Cannabis production in Belgium: assessment of the nature and harms, and implications for priority setting (CANMARKT)

Funding country: Belgium
Project starting year: 2012
Project ending year: 2013
Area(s) of research: Supply and markets

Objectives:
This study pursues the following five objectives: 1) to describe the organization of cannabis production in Belgium, 2) to create typologies of different types of cannabis producers in Belgium and identify their modi operandi and aims; 3) to assess the market significance of different types of cannabis producers in Belgium (i.e. market segments); 4) to estimate the harms associated with different types of producers and 5) to evaluate the impact of the Belgian drug policy strategies on them.

Scientific discipline(s) involved: Anthropology, Criminology, Economy, Sociology

Initial identified needs:
Over the last 30 years major changes on the supply side of cannabis have occurred. The shift to (inter)regional production, trade and domestic production of cannabis has become an irreversible international trend. Belgium has been catching up with this trend: the number of plantations that have been dismantled by the authorities has increased sharply in recent years. Many of them are indoor operations, located near the Dutch border, set up for commercial purposes. These changes in the organization of the cannabis market raise important questions, in terms of estimating the size of the domestic cultivation industry, in terms of opportunities for new and existing offenders to enter the illegal trade, etc. Furthermore, the rise of domestic or regional cannabis cultivation is associated with heightened levels of criminal organization, involvement of ‘gangs’ and higher levels of violence. Typologies of cannabis cultivators always include large-scale (commercially oriented) growers on the one hand, and small scale cultivators (‘home growers’) on the other, and a grey zone in between (‘social-commercial cultivators’). Little is known about the exact market share and role of these different types of cannabis producers. Perhaps the most pressing policy issues relate to the differential harmfulness of activities within each type of cannabis producers, and the differential impact of the Belgian drug policy on different segments and networks of the cannabis production market.

Performed by: University of Ghent
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