still guiltily overlooked by geographers, as rightfully lamented by Tim Hall.³ More specifically, an academic lack of interest is perceivable as to the way in which actors that operate outside of the law territorialize certain locales and produce peculiar spatial configurations through their practices.

In accordance with Hayward's attempt, I purport to reflect on the spatiality of crime by inserting it into the so-called "spatial turn" of the social sciences.⁴ The latter is an epistemological juncture engendered within a host of variegated disciplines by like-minded theoreticians who agreed upon the basic idea that space possesses an ontological dignity of its own. Space thus needs to be problematized, rather than treated as a mere empty container waiting to be filled by human activities.⁵ Yet, my research endeavor's af-

¹ Letizia Paoli, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*, ed. Letizia Paoli (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1–2.

² Itty Abraham and Willem van Schendel, "Introduction: The Making of Illicitness," in *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization*, ed. Willem van Schendel and Itty Abraham (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 2.

³ Tim Hall, "Geographies of the Illicit: Globalization and Organized Crime," *Progress in Human Geography* 37, no. 3 (October 18, 2012): 366–385.

⁴ Keith J. Hayward, "Five Spaces of Cultural Criminology," *British Journal of Criminology* 52, no. 3 (2012): 442–443.

⁵ Matthias Middell and Katja Naumann, "Global History and the Spatial Turn: From the Impact of Area Studies to the Study of Critical Junctures of

finitude with Hayward's stops here, as my focus is centered less on local crime and more on transnational crime. As a consequence, the outlaw activities under consideration shift accordingly from small-scale to large-scale practices, such as contraband and trafficking, meaning also the abandonment of the urban frame as the preferred analytical scale.

However, the vast bulk of literature that seeks to locate crime in space is concerned with the micro- rather than the macro-level, privileging analyses of criminal patterns in towns, residential areas, neighborhoods and even individual streets. The evolution of such spatial criminology has been invariably accompanied by the production of crime maps pinpointing hotspots and reducing the complexity of crime to crude Cartesian coordinates. Nonetheless, the emergence of transnational organized crime as a security issue and academic interest has brought about a similar process, albeit still at an embryonic stage. The development of a scholarship on transnational crime has been accompanied by a parallel institution-building aimed at addressing the problem, thus bringing about a relationship of mutual constituency between academic and policy-making circles. Hence, timid attempts at providing cartographic simplifications of transnational illegal flows have been put forward by specialized agencies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Yet, the maps used in their official reports mirror the same a-spatial and a-historical understanding of the geographical dimension of transnational organized crime exhibited by

Globalization," *Journal of Global History* 5, no. 1 (2010): 154–155; Pete Hay, "A Phenomenology of Islands:" 31-33; for a detailed and multidisciplinary overview of the spatial turn see Barney Warf and Santa Arias, *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

the mainstream literature on the subject matter. As a result, an iconography of transnational organized crime appears to be in the making, thus inviting critical reflections on its underlying assumptions.

Therefore, I put forward a more spatially-sensitive and historically-informed approach to the study of the geographies of transnational organized crime. Rather than focusing on a specific scalar level (such as urban/local, national or global), my intention here is to investigate transit zones used by criminal actors for their traffics as analytical and spatial categories in their own right. These transit areas constitute indeed the best starting point to disclose the spatial patterns arising from dynamic practices such as transnational crime, the more so when they overlap with borderland societies.⁶ Furthermore, they seldom receive due consideration. As duly noted by van Schendel, “the discourse on illegal flows focuses on the (ill) effects of the flows at their points of destination but has little time for possible effects at the various staging posts.”⁷ In this respect, islands acquire a central stage as transit localities *par excellence*. Rather than self-contained spaces characterized by a proverbial insularity from the rest of the world, islands are best embodied by a condition

⁶ Willem van Schendel, “Spaces of Engagement: How Borderlands, Illicit Flows and Territorial States Interlock,” in *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization*, ed. Willem van Schendel and Itty Abraham (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 46; see also Patrick Radden Keefe, “The Geography of Badness: Mapping the Hubs of the Illicit Global Economy,” in *Convergence: Illicit Networks and National Security in the Age of Globalization*, ed. Michael Miklaucic and Jacqueline Brewer (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2013), 97–109.

⁷ van Schendel, “Spaces of Engagement: How Borderlands, Illicit Flows and Territorial States Interlock,” 41.

of inter-connectedness with their surrounding environment.⁸ Especially in the Colombian archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina, which has come to the fore in the last decades as a strategic crossroads and transit point of the illegal cocaine trade. Furthermore, the geographical and political status of the Archipelago as a maritime borderland makes it an ideal case study to investigate transnational phenomena. The group of Caribbean islands will therefore be the geographic focal point of a historical inquiry aimed to explore the illegal practices that have forged its social space throughout time.⁹

The next chapter will elucidate the analytical, theoretical and methodological foundations upon which my work lies. However, it will not present a comprehensive state of the art. Such an unorthodox course of action is the outcome of a deliberate choice. The mainstream literature will indeed be scrutinized, alongside official maps, in the third chapter, within the context of a deconstructionist analysis and critique of the iconography of transnational organized crime. The fourth chapter will delve into the case study, providing an alternative approach to the examination of the spatiality of transnational crime. Finally, the conclusive chapter will provide an overall appraisal of my research endeavor.

⁸ Pete Hay, "A Phenomenology of Islands," *Island Studies Journal* 1, no. 1 (2006): 23.

⁹ The present paper is the extension of a previous research project entitled "The Production of an Insular Borderland: The Long Journey of the Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina from Pirates' Haven to Drugs' Heaven."

2. Thinking crime “spatially”

Organized crime and its transnational ramifications are phenomena that loom large in the criminological literature. Yet, agreement is still far from being achieved among scholars on the subject matter. Albanese noted indeed that “there seem to be as many descriptions... as there are authors.”¹⁰ According to Paoli, organized crime is a notion that has evolved in the last half-century from its first limited and rudimentary coinage in the United States to the contemporary status of “umbrella concept” that encompasses a vast array of criminal matters.¹¹ In fact, nowadays the analytical validity of this contested concept threatens to be reduced by its vague scope of applicability. Scholars and policy-makers are indeed caught between emphasizing the “Who” – criminal organizations as stable hierarchical groupings – or the “What” – a variegated set of illegal activities.¹²

Neither of those pronouns will haunt my research, as my intention here is to distance myself from that dichotomy, and inquire instead into the “Where.” The analysis of the spatial dimension underlying criminal matters will afford me the possibility not to get trapped in a decennial scientific struggle aimed to shape the defini-

¹⁰ Felia Allum and Panos A. Kostakos, “Introduction: Deconstruction in Progress: Towards a Better Understanding of Organized Crime?,” in *Defining and Defying Organized Crime: Discourse, Perceptions and Reality*, ed. Felia Allum et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 4.

¹¹ Letizia Paoli and Tom Vander Beken, “Organized Crime: A Contested Concept,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*, ed. Letizia Paoli (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 13.

¹² *Ibid.*, 14; Hall, “Geographies of the Illicit: Globalization and Organized Crime,” 369.

tional contours of “organized crime” as a legally or scientifically valid concept. Rather, I will focus on spaces where transnational illegal activities take place. Kleemans rightfully theorized the “social embeddedness” of criminality by pointing out that “Organized crime does not operate within a social vacuum but interacts with its social environment.”¹³ The social environment Kleemans refers to is in turn part of a larger societal context that is embedded within a certain space. In a nutshell, I intend to explore the “spatial embeddedness” of transnational organized crime. More specifically, I am concerned here with transit zones, regarded as special places that are shaped both by specific actors (the “Who”) and by particular sets of activities (the “What”) throughout time.

Such a spatially sensitive account needs however a prior clarification on the concept of space, both per se and in relation to criminal practices. As previously mentioned, my theoretical approach will be informed by the social science’s spatial turn, in that I start from the basic assumption that space is not an a priori category delimiting the phenomena that one wishes to scrutinize, but rather a source of intellectual relevance in its own right.

It was precisely the wish to abandon reductionist depictions of space as an aggregate of Cartesian coordinates that animated the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre to write one of his seminal works, *The Production of Space*, whose main claim is condensed in his well-known and oft-cited proposition: “(Social) space is a (social)

¹³ Edward R. Kleemans, “Theoretical Perspectives on Organized Crime,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*, ed. Letizia Paoli (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 37–38.

product.”¹⁴ The term “product” here is to be intended in a purely Marxist fashion, thus as the outcome of a process that is to be investigated, rather than as an intellectual category existing in and of itself.¹⁵ In order to scrutinize this process, Lefebvre developed a three-dimensional dialectic, a spatial triad composed of three distinct moments. The first one, *spatial practice*, is the tangible “perceived space” resulting from the gradual emergence of quotidian praxis, networks and routes. The second moment is termed *representations of space*, namely the space as conceived and regulated by knowledge and power. This dimension is dominated by technical and professional planners, policy- and map-makers, who wish to control the social relations embedded in a certain locality. Finally, the *representational space* is the directly “lived space” that overlays “physical space, making symbolic use of its objects”. As duly pointed out by Merrifield, a representational space is “felt more than thought” and “embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations.”¹⁶

The three aforementioned moments are all fundamental constituent parts of that entity we call “space.” None of them takes precedence nor originates the others. All of them must be viewed as equally important dimensions whose inter-relational and conflictive dynamics lie at the core of the production of a society’s spatial configuration.¹⁷ As Merrifield puts it:

¹⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 26.

¹⁵ Andy Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 104–105; Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 34.

¹⁶ Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction*, 109–110; Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 38–39.

¹⁷ Christian Schmid, “Henri Lefebvre’s Theory of the Production of Space: Towards a Three-Dimensional Dialectic,” in *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading*

The space-relations identified by Lefebvre, then take on meaning through, and are permeated by, historically defined social relations (and vice versa)... space represented the realm of flows of capital, money, commodities and information, and remained the domain of the hegemonic forces in society. From this viewpoint, place comprises the locus and a sort of stopping of those flows, a specific moment in the dynamics of space-relations under capitalism.¹⁸

What better place than a transit zone, then, would be more indicative of those special loci where flows are (momentarily) interrupted and crystallize in a sort of pit-stop of global connectedness?

If space is produced and reproduced over time, so is the illegal, the outlaw, the forbidden. According to Itty and van Schendel “both law and crime emerge from historical and ongoing struggles over legitimacy” between the official sovereign authority exerting its control over a territory and those actors that openly or covertly defy it.¹⁹ It thus makes sense to stop “talking like a state” and distinguish in a more judicious way problematic cognitive demarcations such as the one separating the “legal/illegal” (what the ruling authority allows or prohibits) from the “licit/illicit” (what is socially allowed or prohibited).²⁰ The proper approach is once again summarized by Itty and Van Schendel:

Henri Lefebvre, ed. Kanishka Goonewardena et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 43.

¹⁸ Quoted in Andrzej Zieleniec, *Space and Social Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 2007), 92.

¹⁹ Abraham and van Schendel, “Introduction: The Making of Illicitness,” 7.

²⁰ Paul Gootenberg, “Talking About the Flow: Drugs, Borders, and the Discourse of Drug Control,” *Cultural Critique* 71, no. 1 (2009): 13–46; Abraham and van

We need to approach flows of goods and people as visible manifestations of power configurations that weave in and out of legality, in and out of states, and in and out of individuals' lives, as socially embedded, sometimes long-term processes of production, exchange, consumption, and representation.²¹

2.1 Researching crime “spatially”: clarifications on the methods

The spaces emerging from the aforementioned processes are thus special places that require to be investigated in their historicity. In his evaluation of Lefebvre’s legacy for historians, White rightfully argued that space is “something that human beings produce over time,” ergo “space is itself historical.”²² Therefore, the method that would best complement my theoretical and analytical framework is undoubtedly the qualitative historical analysis, as laid out clearly by Cameron Thies in his attempt to introduce historical research to political scientists in an intelligible fashion.²³ Furthermore, in accord with Gardner, I conceive of historical analysis as a “pervasive and necessary technique in its own right, without which no account of

Schendel, “Introduction: The Making of Illicitness,” 4. Allum and Kostakos, “Introduction: Deconstruction in Progress,” 5–6.

²¹ Abraham and van Schendel, “Introduction: The Making of Illicitness,” 9.

²² Richard White, *What Is Spatial History?*, Working Paper, Spatial History Lab (Stanford University, 2010), 2, <https://web.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/pub.php?id=29> (6 April 2015).

²³ See Cameron G. Thies, “A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations,” *International Studies Perspectives* 3 (2002): 351–372.

present phenomena may be properly understood.”²⁴ The present phenomenon that I wish to analyze and understand is the contemporary condition of the Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina as a strategic staging post for illegal traffics. Through this case study, I wish to disclose the societal processes underlying the production of the problematic transnational spatiality that characterize it.

Before delving into the case study, the next chapter will provide a critical assessment of the mainstream understanding of crime and its spatiality on the transnational plain. An iconography of transnational organized crime will be identified in the official maps and deconstructed according to the insights developed within the field of critical cartography. In accord with Harley, I start from the assumption that maps are social constructions which are imbued with the social meanings and worldviews of their map-makers.²⁵ Thus, maps are to be conceived as “cultural texts” whose textuality can be read and critically assessed: “Deconstruction urges us to read between the lines of the map – ‘in the margins of the text’ – and through its tropes to discover the silences and contradictions [sic] that challenge the apparent honesty of the image.”²⁶ Lurman and MacLure confirm that a deconstructionist approach invites the researcher to view its object of study as a text in

²⁴ Philip Gardner, “Historical Analysis,” in *The SAGE Dictionary of Social Research Methods* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 135.

²⁵ John Brian Harley, “Deconstructing the Map,” *Cartographica* 26, no. 2 (1989): 3–7; see also Jeremy W. Crampton, “Maps as Social Constructions: Power, Communication and Visualization,” *Progress in Human Geography* 25, no. 2 (2001): 235–252.

²⁶ Harley, “Deconstructing the Map,” 3.

order to “challenge the taken-for-granted” contained therein.²⁷ The deconstruction of the official cartographical representations of transnational organized crime will be accompanied by the analysis of the relevant literature, which will shed light on the maps’ underlying contradictions. The latter will then be subject to critique, intended as the “examination of the assumptions of a field of knowledge” aimed at putting forward alternative insights and categorizations.²⁸

2.2 Significance, potentialities and limits of the research: some reflections

I deem my work relevant within the context of several fields and disciplines. First and foremost, my focus on criminal groups and activities manifests clearly my wish to contribute to the ambit of criminology. As a matter of fact, my approach is intended to overcome some of the analytical and conceptual strictures of this highly specialized field, and to offer instead a more nuanced, historicized and bottom-up approach to the study of illegal phenomena. At the same

²⁷ Erica Burman and Maggie MacLure, “Deconstruction as a Method of Research,” in *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, ed. Bridget Somekh and Cathy Lewin (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 286. However, the two authors warn us that Jacques Derrida, the father of deconstruction, would never define it a method, as the latter would always imply its separateness from the world under observation. Instead, deconstruction is viewed as “inextricably tangled up with whatever is its object.” Thus, I would rather borrow Harley’s words and define deconstruction as a broad research strategy, rather than a rigorous set of techniques, see Harley, “Deconstructing the Map,” 3.

²⁸ Jeremy W. Crampton and John Krygier, “An Introduction to Critical Cartography,” *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 4, no. 1 (2006): 13.

time, as mentioned in the introductory section, my work purports to bring criminal groups and their shadowy topographies on the stage of human geography. Such aim is corroborated by the choice to problematize space in the spirit of the spatial turn. The latter will also provide me with some insights that may turn out to be useful contributions to both my broad study field, Global Studies, and to the narrower focus of Insular Studies. With respect to the former, I am guided by the awareness that the spatial turn constitutes the “foundation of global history,” especially if we are to grasp those peculiar spatialities produced by actors that are increasingly causing “irritations and anxieties” to our societies, such as criminal organizations.²⁹ In this sense, the Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina assumes a certain importance as a case study, since it has been described as a “condensation of global history.”³⁰ As for the linkages of the spatial turn to Insular Studies, my contribution would be in line with that branch of scholarship that embraces post-structuralist approaches in the attempt to go beyond the crude physical nature of islands as self-contained entities.³¹ Such a stance is powerfully summarized by Hay in his rendition of islands as “special places, paradigmatic places, topographies of meaning in which the qualities that construct place are dramatically distilled.”³²

²⁹ Middell and Naumann, “Global History and the Spatial Turn,” 152; 154–156.

³⁰ Friedrich Edelmayer and Margarete Grandner, “Santa Catalina – Old Providence. Eine Insel der Karibik zwischen Mikro- und Globalgeschichte,” in *Plus Ultra. Die Welt der Neuzeit. Festschrift für Alfred Kohler zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Friedrich Edelmayer et al. (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2008), 590 (author’s translation).

³¹ See Hay, “A Phenomenology of Islands”; Godfrey Baldacchino, “The Lure of the Island: A Spatial Analysis of Power Relations,” *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures* 1, no. 2 (2012): 55–62.

³² Hay, “A Phenomenology of Islands,” 31.

The fields and disciplines to which I refer inevitably shape the contours of my potential readership. Students, scholars and pundits interested and engaged in criminology, history, geography and cultural studies are the obvious recipients of my intellectual endeavor. However, I believe that my final work will not be particularly serviceable to policy-makers and professional practitioners. The latter, when dealing with transnational crime and networks, are mainly in search of ready-to-use knowledge aimed at countering these illegal phenomena, whereas I approach this subject-matter with the keen curiosity of a graduate student who wishes to offer, as much as possible, an unbiased point of view.

I embarked upon this enterprise with full cognizance of the potential limitations and drawbacks awaiting me around the corner. The first of my preoccupations was my almost exclusive reliance on secondary sources. Unfortunately, for various reasons – mainly related to financial and time restraints – I was not able to travel to Colombia and carry out archival or field research. However, the small geographic size of the case study under examination worked at my advantage. The historiography of the Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina is indeed not very well developed and very few authors have written extensive monographs on it. On the one hand this has obviously entailed a certain paucity of material, but on the other hand this circumstance has decreased the risk of source selectivity on my part.³³ Source selectivity may also be invoked in relation to the transnational crime maps that I chose to de-

³³ Regarding this and other issues on secondary sources, I will abide by the very useful guidelines provided by Thies, “A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations,” 359–364.

construct. In my defense, I tried to minimize this problem by narrowing my choice to maps contained in official reports issued by UNODC, which is undeniably the foremost international authority when it comes to analysis and standard-setting in the field of crime prevention and containment.

Methodologically speaking, I am very careful in trying to avoid incurring in the bias referred to as “presentism”, intended as presenting “analyses of the past based on the vantage point of the present.”³⁴ I am fully aware that I might run into this risk by associating such historically diverse actors as contemporary drug cartels and mercantile pirates. For this reason, I provide due historical contextualization whenever such risk materializes.

With regard to the theoretical framework against which I set the elucidation of my research topic, it must be said that the spatial turn and the problematic issue of “space” in social research are subject to innumerable interpretations and renditions. The latter assertion holds true especially for the oeuvre of the specific author I chose as inspirational source, Henri Lefebvre. Indeed, the French philosopher’s oeuvre has been variously construed by different scholars over time.³⁵ The theoretical edifice constructed by Lefebvre is seemingly open to re-elaboration, and allows us, as noted by Merrifield, “to add our own flesh, our own content, to rewrite it as part of our own chapter or research agenda.”³⁶ Although such a freedom

³⁴ Ibid., 360.

³⁵ Kipfer et al. outline three distinct “constellations” of scholars engaged in the theoretical disentanglement of Lefebvre’s body of work, see Stefan Kipfer et al., “On the Production of Henri Lefebvre,” in *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre*, ed. Kanishka Goonewardena et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 6–16.

³⁶ Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction*, 109.

of interpretation might sometimes lead to biased readings of the French author, it has also undeniably left me enough room for manoeuver in delineating the contours of my research. I have nevertheless done my utmost to avoid abusing of such theoretical freedom.

3. The iconography of transnational organized crime

The concepts of crime and space are no strangers to each other. On the contrary, the spatial analysis of crime patterns looms large in the history of criminology. Already in the 19th century, André-Michel Guerry and Adolphe Quetelet published their first *cartes thematiques* showing the distribution of crimes across administrative areas in France and the Low Countries.³⁷ However, the most important and long-lasting contribution to the criminology of space has undoubtedly been set forth by the Chicago School in the 1920s and 30s. Their findings have heavily influenced the way in which criminologists see space in relation to crime (and vice versa) to date.³⁸

However, the bulk of criminological investigations on the spatial dimension of crime has been mainly focused on local crime at the urban level, whereas very few authors have reflected on the transnational spatialities engendered by criminal groups.³⁹ In addition, the tendency in this specialized sub-discipline is to further restrict the scope of study, zooming in to ever smaller units of analysis such as neighborhoods, streets or even individual addresses.⁴⁰ As

³⁷ David Weisburd, Wim Bernasco, and Gerben Bruinsma, “Units of Analysis in Geographic Criminology: Historical Development, Critical Issues, and Open Questions,” in *Putting Crime in Its Place: Units of Analysis in Geographic Criminology*, ed. David Weisburd, Wim Bernasco, and Gerben Bruinsma (New York: Springer, 2009), 3–4; Theo Kindynis, “Ripping up the Map: Criminology and Cartography Reconsidered,” *British Journal of Criminology* 54, no. 2 (2014): 223.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 223–224; Hayward, “Five Spaces of Cultural Criminology,” 443; Weisburd, Bernasco, and Bruinsma, “Units of Analysis in Geographic Criminology,” 11–15.

³⁹ Hall, “Geographies of the Illicit,” 366–367.

⁴⁰ Weisburd, Bernasco, and Bruinsma, “Units of Analysis in Geographic Criminology,” 3–6.

a consequence, the mainstream literature is replete with accounts on petty crimes and burglaries, but lacks any significant reference to crimes committed transnationally or at sensitive spatial intersections.⁴¹

One of the reasons explaining this intellectual void is of course related to the circumstance that crime mapping is a task almost exclusively carried out by individual, thus local or national, police corps. As a corollary, the spatial analysis of crime is usually restricted to the limited jurisdiction of specific law enforcement agencies tasked with its policing.⁴² Another, equally plausible, explanation is linked to the relative newness of the concept of “transnational organized crime,” or at least of its institutional connotation. Although in its literal meaning the phenomenon “has a history as old as national governments and international trade,” transnational organized crime has been only recently institutionalized as a policy-making domain.⁴³ The birth of transnational organized crime as a “brand name” dates back to the 1970s, when this notion was first elaborated in a working paper on the occasion of a United Nations (UN) conference on crime prevention. Thereafter, the concept progressively gained prominence – thanks also to the heavy lobbying of the United States (U.S.) – among criminologists, practitioners and

⁴¹ A similar criticism is expressed by Gerben Bruinsma, “Criminology and Transnational Crime,” in *Histories of Transnational Crime*, ed. Gerben Bruinsma (New York: Springer, 2015), 4–5.

⁴² Kindynis, “Ripping up the Map: Criminology and Cartography Reconsidered,” 229.

⁴³ Michael Woodiwiss, “Transnational Organised Crime: The Global Reach of an American Concept,” in *Transnational Organised Crime: Perspectives on Global Security*, ed. Adam Edwards and Peter Gill (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 13.

law enforcers, up until its definitive consecration as a global security threat in the 1990s.⁴⁴

The growing attention devoted to the phenomenon led to a parallel institution-building aimed to tackle it, as noted by Sheptycki.⁴⁵ One of the most important international agencies of this kind is indubitably UNODC, whose reports provide the UN member states with up-to-date surveys, data and recommendations on the most pressing issues related to crime on a global level. Similarly to the developments in criminology at the urban level, the analyses offered in such reports have been often integrated by maps showing the spatial distribution, linkages and intensity of all the relevant crime indicators. Such cartographic artifacts are now spread the world over on the pages of notorious newspapers, magazines, academic journals and books. They neatly provide us with all the visual support we need to understand how “crime has gone global.”⁴⁶

However, all these graphic representations are responsible to produce and feed into an iconology of transnational organized crime that is highly problematic. These maps, like all the others, are “inherently ideologically loaded, reflecting the interests of their

⁴⁴ David Felsen and Akis Kalaitzidis, “A Historical Overview of Transnational Crime,” in *Handbook of Transnational Crime and Justice*, ed. Philip Reichel (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 4–5; for a detailed historical overview of the institutional development of the term, see Petrus van Duyne and Mark D. H. Nelemans, “Transnational Organized Crime: Thinking in and out of Plato’s Cave,” in *Routledge Handbook of Transnational Organized Crime*, ed. Felia Allum and Stan Gilmour (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 36–51.

⁴⁵ James Sheptycki, “Against Transnational Organized Crime,” in *Critical Reflections on Transnational Organized Crime, Money Laundering and Corruption*, ed. Margaret E. Beare (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 121.

⁴⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *The Globalization of Crime: A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment* (Vienna: United Nations Publications, 2010), ii, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/tocta-2010.html> (23 July 2015).

creators.” Therefore, they “inevitably fail to capture the spatial dynamics of crime, as they reduce complex social phenomena to dots or shadings on a two-dimensional surface.”⁴⁷ Kindynis masterfully lays bare the contradictory nature of crime map-making, and he thus deserves to be quoted in full:

After all, crime and criminality do not exist as a scattering of discontinuous, static points, suspended in isolation; they have a history and a trajectory, an ambience (or aura?) that surrounds them in both time and space. Conventional dot distribution or choropleth crime maps show only those coordinates at which these trajectories, individual biographies or confluences of criminal ‘opportunity’ – once reported, recorded, categorized, classified and quantified, distilled into static data points – are ‘assimilated into an administrative grid.’⁴⁸

The cartographic embodiments of transnational crime have their own specific graphic artifices to convey a user-friendly snap-shot of criminal topographies. Among them, the arrow stands out as the most effective sign to represent outlawed movements of people or objects across space. Indeed, according to van Schendel:

The cartography of illegal flows depends heavily on the persuasive value of the arrow. The arrow is a god-send for those wishing to represent illegal flows in a threatening manner because it is a discursive tool that

⁴⁷ Kindynis, “Ripping up the Map,” 227–230; another excellent examination of maps - and in particular crime maps - as abstract representations of reality is offered in Bernd Belina, “Crime Mapping – Production of Ideology and Alternatives,” in *Learning with Geoinformation V - Lernen Mit Geoinformation V*, ed. Thomas Jekel, Alfons Koller, and Karl Donert (Heidelberg: Wichmann, 2010), 13–14.

⁴⁸ Kindynis, “Ripping up the Map,” 230.

conveys the notion of motion, stimulus, and target as perhaps no other graphic code could.⁴⁹

Such cartographic practices produce maps that are more persuasive than informational, as they endeavor to make “policy makers sit up and pay attention.”⁵⁰ Yet, state officials are not the only ones who fall victims to the seductive allure of these maps and of the reports to which they are annexed. As acknowledged by many authors, the segments of academia engaged in the study of organized crime are highly receptive to law enforcement and policy-making circles (and vice versa), to such an extent as to be intertwined with them in a symbiotic relationship, whereby scholars must adopt a “populist vernacular” if they want to be heard outside of their limited disciplinary boundaries.⁵¹ In other words, academics end up “talking like cops” or “talking like a state.”⁵²

The biases underlying official transnational crime maps are thus accompanied, endorsed and amplified by hordes of commentators who wish to explain the spatiality of their object of study. The result is an iconography of transnational organized crime that is inherently a-spatial and a-historical, as it fails to portray the trajectories and histories of illegal practices. In the next sections I will present a series of visual and textual examples to support my argument.

⁴⁹ van Schendel, “Spaces of Engagement,” 41.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵¹ Adam Edwards and Pete Gill, “The Politics of ‘Transnational Organized Crime’: Discourse, Reflexivity and the Narration of ‘Threat,’” *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 4, no. 2 (2002): 250–251; Helena Carrapiço, “Transnational Organized Crime as a Security Concept,” in *Routledge Handbook of Transnational Organized Crime*, ed. Felia Allum and Stan Gilmour (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 25; Allum and Kostakos, “Introduction: Deconstruction in Progress,” 5–6.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 6; Gootenberg, “Talking About the Flow,” 39.

3.1 The global octopus

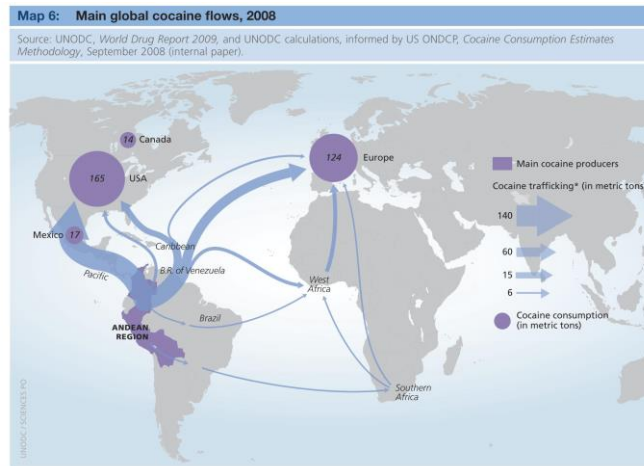


Figure 1: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *World Drug Report 2010* (Vienna, 2010), 70, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/WDR-2010.html> (27 July 2015) © United Nations.

The map above (Figure 1) provides a visual exemplification of the 2008 global cocaine flows. As it is possible to observe, cocaine is produced in the Andean region and then smuggled through multiple routes to its two main end markets, North America and Europe.

What clearly stands out in this cartographic depiction of the transatlantic cocaine trade is of the cohesion of the arrows linking producer and consumer countries. A sense of uniformity is conveyed by the long fluxes of narcotics in all their lengths, as if a single entity were responsible of running and overseeing this illegal commodity chain from its outset up until its terminus; a single entity that is able to reach and conquer faraway places with its long hands. Better yet, an octopus stretching its long tentacles.

In fact, the imagery of the octopus is deeply rooted in the literature on organized crime. One of the first and foremost authors who employed this term was the investigative journalist Claire Sterling in her book *Octopus: The Long Reach of the International Sicilian Mafia*.⁵³ The main idea underlying this book is that the Sicilian Mafia had reached such a level of organizational coherence and sophistication as to be comparable to a multinational corporation. Moreover, like any other legitimate company, it was also able to establish durable links and alliances with other powerful criminal syndicates around the world, thus amounting to a “planetwide criminal consortium,” as she further elaborated in a later book.⁵⁴ As pointed out by Scherrer, this and other sensationalistic depictions “served to underpin the picture of a monolithic and monopolistic criminal organization” that had become transnational, providing also a “frame of reference through which from then on criminal groups of all types and in all places would be understood.”⁵⁵

These views are indeed widely shared by many exponents of the academic world. Susan Strange, in collaboration with Letizia Paoli, regards mafias as states “on the wrong side of the law,” which have joined forces in a sort of “transnational diplomacy.”⁵⁶ Likewise, Manuel Castells argues that the heightened transnational reach

⁵³ Claire Sterling, *Octopus: The Long Reach of the International Sicilian Mafia* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990).

⁵⁴ Claire Sterling, *Thieves' World: The Threat of the New Global Network of Organized Crime* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 14; a more recent example in this strand is offered by Misha Glenny, *McMafia: A Journey Through the Global Criminal Underworld* (New York: Knopf, 2008).

⁵⁵ Amandine Scherrer, *G8 Against Transnational Organized Crime* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 29.

⁵⁶ Susan Strange, *The Retreat of the State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 110–113.

of criminal practices “induces organized crime from different countries to establish strategic alliances to cooperate, rather than fight, on each other’s turf, through subcontracting arrangements, and joint ventures,” thus mirroring the behavior of licit economic enterprises.⁵⁷ In the same spirit, Stanislawski writes that “the major transnational criminal enterprises constitute nothing less than a worldwide criminal web.”⁵⁸ “No corner of the world is untouched by transnational organized crime, and many illicit networks have multicontinental areas of operations,” according to Miklaucic and Brewer.⁵⁹

The mainstream agreement therefore conceives of transnational organized crime as the sum of powerful and cohesive criminal organizations that are territorially spread according to regional spheres of influence. Although it is undeniable that some criminal groupings are fairly well structured and durable, the overall discourse tends to overemphasize the structural and spatial homogeneity of the global criminal underworld. The risk of treating transnational organized crime “as a concrete entity or alignment of entities,” Sheptycki warns us, is that the term may end up being used as a “caricature” rather than as a valid analytical concept.⁶⁰ As Scherrer rightfully observes, this “particular (alarmist and sensationalist) frame of reference has been used and propagated to the detriment

⁵⁷ Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture. Volume III: End of Millennium*, 2nd ed. (Oxford and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 174.

⁵⁸ Bartosz H. Stanislawski, “Transnational ‘Bads’ in the Globalized World: The Case of Transnational Organized Crime,” *Public Integrity* 6, no. 2 (2004): 156.

⁵⁹ Michael Miklaucic and Jacqueline Brewer, “Introduction,” in *Convergence: Illicit Networks and National Security in the Age of Globalization*, ed. Michael Miklaucic and Jacqueline Brewer (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2013), xv.

⁶⁰ Sheptycki, “Against Transnational Organized Crime,” 125.

of other forms of analysis.”⁶¹ Indeed, more nuanced and well-balanced arguments have been put forward by authors who refuse to espouse the prevalent conceptualization. The world of transnational crime is made up of “fragmented, localized and fluid networks,” rather than well-structured and uniform syndicates.⁶²

Albini suggests to view the totality of these networks as an “organized crime matrix” that includes “a vast number of individuals and groups from around the world who weave in and out of criminal ventures as they also weave in and out of the group structures themselves.”⁶³ Furthermore, Abraham and van Schendel argue that much of what today is considered transnational organized crime encompasses as well “scores of micro-practices that, while often illegal in a formal sense, are not driven by a structural logic of organization and unified purpose.”⁶⁴ Likewise, Gootenberg notices that practitioners and policy-makers usually rely on powerful drug lords and cartels as “centralizing demonologies” that signify a concrete target, as opposed to “looser human networks involving thousands of desperately anonymous peasants and dollar-loving street entrepreneurs.”⁶⁵ A more specific example is provided by Kenney, who shows that the official understanding of the Colombian cocaine trade as run by monopolistic cartels is nothing but a myth.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Scherrer, *G8 Against Transnational Organized Crime*, 31.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Joseph L. Albini and Jeffrey Scott McIlwain, *Deconstructing Organized Crime: An Historical and Theoretical Study* (Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland & Company, 2012), 179.

⁶⁴ Abraham and van Schendel, “Introduction: The Making of Illicitness,” 4.

⁶⁵ Gootenberg, “Talking About the Flow,” 37–38.

⁶⁶ Michael Kenney, *From Pablo to Osama: Trafficking and Terrorist Networks, Government Bureaucracies, and Competitive Adaptation* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 25–47.

In fact, the term “cartel” is itself highly problematic, as the trafficking of narcotics has been always carried out by a myriad of small, informal groups. Even though the latter often did business with popular drug entrepreneurs like Pablo Escobar or the Ochoa brothers, “their business relations more closely resembled informal producer-export syndicates than monolithic cartels that controlled prices and monopolized markets.”⁶⁷

The octopus trope is thus the oversimplification of a complex phenomenon that has been nourished by the mainstream criminological and journalistic literature. Consequently, its visual counterpart is based on a biased view of transnational organized crime, whose spatial distribution on the map simplistically evokes far-reaching, unified criminal entities rather than loose networks of situational, contingent and locally-based arrangements.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 26.

3.2 Transnational borderless crime

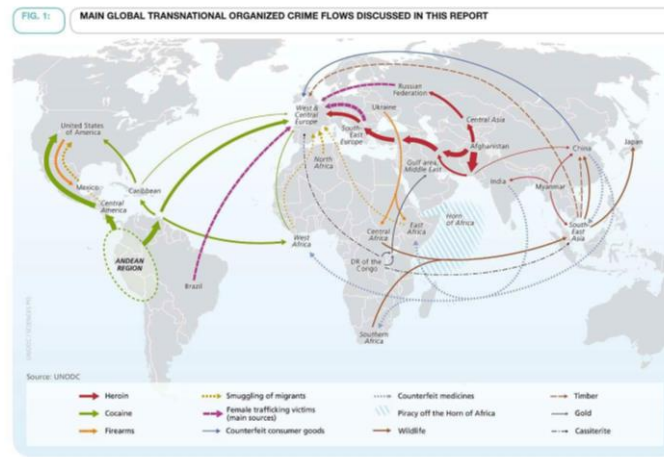


Figure 2: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *The Globalization of Crime: A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment* (Vienna: United Nations Publications, 2010), 2, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/tocta-2010.html> (23 July 2015) © United Nations.

The map shown above (Figure 2) offers an overview of the wide array of illegal transnational movements orchestrated by organized criminal groups around the world, visually systematized according to different chromatic nuances. Graphically speaking, this map is the prime example of what van Schendel has christened the “arrow disease:” an overspreading of arrows crisscrossing the globe in almost its entirety; a graphic sign used and abused to symbolize an inundation of flows.⁶⁸ The underlying message is that lawbreakers and criminalized goods can move nimbly across borders, hopping from one country, region or hemisphere to another. In fact, the rationale is provided by the Executive Director of UNODC in the

⁶⁸ van Schendel, “Spaces of Engagement,” 43.

preface of the report from which this map is taken: organized criminal groups have “gone global and reached macro-economic proportions,” therefore state authorities need to change approach to protect their borders, whose integrity they so “jealously guarded” in the past.⁶⁹

The academic community is equally emphatic in its assertions. According to Williams, “new transnational actors have emerged to pose novel and insidious threats,” helped by the unprecedented furtherance of communication, transportation and information technologies brought about by the process of globalization. The inevitable corollary to such menacing developments is that we live in a “borderless world” where states are no longer able “to control the flows of goods and people across their borders.”⁷⁰ On the same wavelength, Miklaucic and Brewer warn about “the declining robustness and resilience of the global system of nation-states,” which is now receiving “unprecedented attacks” by a host of criminal non-state actors.⁷¹ Naím further argues that globalization “has dissolved the sealants that government traditionally relied on to secure their national borders,” whose unprecedented weakness is now fully exploited by the criminal underworld.⁷² These are just a few among a plethora of authors who conjure up and reinforce an imagery wherein transnational criminal organizations are

⁶⁹ UNODC, *The Globalization of Crime*, ii–iii.

⁷⁰ Phil Williams, “Transnational Organised Crime and National and International Security: A Global Assessment,” in *Society Under Siege, Volume One. Crime, Violence and Illegal Weapons*, ed. Virginia Gamba, Sarah Meek, and Jakkie Potgieter (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 1997), 11–13.

⁷¹ Miklaucic and Brewer, “Introduction,” xiv.

⁷² Moisés Naím, *Illicit: How Smugglers, Traffickers and Copycats Are Hijacking the Global Economy* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 4.

increasingly agile to move across borders at the expense of an international state system that is now helpless and unable to manage its boundaries.⁷³

In effect, these accounts do identify key characteristics of the underworld of transnational organized crime. Groups of wrongdoers around the world are indeed able to smuggle narcotics, arms, counterfeit goods or people through borders, and states are greatly challenged by these illegal flows. Nevertheless, the broad picture painted by practitioners and scholars alike is starkly exaggerated, as it employs a sensationalistic “the sky is falling” rhetoric that ignores fundamental historical developments and belittles the role of certain problematic spatialities.⁷⁴

Cross-border illegal activities have always violated the sanctity of states’ territorial integrity throughout history. One clear example is illustrated by Andreas, who shows how underground cross-border practices at the U.S.-Mexico border have long predated the contemporary flows of migrants and narcotics bound for the North American state. In fact, the territorial boundaries of states “have always been far more permeable than the Westphalian ideal implies. There never was a ‘golden age’ of state control.”⁷⁵

⁷³ I can offer a good, yet not exhaustive, list of other such examples: Terry Cormier, “Transnational Crime in a Borderless World,” in *Human Security and the New Diplomacy: Protecting People, Promoting Peace*, ed. Rob McRae and Don Hubert (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 199–206; James H. Mittelman and Robert Johnston, “The Globalization of Organized Crime, the Courtesan State, and the Corruption of Civil Society,” *Global Governance* 5, no. 1 (1999): 103–126; Paul Stares, *Global Habit: The Drug Problem in a Borderless World* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1996); Stanislawski, “Transnational ‘Bads’ in the Globalized World: The Case of Transnational Organized Crime.”

⁷⁴ Peter Andreas, “Illicit Globalization: Myths, Misconceptions, and Historical Lessons,” *Political Science Quarterly* 126, no. 3 (2011): 405.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 410–411.

It may well be argued that transnational criminal groupings are now more powerful and threatening because of the exceptional technological innovations they have at their disposal. However, such a rendition ignores the fact that transnational criminals have always exploited novel technologies to their advantage, whether it be today's speedboats and computers, or the steamship and the telegraph in the 19th century.⁷⁶ In addition, technology is not an exclusive godsend for those who wish to illegally cross borders. On the contrary, it is equally available for border management authorities and law enforcers alike, who have also benefited over time from increasingly sophisticated tools and techniques to police their jurisdictions more effectively.⁷⁷

The complex interplay between transnational criminals and border control authorities brings into sharp focus another typical misconception as to the spatial significance of borders for the dynamics of illegal flows. Indeed, a dichotomous relationship is posited between borders and flows, whereas the former stand for immobility and "fixity" and the latter embody dynamicity and "motion."⁷⁸ Still, this is a fallacious assumption, as borders can also be construed as "dynamic sites of transnational reconfiguration," as suggested by van Schendel.⁷⁹ Exemplary situations are the competitive adaptation process established between drug traffickers and anti-drug agencies, and the endless "border games" played on the field

⁷⁶ R. T. Naylor, *Wages of Crime: Black Markets, Illegal Finance, and the Underworld Economy*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 5.

⁷⁷ Andreas, "Illicit Globalization," 414–415.

⁷⁸ van Schendel, "Spaces of Engagement," 41; see also Gootenberg, "Talking About the Flow," 24.

⁷⁹ van Schendel, "Spaces of Engagement," 46.

of the U.S.-Mexico frontier.⁸⁰ Hence, the complex border interactions between transnational actors and gatekeeping state authorities engender a relationship of mutual constituency and reciprocal strengthening whereby one evolves in order to outsmart the other and vice versa.⁸¹

In light of the foregoing considerations, we are far from living in a borderless world where the “withering away of the state”⁸² gives free rein to an overflowing of mobile outlaws through fragile borders. On the contrary, the latter continue to be important sites of dynamic confrontations in the geographies of transnational crime.

⁸⁰ Kenney, *From Pablo to Osama*, 103–133; Peter Andreas, *Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Divide*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

⁸¹ van Schendel, “Spaces of Engagement,” 59.

⁸² Naylor, *Wages of Crime*, 4.

3.3 Global disease



Figure 3: UNODC, *The Globalization of Crime*, 105. © United Nations.

The heroin trafficking flows from Afghanistan to the Russian Federation and Europe are the subject of the map under consideration (Figure 3). Particularly emphasized, through guileful chromatic effects, are the source and the destinations of the illegal trade, linked together by the omnipresent arrow. The latter's menacing trajectory suggests the spread of a threat originating somewhere and directed, in a unidirectional manner, toward somewhere else. Such image resembles the propagation of an infectious disease from patient zero to the rest of the society.

Indeed, organized crime and its transnational ramifications have more often than not been described through catastrophic terms borrowed from the medical jargon. Williams sees transnational organized crime as the "HIV virus of the modern state, breaking down the immune system and allowing the spread of infection into

law enforcement agencies and other state institutions.”⁸³ In the same vein, Galeotti labels the phenomenon as the “cancer within modern transnational society.”⁸⁴ These are only a couple of examples showing the existence of a recurrent theme that has been consistently developed within the academic world.

Another popular trope that is intimately connected to the previous one is the presentation of transnational criminal organizations as part of an “alien conspiracy” that, similarly to an exotic disease, threatens the moral fabric of our societies from the outside.⁸⁵ The exoticness of this criminal cocktail is given by the diverse ethnic or national background of the main criminal groups, such as the Sicilian mafia, the Colombian cartels, the Chinese triads or the Japanese *Yakuza*, to name but a few.⁸⁶ As a result, the geographical understanding of transnational organized crime denotes a view that is not centered on “criminal activity crossing borders, but rather criminal activity originating in developing countries which crosses the borders of developed countries.”⁸⁷

These two leitmotifs are fused together in an imagery that highlights not only the dangerousness of powerful global syndicates

⁸³ Williams, “Transnational Organised Crime and National and International Security,” 36.

⁸⁴ Quoted in Stanislawski, “Transnational ‘Bads’ in the Globalized World,” 168.

⁸⁵ Hall, “Geographies of the Illicit,” 369; Vincenzo Ruggiero, “Transnational Crime: Official and Alternative Fears,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Law* 28, no. 3 (2000): 188; Edwards and Gill, “The Politics of “Transnational Organized Crime,”” 251.

⁸⁶ Sheptycki, “Against Transnational Organized Crime,” 126; Monica Massari, “Transnational Organized Crime between Myth and Reality: The Social Construction of a Threat,” in *Organized Crime and the Challenge to Democracy*, ed. Felia Allum and Renate Siebert (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 53; Woodiwiss, “Transnational Organised Crime,” 17; Castells, *The Information Age*, 172; Edwards and Gill, “The Politics of “Transnational Organized Crime,”” 254.

⁸⁷ Ruggiero, “Transnational Crime,” 189.

of crime, but also the infectious nature of an external menace. Such a discursive *modus operandi* is masterfully summarized by Shetpycki:

The stakes are high when the disease analogy is brought to bear. Not only does the disease threaten the health of society; the semantic structure of the terminology connotes transmission from afar. The disease metaphor for TOC [transnational organized crime] harmonizes with the theme of its foreignness. Since it is not *of* the social body, it can be excized *from* the social body.⁸⁸

In turn, this rhetorical harmony is duly translated into cartographic artifacts like the one under consideration, wherein the visual power of the arrow conveys perfectly the contagiousness of the threat as well as its foreignness.

However, this sinister rendition is deceitful, as highlighted by more critical strands of the criminological scholarship. According to the latter, transnational organized crime is treated as given, a scourge coming from the periphery of the civilized world that attacks our polities at their heart. According to Edwards and Gill, transnational crime becomes objectivized and is regarded “as a universal phenomenon, rather than as the result of the interaction between forms of harmful behaviour and the way in which some become criminalised and others do not.”⁸⁹ The outcome of such a narration is the iconography of the arrow, which simplifies our duty of distinguishing the “bad guy” from the “good guys,” or alternatively the “good places” from the “bad places.” The victimization of the

⁸⁸ Sheptycki, “Against Transnational Organized Crime,” 127 (original emphasis).

⁸⁹ Edwards and Gill, “The Politics of ‘Transnational Organized Crime,’” 253.

countries which host the end markets of criminalized goods makes us lose sight of the fact that they are precisely end markets and therefore represent a demand side that is more often than not overlooked. Regrettably, a chance is missed to analyze the internal conditions that are conducive to the spread of transnational crime.⁹⁰

Yet, the metaphorical and visual embodiment of transnational organized crime as a disease does still grant importance to the destination of the illegal flows, as well as their source. In the aforementioned popular depiction, we are urged to focus on patient zero, which stands at the root of the arrow, and the powerless victims, which lay atop of it. What is cut out from the geography of transnational crime is the vector of the disease, the host of places and locales which lay in-between the source and the destination of the flows. As lamented by van Schendel, “it is the head of the arrow rather than its body that we are invited to concentrate on.”⁹¹ He further argues that the goods composing the illegal flows “do not move in thin air,” therefore “we need to incorporate the social relations of transport and distribution, and their spatiality” if we are to understand the geographical dimension of criminal networks.⁹²

The imagery of the disease thus fails to represent the spatiality of transnational organized crime, as it constructs a fixed visual dichotomy between evil sources and untarnished victims of criminalized flows. In this tale, what happens in-between is left to the imagination of the map user.

⁹⁰ Ruggiero, “Transnational Crime,” 188–189; Massari, “Transnational Organized Crime between Myth and Reality,” 54.

⁹¹ van Schendel, “Spaces of Engagement,” 41.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 46.

3.4 The balloon effect

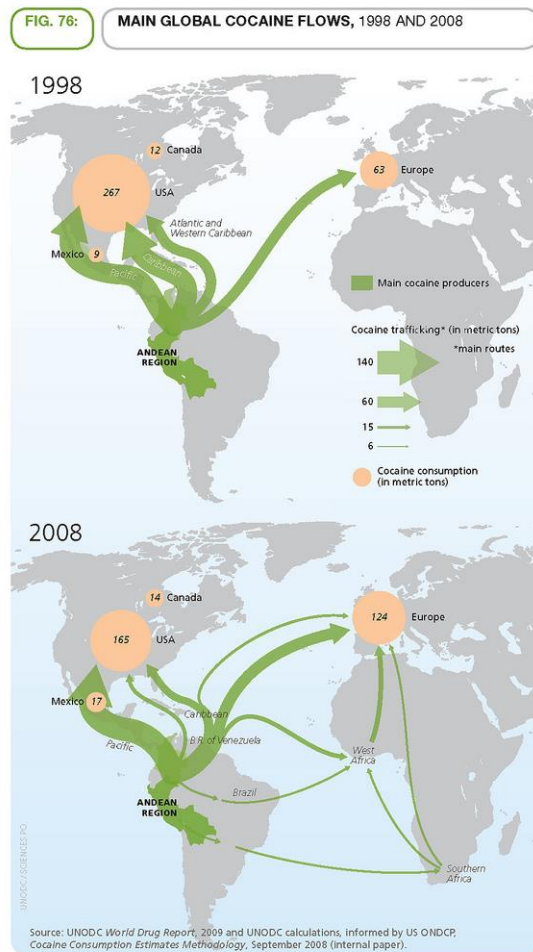


Figure 4: UNODC, *The Globalization of Crime*, 83. © United Nations.

The last map taken into consideration (Figure 4) will look familiar, as it has already been analyzed within the discussion on the octopus metaphor. This time, it is paired with a previous version of it, which shows the global cocaine flows ten years earlier. The rationale be-

hind this combination of maps is patent: it is meant to display in a visual fashion the variation across time of the trafficking routes as well as the volume in metric tons of the cocaine moving therein. The intensity of the flows is once again rendered explicit through a graphic effect linked to the arrow, whose more or less pronounced thickness provides the map user with a visual exemplification.

As it is clearly observable, in a 10-year span new routes have arisen, and some of the old ones have shrunk considerably. Such phenomenon is well-known by the experts of drug trafficking, so much so as to be paradigmatically labeled the “balloon effect.” Needless to say, a complex and multifarious phenomenon is epitomized through a simple and intuitive visual trope. The theories on the balloon effect equate the functioning of the drug trafficking networks to that of a balloon filled with air: if you squeeze it, the air will be automatically redistributed according to the novel shape of the balloon. By the same token, if drug trafficking routes are disrupted following more aggressive law enforcement interventions, the narcotics flows will be reshaped accordingly, insofar as they are sustained by the iron law of supply and demand.⁹³

Such arguments are often used by those scholars who exhibit a critical stance toward the prevalent understanding of drug trafficking mechanisms, informed by the U.S. aggressive approach to anti-drug interdiction policies. The latter has indeed produced a

⁹³ Kenney, *From Pablo to Osama*, 12; Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy, “A Typology of the Unintended Consequences of Drug Crop Reduction,” *Journal of Drug Issues* 20, no. 10 (2012): 3; Cornelius Friesendorf, “Squeezing the Balloon? United States Air Interdiction and the Restructuring of the South American Drug Industry in the 1990s,” *Crime, Law & Social Change* 44 (2005): 38–41; Stella M. Rouse and Moises Arce, “The Drug-Laden Balloon: U.S. Military Assistance and Coca Production in the Central Andes,” *Social Science Quarterly* 87, no. 3 (2006): 542–544.

wide array of unintended consequences, among which the displacement of drug crops and routes figures prominently. Madsen argues, for instance, that if we do not take “the air out of the balloon by addressing the fundamental capitalist fuel of supply and demand for illegal cross-border traffic, [...] border law enforcement simply shifts such activity to other locations where it then has a disproportionate impact.”⁹⁴ On the same wavelength, Rouse and Arce bring into focus the displacement of Colombian rural populations as a negative outcome of the balloon effect.⁹⁵ However, this hydraulic metaphor is not used exclusively by the opponents of the official hardline approach to anti-drug law enforcement, but is employed also by policy-makers and practitioners in a self-critical fashion. In the same UNODC report of the maps under review, it is indeed argued that “Increased enforcement in the Caribbean in the 1980s and the 1990s pushed the drug flow further westward, and Mexican traffickers became involved.”⁹⁶

Ultimately, the balloon effect “has become a truism in drug policy research,” as Friesendorf maintains.⁹⁷ Yet, the underlying assumptions of the theory and of the metaphor that renders it visually intelligible are highly misleading and oversimplifying. Indeed, Friesendorf further explains that the complexity of a multifaceted phenomenon like displacement is reduced by the wish to provide forward-looking theoretical frameworks. In the attempt to predict the future, commentators often forget to take the past into account,

⁹⁴ Kenneth D. Madsen, “Local Impacts of the Balloon Effect of Border Law Enforcement,” *Geopolitics* 12, no. 2 (2007): 282–283.

⁹⁵ Rouse and Arce, “The Drug-Laden Balloon,” 555.

⁹⁶ UNODC, *The Globalization of Crime*, 87.

⁹⁷ Friesendorf, “Squeezing the Balloon?,” 35.

thus failing to disclose the causal mechanisms behind complex phenomena such as the workings of drug trafficking networks.⁹⁸

Nevertheless, it is not my intention here to question the empirical validity of the ‘balloon effect’ theory, since such intellectual endeavor would require a separate book to be properly developed. Also, it is true that a stronger enforcement may not always bring long-term benefits nor preoccupy whether human rights are safeguarded. However, what the proponents of the ‘balloon effect’ argument lack is a thorough understanding of the relation that can arise between illegal activities and space. In fact, equating the criminal flows to a balloon whose air can easily relocate somewhere else runs the risk of taking space for granted and subtly implies that criminal actors take it for granted too. The idea that space does not acquire a certain importance for lawbreakers – as long they are able to gain profits – is a-historical, a-spatial and consequently misleading, if we are to understand the global geographies of crime.

The official theorizations do not account for the persistence of certain spatialities for transnational criminal practices, regardless of the more or less pronounced intensity of the illegal flows in specific timeframes. As pointed out by Abraham and van Schendel, illegal cross-border smuggling circuitries are often part of long-standing commercial routes that are to be understood in their historicity.⁹⁹ A valid case in point is the Colombian archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina, whose current status as a

⁹⁸ Ibid., 39; see also James Windle and Graham Farrell, “Popping the Balloon Effect: Assessing Drug Law Enforcement in Terms of Displacement, Diffusion, and the Containment Hypothesis,” *Substance Use & Misuse* 47, no. 8–9 (2012): 868–876.

⁹⁹ Abraham and van Schendel, “Introduction: The Making of Illicitness,” 5.

hub of the Caribbean cocaine trafficking network is understandable only in light of its centennial history as a transit point for any kind of legally dubious activity across its shores.¹⁰⁰ Another suitable instance is the Golden triangle, a tri-border area shared by Myanmar, Laos and Thailand which is known, since at least the 1970s, to be one of the main sites for the production and exportation of opium and refined heroin within the Southeast Asian region and worldwide.¹⁰¹ The tenacity of all these peculiar locales in the topography of transnational crime is hardly intelligible if we rely upon simplistic explanatory tools like the ‘balloon effect.’

The imagery that conceives of drug trafficking routes as rubbery globes that can be remodeled by the vigorous squeeze of law enforcement agencies is therefore greatly deceptive. Such a view suggests the idea that well-established illegal patterns can easily relocate, thus implying that one space is as good as any other to carry out unlawful practices. As a result, the balloon trope fails to account for the resilience of certain loci in the geographies of transnational organized crime.

¹⁰⁰ More on this case study will be extensively elaborated in the following chapter.

¹⁰¹ See Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy, “Drug Trafficking In and Out of the Golden Triangle,” in *An Atlas of Trafficking in Southeast Asia: The Illegal Trade in Arms, Drugs, People, Counterfeit Goods and Natural Resources in Mainland Southeast Asia*, ed. Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy (London: I.B.Tauris, 2013), 29–52.

4. The Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina: from pirates' haven to drugs' heaven

The Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina (hereinafter: the Archipelago) lies at approximately 800 kilometers of distance from mainland Colombia and 220 from the Nicaraguan shores. In the last three decades, this small conglomerate of islands – in particular its most densely populated island of San Andrés – has emerged in investigative and journalistic reports as a group of “narco-islands.” The latter are described as insular transit points for the flow of narcotics proceeding from organized criminal groups in Colombia and directed at the biggest and most prominent consumer country, the U.S., either through the Caribbean or the Central American route.¹⁰²

As pointed out by Silvia Mantilla – one of the few scholars engaged in the study of San Andrés’ role in the drug trafficking circuitry – the current condition of the island is the outcome of “historical, cultural and economic factors that explain the active participation of certain sectors of the island’s society in these illegal activities.”¹⁰³ She further argues that the aforementioned determinants have helped to configure an insular social order that is permissive with illegal practices, thus constituting a cultural dynamic that per-

¹⁰² See Larraz, “Narco-Islands: Panama’s Drug Trafficking Paradise”; “San Andrés es un paso estratégico para el narcotráfico: comandante de la isla”; Julieth Zapata, “San Andrés, atractiva para las bandas criminales,” *Semana*, 2014, <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/san-andres-bandas-criminales/376521-3> (14 July 2015).

¹⁰³ Silvia Mantilla, “Narcotráfico, violencia y crisis social en el Caribe insular colombiano: El caso de la isla de San Andrés en el contexto del Gran Caribe,” *Estudios Políticos* no. 38 (2011): 40.

meates its society as a whole.¹⁰⁴ Yet, she just hints at these deep causal drives but provides no further elaboration of the historical process underpinning the contemporary status of the insular society. My aim is to fill this void by presenting a comprehensive history of the Archipelago as an outpost of illegal practices.

As shown in the previous chapter, the current insights on the spatiality of transnational crime leave much to be desired. The present case study is meant to offer a more nuanced, spatially sensitive and historically informed approach to the study of transnational crime in relation to its spatiality. My main claim is that organized crime and the contemporary illegal drug trade constitute but the last stage of a historical development through which the Archipelago has been produced and reproduced by a host of actors and spatial practices as a transit point for legally ambiguous activities. This ambiguousness is better understood by deploying Abraham and van Schendel category of “borderland,” namely a specific spatial configuration whereby “the socially licit dominates the formally illegal.”¹⁰⁵ The Archipelago appears to fit perfectly into this categorization, not only because of the problematic licit/illegal divide that characterizes its social environment, but also because of its particular geographic location – right next to the maritime border separating Colombia and Nicaragua.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 61; another brilliant account of the socio-cultural factors underlying the islanders’ embroilment in the drug trade is offered by Alberto Abello Vives, “La nieve sobre el mar: una frontera caribe cruzada por el tráfico de drogas. El caso de Colombia y Nicaragua,” *Aguaita* no. 13–14 (2006): 7–22.

¹⁰⁵ Abraham and van Schendel, “Introduction: The Making of Illicitness,” 22.

¹⁰⁶ The Nicaraguan coast is indeed one of the preferred stop-overs for the drugs proceeding from the Archipelago, see Mantilla, “Narcotráfico, violencia y crisis social en el Caribe insular colombiano,” 58–60.

Such a spatial configuration needs to be assessed not only in its present form but also in its historicity. A proper historical contextualization will prove to be useful to grasp, on the one hand, the problematic relation between the licit and the illegal as it played out historically;¹⁰⁷ on the other hand, it will permit us to see how spatial patterns that are now frowned upon by the official authorities are part of long-standing routes and networks. The objects and agents moving through them may be different, but not the spatial practices underpinning them.¹⁰⁸ Movement is thus pivotal in this story. Mobility – be it of people, objects or both – is the main driving force behind the production of alternative geographies that are unbound by the rule of law or any sort of authoritative apparatus. More importantly, movement is not an abstract concept, on the contrary “it always takes place somewhere.”¹⁰⁹

Our “somewhere,” the point where all flows stop and crystallize, is a group of West Caribbean islands, whose history officially starts in the 16th century, when they had been first discovered.¹¹⁰ Significantly, when a group of Puritan Englishmen first tried to colonize Providencia (which was then known as Providence) in 1629, Dutch corsairs and contrabandists appeared to have already settled

¹⁰⁷ Middell and Naumann, “Global History and the Spatial Turn,” 153.

¹⁰⁸ Abraham and van Schendel, “Introduction: The Making of Illicitness,” 5; Carolyn Nordstrom, *Global Outlaws: Crime, Money and Power in the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 8.

¹⁰⁹ Abraham and van Schendel, “Introduction: The Making of Illicitness,” 13; see also White, *What Is Spatial History?*, 3.

¹¹⁰ According to the most preeminent historian of the Archipelago, the precise date of its discovery is unknown, but its first cartographical appearance can be traced back to the year 1527, James J. Parsons, *San Andrés y Providencia: Una geografía histórica de las islas colombianas del Caribe*, 3rd ed. (Bogotá: El Áncora Editores, 1985), 24.

there.¹¹¹ Such anecdote is the starting point of a historical journey that will take us from the golden age of piracy of the Archipelago's early history up until the contemporary world of cartels and criminal gangs.

4.1 The golden age of piracy: Providence as “a den of thieves and pirates”

This historical inquiry starts with the establishment of the Archipelago as a haven and refuge for pirates during the 17th century. My intention here is not to suggest that contemporary organized crime and mercantile piracy are the same phenomenon. As a matter of fact, it would be highly unhistorical to make such a claim. However, the spatialities produced by raiding corsairs were as menacing for state authorities as those engendered by today's transnational drug flows. Important parallels can be drawn, and indeed other authors have already singled out some of these, the most representative being the predatory nature of the activities undertaken at sea and outlawed by states and empires. Furthermore, piratical enterprises possessed and shared with modern criminal groupings a certain degree of organizational coherence, as shown by Leeson.¹¹² For all these

¹¹¹ Ibid., 25; James Ross, “Routes for Roots: Entering the 21st Century in San Andrés Island, Colombia,” *Caribbean Studies* 35, no. 1 (2007): 7.

¹¹² Peter T. Leeson, “An-Arrgh-Chy: The Law and Economics of Pirate Organization,” *Journal of Political Economy* 115, no. 6 (2007): 1049–1094.

reasons, Schulte-Bockholt rightfully views mercantile piracy as “one of the oldest criminal practices known to humanity.”¹¹³

Yet, piracy was also a complex phenomenon whereby social perceptions often clashed with official sanctioning, bringing about situations where the sphere of the licit was not attuned to the sphere of the legal. Furthermore, the concept of legality itself was somewhat blurry concerning piratical practices. A distinction did exist between outright pirates, illegal for the international community at large, and privateers, legally recognized by nations such as France and England and used as tools of foreign policy to be waived against Spanish and Portuguese vessels.¹¹⁴ However, as noted by Benton, such “distinction was blurred by cycles of inter-imperial war and peace,” during which privateers could easily be labeled as pirates and vice versa.¹¹⁵ For this reason, pirates often conceived of themselves not as outlaws but rather as patriots licitly defending their country’s interests, as exemplified by Henry Morgan’s vicissitudes. Indeed, the notorious buccaneer’s forays were often deemed as unlawful, yet he “simply regarded himself as a soldier fighting the enemies... of England.”¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Alfredo Schulte-Bockholt, *The Politics of Organized Crime and the Organized Crime of Politics: A Study in Criminal Power* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006), 177; see also William J. Chambliss, “State-Organized Crime - The American Society of Criminology, 1988 Presidential Address,” *Criminology* 27, no. 2 (1989): 184; Felsen and Kalaitzidis, “A Historical Overview of Transnational Crime,” 9–10.

¹¹⁴ Peter Andreas and Ethan Nadelmann, *Policing the Globe: Criminalization and Crime Control in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 22; Chambliss, “State-Organized Crime - The American Society of Criminology, 1988 Presidential Address,” 185–187; Schulte-Bockholt, *The Politics of Organized Crime and the Organized Crime of Politics*, 184;

¹¹⁵ Lauren Benton, “Legal Spaces of Empire: Piracy and the Origins of Ocean Regionalism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47, no. 4 (2005): 706–707.

¹¹⁶ David Cordingly, quoted in Schulte-Bockholt, *The Politics of Organized Crime and the Organized Crime of Politics*, 185.

As mentioned earlier, the first colonizing attempt of the Archipelago took place in 1629 by a group of English Puritan adventurers, in search of fortune as well as spiritual refuge from the Catholic stronghold in their homeland. To this end, they established the “Company of Adventurers of the City of Westminster for the Plantation of the Islands of Providence or Catalina, Henrietta or Andrea and the adjacent islands lying upon the coast of America” (hereinafter: the Company), and started to populate the islands with settlers to set up a colonial plantation from 1631 onwards.¹¹⁷ After having realized that San Andrés’ soil was rather unfertile and therefore unusable for their purposes, the settlers concentrated their efforts into the island of Providence.¹¹⁸

Since the outset, this Puritan insular space provided less fertile ground for agricultural designs than for the anti-Spanish privateering ventures. Providence became indeed a haven for Dutch men-of-war who sold the booties stolen from Spanish vessels to the islanders. Furthermore, the colonists themselves did not escape the temptation to complement their activities with sporadic raids against Spanish vessels.¹¹⁹ Meanwhile, the Puritan endeavor aimed to establish a colonial plantation proved highly unsatisfactory and impracticable due to climatic adversities, leading the colony in 1635 to become “openly, what before it had been secretly, a base for privateering against the Spaniards.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Parsons, *San Andrés y Providencia*, 28–29; Arthur Percival Newton, *The Colonising Activities of the English Puritans: The Last Phase of the Elizabethan Struggle with Spain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1914), 86–87.

¹¹⁸ Parsons, *San Andrés y Providencia*, 30–31.

¹¹⁹ Newton, *The Colonising Activities of the English Puritans*, 154.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 6, 121.

The islands' consecration as a pirates' haven entailed important shifts in the insular landscape, which had been enriched by all sorts of fortifications, in order for the inhabitants to be prepared against Spanish reprisals.¹²¹ Besides, privateers constantly supplied the island with black slaves, who quickly came to make up half of the local population and therefore changed the island's demographic composition.¹²²

The Archipelago increasingly attracted the hostility of the Spanish empire. According to the account of an English Capuchin who was travelling throughout the region at the time, the Spaniards "cursed the English in it [Providence], and called the island a den of thieves and pirates."¹²³ The mounting of tensions between the islanders and their Iberian foes led to the latter's successful conquest of Providence island and the dislodgement of all the Englishmen therein settled in 1641.¹²⁴

After almost thirty years of Anglo-Spanish imperial skirmishes aimed at reacquiring control of the islands, another notorious buccaneer of the Caribbean laid his eyes on the Archipelago. Captain Henry Morgan, pirate-privateer based in Jamaica, regarded Providence as a key port to gain the upper hand of the Caribbean basin. According to his biographer Adolphe Roberts, Morgan picturesquely viewed the island as a "gun constantly pointed at Spain's chest."¹²⁵ His aspirations turned into reality in 1670, when he and his crew reconquered the island, without meeting much resistance

¹²¹ Parsons, *San Andrés y Providencia*, 34.

¹²² Newton, *The Colonising Activities of the English Puritans*, 258.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 231.

¹²⁴ Parsons, *San Andrés y Providencia*, 34.

¹²⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, 37.

from the Spanish occupiers.¹²⁶ The following year, Morgan weighed anchor and headed toward Panama to carry out one of the most famous piratical sacks in modern history. Significantly, Providence once again turned out to be a convenient staging post for the mariners' illegal designs.¹²⁷

After being abandoned by both the English and Spanish, the Archipelago went through what Vollmer christened “the forgotten century” of its historiography. Indeed, during the 18th century the Archipelago remained substantially uninhabited and its shores were only sporadically touched by English, Jamaican, Spanish and Dutch vessels.¹²⁸ Nonetheless, a Spanish report mentioned the islands' role as military materiel's storage and crossroads of an informal area under English influence, which stretched between Jamaica and the Mosquito coast in Central America.¹²⁹ Despite the lack of stable settlers and a formal authority on the islands, the Archipelago continued to be used as a favorable transit point for smugglers and filibusters. As pointed out by Clemente Batalla, such spatial practices may have fallen into the official historiographical oblivion of the “forgotten century,” but they nevertheless left a mark in the collective memory of the islanders.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Ibid., 38; Loraine Vollmer, *La historia del poblamiento del archipiélago de San Andrés, Vieja Providencia y Santa Catalina - The History of the Settling Process of the Archipelago of San Andrés, Old Providence and St. Catherine* (San Andrés: Ediciones Archipiélago, 1997), 38.

¹²⁷ Ibid.; For a more detailed account of Morgan's Panamanian exploits, see Jon Latimer, *Buccaneers of the Caribbean: How Piracy Forged an Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 202–222.

¹²⁸ Loraine Vollmer, *La historia del poblamiento del archipiélago*, 41–43.

¹²⁹ Parsons, *San Andrés y Providencia*, 48–49.

¹³⁰ Isabel Clemente Batalla, “El Caribe insular: San Andrés y Providencia,” in *Historia económica y social del Caribe colombiano*, ed. Adolfo Meisel Roca (Barranquilla: Ediciones Uninorte, 1994), 331.

4.2 Smugglers' islands: contraband as a means of livelihood

Following the 1786 Anglo-Spanish treaty that definitively settled the Caribbean's spheres of influence, the Archipelago fell under the Spanish Empire's dominion. Even though the bulk of settlers on the islands was forced to abandon them, a few persuaded their new rulers to stay in return for their unconditional loyalty to the Spanish crown. Now that there was no longer need for fortifications, San Andrés emerged as the most appealing island for potential settlers.¹³¹

Once the Archipelago's settling process had been resumed, so too were the illegal activities of the islanders. The latter were indeed well-placed in the commercial route connecting the Anglophone Caribbean with the Central American populations. Therefore, the islanders came to sustain a profitable smuggling network through which they sold Jamaican goods to the Moskito coast's populations, in spite of the prohibition of such economic activities implied in their vow of loyalty to the Spaniards.¹³² Such practices were mainly justified by the longstanding cultural and commercial ties established among the English-speaking peoples of the Caribbean basin, so much so that the Spanish authorities issued a decree ordering the displacement of the islanders to the mainland, in order to put an end to the illegal trade.¹³³ However, not only was such decree ignored, but the island of San Andrés was also given the rank of

¹³¹ Parsons, *San Andrés y Providencia*, 50.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 51–52.

¹³³ Vollmer, *La historia del poblamiento del archipiélago*, 55; Parsons, *San Andrés y Providencia*, 52.

“minor port” in 1795, thus granting the islanders advantageous exemptions from import and export levies. According to Parsons, the Spanish deemed more desirable to have the island inhabited by friendly Englishmen rather than completely abandoned or patrolled by unenthusiastic military contingents.¹³⁴

This state of affairs protracted itself well into the first decade of the 19th century. The more so during the Napoleonic wars, when the political economy of warfare rendered the contraband trade an essential means of livelihood for the islanders.¹³⁵ Long-fibred cotton became the primary export crop due to its high quality, and the fact that it was sellable at higher prices in the outlawed English markets fostered the appeal of black market’s avenues for the islanders. Smuggling was practiced to such an extent as to make up half of the exportations’ total share, thus causing some worries within the islands’ official circles.¹³⁶ Even the upper governmental echelons were not strangers to such an unlawful yet profitable enterprise. Rumors had it that Thomas O’Neill, an Irishman appointed as governor of the islands, partook in the smuggling business. This illegal venture acquired widespread acceptance and thus became a tacitly sanctioned social custom.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Ibid., 50. However, other sources appear to disagree with Parson’s exact chronology, see Vollmer, *La historia del poblamiento del archipiélago*, 51; Ross, “Routes for Roots,” 11; Clemente Batalla, “El Caribe insular,” 339.

¹³⁵ Juan Carlos Eastman Arango, “El archipiélago de San Andrés y Providencia: formación histórica hasta 1822,” *Credencial Historia* no. 36 (1992), <http://www.banrepcultural.org/blaavirtual/revistas/credencial/diciembre1992/diciembre1.htm> (23 June 2015); Clemente Batalla, “El Caribe insular,” 339.

¹³⁶ Ross, “Routes for Roots,” 12; Clemente Batalla, “El Caribe insular,” 339; Parsons, *San Andrés y Providencia*, 53.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 53–54, 58.

The end of the wars in Europe and the start of the struggles for independence of the Hispanic American colonies marked the brief reemergence of piracy in the Caribbean basin. A French privateer, Louis Aury, conquered Providence and San Andrés in 1818, transforming it for the following three years into a fortified headquarters for its maritime marauding.¹³⁸ Once again, the thin line dividing privateering and piracy was blurred by the chaotic entanglements of war-making geopolitics. Aury was officially backing Simon Bolívar's revolutionary endeavors to free Latin America from the Spanish yoke, and his raids enjoyed indeed the legal blessing of the British government, regardless of his crews' indiscriminate targeting of vessels of all nationalities.¹³⁹ A clearer picture is provided by Vogel when he argues that "while his [Aury's] foes characterized him as a pirate and great villain, his compatriots regarded him as a privateer who operated strictly within the law of nations, a gentleman and a staunch patriot."¹⁴⁰ The death of the French corsair in 1821 was ensued the following year by the Archipelago's political adhesion to Gran Colombia, the newly independent Latin American state that would later become, with some territorial changes, the present-day Republic of Colombia.¹⁴¹

According to Vollmer, contraband remained a well-established and widespread activity on the Archipelago until 1953, year in which substantial changes in the socio-economic structure of

¹³⁸ Ibid., 60–61; Robert C. Vogel, "Rebel Without a Cause: The Adventures of Louis Aury," *The Laffite Society Chronicles* 8, no. 1 (2002): 2, 7; C. F. Collett, "On the Island of Old Providence," *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 7, no. 1837 (1837): 208–209.

¹³⁹ Parsons, *San Andrés y Providencia*, 61–62; Vogel, "Rebel Without a Cause," 2.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 3.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 7–8; Parsons, *San Andrés y Providencia*, 62–63.

the Archipelago unfolded. In fact, both the relinquishment of slavery and the boom of the coconut trade sanctioned the start of a wealthier era for the islanders, including the former and newly emancipated slaves.¹⁴² Simultaneously, stronger commercial and cultural ties were built up with the U.S., which became the prime and most important importer of the islands' new staple good.¹⁴³ New routes toward the north were then created and nurtured by the islanders. Such routes and the spatial practices they entailed were prophetic signs of the drug trafficking routes of the twentieth century, wherein the U.S. also stands out as the main end market.

The commencement of the new century saw a renewed interest of the Colombian state toward its Caribbean borderland, theretofore neglected by the national authorities. The Archipelago's "Anglo affinity" with the U.S. and its English-speaking Caribbean neighbors ignited the worries of the Colombian state apparatus, which thenceforward gradually sought to draw the Archipelago's population closer to the mainland through a process of linguistic, cultural and religious "Colombianization."¹⁴⁴

The context of the 1903 Panamanian secession from Colombia offered yet another pretext for geopolitics and illegal networks to intermingle with each other and exalt the Archipelago's suitability as an advantageous transit point. Given the determinative

¹⁴² Vollmer, *La historia del poblamiento del archipiélago*, 55–58.

¹⁴³ Parsons, *San Andrés y Providencia*, 89–96; Ross, "Routes for Roots," 14.

¹⁴⁴ See Sharika D. Crawford, "Politics of Belonging on a Caribbean Borderland: The Colombian Islands of San Andrés and Providencia," in *Crossing Boundaries: Ethnicity, Race, and National Belonging in a Transnational World*, ed. Brian D. Behnken and Simon Wendt (Lanham, U.S.: Lexington Books, 2013), 19–37; Sharika D. Crawford, "Under the Colombian Flag: Nation-Building of San Andrés and Providence Islands, 1886-1930" (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2009), <http://d-scholarship.pitt.edu/9023/> (23 June 2015).

support lent by the U.S. to the isthmian secessionist cause, Colombian's officials grew overly wary of the ambiguousness of the islanders, so much so as to send a battalion to monitor any suspicious activity. In effect, the Archipelago's inhabitants turned out to be involved in an underground trafficking scheme whereby weapons proceeding from the U.S. were transferred via the islands to the separatists in Panama.¹⁴⁵

More governmental delegations were sent to the Archipelago in the following years, and more legally dubious practices were disclosed. In 1910, two envoys dispatched from the mainland found out that even the departmental authorities of the islands were enmeshed in and actively facilitated the contraband trade.¹⁴⁶ The 1920s saw a progressive decline of the coconut trade, caused by a strict tariff regime imposed by the central government in Bogotá and culminated in the general impoverishment of the insular population. The economic hardships brought about by such ill-fated fiscal policies frustrated the islanders, who turned once more to smuggling activities to provide for their livelihoods.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Crawford, "Politics of Belonging on a Caribbean Borderland," 22–23.

¹⁴⁶ Crawford, "Under the Colombian Flag," 60–61.

¹⁴⁷ Orlando Deávila Pertuz, "Reseña de 'Páginas para la historia del archipiélago. Administración pública, desarrollo económico y corrupción en el archipiélago de San Andrés, Providencia y Santa Catalina. 1926-1927' de Raúl Román Romero y Johannie James Cruz," *Memorias. Revista digital de historia y arqueología desde el Caribe* 8, no. 14 (2011): 275.

4.3 *Sanandresitos* and *transportistas*: the islanders' embroilment in the drug trafficking networks

It is during the 1930s that the first, rudimentary underground networks started to add narcotics to their inventories of smuggled goods. As well documented by Sáenz Rovner with a series of invaluable archival sources, these trafficking routes envisaged the island of San Andrés as a transit point between the Colombian and the North American shores.

In 1936, confidential correspondence between diplomatic officials in Colón, Panama, and the U.S. Secretary of State reveal robust suspicions and allegations, according to which the islands of San Andrés and Providencia served as staging posts for the smuggling of drugs and alcohol headed to the North American coasts.¹⁴⁸ In 1957, the Colombian ambassador in Nicaragua informed his North American counterpart that Peruvian cocaine was being trafficked between the southern and the northern hemisphere via the island of San Andrés.¹⁴⁹ Again in 1971, San Andrés had been cited by anti-drug authorities as a maritime crossroads for the tons of narcotics proceeding from Marseille and subsequently funneled through

¹⁴⁸ Michael Kenney, "The Evolution of the International Drugs Trade: The Case of Colombia, 1930-2000," in *Routledge Handbook of Transnational Organized Crime*, ed. Felia Allum and Stan Gilmour (New York: Routledge, 2012), 202; Eduardo Sáenz Rovner, "Ensayo sobre la historia del tráfico de drogas psicoactivas en Colombia entre los años 30 y 50," *Iberoamericana* 9, no. 35 (2009): 94–95; these documents are transcribed integrally in Eduardo Sáenz Rovner, "La prehistoria del narcotráfico en Colombia. Serie documental: desde la Gran Depresión hasta la Revolución Cubana," *Innovar* no. 8 (1996): 70–72.

¹⁴⁹ Sáenz Rovner, "Ensayo sobre la historia del tráfico de drogas psicoactivas en Colombia entre los años 30 y 50," 102.

Colombia and then on to the U.S.¹⁵⁰ As noted by Kenney, such reports, although fragmentary in nature, point to the existence of embryonic transnational networks, whereby narcotics produced in Europe travelled through Colombia and then reached their end market in the U.S utilizing the Archipelago as a strategic transit point.¹⁵¹

Meanwhile, the 1953 declaration of San Andrés as a free port exempted it from the strict tariff and trade restrictions of the Colombian state, and decidedly boosted the attractiveness of this small island for all those interested in legally-shady commercial activities. Indeed, the term *sanandresito* entered common parlance in Colombia when referring to contraband enterprises.¹⁵²

According to a local departmental report, the island's newly acquired fiscal status drawn in a massive inflow of mainlanders and foreigners in search of wealth. Among them, notorious prospective narco-entrepreneurs, such as Evaristo Porras, invested in the islands by acquiring lands and building huge hotels and nightclubs, ultimately aimed to provide an easy opportunity to launder their drug-trafficking proceeds.¹⁵³ Reportedly, the first to discover the potenti-

¹⁵⁰ Eduardo Sáenz Rovner, *Estudio de caso de la diplomacia antinarcoóticos entre Colombia y los Estados Unidos (Gobierno de Misael Pastrana Borrero, 1970-1974)*, Documentos FCE-CID (Bogotá, 2014), 17, http://www.fcenew.unal.edu.co/publicaciones/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=241:19-estudio-de-caso-de-la-diplomacia-antinarcoóticos-entre-colombia-y-los-estados-unidos-gobierno-de-misael-pastrana-borrero-1970-1974&catid=41:documentos-eaecp-fce (14 July 2015).

¹⁵¹ Kenney, "The Evolution of the International Drugs Trade," 201–202.

¹⁵² Francisco E. Thoumi, *Political Economy and Illegal Drugs in Colombia (Studies on the Impact of the Illegal Drug Trade, Vol. 2)* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995), 100; Salomón Kalmanovitz, *Nueva historia económica de Colombia* (Bogotá: Taurus, 2010), 194.

¹⁵³ Gobernación Archipiélago de San Andrés, Providencia y Santa Catalina, *Plan departamental de reducción de la oferta de sustancias psicoactivas 2013-2016* (San Andrés, 2013), 6, <http://www.odc.gov.co/REGIONALIZACIÓN/Política-regional> (5 July 2015); see also Anonymous, "Porque San Andrés," *Semana* (Bogotá, 1993),

alities of San Andrés for large-scale illegal endeavors was the well-known Medellín Cartel, which was later on replaced by the Cali Cartel.¹⁵⁴ Such an abrupt prosperity and economic openness brought up changes. The landscape of the islands morphed, as pointed out by Maingot and Lozano: “The erstwhile bucolic existence of these islands has been replaced by high-rise hotels, fancy discos, shops with expensive clothing and merchandise, and yacht havens chock-full of vessels of every description and price.”¹⁵⁵

Not only did the physical environment go through substantial changes, but also the local socio-cultural configuration appeared to be irremediably modified. As highlighted in the aforementioned official report, the presence of the *narcotráfico* (drug trafficking) consolidated a cultural orientation based on the attainment of easy money, which particularly affected the islands’ young populace. The more so when the national trade barriers were lifted in 1991 and the island lost its competitiveness, forcing the islanders to obviate to the economic precariousness with extemporaneous expedients such as working as *transportistas* (mules) for drug-trafficking organizations.¹⁵⁶

<http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/porque-san-andres/25010-3> (14 July 2015); Kalmanovitz, *Nueva historia económica de Colombia*, 194.

¹⁵⁴ Anthony P. Maingot and Wilfredo Lozano, *The United States and the Caribbean: Transforming Hegemony and Sovereignty* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 105; Anonymous, “Porque San Andrés.”

¹⁵⁵ Maingot and Lozano, *The United States and the Caribbean*, 105.

¹⁵⁶ Gobernación Archipiélago de San Andrés Providencia and Santa Catalina, *Plan departamental*, 6; see also Inge Helena Valencia, “Narcotráfico y posconflicto en Colombia,” *Cultural Anthropology Online*, 2015, <http://culanth.org/fieldsights/675-narcotrafico-y-posconflicto-en-colombia> (5 July 2015); Inge Helena Valencia, “Violencia, paramilitares y narcotráfico en San Andrés,” *La Silla Vacía*, 2014, <http://lasillavacia.com/content/violencia-paramilitares-y-narcotrafico-en-san-andres-y-providencia-47865> (5 July 2015); Inge Helena Valencia, “Políticas públicas y narcotráfico: seguridad vs oportunidad,” *Boletín Polis* 9, no. 13 (2013): 14–17; Andrés Sánchez Jabba, “Violencia y narcotráfico en San Andrés,” *Aguaita* no. 24

As a result, the islanders got progressively involved in the cartels' illegal networks, by providing the necessary navigational skills required to carry out sensitive logistical operations in what was christened the "lobster route." Maingot and Lozano duly convey a verbal image of the mules' so-called *cruces* (literally "crossings"):

Drugs and fuel are flown in from the mainland, either delivered at the airport in San Andrés or dropped offshore and picked up by speedboats the islanders call *voladores*. These cargoes are delivered to larger vessels which ply the Caribbean.¹⁵⁷

The 1990s thus saw the emergence of the Archipelago as an "epi-center of the nation's drug exports," according to a police report, and the wide array of illegal services carried out therein took place "with brazen openness."¹⁵⁸

At the turn of the century, the dismantlement of the traditional drug cartels gave way to a variegated galaxy of paramilitary gangs, whose exponents competed to control important hubs of the main drug trafficking routes. Among them, the Archipelago was no exception, and the arrival of such paramilitary groups or *bacrim* (criminal gangs) brought with it a worrying surge of violence and deaths on the islands.¹⁵⁹

(2012): 48–63; Mantilla, "Narcotráfico, violencia y crisis social en el Caribe insular colombiano"; Abello Vives, "La nieve sobre el mar."

¹⁵⁷ Maingot and Lozano, *The United States and the Caribbean*, 105 (original emphasis); a more detailed description of the drug-trafficking routes and overall functioning can be found in Mantilla, "Narcotráfico, violencia y crisis social en el Caribe insular colombiano," 50–51.

¹⁵⁸ Maingot and Lozano, *The United States and the Caribbean*, 105; Valencia, "Violencia, paramilitares y narcotráfico en San Andrés."

¹⁵⁹ Valencia, "Violencia, paramilitares y narcotráfico en San Andrés."

As pointed out by Sánchez Jabba, the islanders' embroilment in the hemispheric drug-trafficking networks was never conceived by the local population as a problem of public order, forasmuch as it seldom entailed violence or loss of lives.¹⁶⁰ However, since 2009, the Archipelago has seen an alarming increase in violent deaths – especially those related to criminality and drug-trafficking – and the disappearance or incarceration of many islanders.¹⁶¹ Such a rise is to be attributed to the rampageous territorial disputes of rival *bacrim* aimed at seizing this important node of the Caribbean and Central American drug trade routes.

The words of one of the leading scholars engaged in the Archipelago's vicissitudes provide us with the conclusive passage of this long historical journey:

The island's daily routines were disrupted and the habitual ocean crossings of the island dwellers, to transport drugs and gasoline from one side to the other, to become rife with deaths, selective murders, tortured men. In other words, the islands went from being a crossing point to a strategic nerve center where drug trafficking networks fought to monopolize the transit of illicit cargo.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Sánchez Jabba, "Violencia y narcotráfico en San Andrés," 55.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 60; Valencia, "Políticas públicas y narcotráfico," 15; Valencia, "Violencia, paramilitares y narcotráfico en San Andrés"; Mantilla, "Narcotráfico, violencia y crisis social en el Caribe insular colombiano," 54.

¹⁶² Valencia, "Narcotráfico y posconflicto en Colombia."

5. Conclusion

As highlighted at the outset of the present work, the geography of transnational organized crime is a neglected topic in the vast body of knowledge elaborated thus far in the academia. However, the popularity enjoyed by transnational organized crime as a source of intellectual curiosity and political apprehension has stimulated the emergence of a nascent, albeit rudimentary, corpus of maps. Such cartographical effort has been carried out by UNODC, which is undoubtedly the institutional point of reference when it comes to transnational organized crime as a security issue. However, its maps are heavily influenced by popular misconceptions on the nature and spatial dimension of transnational criminal organizations. The intertwinement of misleading accounts and the visual seduction of crime maps have produced a peculiar iconography of transnational organized crime. The latter relies upon tropes whose underlying contradictions and simplifications call for a more cautious and critical approach to the “conceived space” of the so-called dark side of globalization. The iconography of transnational organized crime appears to be a-spatial and a-historical, as it denotes a tendency to take space and its historicity for granted.

The need for a more nuanced approach to the study of criminal groups and illicit flows has made imperative the abandonment of certain limited theoretical and analytical schemes, if we are to grasp the interrelations between space and illegality. The insights developed within the context of the spatial turn, together with a more critical reading of the licit/illegal divide, have informed the in-

vestigation of the Colombian archipelago's emergence as a pivotal node in the American drug trafficking routes.

Through a qualitative historical analysis of the illegal practices that have shaped the spatiality of the Archipelago throughout its centennial history, it has been possible to better comprehend the societal processes underlying its current status as a "strategic nerve center" of the drug trafficking hemispheric network. As pointed out by Valencia, the contemporary illegal traffic permeating these Caribbean islands is not "an evil that threatens to destroy social order, instead it is deeply rooted in society."¹⁶³ Such rootedness is determined by a historic process whereby the Archipelago's space has been produced and reproduced by its society into a borderland characterized by a substantial blurriness of the dividing line between what is customarily allowed and what is formally prohibited.

The "natural routes" connecting the Archipelago with the neighboring islands and littoral territories have always pointed westward and northward, as noted by Ross.¹⁶⁴ The cultural and commercial ties between the islanders and the Central American and Caribbean neighbors had been established already during the Archipelago's early history. During the 19th century, the Archipelago's booming coconut trade linked its inhabitants closer to the North American shores, both commercially and culturally. Finally, the linkage to the south developed throughout the 20th century due to the islands' "Colombianization," culminating in the 1953 free port declaration. All these routes now form the contemporary itinerary of the narcotics transiting through the islands, and all of them have

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ross, "Routes for Roots," 11.

been sustained over the course of time through both legal and illegal practices. The latter have come to be so intertwined as to be part of a single spectrum of flows or, to put it in Lefebvrian terms, a single spectrum of spatial practices.

Such a symbiotic relation is the product of an insular social space wherein what is legally banned does not correspond to what is socially or culturally accepted by the users of that space, especially when formal illegality becomes a necessity. The pervasiveness of piracy and privateering in the 17th century was a sufficient justification for the Archipelago's Puritan colonizers to gradually transform their settlement into a buccaneers' refuge, the more so when the sustainability of their plantation economy crumbled. Long-standing cultural and commercial ties between the islanders and their regional neighbors permitted the flourishing of contraband as a socially accepted practice from the 18th century onward. Smuggling became a vital activity, especially in times of war or economic tribulations. The same holds true for the islanders' embroilment in the regional drug trafficking scene, in particular for the youths. The "representational space" of the Archipelago's inhabitants does not contemplate a clear-cut line of demarcation between the socially licit and the formally illegal.

However, the islands' social space has not been exclusively forged by the islanders' quotidian practices and routes, but it is the product of a broader societal process whereby the formal state authority has also played its part, either directly or indirectly. The chaotic entanglements of war-making and geopolitics of the Archipelago's early history contributed to dilute the illegality of piratical or

smuggling activities. The latter's permissibility was indeed based on the individual states' viewpoint, be it that of the Spanish Empire and Colombian Republic or that of the British Empire and the U.S. Furthermore, the state political and fiscal management of this insular borderland has often resulted in the deliberate sanctioning or unintended boost of the Archipelago's role as an extra-legal territory. The granting of privileges to San Andrés as free port both in 1795 – by the Spanish Empire – and in 1953 – by the Colombian Republic – stands out as the primary epitome of such a paradoxical state attitude toward its distant borderland. Throughout the Archipelago's history, the “conceived space” as designed and imagined by state authorities have been caught up between the wish to include this space within the orderly contours of law and the implicit recognition of this extra-legal borderland.

This case study has been presented to fill a void in the Archipelago's historiography and, by doing so, to rediscover “the historicity of social space,” as put forward by van Schendel.¹⁶⁵ This journey through the history of the islands' underworld has permitted us to lay bare some of the societal patterns underlying its spatial configuration, and has further showed that the contemporary drug trafficking networks are not so different from the piratical raids or the smuggling routes of the past. All such outlaw practices have contributed to the production of a borderland, a peculiar socio-political space whereas “the socially licit dominates the formally legal.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ van Schendel, “Spaces of Engagement,” 45.

¹⁶⁶ Abraham and van Schendel, “Introduction: The Making of Illicitness,” 22.

Furthermore, this case study has provided some empirical grounds to support my deconstructionist critique on the iconography of transnational organized crime. Contrarily to the view of crime syndicates as exemplified by the octopus trope, the islanders' embroilment in the regional drug trafficking circuitry presents a more variegated and fragmented picture. As pointed out by Abello Vives, the islanders do not own the boats nor have expertise on international drug markets. The local populations are not part of a monolithic criminal entity but rather occasional participants who put their navigational skills at the trafficker's disposal in return for some economic relief and upward social mobility.¹⁶⁷ The importance of the Archipelago in the geography of criminal flows confutes the idea of a borderless criminal world. Border areas and the societies that inhabit them are still vital dots in the topographies of transnational illegal phenomena. The disease metaphor fails to account for the transit zones, the "body of the arrow," and the Archipelago has permitted to highlight the pivotal role that such spatialities assume in the geographies of illegal flows. Finally, the small conglomerate of Caribbean islands raises the problematic of explaining the resilience of certain historical routes and staging posts, an issue that is hardly understandable through the simplistic assumptions of the 'balloon effect.'

Researching the illegal is not an easy task. Reliable data are quite sketchy and the impossibility to access primary sources has made this endeavor even more challenging. For this reason, the present findings are not meant to establish universal claims but rather

¹⁶⁷ Abello Vives, "La nieve sobre el mar," 18.

to stimulate further research that could fill all possible gaps in my analysis. Furthermore, I hope that my intellectual endeavor will inspire more researchers to investigate the spatiality of transnational organized crime with a more critical approach, and further encourage prospective comparative studies on borderlands and other peculiar loci of transnational connectedness. The global geography of crime and the role played therein by certain locales still demand to be properly understood.

Bibliography

- Abello Vives, Alberto. "La nieve sobre el mar: una frontera caribe cruzada por el tráfico de drogas. El caso de Colombia y Nicaragua." *Aguaita* no. 13–14 (2006): 7–22.
- Abraham, Itty, and Willem van Schendel. "Introduction: The Making of Illicitness." In *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization*, edited by Willem van Schendel and Itty Abraham, 1–37. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005.
- Albini, Joseph L., and Jeffrey Scott McIllwain. *Deconstructing Organized Crime: An Historical and Theoretical Study*. Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland & Company, 2012.
- Allum, Felia, and Panos A. Kostakos. "Introduction: Deconstruction in Progress: Towards a Better Understanding of Organized Crime?" In *Defining and Defying Organized Crime: Discourse, Perceptions and Reality*, edited by Felia Allum, Francesca Longo, Daniela Irrera, and Panos A. Kostakos, 1–12. London and New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Andreas, Peter. *Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Divide*. 2nd ed. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009.
- . "Illicit Globalization: Myths, Misconceptions, and Historical Lessons." *Political Science Quarterly* 126, no. 3 (2011): 403–425.
- Andreas, Peter, and Ethan Nadelmann. *Policing the Globe: Criminalization and Crime Control in International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Anonymous. "Porque San Andrés." *Semana*. Bogotá, 1993. <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/porque-san-andres/25010-3> (14 July 2015).

- Baldacchino, Godfrey. "The Lure of the Island: A Spatial Analysis of Power Relations." *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures* 1, no. 2 (2012): 55–62.
- Belina, Bernd. "Crime Mapping – Production of Ideology and Alternatives." In *Learning with Geoinformation V - Lernen Mit Geoinformation V*, edited by Thomas Jekel, Alfons Koller, and Karl Donert, 12–21. Heidelberg: Wichmann, 2010.
- Benton, Lauren. "Legal Spaces of Empire: Piracy and the Origins of Ocean Regionalism." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47, no. 4 (2005): 700–724.
- Bruinsma, Gerben. "Criminology and Transnational Crime." In *Histories of Transnational Crime*, edited by Gerben Bruinsma, 1–8. New York: Springer, 2015.
- Burman, Erica, and Maggie MacLure. "Deconstruction as a Method of Research." In *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, edited by Bridget Somekh and Cathy Lewin, 284–292. London: Sage Publications, 2005.
- Carrapiço, Helena. "Transnational Organized Crime as a Security Concept." In *Routledge Handbook of Transnational Organized Crime*, edited by Felia Allum and Stan Gilmour, 19–35. London and New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Castells, Manuel. *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture. Volume III: End of Millennium*. 2nd ed. Oxford and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- Chambliss, William J. "State-Organized Crime - The American Society of Criminology, 1988 Presidential Address." *Criminology* 27, no. 2 (1989): 183–208.
- Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud. "A Typology of the Unintended Consequences of Drug Crop Reduction." *Journal of Drug Issues* 20, no. 10 (2012): 1–15.

- . “Drug Trafficking In and Out of the Golden Triangle.” In *An Atlas of Trafficking in Southeast Asia: The Illegal Trade in Arms, Drugs, People, Counterfeit Goods and Natural Resources in Mainland Southeast Asia*, edited by Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy, 29–52. London: I.B.Tauris, 2013.
- Clemente Batalla, Isabel. “El Caribe insular: San Andrés y Providencia.” In *Historia económica y social del Caribe colombiano*, edited by Adolfo Meisel Roca, 331–370. Barranquilla: Ediciones Uninorte, 1994.
- Collett, C. F. “On the Island of Old Providence.” *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 7, no. 1837 (1837): 203–210.
- Cormier, Terry. “Transnational Crime in a Borderless World.” In *Human Security and the New Diplomacy: Protecting People, Promoting Peace*, edited by Rob McRae and Don Hubert, 199–206. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001.
- Crampton, Jeremy W. “Maps as Social Constructions: Power, Communication and Visualization.” *Progress in Human Geography* 25, no. 2 (2001): 235–252.
- Crampton, Jeremy W., and John Krygier. “An Introduction to Critical Cartography.” *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 4, no. 1 (2006): 11–33.
- Crawford, Sharika D. “Politics of Belonging on a Caribbean Borderland: The Colombian Islands of San Andrés and Providencia.” In *Crossing Boundaries: Ethnicity, Race, and National Belonging in a Transnational World*, edited by Brian D. Behnken and Simon Wendt, 19–37. Lanham, U.S.: Lexington Books, 2013.
- . “‘Under the Colombian Flag’: Nation-Building of San Andrés and Providence Islands, 1886-1930.” PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2009. <http://d-scholarship.pitt.edu/9023/> (23 June 2015).

- Deávila Pertuz, Orlando. “Reseña de ‘Páginas para la historia del archipiélago. Administración pública, desarrollo económico y corrupción en el archipiélago de San Andrés, Providencia y Santa Catalina. 1926-1927’ de Raúl Román Romero y Johannie James Cruz.” *Memorias. Revista digital de historia y arqueología desde el Caribe* 8, no. 14 (2011): 272–276.
- Eastman Arango, Juan Carlos. “El archipiélago de San Andrés y Providencia: formación histórica hasta 1822.” *Credencial Historia* no. 36 (1992). <http://www.banrepcultural.org/blaavirtual/revistas/credencial/diciembre1992/diciembre1.htm> (23 June 2015).
- Edelmayer, Friedrich, and Margarete Grandner. “Santa Catalina – Old Providence. Eine Insel der Karibik zwischen Mikro- und Globalgeschichte.” In *Plus Ultra. Die Welt der Neuzeit. Festschrift für Alfred Kohler zum 65. Geburtstag*, edited by Friedrich Edelmayer, Martina Fuchs, Georg Heilingsetzer, and Peter Rauscher, 549–592. Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2008.
- Edwards, Adam, and Pete Gill. “The Politics of ‘Transnational Organized Crime’: Discourse, Reflexivity and the Narration of ‘Threat.’” *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 4, no. 2 (2002): 245–270.
- Felsen, David, and Akis Kalaitzidis. “A Historical Overview of Transnational Crime.” In *Handbook of Transnational Crime and Justice*, edited by Philip Reichel, 3–19. London: Sage Publications, 2005.
- Friesendorf, Cornelius. “Squeezing the Balloon? United States Air Interdiction and the Restructuring of the South American Drug Industry in the 1990s.” *Crime, Law & Social Change* 44 (2005): 35–78.
- Gardner, Philip. “Historical Analysis.” In *The SAGE Dictionary of Social Research Methods*, 135–137. London: Sage Publications, 2006.

- Glenny, Misha. *McMafia: A Journey Through the Global Criminal Underworld*. New York: Knopf, 2008.
- Gobernación Archipiélago de San Andrés, Providencia y Santa Catalina. *Plan departamental de reducción de la oferta de sustancias psicoactivas 2013-2016*. San Andrés, 2013. <http://www.odc.gov.co/REGIONALIZACIÓN/Política-regional> (5 July 2015).
- Gootenberg, Paul. "Talking About the Flow: Drugs, Borders, and the Discourse of Drug Control." *Cultural Critique* 71, no. 1 (2009): 13–46.
- Hall, T. "Geographies of the Illicit: Globalization and Organized Crime." *Progress in Human Geography* 37, no. 3 (October 18, 2012): 366–385.
- Harley, John Brian. "Deconstructing the Map." *Cartographica* 26, no. 2 (1989): 1–20.
- Hay, Pete. "A Phenomenology of Islands." *Island Studies Journal* 1, no. 1 (2006): 19–42.
- Hayward, Keith J. "Five Spaces of Cultural Criminology." *British Journal of Criminology* 52, no. 3 (2012): 441–462.
- Kalmanovitz, Salomón. *Nueva historia económica de Colombia*. Bogotá: Taurus, 2010.
- Keefe, Patrick Radden. "The Geography of Badness: Mapping the Hubs of the Illicit Global Economy." In *Convergence: Illicit Networks and National Security in the Age of Globalization*, edited by Michael Miklaucic and Jacqueline Brewer, 97–109. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2013.
- Kenney, Michael. *From Pablo to Osama: Trafficking and Terrorist Networks, Government Bureaucracies, and Competitive Adaptation*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007.

- . “The Evolution of the International Drugs Trade: The Case of Colombia, 1930-2000.” In *Routledge Handbook of Transnational Organized Crime*, edited by Felia Allum and Stan Gilmour, 201–216. New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Kindynis, Theo. “Ripping up the Map: Criminology and Cartography Reconsidered.” *British Journal of Criminology* 54, no. 2 (2014): 222–243.
- Kipfer, Stefan, Kanishka Goonewardena, Christian Schmid, and Richard Milgrom. “On the Production of Henri Lefebvre.” In *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre*, edited by Kanishka Goonewardena, Stefan Kipfer, Richard Milgrom, and Christian Schmid. New York and London: Routledge, 2008.
- Kleemans, Edward R. “Theoretical Perspectives on Organized Crime.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*, edited by Letizia Paoli, 32–52. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Larraz, Irene. “Narco-Islands: Panama’s Drug Trafficking Paradise.” *InSightCrime*, 2013. <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/narco-islands-panamas-drug-trafficking-paradise?highlight=WyJuYXJjby1pc2xhbmRzIl0=> (14 July 2015).
- Latimer, Jon. *Buccaneers of the Caribbean: How Piracy Forged an Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Leeson, Peter T. “An-Arrgh-Chy: The Law and Economics of Pirate Organization.” *Journal of Political Economy* 115, no. 6 (2007): 1049–1094.
- Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991.
- Madsen, Kenneth D. “Local Impacts of the Balloon Effect of Border Law Enforcement.” *Geopolitics* 12, no. 2 (2007): 280–298.

- Maingot, Anthony P., and Wilfredo Lozano. *The United States and the Caribbean: Transforming Hegemony and Sovereignty*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Mantilla, Silvia. “Narcotráfico, violencia y crisis social en el Caribe insular colombiano: El caso de la isla de San Andrés en el contexto del Gran Caribe.” *Estudios Políticos* no. 38 (2011): 39–67.
- Massari, Monica. “Transnational Organized Crime between Myth and Reality: The Social Construction of a Threat.” In *Organized Crime and the Challenge to Democracy*, edited by Felia Allum and Renate Siebert, 50–62. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Merrifield, Andy. *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction*. New York and London: Routledge, 2006.
- Middell, Matthias, and Katja Naumann. “Global History and the Spatial Turn: From the Impact of Area Studies to the Study of Critical Junctures of Globalization.” *Journal of Global History* 5, no. 1 (2010): 149–170.
- Miklaucic, Michael, and Jacqueline Brewer. “Introduction.” In *Convergence: Illicit Networks and National Security in the Age of Globalization*, edited by Michael Miklaucic and Jacqueline Brewer, xiii–xxi. Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2013.
- Mittelman, James H., and Robert Johnston. “The Globalization of Organized Crime, the Courtesan State, and the Corruption of Civil Society.” *Global Governance* 5, no. 1 (1999): 103–126.
- Naím, Moisés. *Illicit: How Smugglers, Traffickers and Copycats Are Hijacking the Global Economy*. New York: Doubleday, 2005.
- Naylor, R. T. *Wages of Crime: Black Markets, Illegal Finance, and the Underworld Economy*. 2nd ed. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004.

- Newton, Arthur Percival. *The Colonising Activities of the English Puritans: The Last Phase of the Elizabethan Struggle with Spain*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1914.
- Nordstrom, Carolyn. *Global Outlaws: Crime, Money and Power in the Contemporary World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- Paoli, Letizia. "Introduction." In *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*, edited by Letizia Paoli, 1–12. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Paoli, Letizia, and Tom Vander Beken. "Organized Crime: A Contested Concept." In *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*, edited by Letizia Paoli, 13–31. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Parsons, James J. *San Andrés y Providencia: Una geografía histórica de las islas colombianas del Caribe*. 3rd ed. Bogotá: El Áncora Editores, 1985.
- Ross, James. "Routes for Roots: Entering the 21st Century in San Andrés Island, Colombia." *Caribbean Studies* 35, no. 1 (2007): 3–36.
- Rouse, Stella M., and Moises Arce. "The Drug-Laden Balloon: U.S. Military Assistance and Coca Production in the Central Andes." *Social Science Quarterly* 87, no. 3 (2006): 540–557.
- Ruggiero, Vincenzo. "Transnational Crime: Official and Alternative Fears." *International Journal of the Sociology of Law* 28, no. 3 (2000): 187–199.
- Sáenz Rovner, Eduardo. "Ensayo sobre la historia del tráfico de drogas psicoactivas en Colombia entre los años 30 y 50." *Iberoamericana* 9, no. 35 (2009): 93–104.
- . *Estudio de caso de la diplomacia antinarcoóticos entre Colombia y los Estados Unidos (Gobierno de Misael Pastrana Borrero, 1970-1974)*. Documentos FCE-CID. Bogotá, 2014. <http://www.fcenew>.

unal.edu.co/publicaciones/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=241:19-estudio-de-caso-de-la-diplomacia-anti-narcoticos-entre-colombia-y-los-estados-unidos-gobierno-de-misael-pastrana-borrero-1970-1974&catid=41:documentos-eaecp-fce.

———. “La prehistoria del narcotráfico en Colombia. Serie documental: desde la Gran Depresión hasta la Revolución Cubana.” *Innovar* no. 8 (1996): 65–92.

“San Andrés es un paso estratégico para el narcotráfico: comandante de la isla.” *El País*. 2014. <http://www.elpais.com.co/elpais/judicial/noticias/san-andres-paso-estrategico-para-narcotrafico-comandante-isla> (6 April 2015).

Sánchez Jabba, Andrés. “Violencia y narcotráfico en San Andrés.” *Agnaita* no. 24 (2012): 48–63.

Scherrer, Amandine. *G8 Against Transnational Organized Crime*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2009.

Schmid, Christian. “Henri Lefebvre’s Theory of the Production of Space: Towards a Three-Dimensional Dialectic.” In *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre*, edited by Kanishka Goonewardena, Stefan Kipfer, Richard Milgrom, and Christian Schmid, 27–45. New York and London: Routledge, 2008.

Schulte-Bockholt, Alfredo. *The Politics of Organized Crime and the Organized Crime of Politics: A Study in Criminal Power*. Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006.

Sheptycki, James. “Against Transnational Organized Crime.” In *Critical Reflections on Transnational Organized Crime, Money Laundering and Corruption*, edited by Margaret E. Beare, 120–144. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003.

Stanislawski, Bartosz H. “Transnational ‘Bads’ in the Globalized World: The Case of Transnational Organized Crime.” *Public Integrity* 6, no. 2 (2004).

- Stares, Paul. *Global Habit: The Drug Problem in a Borderless World*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1996.
- Sterling, Claire. *Octopus: The Long Reach of the International Sicilian Mafia*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1990.
- . *Thieves' World: The Threat of the New Global Network of Organized Crime*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994.
- Strange, Susan. *The Retreat of the State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Thies, Cameron G. "A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations." *International Studies Perspectives* 3 (2002): 351–372.
- Thoumi, Francisco E. *Political Economy and Illegal Drugs in Colombia (Studies on the Impact of the Illegal Drug Trade, Vol. 2)*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *The Globalization of Crime: A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment*. Vienna: United Nations Publications, 2010. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/tocta-2010.html> (23 July 2015).
- . *World Drug Report 2010*. Vienna, 2010. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/WDR-2010.html> (27 July 2015).
- Valencia, Inge Helena. "Narcotráfico y posconflicto en Colombia." *Cultural Anthropology Online*, 2015. <http://culanth.org/fieldsights/675-narcotrafico-y-posconflicto-en-colombia> (5 July 2015).
- . "Políticas públicas y narcotráfico: seguridad vs oportunidad." *Boletín Polis* 9, no. 13 (2013): 14–17.
- . "Violencia, paramilitares y narcotráfico en San Andrés." *La Silla Vacía*, 2014. <http://lasillavacia.com/content/violencia->

paramilitares-y-narcotrafico-en-san-andres-y-providencia-478
65 (5 July 2015).

- Van Duyne, Petrus, and Mark D. H. Nelemans. "Transnational Organized Crime: Thinking in and out of Plato's Cave." In *Routledge Handbook of Transnational Organized Crime*, edited by Felia Allum and Stan Gilmour, 36–51. London and New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Van Schendel, Willem. "Spaces of Engagement: How Borderlands, Illicit Flows and Territorial States Interlock." In *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization*, edited by Willem van Schendel and Itty Abraham, 38–68. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005.
- Vogel, Robert C. "Rebel Without a Cause: The Adventures of Louis Aury." *The Laffite Society Chronicles* 8, no. 1 (2002): 2–12.
- Vollmer, Loraine. *La historia del poblamiento del archipiélago de San Andrés, Vieja Providencia y Santa Catalina - The History of the Settling Process of the Archipelago of San Andrés, Old Providence and St. Catherine*. San Andrés: Ediciones Archipiélago, 1997.
- Warf, Barney, and Santa Arias. *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Weisburd, David, Wim Bernasco, and Gerben Bruinsma. "Units of Analysis in Geographic Criminology: Historical Development, Critical Issues, and Open Questions." In *Putting Crime in Its Place: Units of Analysis in Geographic Criminology*, edited by David Weisburd, Wim Bernasco, and Gerben Bruinsma, 3–. New York: Springer, 2009.
- White, Richard. *What Is Spatial History?* Working Paper, Spatial History Lab. Stanford University, 2010. <https://web.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/pub.php?id=29> (4 March 2015).
- Williams, Phil. "Transnational Organised Crime and National and International Security: A Global Assessment." In *Society Under*

Siege, Volume One. Crime, Violence and Illegal Weapons, edited by Virginia Gamba, Sarah Meek, and Jakkie Potgieter, 11–41. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 1997.

Windle, James, and Graham Farrell. “Popping the Balloon Effect: Assessing Drug Law Enforcement in Terms of Displacement, Diffusion, and the Containment Hypothesis.” *Substance Use & Misuse* 47, no. 8–9 (2012): 868–876.

Woodiwiss, Michael. “Transnational Organised Crime: The Global Reach of an American Concept.” In *Transnational Organised Crime: Perspectives on Global Security*, edited by Adam Edwards and Peter Gill, 13–27. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.

Zapata, Julieth. “San Andrés, atractiva para las bandas criminales.” *Semana*, 2014. <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/san-andres-bandas-criminales/376521-3> (14 July 2015).

Zieleniec, Andrzej. *Space and Social Theory*. London: Sage Publications, 2007.

Curriculum Vitae

Personal Details:

Name: Andrea Geranio

Sex: Male

Date of birth: 4 August 1986

Nationality: Italian

Education:

10/2006 – 7/2013 Bachelor's degree in Political Science and International Relations, University of Palermo, Italy

10/2009 – 7/2010 LLP Erasmus, Political Science and Sociology, University of Granada, Spain

From 10/2013 Erasmus Mundus Master “Global Studies – A European Perspective”, University of Leipzig, Germany (1st year), University of Vienna, Austria (2nd year)

Training:

From 4/2015 Regional Academy on the United Nations (RAUN): Vienna, Austria: team research project “UNODC - Terrorism prevention and non-state actors”

2/2015 – 7/2015 Research stay at the Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde (IfL), Leipzig, Germany: short-term grant abroad (KWA) awarded by the University of Vienna

3/2013 Centro Linguistico d'Ateneo (CLA), Palermo, Italy: preparatory course for the IELTS Academic test

11/2010 Centro de Lenguas Modernas (CLM), Granada, Spain: preparatory course for the DELE C1 exam

3/2009 CRIO – Diplomatici Model United Nations, Catania, Italy: participant at the Security Council simulation

- 4/2008 National Model United Nations (NMUN), New York, United States: participant in the Disarmament and International Security Committee simulation
- 3/2008 Diplomatici Model United Nations (CRIO), Catania, Italy: participant in the Disarmament and International Security Committee simulation

Language knowledge:

Italian: native speaker

English: fluent (IELTS Academic certificate, overall band score: 7.5)

Spanish: fluent (DELE C1 certificate)

French: intermediate

German: intermediate