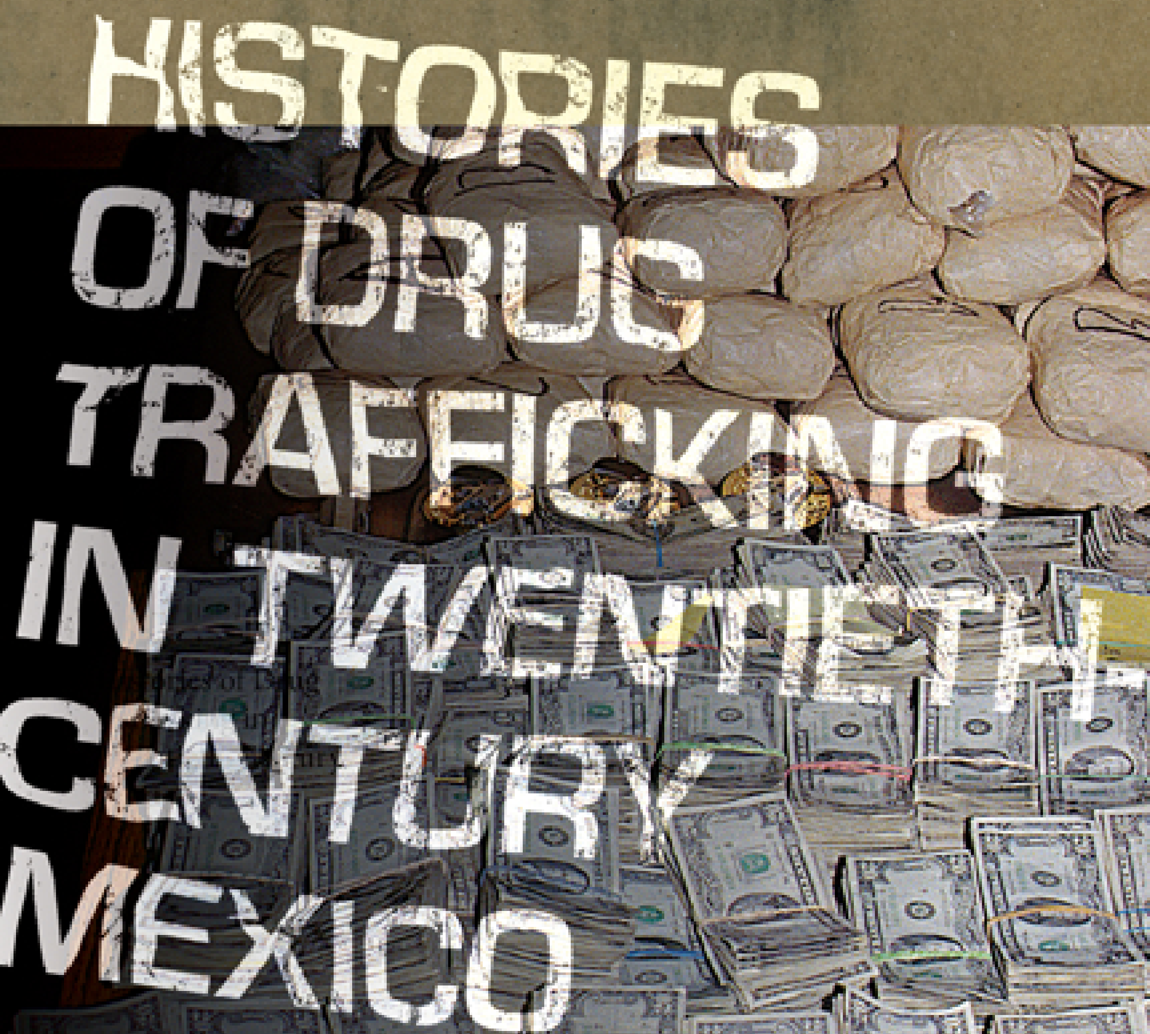
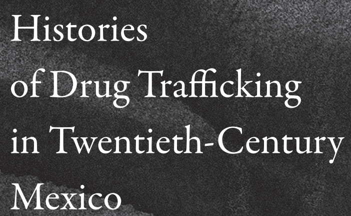
Edited by Wil G. Pansters and Benjamin T. Smith

HISTORIES OF DRUG TRAFFICKING IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY MEXICO




Histories
of Drug Trafficking
in Twentieth-Century
Mexico

Edited by Wil G. Pansters and Benjamin T. Smith

HISTORIES OF DRUG TRAFFICKING IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY MEXICO

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Founded in 1889, the University of New Mexico sits on the traditional homelands of the Pueblo of Sandia. The original peoples of New Mexico—Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache—since time immemorial have deep connections to the land and have made significant contributions to the broader community statewide. We honor the land itself and those who remain stewards of this land throughout the generations and also acknowledge our committed relationship to Indigenous peoples. We gratefully recognize our history.

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1

Writing Twentieth-Century Mexico's Drug Histories

WIL G. PANSTERS AND BENJAMIN T. SMITH

Over the past fifteen years, tales of drug trafficking and drug violence have dominated coverage of Mexico. Since President Felipe Calderón (2006–2012) declared war on the country's cartels, images of headless torsos, swinging corpses, and mass graves have dominated the front pages of national and international newspapers. Many onlookers now view the country and the continent at large through the warped prism of Netflix's fictionalized series *Narcos* or *El Chapo*, or its documentaries such as *Inside the Real Narcos*. In addition to mass media productions, many books have been published about Mexican drug trafficking and the fallout of the War on Drugs. Most accounts have concentrated on the confrontations between rival criminal organizations or between law enforcement agencies and organized crime groups. Particularly after 2006, journalists and commentators have published many books about particular criminal or drug trafficking organizations, the intrigues among *capos* and their extended families, or about the economics and politics of drug trafficking and violence in particular regions of the country.[1] Brimming with detailed information, these publications help contemporary readers to make sense of shifting alliances and conflicts within the world of drug crime, and of the unstable connections among organized crime, law enforcement, and politics. But overall, they tend to be more descriptive than analytical.[2]

No doubt some have moved away from the alleged certainties of true crime. They have started to document the tragic social consequences of violence endemic to Mexico's War on Drugs.[3] Reporting from the multiple epicenters of grief caused by *la guerra contra el narco*, they expose how "headline stories" of internecine criminal violence, feuds among ruthless cartel capos, and the supposed Manichean battles between state forces and organized crime mean

havoc, destruction, and pain for countless individuals, families, and communities.[4] Unsurprisingly, and acknowledging notable exceptions, both types of publications don't really engage the political, social, or economic contexts of drug-related conflicts.[5] They are also not strong on historical contextualization. To a large extent, scholarly work from political science, criminology, and security studies has employed a similar perspective, mostly using secondary sources.[6] Most of this work also lacks critical socioeconomic, political, and, especially, historical contextualization.[7]

If this journalistic and scholarly work is helpful in coming to terms with the complex and fluctuating manifestations of drug trafficking, organized crime, violence, and insecurity in contemporary Mexico, it also reveals the essential empirical, methodological, and analytical challenges to doing such work. These challenges also apply to writing drug histories, perhaps even a fortiori. What can we know about the illicit world of drug trafficking and organized crime (who, what, where?) and their relations to assorted state actors and society at large (connections, coalitions, complicities)? How can we establish acceptable levels of certainty about what is occurring at present and, above all, what occurred in the past? Which sources are available? How is the world of drugs and crime related to broader social, economic, political, and cultural processes, and how have these relations transformed over time? Which analytical frameworks and scholarly debates should be brought to bear on them?

This chapter consists of two parts. The first part consists of two sections and addresses general theoretical and methodological issues concerning drugs research, and identifies ways forward. The first section discusses methodological problems intrinsic to drug research and critically reviews different branches of what we see as essentially constructivist approaches to drugs history. The second section builds on the accomplishments of different branches of constructivism and lays out ways forward by bringing together a new generation of historians and archival sources. We claim it is possible to write bottom-up (subnational) social, economic, and political histories of drug trafficking in twentieth-century Mexico. We also draw attention to the junctures linking the local, regional, national, and global realities and representations of drug trafficking.

The second part lays out the main historical trends and themes pertinent to the drug trade in Mexico and their connections to wider societal processes and scholarly debates. It is also divided in two. The first section examines the key actors and forces that shaped the organization and regulation of drug

production, trafficking, and policies during twentieth-century Mexico and lays out a basic narrative. The second section discusses what the new drugs scholarship in general and this volume in particular contribute to broader thematic debates about twentieth-century Mexico. We focus on U.S.-Mexican relations, policing, state making, and regional developments and cultures. The historical, societal, and scholarly contextualization of the drug trade enables us to go beyond much of the existing work, increase our understanding of the phenomenon, and identify new avenues of research.

WRITING DRUG HISTORIES: CHALLENGES AND WAYS FORWARD

Constructivist Drugs Research: A Review

Piecing together even contemporary narratives of trafficking, violence, and insecurity is a tough job. Uncovering bribery, corruption, and state protection can even be fatal. Over the past two decades, state forces and cartel hit men have killed more than a hundred Mexican journalists just for trying.[8] This has led certain scholars to point at the intrinsic problems of such empirical endeavors. Luis Astorga, for example, has argued that "discovering the precise connections between the [traffickers] and the leaders in the fields of politics and economics" is a "sterile" and "fruitless" activity. Knowledge of such links can rarely be gleaned and is only "reserved for the initiated."[9]

The methodological problems Astorga highlights have generated a broad range of constructivist approaches to the drug business. Below we identify and briefly discuss three strands. More than focusing on the material and social organization of drug cultivation, trafficking, and use, constructivism privileges the study of historically shifting cultural understandings of drugs and how they guide medicinal, legal, and political approaches to the substances. The emphasis falls on the discourses, languages, and "readings" of the drug world. While we recognize the performative effects of representations and narratives, it is fair to say that in constructivist approaches the representations of the drug world take precedence over its social realities. All branches of constructivism combine the significance of how charged narratives and representations insert themselves in writing histories and anthropologies of drugs, with a cautiousness or even skepticism toward what really can be known about the economic and political realities of drug cultivation and trafficking.[10]

★ Mexico City

A: AGUASCALIENTES
M: MORELOS
Q: QUERÉTARO
T: TLAXCALA

1: Aguascalientes
2: Guanajuato
3: Querétaro
4: Pachuca
5: Tlaxcala
6: Toluca
7: Cuernavaca
8: Colima

0 500 km

MAP 1 Map of Mexico (credits: UU-Geo-C&M–Carto).

In their timely special issue of the *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Gootenberg and Campos brought together essays that exemplify the cultural branch of constructivist drug history.[11] These examined the creation of a drug problem by legal and medical experts in Cold War Argentina, the nationalization of *vallenato* music in 1970s Colombia, and the cultural encounters around psychedelic drugs among indigenous shamanism, psychiatry, and pleasure-seeking hippies in 1960s Oaxaca. To these, one could add Dawson's fascinating study of how peyote was symbolically constructed as a boundary between indigenous and non-indigenous subjects and policed by ecclesiastical, legal, and scientific authorities.[12]

The second branch of the constructivist approach does not focus so much on how changing moral, legal, and medicinal repertoires frame particular drugs, or on how the drug world shapes certain cultural products. Instead it dissects the standard accounts of contemporary drug trafficking, organized crime, and violence produced by global policy makers, national politicians, security experts, and journalists. Some years ago Mexican sociologist Fernando Escalante published a powerful book that argued that government documents, reports, news bulletins, and press declarations constructed a "new language or narrative," which claimed to explain the recent history and features of the Mexican world of drug trafficking and the threats it posed to Mexico and the United States. This narrative—in effect—legitimized the punitive and militarized "War on Drugs." During the Calderón presidency, this new way of speaking about drug trafficking and organized crime "was naturalized, and impose[d] itself with the weight of the obvious."[13] It became part of a commonsense framework reiterated by the mass media. And it operated as a filter that gave meaning to daily events in the War on Drugs.

This filter had four key features: it assumed the existence of recognizable and separate social groups exclusively and professionally dedicated to crime and integrated in large stable and hierarchically structured organizations called cartels; it emphasized the entrepreneurial features of these organizations, their multinational scope, and business rationality (costs, markets, competition, profit margins, etc.); it stressed their use of violence to regulate an increasingly diversified criminal portfolio (now also including human trafficking, extortion, kidnapping); finally, it supposed that criminal enterprises controlled territories. Such control entailed not only the production, trafficking, and domestic sale of drugs, but also the regulation of informal markets, the extortion of licit businesses, and the sale of protection. The idea of territorial control—in

particular—constituted the cornerstone of the government narrative of the war against organized crime. Cartels were invading armies; they could only be confronted by militarization. This—in turn—caused increasing violence.[14] The imaginary construction of organized crime and drug trafficking contains "exaggerations, distortions, inconsistencies, and unfounded and doubtful claims."[15] The entrenchment of this narrative came with militarization and a catastrophic increase of violence.[16] The problem of Mexico's security crisis was in large part one of the language used to describe it.[17]

Escalante's constructivist critique compels us to examine and historicize the languages of the state, the private security industry, and drug war agencies. Furthermore, there is a strong moral component to this: the incorporation of daily stories and images of violent executions, massacres, and mass graves in the standard narrative of state-cartel or intercartel confrontations not only normalizes violence but also suggests the guilt of the deceased. Just as journalists reporting from Mexico's most violent areas have noted, a handful of political scientists have observed that this framing of the War on Drugs pushes many to excuse deaths and disappearances with the comforting story that the victims were in some way *metidos* [involved] in the trade.[18]

In addition to the cultural and narrative strands of constructivist approaches, Escalante's work also raises some epistemological questions. Numbers float around about the value of international drugs markets, the profit margins of criminal organizations, the amount of drug money laundered through the financial system, and even the net worth of concrete individuals (see Chapo Guzmán's 701 spot on the 2009 Forbes list with his alleged fortune of $1 billion!). These numbers are reported on and quoted, but they often appear to be based more on what policy makers want them to be than on verifiable empirical and statistical data, or even logical extrapolations.[19] Similar to Astorga's concerns about the empirical verification of corruption networks, these epistemological concerns urge researchers to remain critical of numerical claims regarding illegal economies. The temptation of interested parties and agencies to inflate numbers that convey risks or threats to society and the state is simply too big. The archives of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, for example, abound with references to "major" and "important" drug traffickers or rings, even if suspects are arrested with minor quantities of narcotics. It raises legitimate questions about the limits of what researchers can know.

Such skepticism also holds also true for concepts. Terms like "sicario," "cartel," and "plaza" (or "rings" and "syndicates" during the 1940s and 1950s) are

routinely trotted out to explain confrontations and murders without proper attention to what they actually mean. Was the Guadalajara "Cartel" really a monolithic, hierarchical organization directed by a trio of Sinaloa exiles? Did the Zetas Cartel effectively control the "plaza" of Monterrey, a large industrial city of over a million people? What is a plaza exactly, and where does it begin and end? All these terms carry with them the leading assumptions of the standard "War on Drugs" language. Some authors have no doubt about the intent of all this mystification. Drug war language is just a symbolic device that functions to conceal the real networks of (state) power that control drug trafficking and enhance the interests of extractive industries. After all, why else would the state embark on halting a nonexistent war among cartels that don't exist either?[20]

Lessons Learned, Ways Forward

To what extent has the constructivist emphasis on the cultural and imaginary representations of drug trafficking prevented scholars from posing hard questions about the realities of the trade? Does it explain why, despite the contemporary fascination with Mexican narcotics, we still know little about the history of the trade or its regulation? Acknowledging the insights from cultural constructivist approaches to drug history, and the critical lessons about the contemporary history and sociology of the drug trade in particular, we believe that the answers to both questions are affirmative. But we also believe it is possible and essential to move this debate forward. To do so, this volume proceeds from the following considerations.

First, it acknowledges the concerns articulated by these constructivist approaches and builds on their insights. It is impossible to write histories of drug trafficking without incorporating the shifting cultural, political, and moral representations of drugs and giving them the analytical weight they deserve, as they shape human behavior and choices. It is, however, equally important to ask specific questions about the mechanics of the drugs industry: the what, who, when, where, and how. In fact, as this volume makes abundantly clear, it is both feasible and productive to integrate constructivist and empirically grounded histories and anthropologies of drug trafficking. Morris's chapter about the Herrera heroin drug ring in Durango, for example, not only historically reconstructs the socioeconomic organization of the ring, but also pays attention to how U.S. intelligence agencies created narratives about the Herrera

clan as an international narco-empire or "cartel" that processed huge—in fact vastly inflated—amounts of heroin and money, controlled entire regions, and employed a massive army of farm laborers. The leaking of such exaggerations to the media served to boost the nascent DEA's own profile and budget and to embarrass the Mexican government.

Second, this volume pushes beyond the confines of such constructivism by focusing for the first time on a plethora of new historical sources. Such emphasis allows the authors to go beyond the standard top-down narratives that are encased in official documents and national newspapers. On the one hand, they have started to study the bottom-up perspectives of small-time smugglers, farmers, and regional wholesalers that can be retrieved from regional papers, interviews, and Mexico's state, local, and judicial archives. On the other hand, they have also begun to investigate declassified documents slowly released by both U.S. and Mexican institutions, including the Bureau of Narcotics (popularly known as the FBN), the DEA, the Dirección Federal de Seguridad (DFS), and the CIA. Together these new sources allow the contributing scholars to see beyond the common tales of cops and criminals and assemble more cogent, multivalent histories of the drug trade, the War on Drugs, and their broader political and socioeconomic ramifications.

One variant of these histories employs a political-economic approach, which prioritizes examining the drug trade above all as an economic process that involves supply and demand, pricing and profits, and networks of economic actors from peasant producers to intermediaries to wholesalers, financiers, and lawyers. This approach also looks at how local illicit economies relate to the structural features of socioeconomic systems in general. In this respect Morris, Fernández Velázquez, and Smith and Pansters argue that early drug economies did not emerge from the milieu of organized crime properly speaking but from more recognizable worlds of highland rancher clans, ambitious merchants, and border town grifters. In recent years, an influential political economic approach has grown out of the concept of global commodity chains. These were first employed to trace the economic and spatial pathways of export goods—such as silver, coffee, and rubber—across the globe and thereby "interlocking processes of production, transport, commercialization, and consumption."[21] Paul Gootenberg has employed them to pick apart the exogenous and endogenous forces that shaped the shifting commercial networks of Peruvian cocaine.[22] Similarly, a recent study places the 1970s marijuana boom in northeastern Colombia in a long regional history of agrarian export commodities (banana,

cotton) and modernization, integration with U.S. markets, nation-state formation, and cultural identification.[23]

Another variant of drug histories privileges a political-institutional approach. This focuses on the relations between criminal organizations and formal institutions like federal and local authorities, the police, the armed forces, and political parties, as well as informal institutions like caciques and business networks. Flores Pérez, Morris, Aviña, and Cedillo, in particular, examine the complex and shifting relations between criminal organizations, political elites at different administrative levels, and law enforcement agencies. Alternatively, Olvera Hernández, Pérez Ricart, and Maldonado Aranda examine the ideological, organizational, and operational aspects of different law enforcement agencies involved in combatting drug trafficking: the Mexico City Narcotics Police in the 1920s, the FBN during the second third of the century, and the Mexican army during the 1960s.

Third, this volume elaborates the methodological contours of the "new drug history of Latin America," which emphasize the connections between "different levels and geographies of power."[24] Drugs are commodities that obtain most of their value by virtue of their movement across spatial, legal, and political borders. After all, the bulk of drugs cultivated and produced in particular areas is consumed elsewhere, most often in distant places. Opium, heroin, marijuana, cocaine, and, more recently, fentanyl have been truly global commodities.[25] The life histories and trajectories of these drugs are embedded in networks of local, national, and global actors and fashioned by layers of political forces and cultural imaginations. While writing drug histories should be attentive to the interconnections between local, regional, national, and global realities, integrating these scales constitutes a methodological challenge.

Most of the drug histories of twentieth-century Mexico brought together in this volume can easily speak to the principles of global ethnography—in many ways akin to fine-grained historiography—that aims to "strategically locate itself at critical points of intersection of scales and units of analysis and [. . .] examine the negotiation of interconnected social actors across multiple scales."[26] More specifically, this volume studies how social actors and places are caught up in global forces beyond their influence, which are mediated by particular actors (e.g., smugglers) who construct strategies of adaptation, avoidance, or contestation. It also examines how social actors may seize opportunities and expand their geographic and political boundaries by building translocal and global connections. The entrepreneurial spirit of Sinaloa rancheros who stepped up

opium production during the 1940s or of the pioneers of the marijuana trade in the Colombian Guajira peninsula during the 1970s spring to mind. Finally, it studies how differentially situated social actors produce, negotiate, and contest the imaginations of these forces, processes, and connections, drawing upon distinctive and often conflictive political and legal resources.[27]

While anthropologists may use multisited ethnographic fieldwork, historians can consult and combine sources ranging from international diplomatic records, through national archives, to regional judicial collections and to local newspapers and interviews. Looking at the histories of drugs through the lens of the (global) forces, connections, and imaginations is particularly rewarding if we realize that these manifest themselves in political-economic, political-institutional, and cultural domains, and in their complex linkages. Examining drugs from a global commodity chain perspective creates insights into the extensive spatial pathways that link drug cultivation, production, transportation, and distribution and into the connections between the latter and migration networks. Heroin production by the Herrera clan during the 1960s and 1970s in the Santiago Papasquiaro region in western Durango developed in conjunction with migration networks that connected Durango through Ciudad Juárez to Southside Chicago, where various cells of the extended Herrera family organized wholesale distribution.[28] More recently, cheap black tar heroin from Xalisco, Nayarit, was distributed through sophisticated marketing and retail delivery systems run by young members of extensive family-based migrant networks linking the small town in western Mexico to cells across the United States.[29] Transnational migration flows and closely knit connections among Chinese migrant communities were instrumental in the origins of the heroin trade between northwestern Mexico and the United States in terms of production, markets, and knowledge transfer. Border peddler Mike Barragán was originally from Michoacán. First, he migrated to California. Then he returned and used his cross-border contacts to become a prominent marijuana and heroin dealer in Tijuana during the 1950s and 1960s.[30] Drug history is part of this social history of mobility.

Meanings, discourses, and ideas about drugs equally travel and form interconnected layers of production, negotiation, and contestation at different scales. It is not always easy to distinguish in which direction meanings and discourses move and shape behavioral outcomes or policy choices. Contrary to the widely held belief that prohibitionist discourses and regulations were forced upon Mexico by a U.S.-led global campaign, Campos argues that at the

time of the first-generation war on drugs during the 1910s, Mexico had autonomously developed a widely accepted moral code concerning the use of certain intoxicants. With respect to marijuana, negative Mexican stereotypes in fact traveled north, while a "narcophobic discourse" centered on Chinese opium use journeyed across the globe.[31] While Pérez Montfort points at persistent U.S. pressures on the Mexican government during the 1910s and early 1920s to enact antidrug measures—which appears to dispute Campos's claim—he also notes that by 1920 the effective enforcement of a prohibitionist regime had failed. At the time, Mexican health officials themselves expressed their concerns about drug use, and soon an invigorated U.S. prohibitionist campaign resonated with Mexico's postrevolutionary governments. The combination of U.S. pressures and Mexico's homegrown concerns and political interests leave little room for linear causality.

As the prohibitionist regime consolidated during the 1930s and 1940s, specialized agencies were founded that exchanged information, set up mostly informal mechanisms of bureaucratic cooperation, and carried out joint undercover antinarcotics operations. Information exchanges about international criminal networks, discussions about policies and operations, training programs, and informal agreements between U.S. and Mexican law enforcement agencies and specific agents were at least partially guided by the views of U.S. drug agencies about Mexico. These views "were oversimplified and full of stereotypes" and were molded, it seems, above all after New York–based Italian crime syndicates.[32] At the same time, the moral values and ideological positions that underpinned prohibitionist discourses and translated into massive intervention campaigns in drug-producing areas also collided with regionally based moral economies of peasant and ranchero communities. Fernández Velázquez, in particular, demonstrates how drugs cultivation and trafficking in the Sinaloa highlands was above all a product of community-based solidarity and reciprocity and the outcome of rational livelihood strategies. When Mexican and U.S. law enforcement agencies descended on these highlands to eradicate poppy and marijuana fields and clashed with local communities, it was not only a matter of material interests, but also one of moral repertoires and localized meanings of (il)licit behavior. Stopping growing opium might have been obeying the law, but it was also letting down your compadre.

The collision of meanings and morals is by no means specific to Mexico. In Colombia the marijuana trade and the commodity itself were considered "legitimate, albeit illegal." Once repressive policies intensified at the end of

the 1970s, just as they did in northwestern Mexico, they also "materialized as a discursive battle to define the divide between what was legal and what was legitimate."[33] In Afghanistan, the adoption of stringent antinarcotics policies in the late 1950s went against "local norms of opium production, use, and trade; in this way the drug ban reinforced the profound disconnect" between local communities and the state. The elimination of a "culturally accepted and economically vital commodity" antagonized local communities, alienated them from the global antinarcotics discourse, delegitimized the national state, and ultimately stimulated the expansion of drugs production in subsequent years.[34] As Cedillo and Aviña show in this volume, punitive antinarcotics interventions in producing areas became even more ideologically charged and antagonistic to the material and moral economies of local communities when the former connected to global Cold War counterinsurgency ideologies.

In sum, this volume builds on the accomplishments of cultural and discursive constructivism and acknowledges the epistemological concerns. It brings together a new generation of historians and works with numerous archival sources, which are instrumental in writing Mexico's bottom-up subnational histories of drug trafficking, either privileging political-economic or political-institutional perspectives. In doing so, it strongly claims that it is possible to write social, economic, and political histories of drug trafficking in twentieth-century Mexico. Finally, the chapters in this volume pay attention to the connections and junctures between the local, regional, national, and global realities and representations of drug trafficking.

HISTORICAL TRENDS, THEMATIC DEBATES

The Organization and Regulation of the Mexican Drug Trade (1910–1985)

The integration of international, national, and local perspectives and the attendant blending of three levels of sources offer both a clearer narrative of the drug trade and a more nuanced picture of the war against it. No doubt, changing U.S. appetites have provided the principal impetus for the Mexican narcotics industry. For example, from around the early 1960s onwards cannabis production spread throughout the western slopes of the Sierra Madre in lockstep with the development of the U.S. counterculture.[35] U.S. pop culture marked its growth. In 1967 Rainy Daze celebrated the power of "Acapulco

Gold." Three years later Jefferson Airplane lamented that a "small-headed man" called "Richard [Nixon]" now had Mexico "under his thumb" and had ended the "tons of gold and green, comin' up here from Mexico: 'A donde esta la planta, mi amigo, del sol?'"[36] But other forces also shaped Mexican production. They included homegrown Mexican appetites. These were much more limited than U.S. demands and in general less concerned with hard drugs. But they existed. They also included changes in global narcotic production. Just like any other domestic good, Mexican drugs were buffeted by the ups and downs of the world market and the shifting policies of the big international players. From 1976 onwards Mexican marijuana production fell partly due to Operation Condor and partly to the U.S. scare over paraquat poisoning.[37] But most importantly, it was victim to the competition from better quality weed being produced in Colombia, Thailand, and Jamaica.[38] Mexican heroin production witnessed a similar dip in 1948 and again in 1978. Underprocessed "Mexican brown" could neither match the purity nor the price of rival products from Europe and Southeast Asia.[39]

As U.S. markets, global supply, and domestic demand have molded the Mexican drug trade, each of the three major narcotics (marijuana, opiates, and cocaine) has its own unique rhythm of production. During the late nineteenth century, marijuana production was limited, used to feed a market of soldiers and prisoners with limited access to alcohol.[40] Though this is difficult to track, it seems that production increased during the Revolution as Mexicans were dragooned into the army and faced with a limited supply of standard pain relief drugs.[41] From the 1940s through the 1960s marijuana production dropped. As early as 1940, the army reported very few cases of marijuana "intoxication." Regiments that did report some were—interestingly—based in places like Atlixco, Puebla, and Ameca, Jalisco, where marijuana had a history of production.[42] Media reports of marijuana use also slid. The *Siglo de Torreón* went from around a mention a week during the early 1930s to barely one every two months from 1956 to 1965.[43] In the subsequent decade, production grew again, this time exponentially. Busts went from a few dozen kilos to few dozen tons, and by the mid-1970s the DEA estimated that Mexico was producing up to six thousand tons a year.[44] For many villages it became the sole retail crop. In San Juan, Sinaloa, peasants competed to see who could grow the tallest plants.[45] Yet it was a boom, not a sustained industry. By 1982, Mexican youths sniffed paint thinner rather than smoked weed and Mexico produced 6 percent of U.S. supply.[46]

The Mexican opiate trade has been similarly up and down. During the 1910s Mexico served as a transition point for large quantities of imported raw and smoking opium.[47] Baja California governor Esteban Cantú famously taxed the product and used the money to build roads and schools.[48] Yet the declining use of smoking opium and the reopening of European sources of processed narcotics like morphine and heroin ate into the trade.[49] By the mid-1930s, the opiate trade was reduced to a handful of European entrepreneurs, a few surviving Chinese businessmen, and some farmers in Sonora's El Altar valley.[50] World War II resuscitated the trade. European and Asian sources of narcotics stopped, and by 1943, the U.S. Customs Office reported that Mexico was now "the principal source of supply of prepared opium to the illicit traffic in the United States."[51] Furthermore, Mexico had started to produce its own. The following year U.S. Customs officials reported that they were also seizing both morphine and heroin on the Mexican border. The drugs were "definitely of Mexican origin."[52]

As Pérez Ricart argues, the U.S. and Mexican authorities congratulated themselves that it was hard-nosed antinarcotics tactics that ended the boom in heroin "hecho en México."[53] In reality it was international competition from new European sources of heroin (particularly Italy and France).[54] Yet the boom left a legacy, a heavy concentration of growers, processors, and traffickers in the so-called "Golden Triangle," the mountains connecting the states of Sinaloa, Chihuahua, and Durango. During the 1950s and 1960s, these small-scale heroin dealers—captured for posterity in the first work of narcolit *Diario de un narcotraficante*—fed Mike Barragán's Tijuana dealers and La Nacha's Ciudad Juárez shooting galleries.[55] What is less known is that they increasingly teamed up with international French Connection dealers to ferry through larger quantities of European heroin.[56]

The counterculture persuaded some of these traffickers to experiment with other narcotics, including marijuana and, by the late 1960s, cocaine. Yet others stuck firmly to what they knew. And from 1973 onwards U.S. addicts reacquainted themselves with underprocessed "Mexican mud." In 1972, 80 percent of U.S. heroin came from France; within four years most came from Mexico. Yet again, like the 1940s, the boom was short-lived. By the beginning of the 1980s, Mexico had returned to producing just over 30 percent of America's heroin.[57]

For decades U.S. drug authorities speculated that Mexican traffickers sought to grow coca plants, particularly in the isolated mountains of Chiapas.[58] But

evidence of cocaine "hecho en México" is sparse; any attempts there ended in failure. Processing coca paste into cocaine was done. And from the 1970s onwards police busted small-scale cocaine laboratories throughout Mexico.[59] But in general cocaine was always imported; Mexico was a region that cocaine was trafficked across and to a much lesser extent snorted in. There was a small market for cocaine in bohemian circles in 1920s Mexico City, where one flapper compared her use of the drug to her love of classical music: "When I am very bored, very bored, so bored that neither Grieg nor Chopin nor Beethoven nor Debussy will suffice, I take ether or coc[aine]."[60] And there was a small market among border thrill seekers. Just less than 10 percent of drug arrests in Mexicali and Tijuana from 1922 to 1923 were for cocaine.[61] In both cases the product came from European pharmaceutical companies and was imported by European smugglers.[62]

Again the counterculture changed things. Traffickers increasingly used Mexican smuggling routes to get their product across to the United States. (It might have been marijuana that Billy and Wyatt were smoking in *Easy Rider*, but it was cocaine they were smuggling out of Mexico at the beginning of the film.) Cedillo cites the DEA estimate that by 1977 30 percent of Peruvian cocaine came through Mexico. Some was brought by freelance Americans who were previously involved in the weed business,[63] and some was brought in by the Golden Triangle's former heroin traffickers.[64] But much of it appears to have passed through official channels. In 1976, a Miami grand jury indicted the federal judicial police commander, Arturo "el Negro" Durazo Moreno, on five counts of orchestrating the smuggling of cocaine from Colombia, through the Mexico City airport, to the United States. As elections were approaching and Durazo was the PRI presidential candidate's campaign security chief, the accusations were quietly dropped.[65]

Taking this three-tier approach not only allows us to map out the contours of the trade, it also helps us understand the chronology, the intensity, and the focus of counternarcotics policies. Most social scientists are still wedded to a dynamic of drug prohibition that views Mexican efforts as a direct U.S. imposition. It is commonly referred to as the "pressure-response" model. Certain set pieces back this up. In 1940, U.S. threats to withhold pain-relief opiates ended Mexico's experiment with a state-run maintenance program for addicts. And in 1969, President Nixon's exhaustive border check—Operation Intercept—forced Mexico into adopting a more aggressive stance as well as more prohibitive laws on drug prohibition.[66]

Yet such an approach tells only part of the story. Mexican antidrug policies were not simply foreign imports. They—like the drugs—were also "hecho en México." The cultural prejudices that framed and fed decades of counter-narcotics policies were often national in scope. Sometimes they were fit for export like the homegrown biases over marijuana smoking, which Anslinger happily adopted for his own anticannabis campaign.[67] Sometimes they were national prejudices shared by a broad swath of modernizing nations, like the Sinophobic bigotry that nourished the antiopium campaigns of the 1920s and 1930s.[68] Sometimes they were distinctly regional preconceptions of class and race, like those wheeled out by the political elites of Guerrero, Sinaloa, and Chihuahua during the 1970s to excuse the imprisonment, torture, forced displacement, and murder of hundreds, maybe even thousands.[69]

The political motives for drug policies were also distinctly homegrown. They often shaped the timing, the focus, and the manner of antidrugs policies. Venustiano Carranza's efforts to control opium imports obeyed U.S. diktats and rested on a Mexican version of degeneration theory. But they also undercut the funding and the credibility of the autonomous Baja California governor, Esteban Cantú.[70] By the 1960s, as Maldonado shows, similar concerns over the political independence of the Tierra Caliente (and its links to the influential former president Lázaro Cárdenas) precipitated a military campaign against local marijuana and opium growers.[71] And fifteen years later anxieties over regional autonomy, peasant activism, and guerrilla insurgency finally pushed the federal government into supporting the mix of military intervention, crop spraying, and police crackdown that the United States had been encouraging for more than six years.[72]

Furthermore, not all of these initiatives came from the top down. Though it is rarely acknowledged—and subsequently often regretted—the political impetus for antidrugs policies also came from regional representatives of civil society on both sides of the border. Moral panics in California and Texas pushed the crackdown on Mexican border drug sales during the late 1950s. But America's wordy moralizers were not alone. As Cedillo points out, it was the Sinaloa elites that eventually called on the Mexican army to occupy Culiacán at the end of 1976. In the 1950s and again in the 1980s, PAN politicians, especially in the north, used accusations of collusion between local politicians and traffickers to undergird social movements and push PRI representatives from power.[73] In fact, it could be argued that Felipe Calderón's post-2006 campaign

had its roots as much in these pious anticorruption efforts as contemporary issues of realpolitik.

The integration of these three levels of analysis also offers a much more accurate picture of the links between drug traffickers and the different layers of the state. Again a narrative emerges. From the 1910s to the 1930s certain border governors, including Esteban Cantú but also Abelardo Rodríguez (Baja California) and Rodrigo Quevedo (Chihuahua) extorted drug sellers and drug traffickers.[74] At times, the money went into public coffers.[75] But a lot went into their private bank accounts. In Mexico City during the 1920s, the head of the capital's police protected dealers in return for cash. By the following decade, as Olvera shows, this role had fallen to the Health Department's narcotics police.[76]

The 1940s boom and the extension of opium cultivation to the Sierra Madre shifted state-trafficker relations. These changes were often accompanied by violence. At first, municipal policemen in league with local military regiments protected and extorted the growers. But by the early 1940s, the state authorities attempted to take control using the state judicial police. In Sinaloa, the attempted takeover led to the high-profile murder of the head of the state police, Alfonso Leyzaola Salazar, by Badiraguato traffickers in 1941.[77] It also probably precipitated the assassination of the governor of Sinaloa at the Mazatlán carnival three years later.[78] Yet by the mid-1940s, at least in the northwestern states, an arrangement was reached. State governors would protect the trade using the state judicial police in return for a cut of the profits.[79] Growers and traffickers would keep a low profile and avoid bloody squabbles. If they failed to do this, protection ended. This arrangement would last for at least three decades and reached its apogee under the governor of Sinaloa, Leopoldo Sánchez Celis, who appointed some of Mexico's most feared *pistoleros* to protect the trade.[80]

In the northeast, as Flores Pérez observes, a slightly different arrangement emerged. In Tamaulipas and Coahuila, drugs were not grown, but transported. Former alcohol smugglers and *fayuqueros*, like Juan N. Guerra, dominated the trade. To work, they needed protection of the border checkpoints and the states' major federal roads. Broader territorial control was unnecessary. At first, as in the northwest, state governors took an interest. Hugo Pedro González protected the Nuevo Laredo trafficker, Alfonso Treviño, and even ordered the local authorities to let him out of jail in the evenings to visit the local cabarets (he used the prison, one paper claimed, as a "dormitory"). But in 1947, things

changed. Governor González was sacked and the old *camarilla* surrounding former president Emilio Portes Gil was unceremoniously dumped from power. From the late 1940s, an alliance of local military commanders (like Tiburcio Garza Zamora and Bonifacio Salinas Leal) and federally appointed customs officials controlled the checkpoints and the roads and as a result protected both the drug trade and the smuggling of duty-free contraband.[81] Again, it was an arrangement that lasted until the 1970s.[82]

It should be noted that what happened in Tamaulipas may have been part of a broader attempt by Mexico's federal authorities to take control of the burgeoning trade. There is ample evidence that in 1947 the newly created Dirección Federal de Seguridad (DFS) tried to muscle in on the narcotics business. Some more conspiratorially minded writers have drawn the conclusion that the DFS protected the trade from the Alemán presidency until the institution's implication in the Camarena murder nearly forty years later.[83] But there is no evidence of this. If there was an attempt, it failed. After 1948, U.S. accusations of DFS complicity disappear completely. Furthermore, for at least the next thirty years the organization was so underpowered, it seems extremely unlikely it had the time, the manpower, or the powers of coercion to corral and extort Mexico's drug dealers.[84]

No doubt, during the 1970s something changed. Profits from the trade grew exponentially. The protection rackets run by the state governments boomed. Yet this upset relations with Mexico's federal powers. On the one hand, the trade was too big to ignore, and the United States started to take an increasingly aggressive role on drug prohibition. On the other hand, and perhaps just as worryingly, certain state governments were starting to become increasingly autonomous. The drug trade was effectively decentralizing the Mexican state. In the early 1970s, for example, Sinaloa had a state judicial police force with perhaps as many as five thousand badge-carrying members.[85] In comparison the federal judicial police [Policia Judicial Federal or PJF]—Mexico's official counternarcotics force—numbered less than three hundred and could only enter the region with state government permission. "We got a clear message from the [PJF] that we needed to leave as soon as possible," one former DEA agent complained.[86]

The antidrug campaigns of the 1970s were designed to counteract this increasing regional autonomy. An expanded, armed, and well-funded PJF supported by the army went in, arrested traffickers, harried, tortured, and murdered growers and dismantled the state government protection rackets. It is tempting

to question the Mexican government's statistics on fields sprayed and crops destroyed. But by 1978 the marijuana and heroin industries were in free fall, albeit as much for reasons of global competition as counternarcotics efforts.

The question of what came next remains open to debate. We know that by 1985, the DFS provided protection for the cocaine trafficking and marijuana production of the so-called Guadalajara Cartel.[87] Yet such an arrangement did not emerge overnight. From the end of the 1970s onwards, different federal institutions, including the army, the DFS, and the Attorney General's Office and their police force, the PJF, jockeyed for control of a radically diminished and hence less visible trade.[88] The initial winners seem to have been the Attorney General's Office under former Chihuahua governor Oscar Flores Sánchez. He was backed up by the head of the PJF (and former Ciudad Juárez hit man) Raúl Mendiolea Cerecero, the Mexican police chief Arturo "El Negro" Durazo and his right-hand man, Francisco Sahagún Baca. Together they started to control the smuggling of cocaine through Mexico City and up to the United States.[89] Only with the 1982 election of Miguel de la Madrid, the public fall of Durazo, and a fair amount of interagency violence did control of the trade swing into the hands of the DFS.[90]

Drugs, U.S.-Mexican Relations, Policing, and State Making: Thematic Reflections

The new drugs scholarship tells us a lot about the historical dynamics of the organization and regulation of the trade and its subnational variations. It also speaks to several broader scholarly debates concerning Mexico. The latter is based on a simple but critical idea, itself borne out by recent scholarship: the drug trade is deeply rooted in and entangled with other major societal domains, and as a result it shapes and is shaped by the processes taking place in these domains. In contrast to approaches that view the drug trade as a phenomenon in itself, enclosed in its own illicit world, a quintessential *Fremdkörper* to "normal" social relations, we understand histories of drug trafficking as part and parcel of wider histories. Focusing on narcotics can be useful for understanding processes and relations beyond the "underworld," not least because much of it occurs in the "upper" world. So, unsurprisingly, its study will produce insights relevant for our understanding of economic development, politics and state making, cultural production, social hierarchies, and international relations in twentieth-century Mexico.

In the most basic terms, this book attempts to shift the focus of drug studies from the confines of the state of Sinaloa. For nearly three decades, discussion of the relationship between the state's rancher class and its peasant opium growers has dominated the scholarship.[91] There is good reason for this. As Fernández Velázquez demonstrates, clans of Sinaloa opium wholesalers and chemists dominated the opium trade during the 1940s and 1950s.[92] They developed their own distinct *narcocultura* replete with songs, dress code, and a narco-saint[93]; during the 1970s they were the focus of Operation Condor's most brutal repression[94]; and during the next decade they linked up with state security forces to form what became known as the Guadalajara Cartel.[95] Yet Mexican drug culture has always been more than a silk shirt, a Stetson, and a Jesús Malverde medallion. As Pérez Montfort demonstrates, there were various distinct cultures of drug users in postrevolutionary Mexico.[96] These ranged from down-at-heel weed smokers to Chinese immigrant opium smokers to upper-class cocaine users. There were also regional variations in drug smuggling networks. Some—like the Sinaloans—seemed to have been based on a combination of rural links and chemical know-how. Others, like Durango's Herrera family or the Mexican American traffickers of the 1970s, relied much more strongly on connections to sales points in the United States.[97] There are also distinct regional cultures of border drug peddlers. Up until the 1970s, in Baja California and Chihuahua, narcotics dealers focused on selling small quantities of narcotics to a market of predominantly U.S. border addicts in the vice zones of Tijuana, Mexicali, or Ciudad Juárez.[98] In Ciudad Juárez, Ignacia "La Nacha" Jasso made sure that many of these were women.[99] In contrast, drug dealers in the northeast concentrated on smuggling heroin and marijuana through unguarded desert towns and into the markets of Texas and the East Coast.[100] These differences, in turn, shaped distinct regional protection rackets. In Sinaloa, they were dominated by the state governments, which had a degree of influence both in the sierra and the urban laboratories of Culiacán. In the border towns of Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez, state governments and the municipal authorities shared in the profits from the vice industry. In Tamaulipas and Coahuila, however, it was the customs agents and military detachments that controlled the major highways and that dominated payoffs from the drug business.[101]

The new drug scholarship also adds to our understanding of U.S.-Mexican relations. Previously, diplomatic historians and international relations specialists either left counternarcotics policy to one side or dealt with it as a

separate set of negotiations.[102] They also tended to concentrate on policies, treaties, summits, bilateral agreements (an impressive forty-seven of which were signed between the late 1930s and mid-1980s!).[103] While important for understanding Mexico's place in bilateral, hemispheric, and global regulatory frameworks, they also limit analysis. As Pérez Ricart demonstrates, the scope and extent of the U.S. policing presence in Mexico was a highly controversial issue. Tacit federal permission often bumped up against the authority of local governments, as well as public outrage, on both sides of the border. It was a rolling problem. New protocols were constantly being discussed at national and state levels. At the same time, both the U.S. and the Mexican governments clearly used counternarcotics policies as pawns in bigger games of bilateral chess. Anslinger's overt bullying of Mexico at the 1947 UN's Commission on Narcotic Drugs meeting was designed to push the new government toward harsher drug laws, toward more wide-ranging counternarcotics campaigns, and toward taking drug policing out of the hands of the health authorities. In the short term it worked.[104] Yet it probably only did so because President Miguel Alemán needed U.S. support for an ailing economy and an increasingly defiant union movement.[105] It ushered in a period between the late 1940s and the early 1960s seen by some as "the golden epoch" of bilateral cooperation between the United States and Mexico in combating drug trafficking.[106] Since most of these years featured, as we observed before, a significant decrease in Mexico's production and export of marijuana and heroin, this is perhaps not that surprising. Almost half a century later, the huge economic interests involved in the negotiations and implementation of NAFTA (and the 1995 peso crisis) led to far-reaching cooperation in matters of drug trafficking at the end of the century.

Furthermore, other chess games are still to be understood. How did Operation Condor and the militarization of counternarcotics efforts link into other contemporary foreign policy debates over the economy, the oil boom, and migrants?[107] How did Mexico's brief flirtation with morphine dispensaries in 1940 fit into bigger narratives of bilateral relations? Was it just an example of Anslinger's intransigence over drug laws?[108] Was it, as Campos argues, an instance of poor Mexican institutional coordination?[109] Or was it one of *cardenista* Mexico's diplomatic weapons of the weak?[110] Did the Mexican authorities push it and then rapidly back down from it in order to persuade the United States to make more important concessions over—say—repayment for oil expropriation? Was it simply a coincidence that the U.S. decision to enter

into arbitration with Mexico over expropriation occurred in the same month as Mexico's climb down from the morphine dispensaries?[111]

A particularly interesting contribution of recent drugs scholarship is going beyond formal (diplomatic) relations and policies. The Mexican drug trade has also shaped and been shaped by other, popular appreciations of the neighboring country. During the 1950s, Californian middle-class concern about Mexican American drug peddlers preying on white, suburban girls kick-started a moral panic over borderlands narcotics trafficking.[112] This, in turn, led to mass arrests and public drug burnings in Mexicali and Tijuana.[113] In contrast, at least some of drug trafficking's appeal in Mexico has come from the fact that the narcotics have tended (until recently) to be sold up north rather than to domestic addicts. It is the subaltern counterpunch, the second half of the twentieth century's version of peasant nationalism. It is expressed in narcocorridos.[114] And it is occasionally reflected in the offhand comments of cornered traffickers. During the Michoacán antinarcotics operations of the late early 1960s one local poppy planter rebuked the soldiers: "Tell me another way to take revenge for what happened in 1947 [the year the United States led a controversial nationwide livestock cull to wipe out foot-and-mouth disease] if it isn't poisoning the gringos. . . . Instead of putting me in jail, you should act like a good Mexican and give me better seeds."[115] In times of NAFTA, as Knight observed ironically, successful drug traffickers may represent "a more genuinely nationalist national bourgeoisie than many in modern neoliberal Mexico who might claim that title."[116]

Studying drugs also allows us to reconfigure how we understand state-society relations. For decades, U.S. historians—in particular—have viewed much of the interaction as occurring in the arena of culture. Discussions happened in schools, secular ceremonies, and municipal meetings. They were conducted by teachers, anthropologists, and the participants of cultural missions.[117] Yet for most of the twentieth century, Mexicans interacted most frequently with another, rather less friendly, state emissary: the cop. The prominent roles that the police play in these new drug histories contrast with the scant works on the history of this Mexican institution.[118] In fact, among the coercive state institutions, we may know more about the army and the intelligence services than about the police.[119] In such a vacuum the new drug scholarship proves a major advance. It suggests the essential paradox at the heart of Mexican policing. Cops were meant to keep order and enforce the law but they were also meant to do so without incurring significant costs and

with at least a degree of social approval.[120] Usually this was resolved through some sort of controlled corruption. Olvera demonstrates how the postrevolutionary sanitary police mixed employing drug laws to clean the streets of vagrants with the increasingly well-remunerated protection of certain favored peddlers. There were similar policies in 1920s Baja California, where the local government shielded certain traffickers but arrested others, collecting an impressive 26,000 pesos in fines in just eighteen months.[121] Or in San Luis Potosí, where Gonzalo Santos tried to win back the favor of the Potosino elites by corralling all the street *marihuanos* into the local jail.[122]

Such roles often led many police officials to go full time into the trade. The career move from cop to capo was frequent. At the end of the 1920s, the chief of police in Ciudad Juárez, Jesus Soza, and Edmundo Herrera of the state judicial police were actively involved in the drugs and prostitution business, enjoying the protection of the municipal president and military zone commander.[123] Since the mid-1960s, Jaime Herrera Nevárez worked as an officer of the State Judicial Police in Durango. As Morris shows, his rise as a major heroin trafficker ran parallel to his rise through the ranks of the police.[124] In the 1970s, Mexico City police chief and childhood friend of the president, Arturo "el Negro" Durazo, was a "known narcotics trafficker."[125]

In more general terms, analyzing the police, in turn, speaks to broader discussions about the historiography of twentieth-century state making, in which the framework that privileges hegemonic rule and cultural negotiations is effectively challenged by one that underscores the role of coercion, violence, repression, and (organized) crime in state making. The latter argues that the decrease in violence at the national level and the consolidation of institutional mechanisms of social and political control was, at least in part, conditioned by the displacement of violence and coercion to provincial towns and villages. In fact, grassroots violence and repression facilitated "the more ostensibly peaceful conduct of national politics."[126]

It is also possible to bring together these views on diplomacy and on the police in illuminating new ways. In particular, the combination of U.S. diplomatic pressure and U.S. policing methods upset delicate—some may argue unsustainable—balances. Pérez Ricart shows how FBN buy-and-busts might have caught border peddlers but also incited considerable public outrage and the eventual legal clampdown on such maneuvers. In this volume, Aviña, Cedillo, and Morris all suggest that U.S. antidrug pressure not only forced the military into an increased policing role but also rolled out federal police forces

throughout the Mexican provinces. Such pressure transformed the local equilibriums forever. The federal judicial police and the DFS now competed with the state and municipal cops for the income from the drug trade. In view of the absence of accessible national police archives, archival sources concerning the drug trade provide valuable insights into the features and functioning of police forces at different administrative levels, into their complex and often contradictory relations, and into their significance for state making at local, regional, and national levels.

Looking at drug trafficking also offers insights into the evolution and changing features of Mexico's political system. In particular, the shifting balance between political centralization and regional power has been the subject of considerable debate. An influential theory has been that the consolidation of one-party rule and its corporatist structures was key for federal power holders to subdue powerful regional political and military interests that had emerged from the armed phase of the Revolution. Centrally run economic and fiscal policies strengthened this trend. Although this historical trend was never linear across the national territory nor irreversible (think of the formal politics of decentralization and the de facto re-emergence of powerful regional elites in the face of weakened federal institutions since the 1980s), the overall argument still seems valid.

Yet new drugs scholarship impinges on this debate in at least two ways: What role have resources from the drug business played in shaping the balance of power between local/regional and federal interests during particular conjunctures? Governors or local strongmen with pockets filled with drug money are less likely to bow to directives or incentives from higher political or state echelons. We can think of examples running from Esteban Cantú Jiménez, governor of Baja California during the 1910s, through Leopoldo Sánchez Celis, governor of Sinaloa in the 1960s, to Tomás Yárrington Ruvalcaba, governor of Tamaulipas at the start of the twenty-first century. All confronted the federal authorities and managed—at least temporarily—to gain a degree of state autonomy.

The other way to approach this theme is to investigate the dynamics of local/regional and centralized control of the illicit drug business itself. Which political or law enforcement agencies were associated with drug traffickers, and how did those coalitions shift through time? It has sometimes been suggested—parallel to the general argument concerning political centralization—that Mexico's drug business was since the late 1940s controlled by the national

intelligence agency and by national political elites, until the grip of the latter on the political system weakened. There is, however, evidence that if such a more or less centrally controlled system of trafficking and state protection ever existed it was not until the late 1970s, and only for a brief period. The historical evidence instead shows that during a large part of the twentieth century the drug trade system was relatively small-scale, integrated into regional socioeconomic hierarchies, and regulated by municipal or state police forces. By the mid-1970s, increased competition among drug growers and traffickers, spurred by the new scale of the trade from the 1960s onwards, in combination with the heavy-handed intromission of federal law enforcement agencies into the regions, lead to fierce competition about who would control markets and state-sponsored protection rackets (local, state, and federal agencies), a pluralization of armed actors and a dominance of federal law enforcement agencies (the army, federal police, and DFS).

Caciquismo has long played a critical role in constructing informal political and social relations between different levels of government and the state. While its phenomenology changed through time, as caciques gradually became more absorbed into the new institutional environment, while maintaining their informal power, their essential role as mediators remained crucial for postrevolutionary state making. How to approach the relations between caciquismo and the worlds of drug trafficking and organized crime? It is possible to think about the development of these connections along two routes: established cacique power structures articulate with illicit (drug) economies; the other route works in reverse when drugs-based "primitive accumulation" and power, coercive muscle, and territorial control morph into broader cacicazgos. Both scenarios may lead to what we could call "narco-caciquismo," a modality of local authority and mechanisms of intermediation, built at least partially on the revenues of drug trafficking, generally set in regional societies in which drug trafficking or organized crime are socially and economically significant.

Although there are many studies about local and regional cacicazgos in postrevolutionary Mexico, hardly any touch upon the role of drug trafficking. Local illicit drug economies were rarely factored into the original research questions.[127] It is likely also related to the availability of relevant archival sources. We nevertheless expect that future bottom-up histories of drug trafficking will encounter the figure of the "narco-cacique." In fact, recent scholarship has started to investigate the relationship between the formation of cacicazgos and the world of drugs. Fernández Velázquez has shown that

during the 1940s through 1960s peasants in highland Sinaloa combined the cultivation of marijuana and poppies with subsistence crops and cooperated in family- and place-based networks, which later developed into the clans that ran drugs cultivation in the highlands and trafficking routes in the lowlands and beyond.[128] Informal networks were crucial for protection. Melesio Cuén Cásarez had been municipal president of Badiraguato, Sinaloa, on several occasions during the 1930s and early 1950s. His political influence included the appointment of judges, police officers, and civil servants: "tuvo el mando en el puño y todo lo que ahí pasaba tenía que ver con él" [he held power in his hands and everything that happened there had to do with him].[129] His cacicazgo originated in substantial economic influence. Cuén had business interests in commerce, mining, real estate, tortilla factories, a pharmacy, and a funeral home. As a prominent merchant, he became the best-informed and best-connected man in town, who arranged marriages, resolved quarrels, and advised people in all matters.[130] For one local author he was the "cacique deseado" of the town.[131] Federal law enforcement agents probably disagreed when they reported Cuén's involvement in poppy cultivation in 1938.[132] He sold protection to local producers. By the 1930s, Cuén had become a kind of narco-cacique, whose local authority was based on a mixture of licit and illicit businesses, formal political authority, informal networks, and social capital.

Others were classic revolutionary caciques, who harnessed their military record, their control of armed men, and their contacts with urban politicians to carve out areas of local influence. By the 1940s, with the money to buy up opium and the political power to escape prosecution, they were able to become caciques-turned-opium wholesalers.[133] There are no reasons to think that similar cacicazgos would not have formed in the Chihuahuan sierras or in the southern states of Jalisco, Nayarit, Michoacán, or perhaps, above all, in Guerrero and Oaxaca. What can we learn if we look through the lens of caciquismo at the Herrera clan in Santiago Papasquiaro, Durango, in many ways a "traditional" local ranchero leader, but with access to a "modern" migrant network in Chicago?

Several contributions to this volume make clear that the drug trade shaped political processes and state making during particular conjunctures. For example, during the mid-1940s, and most importantly from the 1970s onwards, the increasing competition among traffickers and the repressive interventions by different law enforcements agencies caused waves of conflict and violence. The latter added another source of conflict, contestation, and instability, mostly