



# The Space of Agnes Elisa

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Dear Reader:

Organized Crime and its associations have been an interesting subject for many studies, lectures, and reflections for the past 18 years. As a criminology, law enforcement, and intelligence analysis specialist, I read, worked, studied, and analyzed the matter from different points of view to understand why it continues to be a lucrative business and a government failure.

This article is the first part of a series dedicated to this subject but focused on Puerto Rico; as a transshipment point with high criminal frequency statistics, the Puerto Rico government does not recognize the problem beyond police matters.

I invite you to read, comment, share this information, and support me on my social networks.

Thanks for supporting me,  
*Dr. Agnes Aponte Muñoz*  
Researcher

## NARCO 101: Organized Crime & Narcotrafficking in Puerto Rico

This series looks to write the history, development, and evolution of the drug trafficking business in Puerto Rico, substantiating data from primary sources about criminal organizations and gangs on the island. As we know, Puerto Rico is an island colony territory of the United States of America. For decades has been a connection bridge between Europe and the Caribbean islands in the transportation and distribution of drugs that reach the island by South American countries like Colombia, Venezuela, and Perú, among others.

It is hermeneutic to know and understand the significance of the island's geographical location and annexation with the United States since once the product enters Puerto Rico, it is easier to transport to the United States, the primary consumer of narcotics. There are no investigative repositories, books, or studies about the problem on our island beyond journalistic investigative articles, chapters, or essays about the problem, but not on the beginning and evolution since the 60s and 70s.

This exploration pursues to recognize and realize the behavior history of drug trafficking in Puerto Rico and how it became an essential point of transportation since

the 80s. President [Ronald Reagan's US public policy on drug prohibition](#), known as the drug "failed" war, analyzed its methodologies and market strategies, components, diversification, and alliances with other authorities. The reflection of this literature will contribute to continuing the understanding and development of a sustainable criminal justice reform based on the legal, educational, economic, social, cultural, and behavioral aspects of solutions of the drug trafficking emporium, and not with the same punitive methods of arresting and trying to dissolve the distribution points of sale.



### Where to start? Literature Review

Stories related to drug trafficking and organized crime have taken a stunning and international hill with the publication on many digital platforms, tv-series, and documentaries about the life and effort of the most significant drug traffickers in the world. Violence, extravagances, and riches mark each story that many people would like to live and experience. When the televised stories about [Pablo Escobar's](#) life and crimes began, many of us watched the different series, emulated his accent, and dressed like him. Then came other stories about [Griselda Blanco](#), [Amado Carrillo Fuentes](#), The [Italian Mafia](#), and [Mexican / Colombian Cartels](#), among others. If there was one thing about all these stories, they incited

the copy of behaviors, pleasures, egos, and actions to experience a small number of the people's delights in one way or another. Puerto Rico was no exception and became an unhealthy trend that included music, clothing, vocabulary, and criminal actions that destabilized state and federal law enforcement agencies on the island.

The 100 x 35 island also had notable characters related to drug trafficking and organized crime businesses. Some of them are [Gamalier Cruz Cariño](#), [Alexander Capó Carrillo](#), [Jorge Solano Moreta](#), [Angel Vázquez Ayala](#), and [José Figueroa Agosto](#), among others. They put state and federal law enforcement agencies to understand and comprehend the conduct and profits of their illegal enterprises, moving the economy, leaving a path of violence, government instability, absence of public safety, and pain. Some are still serving long-life prison sentences; others are already done due to their knowledge and expertise about this topic. They cooperated with law enforcement authorities in ongoing investigations about organized crime, drug/firearms trafficking, and money laundering as subject matter experts in making felonies.

## Narcotrafficking

Since drug trafficking is an activity attached to organized crime, its essential to discuss both activities as part of the business. (García-Iglesias & Quevedo, 2015). Drug trafficking and organized crime have gotten a significant position in the history of civilization through the globalization of communications and technology. Defining this concept, The Royal Academy of Spanish Language defines drug trafficking as: *"the large-scale toxic drug trade."* The internet represents drug trafficking as follows: *"Generally, drug trafficking is a commercial business or exchange of products in an illegal way, which is associated with the sale and distribution of illegal controlled substances, given the dangerous consequences of their consumptions. However, other drug trafficking activities extend worldwide, whose functionality is the commercialization of goods and products outside the legal framework and exchange controls.* (Yirda, 2021)<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, it is a variable of organized crime that consists of the production, distribution, sale, and consumption, usually on a large scale, of drugs, addictive or not, illegally to obtain economic benefits. (Bataillon,

2015) these drugs or narcotics generally have negative health consequences and are banned in most countries. Illegal groups, mafias, cartels, and drug trafficking groups are responsible for developing this activity. Usually have an international presence and often howl with some governments. Let us remember that the actions of drug traffickers are tolerated, accepted, and valued by the elite sector as well as the middle class and poor sectors. The enrichment linked to this activity has been considered a legal way to ascend socially and face precarious socioeconomic situations due to the lack of access to primary socioeconomic resources. (García-Iglesias & Quevedo, 2015)

The contribution of (Bataillon, 2015) on drug trafficking and corruption makes us reflect on the participation in the acquisition of consumer goods and their conversion of recognition and success. The author mentions an increase in the labor force that often comes from poor regions of Central and South America and qualified staff at the level of professional engineers, chemists, and accountants, among others. This must include the increase in assassins and bodyguards of drug traffickers who have poor professional knowledge and training from ex-military personnel; army corps sometimes occupy them; thus, the legal understanding of criminal lawyers working for organized crime. Finally, we must include professionals in economics, finance, and construction who have done former business. Drug trafficking is the second illicit activity that moves more money than other activities. It is the one that has the most significant capacity for infiltration and corruption in the political, economic, and social systems.

Drug Trafficking Organizations, aka DTO, and other Transnational Criminal Organizations, aka TCOs (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, 2015) operating in and around the United States Caribbean border (*including Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands, and the islets and cays surrounding those main islands*) exploit the region as both a destination and a transshipment point for illicit drugs shipped from South America through Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean to the Continental United States (CONUS). Local law enforcement agencies assert that 80% or more of the murders committed in Puerto Rico are drug-related; I can say 92%. The jurisdictions of Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands are

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<sup>1</sup> <https://conceptodefinicion.de/narcotrafico/>  
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endangered by TCOs that are highly mobile, unrestricted by national boundaries, and diversified into a wide range of crimes, including illicit drug trafficking, alien smuggling, human trafficking, and complex financial crimes. Smuggling patterns are varied to avoid law enforcement detection, and the vast sums of illicit proceeds generated negatively impact the economic system of Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. TCOs have long employed various means to smuggle drugs into and through the area, including vessels and commercial/private aircraft, mail, human carriers, and express shipping packages.

Let us talk in numbers. The government like numbers to understand the movement and how to proceed and look for immediate public solutions. Good statistics show trends about a specific problem or a group of problems. Regarding Puerto Rico, the PR Police Department does not have detailed statistics related to drug and arms trafficking published. They only show the overall of felonies and compare with the before years. As we spoke previously, murders are ranked in Puerto Rico as the prior felonies related to drugs and firearms trafficking:

Here are the numbers for the last two years:

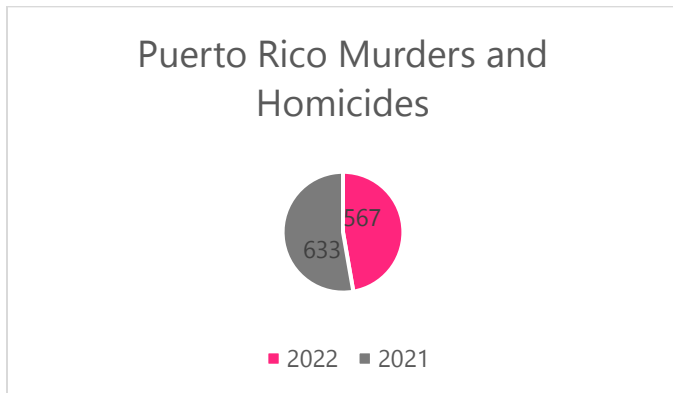


Figure 1: <https://estadisticas.pr/en/estadisticas-mas-recientes>

I suggest visiting the following links for more information about the global trends of drug trafficking:

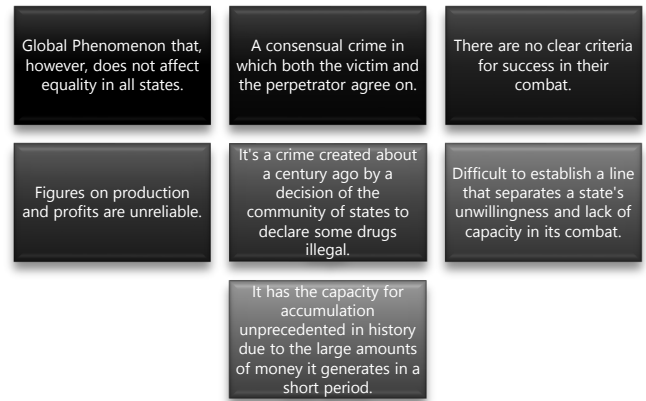
- [The Global Drug Policy Index](#)
- [UN Office on Drugs and Crime](#)

## Characteristics of Organized Crime & Narcotrafficking

The world has also dealt with the issue of violence and drug trafficking. Imagine this: a teacher asked students what they wanted to be when they grew up...they answered without blinking that they tried to become gangsters when they were older (Bataillon, 2015). These are the benefits that the narco leaves to a country's

economy. It generates jobs, the infrastructure it creates, and the gaps it fills where the state does not reach. It is the role of the public service provider that the government itself achieves to play. The weightiness of drug trafficking in a country goes beyond corruption: It is an essential economic actor and can become indispensable. However, the relationship between the narco and the state has its rules and limits (Chabat, 2005).

(Chabat, 2005) also mentions a variant of organized crime whose characteristics are:



In addition to the definitions developed by international organizations, many authors have also addressed the conceptualization of drug trafficking. (García-Iglesias & Quevedo, 2015) Refers to Manuel Castells since it considers that for drug trafficking exist, a series of characteristics must be registered. Let us review the high-level factors:



Finally, if it meets these characteristics, then it is drug trafficking. For these authors, legalizing some drugs is essential to hinder drug trafficking. That is, to leave it without its reasons, despite the risks that essence of this measure (García-Iglesias & Quevedo, 2015).

In creating and maintaining social power, narcos must be present in society as heroes or behaviorist theories of

Robin Hood, which requires a social force that the state does not necessarily possess over its citizens. The imagination in this action will depend on the unique characteristics that can differentiate them from a network or organization. Taking the example of (Ovalle Marroquín, 2010) in his article on drug trafficking and power, networks have been forming in Baja California territory. They have not been characterized by widely sharing their fortunes with the society they settle. They have bet more on the Machiavellian maxim of fear. However, this "friendly face" of drug trafficking is countered by the exercise of power through intimidation and the instrumentalization of violence, widely documented in the media and cultural industries.

### How can admitting power through violence's instrumentalization be understood as a planned, strategic, systematized, and intelligent action in these networks?

Failure to follow the strict rules of silence, respect for anonymity, debt payments, and respect for certain hierarchies, among others, what is at stake is a lot: the business infrastructure, their fortunes, freedom, and ultimately the personal integrity of their loved ones. Two ways of exercising power that affect the consolidation of the phenomenon of drug trafficking translate into a process of legitimization of its illegal project: Power of Reward and Power for Punishment. However, these two typologies of violence are insufficient to identify and understand the forms of infiltration of drug trafficking into the social fabric of the places where it settles. They also inadequately explain the experiences of fear, repulsion, indifference, attraction, and admiration. (Ovalle Marroquín, 2010)

The Caribbean Border Drug Threat Overview Cocaine Report (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, 2015), is the principal drug threat and source of associated violence in the Caribbean region. The trafficking threat and violence associated with marijuana, heroin, and prescription drugs continue to pose significant challenges for the Caribbean Border Counternarcotic Strategy. In the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, Transnational Crimes Organizations are the primary wholesale and retail distributors of cocaine in the Caribbean region. Illicit trafficking is a highly fluid enterprise that generally follows the path of least resistance.

Maritime trafficking continues to be the dominant transportation method used by Transnational Crime organizations in the Caribbean region. Go-fast boats, fishing vessels, luxury yachts, ferries, cruise ships, and containerized cargo are consolidated counterdrug databases (CCDB). The Caribbean Border Counternarcotics Strategy (CBCS) is commonly used to transport narcotics into and through the region. Transnational Crimes Organizations hide large quantities of drugs amid legitimate container traffic, making interdiction challenging. Drug traffickers have long used the Dominican Republic as a transshipment point for cocaine shipped from South America to the Continental United States and Europe. Due to law enforcement efforts by the Dominican Republic in conjunction with the US [Drug Enforcement Administration \(DEA\)](#) and the United States Coast Guard (USCG), drug traffickers decreased air activity. Increased maritime trafficking to the Dominican Republic, according to interagency assessments; there has also been an increase in detected cocaine loads via maritime conveyance directly to the Puerto Rico vicinity.

### Threats and Challenges encountered predominantly in Puerto Rico:

The Puerto Rico Police Department (PRPD) continues to face challenges in countering drug flow that arrives on the island via maritime routes. Illicit drug shipments on Puerto Rico's coastlines are transported to various locations on the island for further distribution to the continental US or local drug points. Significant intelligence indicates that Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) are using the US Postal Service and private couriers' impunity to send kilograms and smaller loads from PR to the Continental US. Due to the current economic situation in Puerto Rico, the local government's budgetary and vision constraints have been limited. The lack of PRPD standing, government and civilian support, knowledge, training, equipment, and the state law's capacity to prosecute criminals aim the failed Puerto Rico War on Drugs as a copy/paste of the US initiative from the 80s until today, criminalizing conduct and not the market. Ability to provide adequate maritime law enforcement assets to address drug trafficking threats to Puerto Rico's coastal waters, extending to nine nautical miles offshore.

Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands will be major eastern Caribbean destinations for significant cocaine and heroin shipments. Cocaine continues to be the principal drug

threat in the Caribbean region regarding trafficking and associated violence. The drug trade and gang involvement has continued to increase the danger posed to children and the juvenile population. Criminal incidents such as violence, destruction, and property theft continue to occur in the school system. The prime motivation for the importation and trafficking of drugs is financial. Therefore, as drug trafficking activities continue to increase in the region, financial crimes will also increase. As illicit drugs are brought in, drug proceeds must move out, either laundered through the financial system or Caribbean Border Counternarcotics Strategy transported to foreign locations in bulk as cash. Some drug trafficking organizations/transnational criminal organizations operating in the region have displayed little sophistication in successful money laundering. Thus, bulk cash smuggling will continue to increase. In addition, the existing social and economic conditions create an environment conducive to the corruption of various entities, including financial institutions. (Policy, 2020)

### Drug Trafficking, Violence & Criminal Activities related to Organized Crime

The transformation of violence is related to the rise of power and criminal groups engaged in drug trafficking and other illicit activities. They were reaching from extortion and kidnapping to smuggling and the counterfeiting industry to human trafficking; the benefits generated by the traffic favor multiple sectors that develop activities that, for some, are perfectly legal. Traffickers require drivers or pilots, vehicles, ships, airplanes, and the personnel in charge of their maintenance. The illegal activities and the violence associated with them remain incomprehensible if one does not analyze their elective affinity with two types of conceptions of wealth, work, and the individual. The first is deeply rooted in the Latin American population; the other is promoted and brought about by neoliberal deregulation and the latest globalization. The activities linked to drug trafficking are so-called in the same way; they are not routine and regular activities but a series of good businesses where luck plays a determining role.

The music activity of "narcocorridos" like "[la guagua gris](#)" from the Mexican Group Los Tigres del Norte illustrates this imaginary game and the present challenge among the smugglers. This song, like many others, features bold men who risk everything. The activities linked to drug

trafficking are also ideally suited to a representation that considers the individual an "asymmetrical player" or a "vulnerable opportunist." It acts as an unstable world where rules are to the detriment of "those below" and permanently rearranged by the powerful in their favor. Listening to narco-corridos, reggaeton, trap, and rap, watching films, series, and novels of narcos prevalent in Mexico and Colombia, and among others, immigrants living in the US contribute to spreading these imaginaries. The individual here is not led by institutions that set rules and produce norms applied mechanically to protect him but by other individuals who are first and foremost members of networks that act opportunistically. Individualism is the attitude of the "me first." It is not exclusive to the narcos, the political class, or the authorities but is sprinkled throughout the social whole. For everyone, morality is concentric, applied based on sociability and network circles (Bataillon, 2015).

It is important to remember that organized crime and drug trafficking are not limited to the national context but are framed in the transnational sphere. In this sense, a country is not solely responsible and cannot solve the problems related to these phenomena without external support. The issue of drug trafficking is complex, and governments need to debate and cooperate not only on legalizing some illegal drugs but also on the underlying problems, such as weak institutions, corruption, impunity, education, drug demand, and prevention. Countries that produce drug trafficking and use it cannot solve problems without honest efforts in collaboration and coordination (Rosen & Zepeda-Martínez, 2015).

### Have you ever wondered about the professionalization of the narcos?

Since the 1980s, when the drug war began, these networks and their strategies have persisted in evading legal obstacles, leaving evidence of their capacity for innovation, competitiveness, and adaptability. There is observable in transforming their organizational routes, networks, labor structuring, and the incorporation of government officials' different labor branches with technological, scientific, legal, and strategic knowledge to potential project success. (Ovalle Marroquín, 2010) mentioned sociology that can be understood in consensus by pointing out the existence of schools that address the paradigms of the definition of a profession.

## How can we define the characteristics of the profession?

(Ovalle Marroquín, 2010), The essential activities ensure the life and well-being of society members with an emphasis on services that go before the interest of their clients. Requires specialized studies based on systematic knowledge that involves the passage through educational institutions, enjoy the right and monopoly to offer the services for which they were molded.

## Do we favor the professionalization process to develop drug trafficking networks?

The market's competitiveness, acceptance, and legitimization of its project can be distinguished by generating a "sustainable" economy for society. Acquiring professionals in the legal area, business administration, scientific engineers, and specialists in communications, aviation, strategies, and security are obtaining an interdisciplinary group of knowledge that optimize the organizational system of the criminal organization. The result of this specialization and entrepreneurial professionals is to adapt and counteract barriers the government present. That includes and is not limited to improving the product, marketing strategies, transportation, security, enhancing and hiding crops, improving communication systems without interception, and above all, valuing the effort of the business.

## Narco-trafficking in Puerto Rico: How is the problem defined, what are the statistics, and what are we solving?

The history within the federal justice system in Puerto Rico has been forged of accomplishments due to its methodology and broad jurisdiction in the investigations and prosecutions of individuals involved in the organized criminal activity of drugs/arms trafficking in Puerto Rico from the 80s to the present. This area within the Federal Prosecutor's Office in Puerto Rico is critical. It has brought successes in the judicial prosecution of its defendants and associates within federal law that address the complexity of related crimes.

The federal government under President Ronald Reagan established public policies for the criminal and severe prosecution of activities related to drug trafficking and organized crime. Our territorial political position allows federal agencies to investigate these crimes to take

jurisdiction over complex cases that include but are not limited to drug trafficking, arms trafficking, money laundering, interstate commerce, and all offenses contemplated under the [RICO ACT](#). Since the 90s, the market development with Latin American countries such as Colombia, Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Panama, and Mexico, among others, created unique characters in the Puerto Rican culture, emulating one of the most iconic, strategic, and significant characters in the history of drug trafficking, Pablo Escobar Gaviria. The intervention, strategy, and planning to control the drug trafficking market developed a school of knowledge and business management that has been emulated in other countries such as Mexico with their characters: [Beltrán Leyva Brothers](#), [Michoacana Family](#), [Juarez Cartel](#), [Tijuana Cartel](#), [Jalisco Cartel](#), [Jalisco Nueva Generación Cartel](#), etc. Puerto Rico could not be left behind. They were developing their characters trained in different eras that today are in the custody of the Federal Department of Correction, serving severe sentences under federal laws that process cases related to drug trafficking and others in the free community serving suspended sentences.

While the United States has managed to stabilize or reduce the demand for most illicit drugs, it has undoubtedly not eliminated the American need for illegal drugs or the profits associated with supplying the vast American market. Washington DC has underendowed demand control routinely, while the main emphasis has almost automatically been positioned on supply-control strategies, but ultimately fruitless. However, the consequences of Washington's strategic decisions are visible. Washington demands the countries in the region follow its example in the "war of frugs" and, as in previous years, maintain a formal "certification" process that often sanctioned those nations that did not "cooperate fully." America's insistence on such a policy approach has led overall failure of the drugs war for the past 40 years. It has backfired on US interests and individual Latin American countries (Bagley, Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime in the Americas, 2012).

## Drugs in Puerto Rico

Data collected through the media and studies conducted by prominent Puerto Rico researchers reveal records on the police and punitive handling of causes related to the consumption and possession of controlled substances or drugs since the 1930s. Thus, the consumption of controlled substances has become a structurally legal

business that generates millions of dollars a year in what is known as the underground economy. It is not mirrored in the stated records of the Department of Treasury. We must first define what drugs are and discuss how substance use has become a lucrative and macro-expensive business worldwide. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), it is currently the most used illegal drug or psychoactive substance whose production, sale, or consumption are prohibited. Strictly speaking, the drug itself is not unlawful; its production, sale, or consumption in certain circumstances in a particular jurisdiction is. The most accurate term, *"illegal drug market,"* refers to the production, distribution, and sale of any drug or medicine outside legally permitted channels.

The US Drugs War began in 1971 with the declaration of President [Richard Nixon](#). It is worth mentioning that President Nixon identified the problem correctly: drug trafficking exists because of consumers and the prominent market, and the invested resources to combat consumption. The current phase of the Drug War began with President Ronald Reagan in the 80s. Reagan considered the production and trafficking of illegal drugs, particularly in the Andean region, to represent a severe threat to the security of the United States. Therefore, he initiated a process of securing the drugs war and made this war the first national security objective and priority of his administration.

(Bagley, Bonilla, & Paez, La economía política del narcotráfico: El Caso Ecuatoriano, 1991) The people positively supported the president's initiative. The US Congress passed severer anti-drug legislation, expanded military involvement in the war, backed presidential efforts to intensify interdiction efforts along US borders, and developed the design of crop substitution and legal coercion programs in foreign producing and transit countries.

The drug war during the Reagan Administration was evidence of Washington's objectives and foreign policy toward Latin America. (Rosen & Zepeda-Martínez, 2015) The first objective of US foreign policy has always been security. Reagan persuaded the US population that drug trafficking posed a significant threat, could destroy many people's lives, and affect young people. In particular, the middle class represented and continues to represent a formidable ally for those who maintain the need for the drug war because they do not want their children to have problems with them. US strategies and war continued

during the presidency of William Clinton (1993-2000), despite belonging to the democratic party. The Colombian case, particularly the implementation of the [Colombia Plan](#) (Rosen & Zepeda-Martínez, 2015) is a crucial example of understanding cooperation between the US and other countries. Like his predecessor Ronald Reagan, [William Clinton](#) considered drug trafficking in Colombia a threat that could affect the security of the US. Colombia has a strategic geographical position and is an essential country in the Andean region. Colombia's major security issues may impact trade and the economy in the area. The US and Colombia had harsh relations during the Clinton administration and his counterpart in Colombia, [President Ernesto Samper](#) (1994-1998). Samper was never a staunch ally of the US, and relations between the countries deteriorated rapidly.

The Clinton Administration perceived President Samper as uncommitted to fight against drugs and decertified Colombia for three consecutive years. This is an example of the US propensity to use its hegemonic power in the region and dictate conditions to other countries unilaterally. The US sanctioned Colombia for its insubordination and unwillingness to obey the rules and dictates of US foreign policy. The election of President [Barack Obama](#) in 2008 represented an opportunity to change the strategy of the drug war; new approaches and procedures were required. The Obama administration knows that the US cannot continue to be the world's police officer or continue the global war on terror. (Rosen & Zepeda-Martínez, 2015)

## The Social Power of Drug Trafficking & Organized Crime

An in-depth look at the author Lilliana Ovalle in her writing on Drug Trafficking and Power, the struggle for legitimacy made a thoughtful analysis of social behavior in the face of drug trafficking. She quotes:

Why don't you leave it?

It is the question asked to the informants over and over again. They knew in advance that the mythical ideas that *"the one who enters does not leave"* are nothing more than fiction built by official sources and reinforced by the media. They constantly refer to it: *"there is much competition; in this business, the difficult thing is to keep you inside."* To those who have been rattling for years,

from capos bosses without getting the desired fortunes to those who have just been released from prison after long sentences, to those who have achieved privileged positions within drug trafficking networks by building enough capital to *"subsist quietly."* She asked them:

### Why don't you look for a new role?

The answers were logically varied: they were out of habit because they did not know how to do anything else. They consider it essential to have a network of complicities to which they access thanks to drug trafficking because they do not want to modify their lifestyle. After all, legal employment alternatives do not find them attractive. They do not perceive job opportunities in the world of legality because they like and are amused but their lifestyles, among others. (Ovalle Marroquín, 2010)

Social distancing refers to the parallels of sympathy and understanding between individuals and groups, which have to do with the willingness to establish relationships with different groups (Borgadus, 1925). Social distance studies commonly consign prejudice, discrimination, or intergroup conflicts. The social distance expressed by the subjects can be interpreted as rejection or acceptance from one group to another. Since social distance has to do with the willingness expressed by members of one group to relate to another, it is a requirement that there is indeed the possibility of such relationships occurring in the social context in question. (Moreno-Candil & Flores-Palacios, 2015).

(Ovalle Marroquín, 2010) Continuing with his contribution to the social construction of drug trafficking as an occupation, he outlines the vocation for drug trafficking in a section. Conceptually it is bold to approach drug trafficking as a profession in the daily life of multiple social sectors; this environment is lived as a mechanism of inclusion and labor alternative; therefore, it is more daring to raise the existence of vocation for the narco. This concept refers to personal choices about work based on tastes, interests, and aptitudes. Vocation is the expression of individual values. Nevertheless, these values are not molded in a vacuum; they are referenced in the set of family, community, and social interactions in which people develop. Identifying the vocation for narco implies, at

least for some networks of transnational drug traffickers, their link lived as a disposition as a call to carry out these activities and prefer such a context.

Moreover, subjects state that a significant advantage of working with drug trafficking is the possibility of having the support of issues which, due to their networks of complicities, effectively possess the power within the social structure in case of any difficulties. The most crucial element to getting involved and maintaining their link with drug trafficking networks is the profitability of their activities. However, the supposed profitability of drug trafficking is an idea that must be qualified since in the drug trafficking networks, as in other companies, profits are concentrated in a few, usually those who occupy the most privileged, least risky, and most lucrative positions. They are merchandise owners with the necessary knowledge to occupy these positions. Most members of these networks who are enthusiastic about planting, producing drug dealing, transport, security network, and the care of safe houses, among others, risk a lot and usually do not get even the expected enrichment (Ovalle Marroquín, 2010).

A belief in the safe profitability of the drug trafficking business may be related to the fact that large sectors of society are beginning to consider this activity a valid and attractive job option. The different authors dedicated to sociology agree that income levels are a decisive factor in occupation status. Generally, specific work ensures a higher average income than others; this translates into an increase in prestige, consent, and power. Given the profitability of drug trafficking activities, it is essential to consider this argument by analyzing the relationship between knowledge and the ability of these networks (Ovalle Marroquín, 2010).

### Persons Imprisoned for Drug Trafficking-related offenses

Although it is public knowledge, the problems related to violent crimes in Puerto Rico and offenses related to drugs and firearms occupy worrying numbers in the statistics of crimes registered per capita. Statistics from the Puerto Rico Police Department, the main charge of ensuring the safety of citizens in the period from January to March 2021, a total of 86 murders were registered out of a total of 158, equivalent to 54% where the motive was drugs.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Informe Preliminar De Asesinatos | Policía de Puerto Rico



The [Insight Crime Website](#) published that the homicide and murder rate in Puerto Rico will be 16.5 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2020. The failure was due to the COVID-19 crisis and the confinement of inhabitants to minimize the spread of the disease.<sup>3</sup>

## Theories Associated with Organized Crime

Talking about theories, commercial activity acceptable to society can pigeonhole us into a visual structure and think of traditional views of human behavior. While doing the literature review, among the multiple readings, I found the authors (García-Iglesias & Quevedo, 2015) an objective and accurate contribution to the sociology of organized crime. In a work of theirs carried out in the 20th, as a requirement to the final degree project, they stated the following: summarizing their reading and contribution in writing: Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking on the International Scene.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, with the expansion of commerce and urban evolution through the social and migratory exchange, maintaining a patriarchal structure was a predominant feature of men over women. Except in the cases of the family nucleus called "*the family*" in the classic style of the historical mafia, organized crime has established a presence in financial markets, trade, business, and political systems, undermining its interest outside the framework of the legal. Diversifying its activity outside the traditional increased supply and demand makes the approach strategy more dynamic. Includes the diversification of the market that, in addition to drug trafficking, is necessary to have and not limited to the trafficking of weapons, alien trafficking, and sexual trafficking, regardless of age and gender, to satisfy human "*need*" of the effect of the drug's use. The exercise of violence as a coercive measure to fulfill deals, blackmail, settling of accounts, and hiring people dedicated to executing "*murder contracts*."

Money laundering or assets has acquired significant importance in the formal and informal economy, highlighting the tax heavens and the criminal justice system that only makes sense if the profits generated can be reinvested and used in the legal economy. Economic activity is a cornerstone of transnational organized crime that benefits from tax havens and the channels of action

made possible by the international financial system, which has very few controls.

Violence has been even in the day-to-day routine of human beings. We see this in daily reports about criminal activity toward a person (*murders, homicides, robbery, sexual assault, among others*). The differences between criminal organizations have highlighted their aggressiveness and their fury latent at any time and place. Also, it normalized the attitude or manifestation of the narco culture that sometimes wants to show us the good side of the narco that is acceptable in society (Estrada-Pérez & Quiroz-Batista, 2018). Their reflections let that normal behavior can trigger young people to enter drug trafficking and be bulletproof by the country's governmental instability. Access to essential services such as water, energy, internet, education, food, lack of labor equity, and sustainable job offers adapted to the needs and wage disparity compared to other jurisdictions in the United States. In addition, narcocorridos, reggaeton, trap, and different fashionable musical genres represent the conjunction of narco-culture since their themes refer to the practices, beliefs, language, and lifestyle of the drug trafficker, triggerman, and bichote.

(Requena-Martinez, 2020) Conducted a study about the psycho-criminological profile of the drug trafficker. Their findings were relevant to bond ideas with the theory of social networks. Opportunities and social relations are not a matter of life, but the laws of geography produce unions by ethnicity, age, and work that sometimes coincide. Work is an area of interaction but contributes to successfully concealing illegal activities.

In his position on the social structure of opportunities, he explained the late-onset options are obtainable because of the social ties established by friends, family, and acquaintances, which sometimes criminals lack from an early age. [The study of Van De Koppen et al. \(2010\)](#) when (Requena-Martinez, 2020) mentioned compared the criminal careers of a sample of criminals related to organized crime with common criminals. Determined that it is vital to study the phenomenon of organized crime separately since the patterns are different from the beginning of the criminal activity; later persistent carries more lasting sentences and has a more stable character.

The profile study of the drug trafficker determined that personality background influences these people's

<sup>3</sup> [Balance de InSight Crime de los homicidios en 2020](#)

characters. [In Hans Jurgen Eysenck's theory](#)<sup>4</sup>, people who commit crimes have not developed a strong conscience, either because of poor conditioning or inherent. In the case of drug traffickers, they possess psychological characteristics that make them suitable for business, the gratification of taking the risk associated with impulsivity by reducing people's ability to control their behavior.

(Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985) Developed a theory that those with a degree of impulsivity were more likely to commit crimes because they calculated the cost and benefits of offending. Supported by their desire for immediate reinforcement by valuing more the help of the offense offered by the instantaneous reward and less influenced by the subsequent consequences of the criminal activity.

The theory proposed by (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990) claimed that people with little self-control are impulsive, take risks, have few cognitive and academic skills, are selfish, and have little empathy. Impatience related to the taste of the power of being a drug trafficker allows them to access a group feared by society and live above the law enjoying the power of breaking the rules. History is full of these actions, such as Amado Carillo, who ordered to end of other people's lives in charge or represented a threat to the business. Pablo Escobar's obsession when he financed electoral campaigns to belong to the political world. When Joaquin Guzmán in his taste for women because they represented a prize. People who possess a violent personality are associated with a low possession of empathy. (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2018) mentioned that support for the relationship between empathy and crime comes from the studio of psychopathy. Psychopaths must be simplistic, superficial, and manipulators. However, it's thought that the lack of emotionality and appropriate empathy characterizes this condition.

### Organized Crime studies and scope

In several ways, drug traffickers have long had this profile in Mexico and other Latin American countries. They are individuals who accessed envied positions thanks to their cunning and vision of the business images quite far from those traditionally transmitted by films such as The Godfather or ScarFace (Bataillon, 2015).

Since the 90s, Colombia has been the world's primary producer and exporter of cocaine. A series of underlying

structural conditions make this country the best place in America to concentrate cocaine cultivation, manufacture, and export activities. These factors show the importance that drug trafficking had for Colombia and countries in the Andean region, mainly cocaine, targeting the North American market but also involving transit countries in Central America, the Caribbean, and Mexico (Rosen & Zepeda-Martínez, 2015).

The legitimization of drug trafficking within certain societies is symbolic of making groups consecrate and institute them. (Ovalle Marroquín, 2010) Mention this legitimization is achieved when a group of social people can make the concept of reality prevail and adopt a vision as the right one for the world. Clans, families, and mafias traditionally administered drug trafficking, or cartels that commercialize drugs at local and international scales, taking advantage of the existing legal system and even weakening governments and introducing corruption into legal and economic activities. The mafia's largest income source came from drug trafficking in the 60s. For example, the following graphic (Bagley, Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime in the Americas, 2012) expose the proliferation of Mexican Cartels in the period from 2006-2010:

2006	2007-2009	2010
Pacific Cartel	Pacific Cartel, Beltrán-Leyva Cartel	Pacific Cartel, South Pacific Cartel, Acapulco Independent Cartel, and La Barbie Cartel.
Juarez Cartel		
Tijuana Cartel		
Gulf Cartel	Gulf-Zeta Cartel	Los Zetas Cartel
The Michoacana Family		
Millenium Cartel		Resistance Cartel, Jalisco New Generation Cartel.

Criminal organizations, in contrast, do not determine the type of state, although they can deter or inhibit political reform efforts at all levels of the political system. Advanced capitalist democracies from the United States to Europe and Japan exhibit wide variations in organized crime they generate or tolerate. The United States, for example, has eliminated the Italian Mafia model and seen it replaced by 12 fragments and widely dispersed domestic criminal organizations, many affiliated with immigrant communities (Bagley, Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime in the Americas, 2012).

Also mentioned, the failure of the US Drug Control Policies to stabilize or even reduce demand for most illicit

<sup>4</sup> <https://open.baypath.edu/psy321book/chapter/c18p2/>  
pg. 10 | [www.agneselisa.net](http://www.agneselisa.net)

drugs at home certainly has not eliminated the American need for illegal drugs or the profits associated with supplying the vast US market. Washington has demanded the countries of the region follow its lead in the “*drugs war*” and, as in previous years, upheld a formal “*certification*” process that often sanctioned those nations that did not “*fully cooperate*.” US insistence on such a policy approach has led to overall failure in the “*war on drugs*” over the last 25 years; it has been counterproductive for the US and individual Latin American countries.

## Narcoterrorism

When I began my literature review on this concept related to drug trafficking, it was inquisitive to find the literature on the term by federal agencies since the 80s. The United States recognized this activity as part of an organization during the war on drugs with Colombia and the FARC terrorist group The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. The money from drug trafficking is used to defray the cost of purchasing weapons and supporting terrorist activities.

An article by Daniel Boyce, an FBI intelligence specialist in the 80s, entitled: Narcoterrorism; indicated that in third-world countries, narcotics, traffickers, terrorist organizations, and insurgent groups allegedly use their wealth from drug sales to exert economic, political, and military pressure on the government of countries which they operate. The activities of drug traffickers and terrorist organizations in remote areas of Latin America often directly impact the United States as this is the primary consumer of drugs in the world. Its reflection in the US is the use of violence to protect criminal enterprises regardless of the objectives of terrorist organizations. In the latter, contact between terrorist and drug trafficking groups results from the clandestine nature of illegal activity between the two groups (Boyce, 1987).

Peru’s former president [Belaunde Terry](#) created the general debate on narcoterrorism in 1983. He used the term to refer to attacks orchestrated by organized crime groups on law enforcement agents. That is why Colombia used it to describe its relations with the [FARC](#) and extended the term to other organizations and governments participating in drug trafficking to achieve the political objective. Insurgent groups in drug trafficking finance their attacks, provoking a high level of confusion summed up: “*the vague formula of narcoterrorism with its*

*implicit call to merge the war on drugs and the war on terror could offer a misleading intellectual roadmap for addressing the problem of terrorism* (Teiner, 2020). ”

The general debate on narcoterrorism has produced two types of the phenomenon: criminal organizations that use terrorist tactics to secure or expand their illicit businesses and insurgent organizations, terrorist groups, or governments involved in drug trafficking to achieve their political goals. Both types of narcoterrorism can be applied to many organizations, not limited to specific counties or regions.

## Narco-Corruption

The traditional corruption that generates any organized crime activity is the policeman who looks the other way when the shipment of drugs, weapons, or people passes. The corruption caused by the narco goes further; it also pays not to be arrested or convicted and, if so, escape prison. It also pays for information on possible police operations, avoiding them, and information on “*traitors*” and “*competing gangs*” activities. One aspect of narco-corruption frequently makes the front pages of newspapers is illicit money in political campaigns. However, it is difficult to prove for the simple reason that a dollar product of drug trafficking is equal to one outcome of a legitimate business. However, what is the purpose of the support? Having influence and buying protection, the government’s gaze turns to others.

Criminal groups towards another cartel are nothing more than that. Drug traffickers are not interested in buying everything from the state. They were interested in defining public policies to influence social or foreign policies. They do not want political power; they do not need it. They have no political project. They want a state that lets them operate, protects them, and works for them. The third aspect of the relationships between the drug traffickers, the state, confrontation, and corruption is peaceful coexistence. The narco, in its activity, generates direct jobs, which despite being illegal, have an impact on the economies where it is based. The economic spillover that drug trafficking fosters, especially at the local level, can significantly alleviate the hardships of an underdeveloped country, a phenomenon that makes it a factor of stability. Drug traffickers also often collaborate to benefit their community, such as roads or schools. In addition to generating sympathy among the local population, this contribution dramatically alleviates the

demand for essential services that the state often cannot provide. On the other hand, drug traffickers usually invest in licit businesses, impacting the economy and state revenues through the takes these [businesses pay](#) (Chabat, 2005).

## NarcoCulture

Yeap! Narcoculture. A new old one arises on drug trafficking, production, distribution, and consumption. The concept includes and is not limited to the codes, beliefs, styles, clothing, music, languages, social coexistence, and family environment (Estrada-Pérez & Quiroz-Batista, 2018). Narco-corridos, reggaeton, underground, rap, trap, etc., are musical genres that use as prefix indicators to the narco in the lyrics about experiences of drug trafficking, lifestyles, and way of operation. The goal is to narrate the behaviors, failures, and experiences of those dedicated to drug trafficking. In addition, this cultural movement mentioned (Teiner, 2020) has the purpose of building personalities and making history about the drug war, primarily the responsibility of bargains, cartels, and their leaders in the way and manner of committing their crimes. In the past, [Emilio Zapata Salazar](#), leader of the Mexican Revolution, idealized in the Zapatista Movement in the early 1900s, the spiritual figure of Santa Muerte and the patron saint of drug trafficking [Jesús Malverde](#), were essential factors in the establishment of narco-culture.

The effect on the word cannot be simple communication since it includes and is not limited to thoughts, meanings, interpretations of the context, and experience of the individual, generating a range of purposes and their different representations. Today, the concept is a good fad among the youth for its symbolism of violent ideas beyond understanding the importance of history when listening to narco-corridos. The violence expressed within the concept, the new identities based on power and acceptance, the reality of the networks, and the influential social pressure make the subrogation towards dominance in a society where fear and death arise, and survival is the best way to remain stable. In response to these considerations, being a social phenomenon has as characteristics the immediacy of proximity and accelerated growth given by its popularity and media. It is essential to emphasize the youth population's process of conformation in a context marked that the narco culture is proven to accept it without questioning that the social and individual implications it brings with it are permeated

by violence and the transgression towards the other society itself (Estrada-Pérez & Quiroz-Batista, 2018).

## Organized Crime

Organized Crime as we know it today has a very contemporary beginning. The second half of the nineteenth century was associated with the incipient expansion of world trade, European imperialism, rapid urbanization, intense social changes, and new internal and international migratory processes (García-Iglesias & Quevedo, 2015). Organized crime has the following primary characteristics:



In addition to maintaining a predominantly patriarchal structure, which is also one of its defining features, a hierarchical distribution of power in men, occupies a preferential place to the detriment of women except in cases where they are part of the ruling family nucleus or the "family" in the classic sense of mafias. With this renewed strengthening, organized crime has penetrated financial markets, trade, businesses, and many political systems, undermining their interest or establishing relationships outside the law (García-Iglesias & Quevedo, 2015).

With the same dynamic, criminal activities in recent decades have managed to diversify their traditional offer. However, depending on the organization, their actions focus more on one sector than another. For example, in the case of Latin America, the cartels focus primarily on drug trafficking, originally cocaine, marijuana, heroin, and other chemical drugs. In addition, to the trafficking in arms, mainly light weapons, the smuggling of immigrants, deception, and exploitation by criminal organizations to exceed border controls and obtain residence is also worth mentioning. Women's trafficking and Children's are closely linked to the sexual division of labor, sexual exploitation, and prostitution, occupying third place in the volume of money after arms and drug trafficking. The

exercise of violence is commonly used to enforce deals, frighten, coerce, blackmail, or “*settle scores*”; sometimes uses the outsourcing of contract killers.

Furthermore, money laundering has acquired tremendous importance in the current era of speculative financial capitalism and tax havens. Regarding the laundering activity, it should be noted that the entire criminal system only makes sense if the profits generated can be reinvested and used in the legal economy. Money laundering is the cornerstone of transnational organized crime, which benefits from the existing tax and the channels of action made possible by the international financial system, which has very few controls.

In addition, to have conditions conducive to growth, the key to triumphing organized crime and drug trafficking at a global scale lies in the status as a transnational actor, which has been able to take advantage with more incredible skills and efficiency of the ins and outs of globalization. Organized crime has ceased to be a national problem and has instead become a transnational or global challenge. Therefore, the most appropriate way to address this is by adopting transnational or international cooperation measures mediated by a necessary political will.

(Calvani, 2010) The [UNTOC Convention](#) also defines an organized criminal group as a structured group of three or more persons existing for a period acting in concert to commit severe crimes to obtain a financial or material benefit. Organized Crime groups have different structures or typologies of definition:

- **Standard Hierarchy:** As a structured group of three or more people, there are at least five basic ways to organize these “three or more people” themselves.
  - The first and probably most known criminal group typology is the so-called “standard.” It frequently found crime among eastern Europe, Russia, and China groups.
  - The following elements characterize it:
    - It has a single leader with a clearly defined hierarchy
    - Under a robust system of internal discipline

- Known by a specific name, and there are often social solid or ethnic identities underlying it
- Violence is essential to their activities, and they often have evident influence or control over a defined territory.

- **Regional Hierarchy:** A classic example is the Italian mafia. Other examples include organized crime groups from Albania, Russia, Japan, and the US.
  - It is a single structure with a line of command from the center and a certain degree of autonomy at the regional level over a geographic or regional distribution.
  - They undertake multiple activities.
  - Violence is essential to their activities, offering a solid social or ethnic identity.
- **Clustered Hierarchy:** It is relatively rare, so finding many examples of this group is difficult. There is the [28s prison gang of South Africa](#), the Italian-dominated heterogeneous networks groups active in Germany, and the Russian-based Zilberman Group.
  - It consists of several criminal groups with governing arrangements among the groups; the cluster has a stronger identity than its constituent groups, and there is a degree of autonomy for these constituent groups; the formation of this structure is strongly linked to a specific social or historical context.
- **Criminal Network:** This is the most common type of organized crime group nowadays and resembles a business type.
  - It is defined by the activities of key individuals whose prominence in the network is determined by contacts or skills.
  - Personal loyalties and ties are more critical than social or ethnic identities.
  - Network connections endure coalescing around a series of criminal projects, granting them a low public profile so that any name seldom knows them.

The literature review has shown us that drug trafficking is an illicitly legal activity accepted by a society where it

generates order and, at the same time, chaos to satisfy human, political, and behavioral needs. Throughout history, the behavior around this activity has shown its viable, accessible, and relevant alternative in underdeveloped societies where the government and the state cannot provide the necessary tools to have a sustainable and accessible community with a quality of life.

Knowing the history, development, and evolution of Puerto Rico as a primary bridge of drug transportation and distribution can contribute to developing better strategies aligned with our needs as an island. An unincorporated territory of the United States, and minimize the practice of copying strategies, styles, and plans of the US and Latin American countries that history has not taught that have not been effective in reducing or eradicating organized criminal activity and drug trafficking consumption in Puerto Rico.

## Conclusion

The general approach to the specifics of organized crime and its associated crimes, counting drug and arms trafficking, remains the most lucrative business in a society marked by economic, cultural, and educational inequality. The globalization of the world through the integration of technology, including today's social networks, makes drug trafficking and organized crime a lifestyle that many want to achieve as part of that artificial fame that floods the behavior of the human being. We cannot leave behind those crimes related to organized crime is not a matter of rich and poor groups; it is a social, economic, and educational issue that affects not only human coexistence. The government insists on addressing the issue as a police problem and not. These crimes are highly structured and influence the legal and governmental economy like any other business. Changing our views on handling drugs, weapons, and organized crime requires a behavioral and cognitive change in how we perceive the consequences of crime and how the government irresponsibly continues to handle it.

I will dedicate exclusively to my island Puerto Rico in our next series. Unfortunately, it has failed to find sustainable alternatives aligned with our specific needs, and how the fallacy of the war on drugs continues to perpetuate the failure to create human warehouses in structures and on land.



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