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Traquetos : Colombians involved in the cocaine business in the Netherlands
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Chapter VIII
Flexible Affairs
Labour and Business Relations amongst Colombian Dealers

"In the life-game of postmodern men and women the rules of the game keep changing in the course of the playing. The sensible strategy is therefore to keep each game short."

Z. Bauman, Modernity and its Discontents.

"I came here to work."
Riverito

Introduction

Chapter II dealt with the social organisation of cocaine entrepreneurs in Colombia, challenging the mythical images of fixed 'cartels', stable enterprises or 'mafia families' at export level. The preceding chapters V and VI tackled the specific role of Colombians in subsequent business steps in the Netherlands, focusing particularly on individual backgrounds, on social chances and skills, and on operational aspects of their performances. Moreover, a strong emphasis was placed on assessing their share at each level, demonstrating how and why Colombians interact with groups and individuals from transit and destination countries.

While those chapters highlighted the nature of the Colombian involvement in general and of cocaine entrepreneurs and employees in particular, this chapter will be devoted to analysing the most common business and labour relations I encountered during my fieldwork amongst Colombian cocaine dealers in the Netherlands. In so doing, I follow earlier attempts to identify different types of drug enterprises (Dorn et al. 1992; Korf and Verbraeck 1993; Van Duyne et al. 1990) and labour modalities within the drug economy (Ruggiero 1995).

Colombian drug organisations active in Europe have been described either as mere representatives or cells of all-powerful Colombian enterprises, or as flexible criminal networks in which non-criminal roles and relations are, per definition, excluded from the analysis. The first view presents caricatured branches and professional businessmen. The other offers a chaotic web of underground, international criminals. I will first comment very briefly on these two approaches as they empirically refer to the case of Colombian dealers involved in Europe.

A second section will present three cases in which interesting aspects on business and labour relations are revealed. From these and other cases encountered during fieldwork, I will further examine the business and labour modalities involved more systematically.

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1 See chapter I for a critical assessment of existing approaches on drug organisations. There I reveal the limitations of criminological views revolving around state-sanctioned definitions of organised crime, managerial approaches stressing criminal networks, and euphemistic macro-economic views, which talk about transnational corporations or cartels. In contrast, I explain how ethnographic research with a focus on business and labour relations has potential advantages. It can reveal some of the reasons behind internal interaction, changing arrangements, conflicting interests and risk transfer inside the business. It can further contribute to explain the meaning of violence, secrecy and trust for the actors involved. Finally, it can expose both similarities and interconnections with broader social and economic arrangements - with other labour markets, with other legal and illegal businesses or entrepreneurs, and so forth.
8.1. Branches, criminal networks and flexible entrepreneurs

Most works mentioning Colombian groups or individuals involved in cocaine import and distribution in Europe tend to describe them as branches, cells, representatives or agents of the X Colombian cartel(s). These descriptions are usually fed by a combination of economic and bureaucratic definitions of organised crime: Colombians are in business and they belong to certain organisations. Whether the emphasis rests in high organised and stable structures (Florez and Boyce 1990), strict labour division, professionalism or vertical integration (Lee III 1989; 1991), the model in mind is that of a transnational corporation. Even when the notion of cartel is avoided, Colombian dealers abroad are fixed in large organisational structures. In an interesting attempt to compare the ‘narco-business’ with any other large company, Zabludoff (1997) argues that

"...Each cell is organised somewhat along the lines of its headquarters in Colombia. Cells vary in number of personnel according to their responsibilities and the size of the market they serve. Some employ as many as 50 Colombians including a cell leader and several ‘vice-presidents’ in charge of specific tasks..." (Zabludoff 1997: 35)

Others simply discuss the issue in terms of the activities of ‘Colombian cartels’ (Savona 1999; OGD 1997a) or ‘Colombian families’ (OGD 1996a: 67) in the Netherlands. Some versions of this picture also include an ‘alien conspiracy’ dimension. For example, Van Doorn (1993) claims that

"Close family ties at the top and a cell-structure characterize the cartels (...) Arrival and further distribution in Western Europe, is in the hands of high-placed Colombian cartel members who take up residence, either permanently or temporarily... There is a very realistic possibility that the cartels will try to expand their influence in Europe over the next few years by setting up import corporations of their own" (Van Doorn 1993: 101).

Despite the fact that most economic roles and relations amongst Colombian dealers can indeed be compared with those of other legal markets, this perspective tends to institutionalise arrangements and businesses in a holistic way. Moreover, the exclusive stress on professional skilled managers and entrepreneurs simply ignores the reality of the mass of unskilled Colombian employees, often regarded as members and not as victims of the groups they supposedly belong to.

With a stronger accent in economic processes than in bureaucratic structures, Van Duyne (Van Duyne et al. 1990; Van Duyne 1993a; Van Duyne 1995) presents a less static picture of Colombian cocaine entrepreneurs and enterprises. Even though he talks about ‘mother organisations’ (1990: 55) and mentions cartels holding sections of the European market (1995: 80), he pays more attention to business forms as well as to symbiotic relations with the legal economy. He describes ‘commercial bridgeheads’ and ‘pioneer firms’ (1993a: 15), which are both flexible and not always a model of professionalism (1995: 82-83). He also identifies enterprises of different size related through intermediaries or brokers. Since only significant detected cases are analysed (through police and judicial dossiers), Van Duyne does not deal with smaller units, more informal coalitions and especially with the labour market of his ‘criminal enterprises’.

With a strong entrepreneurial approach, Naylor (1997) criticises the misleading use of economic categories by drug enforcers, pointing out that cocaine trafficking proceeds through a complex of arms-length commercial transactions (Naylor 1997: 20). Other researchers have
sustained the same stress on fragmentation as well (Krauthausen and Sarmiento 1991; Thoumi 1995; Kopp 1995). The material presented by Bovenkerk (1995a; 1995b), with a stronger focus on the socio-economic and cultural context of those involved in large cocaine import operations, also reveals more fluid transactions, some levels of autonomy and space for erratic behaviour even amongst top traquetos.

From a different perspective, a recent report from the WODC (Kleemans et al. 1998) describes Colombian related cases in the Netherlands in terms of 'criminal networks' both facilitated and hindered by the social context. These researchers distance themselves from the economic view as theoretical departure, so they seldom talk about entrepreneurs or cartels. While they favour notions such as 'criminal networks' or 'co-operation agreements' (samenwerkingsverbanden), they still refer to Colombian 'groups' and 'organisations'. Kleemans et al. (1998) also challenge the 'ethnic' tone of the Van Traa Report (Fijnaut et al. 1996) arguing that Colombians engage in mixed and international networks since ethnicity is only one aspect of broader social linkages. Their picture, sketched from some dossier-cases involving Colombian cocaine dealers, reveals flexible international co-operation, diversification to other illegal markets at distribution level, and, of course, different operational capabilities regarding contacts in Colombia and the Netherlands. Their view has the merit of recognising flexible relations at the core of any drug transaction.

As earlier explained in this book, the first problem with this approach is the exclusive focus on a-priori isolated 'criminal' relations. Non-criminal' relations are considered secondary or analysed as external social context - as 'upper world', as corrupt officials, as spoiled legal businesses, and so on. Secondly, no attention is paid to the meaning that relations have for those involved in the 'network'. During my fieldwork, I met many people who even knowing that they were engaged in illegal activities, did not consider themselves to be criminals: people primarily engaged in legal or informal activities, people who saw themselves as workers, as adventurers or as acting under pressure, and finally those who blamed others for being the 'true criminals'. Illegality is a key factor, but should not be taken for granted when explaining traquetos' social behaviour. People engage in the drug economy attracted by potential large (illegal) profits, but they also do it 'despite' the fact that cocaine is illegal. For example, many informants wanted to step out from illegality as soon as possible, supported drug legalisation, or engaged in legitimate activities that provided greater symbolic rewards.

This approach also tends to portray Colombians as 'co-operative' and 'partners in crime', neglecting internal conflict between different roles and the power relations involved. Finally, this view remains rather a-historic, it does not explain why people behave in certain ways, and it is only secondarily concerned with the economic dimension of the illegal business. Behind flexible networks - whether they are 'criminal' or not - there are flexible entrepreneurs, partners, brokers and employees. Flexibility can be better explained - and compared - when the business and labour relations are the object of analysis.

8.2. Sand through the Fingers

8.2.1. Riverito's four operations

At the time I visited him, Riverito was in his thirties and serving 4 years in De Weg, one of the buildings with several Colombian inmates in the Bijlmer prison of Amsterdam. From a

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2 See also for the same critique Zaitch and Janssen (1996).
middle-class family from Cali, he studied economics at the *Univalle*, where he graduated in 1992. Afterwards he got a reasonably good job with a leading building company in Cali, but he found it routine and boring. During his studies, he worked as a waiter in a famous hotel in the Cali centre, a place where top local cocaine entrepreneurs gathered for business and pleasure. It was in that hotel that Riverito got to know these people and the world of major cocaine producers and exporters. He was at first a simple waiter who knew their tastes and anticipated their wishes. He was later invited to more private events:

"I was the private waiter of P.H. [a former major drug entrepreneur from Cali]. Once he gave me a US$ 1,000 tip at the end of a party, I had to share it with some other people."

However, beside this link and the fact that he sometimes easily got hold of some cocaine to retail amongst friends, he did not become involved with those cocaine entrepreneurs. However, his closeness to them had a tremendous impact:

"Brother, you don't imagine how it is until you come close to them. So much money! They impress the people around them, because they are not so different than you or me. They are not old rich bastards, no; they speak the same language as normal people do. Some are gentle and jointly liable. And you wonder: why not me?"

For him, things were not going well in Colombia. He underwent a serious alcohol problem:

"Very rarely a joint or a coke line, no, my true nightmare is the drink: beer, and especially whisky and *aguardientico*. I don't get aggressive, but I lose control. I ruined my marriage in December 1994 due to the drink."

Riverito indeed had an ex-wife, for whom he still felt responsible, and an 8 years old son who lived with her.

In 1995, ten months after they broke up, he decided to go to the Netherlands. He had a sister living there, so he left. Is not clear the main reason behind his decision. He argued during our first meeting that he came to the Netherlands for adventure, that he had nothing else in Colombia and wanted to solve his alcohol abuse by changing environment, but he had not come to deal cocaine. After many encounters, he became more open and forgot his earlier claims:

"I came here to work you see, it was the only thing to do. I had no prospects there."

It is reasonable to believe that a number of factors pushed him to decide to move to the Netherlands and participate in the cocaine business: dissatisfaction and frustration with his job, earlier contacts with powerful local cocaine entrepreneurs, a spiralling down that ended in a broken marriage and, finally, the fact that he had a sister in the Netherlands. In the case of Riverito, personal economic problems did not seem to be high on the agenda. Indeed he was interested in making big money quickly, not so much as a path for social improvement, but rather as a disruption, as a possible turning point for a new start. The way in which he became involved in the cocaine business illustrates this. He was not sent by any people nor did he belong to any group or organisation. Riverito went to the Netherlands alone, established contact with local importers and distributors, and eventually used his former contacts within the *Caleño* cocaine circles.
Once in Amsterdam, he shared a room in an attic with other Colombians. Some were already involved in the cocaine business. With these people, he first worked as encaletador, the person responsible for keeping and watching over the cocaine loads before they are eventually divided and delivered to wholesalers. He was just an employee, next to other two, of a Colombian cocaine importer. After a couple of operations, in which he demonstrated his competence and gained trust, he was offered a more risky and profitable task: the unloading of several kilograms from a ship in Zeebrugge for which he was offered US$ 30,000, an amount he was meant to share with another Colombian who was supposed to go with him.

Unloading in Zeebrugge
Riverito’s operation at Zeebrugge was a successful one, but the US$ 15,000 promised turned out to be just US$ 10,000. Interestingly enough, although he claimed the rest for a while, he just accepted the actual payment that seemed a good deal to him.

"I wasn’t going to create problems, I wasn’t in a position to ask for the rest. You see, after all they paid me well. I bought a house in Cali with that money, for my ex-wife and my son.”

The unloading operation at Zeebrugge reveals interesting aspects regarding the labour relations involved. Contrary to the idea that a single, well organised group was controlling all the import tasks - for example, with a boss who divided the tasks and paid salaries or percentages to ‘his own’ people –, the operation involved at least two small independent units.

On the one hand, the Colombian importer and owner of the cocaine load bought to the exporter at US$ 20,000 per kilo - at import port - and sold at a wholesale price of US$ 24,000 per kilo, obtaining gross earnings of US$ 200,000. He worked alone with two informal helpers, both receiving some thousands from him after the operation. While he received information about the cruce (sending), he was not responsible for it since he bought from the exporter at the point of arrival. He unloaded the shipment, transported, stashed and divided the merchandise, and delivered it - in this case, three packages - to wholesale distributors. However, he did not do all this by himself. For the most dangerous task, the unloading, he was willing to pay 10% of his profits (US$ 20,000) for to someone else to do it, in the same way, a legal company subcontracts special services for a project. The contractor was in this case Riverito.

Riverito and his companion, on the other hand, were a separate economic unit from the importer. They were not his partners, since they were neither owners nor responsible for the merchandise. They could neither be considered employees like the other helpers, since the contracting relationship ended as soon as the operation had been completed. Riverito and his partner also remained autonomous with regard to the planning and execution of the operation. Naturally, the division was less strict than in legal subcontracting, since Riverito was not in a position to guarantee a refund if the unloading operation failed. In practical terms, the importer worked very close to Riverito, kept an eye on him, provided him with ideas, information and even with a vehicle, though Riverito and his friend had to arrange many technical aspects of the unloading by themselves.

In this way, they were contracted out, as an external labour force, to take over the high risks involved in the unloading. They just offered the importer a highly priced service for this particular operation. In contrast with what happens in legal business, this subcontracting relation had almost no chance of being repeated in future operations: Riverito wanted more, and new personal circumstances allowed him to try on his own.
Flexible Affairs

From unloader to importer to wholesaler

After the Zeebrugge operation, a year after arrival to the Netherlands, his older brother William also came over. Unlike Riverito, he had problems in Colombia with marihuana and cocaine use. They had a good relationship and he wanted to help him, so he convinced him to come to the Netherlands. Together, they started to look for possible opportunities to transporting cocaine from Cali. They had no capital to invest, but they knew many people. Their intention this time was to keep things in their own hands:

“You see, I work no more with those paisanos [Colombians]. Everything fine with them, but I just tried with other people in Colombia. I knew this man from before. He promised to send something, so we waited. We waited, and waited, and nothing happened. He kept giving stupid excuses, I think he liked to talk and tell things he really could not do. Pure bullshit!”

Riverito got what Colombians call a línea muerta (dead line), a cocaine line or operation that simply does not exist or is destined to fail. For this operation, Riverito was going to buy in Colombia and sell in the Netherlands, dividing the profits with his brother. They phoned many people in Colombia, but nothing worked out. People who promised things just disappeared. They survived with small jobs as load keepers and internal couriers. In the meantime, their sister had returned to Colombia: she had had absolutely nothing to do with the cocaine circuit. Finally, in the beginning of 1997, a new operation appeared. It was small, but rather easy and with a good profit margin. They could make a mark up of US$ 4,000 selling a kilo that Riverito had got from another Colombian. Riverito thus suddenly became a wholesale distributor. He bought the cocaine, and his brother William and a paisa called Charly entered the deal as his helpers. Charly was a paisa that had just arrived and used to repeatedly tell that he had been bodyguard of Pablo Escobar. Charly told Riverito that a friend of him had a buyer for the cocaine kilo. This 'friend', thought to be Colombian by Riverito, turned out to be an Aruban who presumably gave Charly some money to ensure the deal. They followed him to meet the buyers, but things went wrong. Riverito:

"Man, there was no buyer, there was only a gang of Antilleans who put two guns to our heads and stole the thing. It is a miracle we are alive. I know another caileño who was almost killed in the same situation but still walks around with a bullet in his neck."

The man from Aruba did not disappear, but pretended to also have been fooled. As a regular police informant, he could avoid punishment by feeding the police with a 'Colombian criminal organisation' story while he could get away with a loot worth US$ 24,000. After a failed attempt to recover the package from the Aruban - allegedly using violence -, the police raided Riverito’s flat in Amsterdam Zuid. He and his fellows were subsequently detained. In his last operation, Riverito was the boss.

Riverito’s four operations, all taking place with the space of two years, reveal two interesting things. Firstly, that far from a stable and large organisation, a mutating interconnection of small units seems to be the case. Secondly, that this connection changed with respect to people, positions, linkage nature and tasks along the four successful or failed operations in which Riverito was involved. These changing relations and roles are illustrated in Figure IV.
Figure IV. Riverito's Business Links in Four Different Operations

- As Load-keeper
- As Unloader
- As Importer
- As Wholesaler

Entrepreneur
Employee
Riverito
8.2.2. Miguel's many bosses

Although Miguel primarily addressed himself as an "intellectual mainly interested in philosophy and criminology", he was rather open about his involvement in the business for more than a decade.

He almost made it as a criminal lawyer, but for no clear reason he claimed he was impeded to complete his last year at the University.

"I felt frustrated and I burned all the books. At that time, I was working in a small secondary school in Cartago as vice-principal and philosophy teacher. I knew some people in Cali, but I did not enter this for the money, I suppose. I think it was out of bitterness."

He was first invited to work as a courier for a small organisation in Bogotá, transporting between 3 kg and 7 kg. He made successful trips to the Netherlands, to Paris, again to the Netherlands, and later to a couple of Central American countries. He was caught in a subsequent trip to Portugal, where he spent 3 years in prison.

"It was terrible there, the law of the jungle, surrounded by 'garbage' that did not deserve anything. I survived because we have a name, I mean they think it is better not to mess with Colombians."

Back in Colombia, he tried to resume his law studies, but he was again obstructed. Frustration was even more painful since his brother was a criminal judge with many contacts. He started to work in a cocaine kitchen near Cali, a job he regarded as very dangerous:

"The chemicals are very inflammable, we had to wear rubber shoes cause the slightest spark could provoke an explosion. Everything is very precarious, once a certain amount is cooked the kitchen is dismantled and you are moved to a new one. It is risky, but you get monthly paid."

After that period, and due to the fall of his patron (boss), Miguel returned to Bogotá to resume his job as drug courier, but this time for another organisation. He already had experience, and was no longer regarded as a simple courier. In 1993, he was sent to Frankfurt as a 'baby sitter'. Although he was not caught, the cocaine was seized, some Italian importers were detained and the cocaine remained unpaid for. Shortly after this operation, Miguel attempted to smuggle a few kilos through the Schiphol Airport, where he was caught. My first interpretation was that he had been punished for the failure and 'demoted' from 'baby sitter' to mula, but things were more simple than that: a new operation for a single courier appeared and he happened to get the job. With a false passport and more than 3 kg cocaine, he was sent via Venezuela and Curacao to Amsterdam, from where he would have travelled south to deliver the merchandise in Geneva, Switzerland. Miguel explains:

"You see, I worked for many groups and I never saw anything like a 'cartel'. I don't feel part of a 'cartel'. Every group is more or less independent. Some people know each other, yes, and sometimes a couple of patrones could meet and work together. There are also informal rules and codes, but nothing like the mafia, people don't really respect them. I believe that the only rule is to survive and get rich."

3 During our encounters in the prison of Veenhuizen, he commented upon Hegel, Kant, Russell, Bentham and Foucault. He also referred to social utopists such as Owen, Fourier, Saint Simon and Comte, and to authors such as Huxley and Orwell. Quoting Kundera, he finally thanked me for the unique opportunity to share thoughts about these thinkers, implying that he was an exception in that "criminal subculture". Upon this intimacy he also based his willingness to tell me his story.
When asked about his plans after prison, Miguel suggested that he first had to settle things with his most recent boss from Bogotá. After that, he would go back to Cali to "see who is there". He was, however, very sceptical about finding his old employers after so long.

Whatever effort may be made to connect Miguel with a particular group or 'cartel' in Colombia is destined to fail: he moved rather easily from one employer to another, combining or shifting drug smuggling with other roles as 'cook', as bodyguard and as 'baby sitter'.

8.2.3. Joel's loneliness

In chapter VI, I explained why Joel should be considered a 'discreet professional' as a Colombian cocaine wholesaler active in Amsterdam.\(^4\) I then presented relevant information about his career, his daily arrangements, his resources and the ways in which he acts and thinks about the business. What is also interesting about Joel's story is the kind of relations he establishes with business partners and with the people working with and for him.

Joel was usually the boss of his own illegal enterprise. He was clearly what Dorn et al (1998) refer as a *number 1*, 'cut out' from some delicate operational matters such as cocaine transportation and money transfers, but 'hands on' in others such as stashing cocaine. In some cases, he made Paisita his partner - sharing a percentage of the profits -, but only when they sold to a couple of Paisita's clients. Joel was always the investor and he always ran the financial risk of the operations. Interestingly enough, his brother, who invited him to come to the Netherlands and gave him most of the business contacts, worked independently from him, holding a different line. However, they used to work together in Chicago. Tano reveals:

"Once he went to collect some money, I think a lot of money, and they told him that his brother had already received it. When Joel found him it was already too late, his brother had spent it all in Colombia. I believe they settled the score, but there is always some tension."

Joel only bought cocaine from other Colombians, but not always in the same way and from the same people. He entered the game per operation. He would receive a message from exporter A from Cali, asking if he wanted to play. Although Joel knew his nickname and a telephone number to contact him, he never met him personally. According to the price and the quantity involved, he would say yes or no. In practice, he always agreed to buy at least part of the cocaine load. Exporter A would arrange the shipment with importer B, mainly through Rotterdam. Joel would also accept sharing the financial risks with importer B, who was also from Cali. In the event that the shipment was lost or seized, he would pay for half of it and he would invite the exporter to verify that no rip-off took place.

The autonomy of the 3 partners in this *línea* (line) or *flecha* (arrow) is obvious not only from the meticulous share of financial risk, but also from the fact that they seldom repeat the same scheme. Importer B and Joel also received cocaine from exporter C, who closed a deal with importer A to use his contacts in the Netherlands. Despite the fact that Joel only bought from importer B - he tried with a second one but he was not satisfied - importer B also sold to other Colombian and non-Colombian distributors.

Joel sold the cocaine to different groups including other local Colombians, some Turks and Italians in Amsterdam, and a couple of groups in Germany and Belgium. However, he never deals with more than two or three clients. On one occasion, Joel was visibly irritated. He explained me that

\(^4\) See Chapter VI.
"Another group of Calenos, they sold the thing one point cheaper [a point, referred to the kilo price, is $1,000] but we had agreed to sell for 48. Therefore, they sold it and I didn't. I will speak with them..."

While he excluded the use of force, he implied that these informal agreements are common between two or three groups or distributors handling from the same bulk and selling to the same groups. However, even in these circumstances, he admitted the difficulties involved in enforcing these price accords. Other agreements with the importer were often tacit and implied a grey zone of misunderstandings, discussions and conflicts. For example, if the cocaine was not sold immediately, the importer would become rather impatient about the payment.

I met six different Colombians working for or with Joel: Simona, Paisita, his brother, Tico, Chino and Tano. Except for Paisita, who was only on some occasions involved as business partner, none of the others engaged in any stable 'criminal' relation with him. They would not be offered a job either before or after certain operation. Even then, Joel would decide what and when to delegate. I then realised that one of the secrets of Joel's success was that he worked alone. He basically hired people to move the cocaine inside Amsterdam, to receive it and deliver it, and to transfer the money. Some people such as Tano would rotate through all of these tasks. Paisita and Tico could provide the 'violent' image that Joel did not have. Finally, Simona would generally cook and clean for him, and, of course, provide her house to stash the merchandise.

The money transfers to Colombia were arranged in a rather simple way. Sometimes he went to the office by himself, but most of the time, he sent somebody else. He was aware of video cameras and financial legislation, so he used to distribute uneven amounts of about $5,000 to $7,000 amongst 6 different people, who would deposit the money in some 4 or 5 well-known funds transfer offices. For this work, Joel also recruited peripheral people - for example, friends of Simona - who would get between $200 and $300 for the job. In this way, he managed to send, diverted to different accounts in Colombia, an amount of around US$90,000 each time. He avoided sending people to the same office very often, and he occasionally sent cash with trusted travellers. Far from being part of a group - i.e. Joel's organisation - these people were just friends or acquaintances who did not necessarily know each other very well.

Tano described how he delivered the cocaine for Joel:

"I put the stuff in a big suitcase and I just went alone to meet the buyers. Paisita met me there and we delivered it. Joel paid me $200 for each kilo transported."

Finally, Joel mentioned some 'projects' - one in Japan and another one in France, both apparently failed - in which neither the people referred above were involve, nor was his precise role in these projects clear to me.

8.3. Working with/for a traqueto

From these three stories and the material presented in chapters V and VI, it is evident that Colombian dealers engage in various sorts of business and labour relations. The following is an attempt to enumerate the most common types of linkages I found during my fieldwork. Since these types are in reality both mixed (for instance partnerships amongst relatives) and mutating (i.e. traffickers change from one method to another), this should serve to grasp the
diversity of business forms as well as to identify the most important elements of Colombian cocaine enterprises.

8.3.1. Business types

Individual enterprises
Self-employment, a paramount feature of immigrant economies (Portes 1995), was extremely rare amongst Colombian cocaine dealers. For reasons explained earlier, Colombian smugglers were always employees of somebody else. The few cases were restricted to people mostly involved in wholesale distribution. Joel, for example, acted in most of his operations as an individual entrepreneur helped by ad-hoc recruits. Lupo, in a more erratic fashion, incorporated sporadic cocaine dealing with a larger number of informal or illegal activities in which he engaged alone. Finally, Pollo managed to conduct one single import operation moving on his own.

Partnerships
This was the most common sort of business by far, especially at the level of import and distribution. Most partnerships were between two people. When a third partner was present, it tended to be a non-Colombian associate who provided local resources, infrastructure or further marketing contacts. While some lasted for few operations, most partnerships were temporary coalitions of two persons with a number of helpers, employees and subcontracted personnel. Riverito worked with a partner when he performed as unloader and as an importer (see graphic IV). His case, like that of some other adventurers or 'opportunist irregulars' (Dorn et al. 1992) was to combine or switch from partnerships to wage labour. Some partners were family related, especially brothers and brothers in law.

Thinking in terms of the typology of trafficking 'firms' proposed by Dorn et al. (1992: xiii), it can be argued that none of these Colombian partnerships were 'trading charities' (ideologically committed to drugs) or 'mutual societies' (drug exchange amongst users). Colombian traquetos belonged to the other five categories in a very flexible fashion.

Despite the fact that 'sideliners' (legal businesses that trade drugs as a 'sideline') are a common phenomenon in Colombia, no traces of Colombian 'sideliners' in the Netherlands were found. This is due to the lack of legal Colombian entrepreneurship in the Netherlands, which if related to cocaine traffic was already an instrument designed to conceal the illegal business. Naturally, Colombians found partners in local 'sideliners', especially people with import or retail businesses suffering financial problems. If prostitution is considered to be a legal activity, a small number of Colombian prostitutes and ex-prostitutes also 'sidelined' into cocaine by meeting or being related with a drug entrepreneur.

Almost the same can be said about their engagement as 'criminal diversifiers' (existing criminal enterprise that 'diversifies' to include cocaine). Those Colombians who engaged in burglary or shoplifting only entered the cocaine business as temporary unskilled workers, but never as entrepreneurs. In fact, for some Colombians who diversified to other criminal activities and markets in the Netherlands – Mocho, for example, also imported cannabis - cocaine was the first step and still the most profitable activity. As argued previously, many of these traquetos had no criminal record in Colombia. However, many of them engaged in partnerships with local entrepreneurs involved in all sorts of illegal activities.

Though the 'opportunist irregular' (involved erratically in the irregular economy) and the 'retail specialist' (with a boss employing people to distribute drugs to users) are two

5 See chapter V on independent smugglers.
categories referring to retail levels in which Colombians were absent, these types were somewhat familiar amongst Colombian entrepreneurs. On the one hand, people like Lupo distributed cocaine along many other small *rebusques* (street informal jobs) he engaged in. Since some *traquetos* only managed 2 or 3 operations per year, their involvement was more 'irregular' than often thought. They reacted to short-term developments, acting as 'jump-up merchants' (Hobbs 1988) when a nice business opportunity suddenly emerged. In this way, they also engaged in temporary partnerships and recruited people for the project. On the other hand, even improvising, the 'groups' assembled had a boss and employees or helpers performing specific tasks.

Finally, Colombian groups or partnerships, especially those involved in cocaine import, were susceptible to dealing with 'state-sponsored traders' (who collaborated with enforcement agencies as informants, infiltrates or undercover policemen). While I could not find one single Colombian willing to become a *sapo* (police informant), many complained of making foolish mistakes by dealing with the 'wrong' people.

**Joint ventures**

Many partnerships were not only temporary for one or two operations, but involved people already active in other projects with other people. These joint ventures were usually between people holding different sorts of capital resources, all required to put the operation together. One had, for example, the money to invest and a front-store business, while the other provided the supplier in Colombia and the people needed for the operation. Some of these coalitions were 'virtual'. Potential partners spent a great deal of time thinking and talking about projects which never materialised in the end.

**Percentage commission**

People did not divide profits in an even way. If partners were - or appeared to be - roughly of the same status, negotiations often took place. Even if they knew each other, part of the negotiation was aimed at showing - and often exaggerating - personal credentials: how reliable and profitable each party was. Negotiations also involved discussions about three issues: financial risk, personal risk and material/human resources employed in. The first and third factors were the key ones, while personal risk was difficult to assess, often equally shared or completely passed on to helpers and labourers. When Paisita managed to share profits with Joel, he would only get 30% for providing the customer, putting some money and arranging the deal. As the main investor, Joel kept the other 70%.

A different picture resulted if partners were very different in size and power: the offer would be accepted with little or no discussion. The smaller party would then receive a percentage commission either in cash from the general profits or in kind from the total amount of cocaine moved. This arrangement was typical in export-import operations involving 'envoys' such as Jairo. Although he organised the import for certain group in Cali - i.e. working for them in that particular operation - he became involved as a partner since he provided essential infrastructure, marketing opportunities and assumed high personal risks.

This system should be distinguished from the 'sales on commission' method, widely used amongst small wholesale distributors. As I will explain below, this last contracting arrangement applies less to entrepreneurial partnerships than to flexible labour force.

**Family business**

None of the cocaine enterprises found were structured along family lines in the style of the 'crime families' described by Ianni (1972) or of 'family businesses' discussed by the vast literature on middleman minorities and ethnic economies. Of course, kinship relations often
provided the basis for partnerships, labour recruitment, solidarity and the necessary enforceable trust. Joel or Riverito sometimes worked with their respective brothers, and some couples like Pacho and Blanca or Wilder and Rosaura co-operated in export-import operations. However, most of them had relatives who did not participate in the business, and most commonly dealt with and employed non-relatives. Moreover, the whole idea of 'family labour' was absent. Solano explained:

"Here in The Hague I met many family members involved: blood brothers and relatives in law. But also close friends, that can be almost the same. (...) I see here many Arabs and they look like a big family, they are closed and they help each other. But Colombians are more individualistic, I don't know why... (...) Yes, family is important, but money makes them blind."

Jairo, who was sent by the Grajales family from Cali, was not related to them. The Grajales 'family business' was in fact a conglomerate of legal and illegal businesses run by different members of a large family, and not a unified structure. Joel and his brother also ran separated businesses. In some cases, the relative primarily provided the know-how, human and financial capital, or infrastructure. This is the case of 'mixed couples' or Colombian couples in which the woman had the Dutch nationality and local contacts. Tano emphatically denied that family ties were important amongst traquetos in the Netherlands:

"Look, you can not do this for many years, so some people try to keep their relatives out of this".

Paisita also insisted on 'Colombian' over family ties:

"We work with other calichanos [Colombianos]. They won't do silly things, you know for sure because everybody has a family in Colombia..."

**The centrality of intermediaries and brokers**

This system of small, changing and temporary coalitions is certainly invigorated by the essential intervention of a specific type of entrepreneur: the broker. Boissevain (1974: 148) explains that social brokers place people in touch with each other either directly or indirectly for profit.

The usual role of brokers in the cocaine business - also referred as 'go-between', 'intermediaries', 'criminal brokers', and so forth - is to connect potential partners, potential buyers and sellers, and potential employees and employers. In this way, cocaine brokers combine, in a very informal way, some of the tasks usually performed by chambers of commerce, employment agencies, social clubs or financial newspapers in legal business. Nevertheless, they also reproduce other sorts of social brokerage - amongst friends, relatives, colleagues, co-nationals, and so forth - present in any other monetary or non-monetary transaction.

Brokers tended to belong to the very social networks being connected. Although not necessarily cocaine entrepreneurs or employees themselves, they were also not external 'powerful' actors such as local politicians, mafiosi or migrant community leaders. During the 1980s, Bettien Martens, for example, managed many contacts between Colombian exporters and European importers. Although her only capital was her network, she went beyond brokerage to work for specific groups as an 'envoy', a money launderer, and so on.

Brokers amongst Colombian traquetos included people occupying intersections of very different networks: illegal immigrants, musicians, frequent travellers, local dealers, local

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6 A more elaborated argument is offered in chapter II on cocaine enterprises in Colombia and chapter IX on the role of trust.
entrepreneurs, prostitutes, undercover police officers, and so on. Tico, for example, introduced
Tano and Chino to Joel, who later help them in many ways. Tano acknowledged:

"Yes, I can work with Tico. He isn't selfish, he didn't know me very well, but he told Joel to trust
me."

Silvio argued that some salsa musicians in Amsterdam acted as brokers by exchanging
their broad network of potential cocaine users for regular free cocaine supply for the closest
circle. In The Hague, some Latino DJ's also knew how to exploit their contacts with established traquetos and 'second generation' Colombians. I found further cases of brokerage
amongst telephone operators, restaurant and bar tenders, coffee-shop owners, doormen in
salsa discos and non-Colombian inmates. They all facilitated new contacts and
transactions, and they all did so for profit.

As explained by Boissevain (1974: 158), the broker's tariff (profit) rarely consists
directly of money. Cocaine brokers obtained material and immaterial benefits. The most
common were: credit with traquetos; reputation and status; expectation to enter the business
in the future; future possible favours or services; more clients; cocaine for consumption; moral
leadership; and indeed cash. Credit and reputation were very important since they were key
credentials for business success.

Many Colombians refused to perform as brokers when asked by non-Colombian drug
dealers to connect them with the 'big guys'. They did not see any clear benefit in it. When
Cabeza was learning Dutch, two Moroccans approached him at the language school. They
wanted to get in touch with Colombian cocaine suppliers, and wondered if he could help
them. Cabeza:

"I thought why not, so I found a Colombian and I did the cruce [favour]. The Moroccans were real
desprolijos [lit. sloppy, amateurs], and after two failed meetings I said: you know what? I cancel
the thing and I step out."

However, manipulating traquetos with hopes and promises - recommending unreliable
people, lying about their skills, making them wait, and so on - was for many the only way of
getting close to a business with such large profits. More than career makers, cocaine brokers
in the Netherlands tended to rely on short-term thinking. The temporary status of cocaine
enterprises - in terms of organisation and staff - was then reinforced by a continuous
circulation and replacement of brokers as the older ones ran out of credit.

In an attempt to explain diversification of markets and activities amongst Colombian
drug entrepreneurs, M. Koutouzis from the OGD in Paris argued that cocaine import was
being subsumed into a huge broker operation:

"It isn't a product (cocaine), but the very network what is really at stake, the real merchandise. The
present and future tendency is to buy and sell lines, routes and networks. Internationalised criminal
organisations will be able to provide any illegal product." (Koutouzis, April 1997).

Interestingly enough, even considered at local level, this process is reminiscent of homologous
trends towards horizontal integration, and flexible accumulation and consumption in late
capitalism.
8.3.2. Labour relations

Most of the people contacted during my research were either working or selling a service to some traquito. I have already shown how import and distribution could be both organised as an enterprise or as a job, and that cocaine entrepreneurs had the crucial assistance of all sorts of helpers and employees. I have even described most of their tasks in former chapters. I will now try to characterise this specific labour market, showing the most common contractual arrangements found and the logic behind them. When analysing drug economies, too much emphasis on professionalism has obscured the fact that the ‘crime industry also needs a large number of unskilled criminal employees’ (Ruggiero 1993: 137) who at the same time pose a major threat to their employers. Reuter (1983) argues that:

"The entrepreneur aims to structure his relationship with employees so as to reduce the amount of information available to them concerning his own participation and to ensure that they have minimal incentive to inform against him." (Reuter 1983: 115).

Traquetos try to solve this problem by segmenting units, subcontracting, using friends and relatives, avoiding fixed employees, relying on brokers, passing minimal information, providing personal incentives, replacing, intimidating or lowering the number of employees. In sum, becoming flexible and relatively ‘unorganised’. After reviewing the specific labour market around Colombian traquetos, I will argue that these ‘solutions’ are part of a wider picture that goes beyond illegal markets. While illegality tends to intensify them, they touch core developments of current capital and labour markets under ‘disorganised capitalism’ (Lash and Urry 1987), ‘flexible specialisation’ (Harvey 1989) or ‘post-Fordist’ economies (Amin 1994).

Skilled subcontractors

Colombian cocaine entrepreneurs relied heavily on subcontracting specific tasks to a variety of individuals and enterprises that provided infrastructure, knowledge or skills for a particular operational aspect. These contractors were usually paid either in cash or kind per individual project. In this way, relatively small economic units were able to operate by integrating flexible layers of contractors and subcontractors.

The subcontract of other illegal enterprises was rare in the Netherlands but very common in Colombia. Cocaine exporters used to contract the services of organisations - some with two or three people - specialised for example in the recruitment and loading of small couriers, in large scale transportation - for example, Mexican groups - or in the exercise of violence - private armies, sicarios, and so on.

Other subcontracted businesses had a much better reputation. Whether they were single corrupted employees inside a firm (import-export, freight or transport companies, chauffeurs, bank employees and managers, and so on) or entire small businesses (retail and distribution shops, restaurant owners, and so on), all had in common that they were paid to provide essential infrastructure services, beyond mere know-how or labour force. Almost every single operation that came to my knowledge subcontracted, at certain stage, services from legal companies.

Much subcontracting took place at an individual level, blurring at times the divide between wage labour and entrepreneurship. These people performed more simple tasks, all involving some particular skill and some material resource not provided by the employer. I have explained, for example, how Riverito was contracted to unload cocaine, for which he had to arrange many things for himself. Some infrastructural services were subcontracted in a
more continuous fashion: Simona was regularly paid by Joel to stash cocaine in her flat. Some individuals regarded the contract as an extra-income, while mainly keeping more stable sorts of income from jobs or social benefits. Sporadically, Manolo drove an acquainted *traquito* in his car, but lived from retirement benefits after 30 years of industrial work.

**Professionals**

Professional skilled workers also tended to be externally hired or recruited. Again, small and temporary enterprises did not allow for stable 'departments' with specialised personnel. Some of these services came from legitimate professionals, who were often paid salaries or fees well above the average. A pool of local or Colombian lawyers specialised in cocaine cases had a remarkable stability in their jobs compared to their clients. Travel and real estate agents were paid excellent prices and commissions. In contrast with Colombia and with local legal and illegal entrepreneurs, I could not find local accountants hired to launder money. This professional service was directly provided by the institutions or the employees involved. In some cases, people with know-how in import-export bureaucracy and in IT were also involved, for example, for organising large import operations. Professional truck drivers were also hired or paid off to transport cocaine in their trucks.

*Traquetos* also hired a number of people with particular skills acquired by virtue of their full-time involvement in some illegal activity. They included professional smugglers of all sorts, routine burglars (for operations that involved breaking into warehouses, containers or flats) or individual *sicarios* (though rare in the Netherlands). The trend for these 'professional criminals' was to diversify skills and become polyvalent multi-skilled workers. They were good candidates for replacing 'bosses' or becoming their closest employees.

**Managerial bodies**

The heavy use of subcontractors and 'external' professionals discouraged stable managerial bodies. In many cases, the *patrón* him/herself directly controlled the performance of unskilled workers. When people were sent to the Netherlands to organise the import (envoys), they eclectically mixed functions of managers and entrepreneurs. More specific 'organisers' – sent, for example, to supervise a delivery, assess risk, make a collection or 'fix' a problem - were often focused on one particular operational aspect, closely followed orders from the 'boss', and were more concerned about external relations and arrangements than with internal labour organisation. These people, although highly trusted by the cocaine entrepreneur, did not behave so much as white-collar 'company men' or 'vice-presidents' but often identified with many subordinates in their expectations of 'taking over', 'changing *patrón'* or 'quitting the job' altogether. Hierarchies were understood more in terms of authority and leadership than as compartmentalised, vertical bodies of delegation and control. 'Superiors' and chiefs were often respected for past events or deeds, rather than for present positions and current developments. Moreover, some people suggested the existence of more horizontal relations - in the style of *project crimes* or *crimes in association* (McIntosh 1975) - which involved mutuality beyond the business or labour relation. Miguel:

"It is not just pure business and cold contracts. Within the group you discuss your personal life, your problems with others or with women, you have fun together."

He even alternated between performing as a supervisor (*baby sitter*) and a worker (*mula*). There were also cases in which 'outsiders' like overseas partners, who for example recruited and dealt with employees, took managerial functions. Sometimes I noticed that tasks and arrangements were simply abandoned to the initiative of those hired to execute them, and
that 'bosses' did not have the will or the power to supervise people while the task was being carried out.

Finally, some cocaine entrepreneurs suggested that 'managers' are important but also dangerous, since they know many things that could easily be used against them. Mary McIntosh (1975) made the point in her classic work *The Organization of Crime*:

"In fact it is not easy to distinguish control over subordinates from control over rivals. A subordinate may at any point cut loose and become a rival; a rival may become a boss, or a subordinate." (McIntosh 1975: 54)

The use of relatives is only a partial solution: pressures to also be 'in charge' are greater amongst close relations, whom incidentally may not always have the organisational skills required to manage people.

**Unskilled part-time employees**

Unskilled irregulars, people who would perform multiple tasks with different levels of complexity, formed a final and extremely important group of employees. These employees showed high degrees of job dissatisfaction and had no prospect of promotion. For some, the job meant an extra-income next to other legal or illegal occupations. For others, it was a 'last remedy' solution to tackle economic hardship, desperate conjunctures, or no other perspectives. For others still, it was the dream of becoming a *traqueto* some day.

The group included, as described in former chapters, people performing as 'body packers' or small air couriers, local chauffeurs, divers, other unloaders, load keepers, informal bodyguards, internal couriers, cash remitters and smugglers, flat hosts, helpers and peddlers.

They had no job security. As a protection *buffer* to the business, they were placed in the 'front line', and easily replaced when targeted by drug enforcement agencies. Continual replacement not only restricted the flux of sensible information - weakening their bargain position - but also kept labour costs lower than in cases when stronger loyalties were constructed. I found many people 'waiting' to be called by a *traqueto*. Others had done some job for the boss, and were put 'on hold' until the next operation, a process that could take months.

Many of them rotated through different tasks in one or several operations. They had a name for those unskilled helpers doing 'a little bit of everything': *toderos*. They enjoyed the lowest occupational prestige.

These workers were recruited from several networks, but preferably not from established criminal labour markets: relatives of cocaine entrepreneurs, potential, illegal or established migrants, or local drug dealers. In this way, they tended to belong to external labour markets (Tilly and Tilly 1995: 287), evidenced by the lack of career advancement and in many cases criminal records.

While only some of these employees received a salary on a regular or irregular basis, the large majority were given some sort of flexible personal payment for each task performed. Load keepers, for example, were paid by the day. International unskilled couriers were unevenly paid a fixed amount or per kilo transported according to their experience and the financial resources of the exporter. This meant sums of between US$ 1,000 and US$ 5,000. Internal couriers and cash remitters or smugglers were paid a percentage of the amounts handled. Finally, helpers of wholesale distributors were given a couple of kilos of cocaine and the instruction that they could keep any difference above certain price. Many of these 'salespersons on commission' belonged, in my view, to this type of unskilled, interchangeable labour force.
8.3.3. Post-Fordist arrangements

For the past 20 years, the Fordist organisation of capitalist production experienced a serious crisis that resulted in significant change. While the causes, the extent and the prospects of this transformation remain a matter of debate, little disagreement exists about the main characteristics of so-called 'post-Fordist' conditions of accumulation. Some of the key characteristics of post-Fordism are summarised in Table X. Hirsch (1993) argues that post-Fordist firms are

"...increasingly conceived as a "bundle of contracts", none of which requires elaborate headquarters, overhead, staff, hierarchy, slack, or much in the way of organisational memory. These organisational attributes are seen as irrelevant, if not unnecessary and wasteful. Managers are conceived of as interchangeable; specialized skills, if not available in house, can be purchased outside at market prices..." (Hirsch 1993: 148).

The way in which Colombian traquetos organise themselves to deal cocaine, from export to wholesale distribution, perhaps represents one of the finest examples of such a firm. In this way, my findings differ from those of Ruggiero (1995), who conducted research on drug economies in Italy and Britain. He found that their labour markets reproduced the Fordist model, in which 'assembly-line delinquents' had clearly divided roles and tasks, within a vertically organised industry. However, he recognises that the overwhelming preponderance of flexible work constitutes an anomaly in his hypothesis, justified by the 'competitive' rather than 'monopolistic' nature of the drug economy. However, he does not explain why such a dynamic business should follow an opposite trend - i.e. Fordist - to other legal markets of the same kind in terms of business organisation and labour relations. In Table X, I illustrate how most of the characteristics of the cocaine business parallel more general trends of post-Fordist or flexible accumulation.

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7 The Fordist system basically implied, in the realm of production and labour processes, the following features: mass production and consumption of uniform and standardised goods; vertical integration; displacement of knowledge from labour to managerial bodies; disciplining of labour force; 'Taylorist' segmentation of tasks performed by single workers in a repetitive and alienating way; job specialisation; payment by rate; no or little 'on the job training and learning' and functional as well as spatial division of labour. For an extensive analysis on capital and labour organisation under Fordism, see: Braverman (1974) and Harvey (1989).

8 See Amin (1994); Harvey (1989); Lash and Urry (1987); Jessop et al. (eds) (1991); Wood (ed.) (1989) and Hirsch (1993). It is beyond the scope of this research to thoroughly analyse the nature and implications of post Fordism. In addition, I do not intend to compare businesses at an empirical level. I regard this theoretical exercise, very much inspired by Ruggiero (1995), as a conclusive hypothesis worthwhile exploring in further research.
Table X. Post-Fordism and Cocaine Business Compared

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Post-Fordism</th>
<th>Cocaine Business</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise</td>
<td>Decline of hierarchical management and corporate structure.</td>
<td>No 'branches'. Small firms with arms-length transactions. Flexible 'cocaine' brokers.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Technological innovation.</td>
<td>New smuggling and packing methods. New communication technology.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>No stocks.</td>
<td>No cocaine stocks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economy of scope in a global market. Flexible and small batch production and distribution.</td>
<td>No 'pipe-lines' but specific operations. European market as an unity.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dual segmentation towards professionalisation and de-skilling.</td>
<td>Criminal lawyers, legal businessmen, professional smugglers and unloaders VS mulas, boleros, toderos, encaletadores and helpers.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>More horizontal labour organisation.</td>
<td>Despite clear patrones (bosses) and separation of planning and execution: weak managerial structures, many project crimes, little supervision, vertical clashes, workers become bosses.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Worker's co-responsibility.</td>
<td>Workers take more risks and are expected to solve problems. Little information exchange.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Quasi-) vertical integration through increased sub-contracting and outsourcing.</td>
<td>Many skilled tasks sub-contracted by traquetos: transport, unloading, legal defence and cover, violence, and so on.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Decline of blue collar working class.</td>
<td>No stable employees, no bureaucracy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elimination of job demarcation. Multiple and rotating tasks.</td>
<td>Toderos. Entrepreneurs also 'hands on'. Polyvalent multi-skilled promoted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Revival of domestic and family labour systems.</td>
<td>Kinship and ethnic bonds important, but no 'family business'.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal payment (bonus, flexi-wage, on commission).</td>
<td>Conditional payment if success. Kg sales on commission. Courier's wages very flexible. Gifts when 'crowning'.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>On the job learning and training.</td>
<td>Many people with no 'criminal record'. Improvisation and imitation.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
The illegal nature of the cocaine business introduces even more dynamism to all the post-Fordist trends described. No taxes, large profits, no labour regulations and unions, no training costs, not even a company building: the ultimate utopia of those advocators of market flexibility. Undeniably, the lack of stable employees, the massive use of sub-contracting or the reliance on brokers are also risk minimising strategies to neutralise repression efforts. Illegality increases the variables that jeopardise the chances of two actors to engaging in the same business or labour relation for a second time. A provisional list of these variables include:

a) Changes in volumes and prices handled; marketing routes; smuggling methods; legal business around the cocaine trade and production or consumption levels.
b) Actor A or B dies; has to 'move'; goes to prison; goes bankrupt; changes expectations, interests, ambitions or reputation.
c) Disagreement; 'dirty play' or dissatisfaction from the first transaction.
d) Police intervention in terms of mutual distrust and paranoia.
e) Police toleration and corruption in terms of new partners; possible alliances and better contacts.

While this 'wild' flexibility may threaten individual entrepreneurs - increasing transaction costs, expelling first-time losers from the game, and so on - it provides to the overall cocaine business with a superb incentive and a comparative advantage.

Although illegality shapes internal business and labour relations, these relations can also be traced in other highly competitive legal markets, which struggle to survive under post-Fordist conditions. These commonalities also make possible the symbiotic overlap between legal and illegal businesses and labour markets.

The impact of illegality upon internal relations can be better observed by focusing on particular resources deployed while doing business. Chapter IX will demonstrate the extent to which violence, secrecy and trust are three important paths for success and failure.