Traquetos: Colombians involved in the cocaine business in the Netherlands
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Chapter IX

The Ambiguity of Violence, Secrecy and Trust

“...The time is past for guns and killings and massacres. We have to be cunning like the business people, there’s more money in it and it’s better for our children and grandchildren.”

Mario Puzo, *The Godfather*

“The secret contains a tension that is dissolved in the moment of its revelation:”

George Simmel, *The Sociology of George Simmel*

When focusing upon the dynamics of the cocaine business, almost all observers have highlighted the central role of violence, secrecy and trust in the illegal enterprises or organisations involved (Arlacchi 1986; Catanzaro 1992; Gambetta 1988, 1996). In some cases, such as in secret societies or terrorist groups, many authors have stressed the symbolic nature of these aspects as rituals for internal cohesion, identity construction and social reproduction (Blok 1991a: 142; Blok 2000: 87). However, when focusing on drug entrepreneurs and organisations, a more instrumental approach has mainly prevailed in which violence, secrecy and trust are analysed as highly strategic resources subordinated to economic needs and considerations (Arlacchi 1986; Krauthausen and Sarmiento 1991; Thoumi 1995; Gambetta 1996). In following this path, I do not intend to underplay the strong symbolic dimension always attached to physical violence as a powerful language of honour and respect, reputation and status, identity and group solidarity, or masculine construction (Blok 1980; Blok 1991b). Neither do I want to deny the centrality of secrecy in forming the bonds and identities of secret societies (Simmel 1950).

However, cocaine entrepreneurs, for whatever reason they have to do so, are mainly interested in making money. Since their business is illegal, risk minimising strategies are crucial for maximising profits. They resort to violence in the absence of external regulating devices, they heavily rely on trust in the absence of written agreements, and they keep their activities secret to avoid detection. This seems reasonably and widely accepted.

Traquetos, as many other illegal entrepreneurs, are usually portrayed as extremely violent, highly secretive, and only willing to work with trusted 'equals'. Both in the existing literature and media accounts, these images are exploited for public entertainment and commercial success. State agencies and legal entrepreneurs are also ready to emphasise those elements to highlight a qualitative difference between gangsters, *mafiosi* or drug dealers on the one hand, and businessmen, bankers or policemen on the other.¹ Colombian drug entrepreneurs have a particular reputation for being violent and loyal. During my fieldwork, for example, the idea of a dangerous, inaccessible underworld was constantly reflected in the questions I received about my research from the surrounding scientific community. I was told to learn everything about doing ‘dangerous fieldwork’. Despite all of the stereotypes and warnings, I soon became amazed about the number of conflicts that did not lead to physical

¹ Zygmunt Bauman convincingly argues that ‘thanks to the state monopoly, coercion gets split into two sharply distinguished kinds, respectively characterized as legitimate and illegitimate, necessary and gratuitous, desirable and undesirable, useful and harmful. (...) One category of coercion is called ‘enforcement of law and order’, while the nasty word ‘violence’ is reserved only for the second. What the verbal distinction hides, though, is that the condemned ‘violence’ is also about certain ordering, certain laws to be enforced – only those are not the order and the laws which the makers of the distinction had in mind.” (Bauman 1995: 141).
violence and the amount of information that was disclosed to immigrants not involved in the cocaine business. As explained in the introduction, it was a matter of time, common background but especially common sense to become trusted by informants. Dominant perceptions, judgements, images and expectations from outsiders - including those of fellow Colombian immigrants - often clashed with the social reality of drug dealing and dealers, which was more boring, consensual and public than imagined.

However, *traquetos* themselves were often prompted to perform in accordance with the expectations of outsiders and other business insiders. They built violent reputations even against their will, they made promises that were not going to be kept, and they kept secrets that were already known. Next to the real use of violence, secrecy and trust, *traquetos* and their employees often 'acted out' these resources strategically as a form of manipulation and as a way to construct their social and ethnic identities (Siegel and Bovenkerk 2000).

Thus, far from constituting natural, taken for granted features around illegal drug dealing, *traquetos* have tried to carefully administrate these three social resources by using them, avoiding them or acting them out. The result is a complex, almost paradoxical situation in which violence, secrecy and trust are used in ambiguous ways, forming at the same time essential tools and serious obstacles for business success. In the following pages, I will try to illustrate some of this ambiguity.

9.1. Violence

9.1.1. Paradoxical violence

Illegality turns real or potential violence into a resource with several purposes (Thoumi 1995: 134). Firstly, it is used as a threat to enforce deals or as a conflict resolution system when business deals go wrong. From preventing being cheated to punishing misbehaviour or failure, from 'settling scores' to getting rid of creditors, cocaine entrepreneurs have very often resorted to threats or assassinations, both toward business partners and their own personnel. Secondly, violence can be used as a threat against competitors to prevent them from intruding in one's market (Arlacchi 1986: 195) or from reporting business activities to the authorities. Good examples of this are the Miami 'cocaine wars' (1979-1982) or the many attacks and assassinations involving Medellín and Cali traffickers. Thirdly, violence protects the illegally obtained property or profits from theft and robbery, both from insiders and outsiders. Finally, it can be used against law enforcers to force policy changes or to avoid capture or seizures. Over the last 20 years, large and small cocaine entrepreneurs have killed politicians, judges and thousands of policemen in Colombia.

Violence has indeed a permanent latent presence in the cocaine business. In contrast with more political organisations - for example, *mafia* groups, guerrilla or paramilitary organisations, and so forth - where it appears as a commodity in itself, for cocaine entrepreneurs violence is one of the resources available.²

² Following Blok (1974), Arlacchi (1986) explains that the traditional *mafioso* had no hesitation in violating the most deep-rooted cultural and ethical norms (1986: 14-15). The *mafioso* resorted to physical force in his struggle for supremacy, prestige and honour, and even his legitimate power as protector or mediator was ultimately based on the possibility of successfully administrating, exercising or neutralising violence. The modern *mafioso*-entrepreneur, on the contrary, enjoys a competitive advantage rooted in market forces, and in the ability to combine capital, violence and corruption (1986: 194). A similar dichotomy between power and enterprise syndicates is made by Catanzaro (1994). While the former are specialised in violent social regulation, the latter seek to develop skills and alliances for their illegal activities.
However, as a 'meaningful' (Blok 1991b) and 'instrumental' means of preventing or solving conflicts, even within the cocaine business, violence seems to be used as a last resort (Krauthausen and Sarmiento 1991: 195).

The nature of the cocaine business places structural limitations to the excessive use of violence. In fact, cocaine transactions are based on agreed exchange rather than on violent extraction, as it is the case in parasitic activities. An ideal deal does not or should not have to include physical violence. Moreover, an overemphasis on market protection and monopolistic tendencies à la Arlacchi ignores that even the people involved recognise the competitive nature of the drug business and act accordingly. I witnessed, for example, how several small Colombian groups peacefully coexisted in the same city - at export level in Cali or at wholesale level in Amsterdam. They often ignored each other or regarded it contra-productive to 'fight' the competition.

More important than the exercise of violence is the 'threat' of violence. A violent reputation - i.e. the conviction that somebody is ready to use violence if necessary - can indeed be enough in many cases to neutralise retaliation or 'dirty play' and push forward a deal. Miguel recalls from a Dutch prison:

"A guy from our group thought that I had something with his girlfriend, which wasn't true. He said he was going to kill me, but the patron told him that he would kill him, his children and the next 5 generations. The day after the guy apologised."

Some Colombian traquetos in the Netherlands cultivated a violent reputation by doing nothing more than exploiting a fama (fame) or even a surname. One informant was called Escobar, a very common name in Colombia, and he kept telling that he was related to Don Pablo when he discovered that the story impressed people. Another man invented the story that he had been a Pablo Escobar's bodyguard.

Too much violence can discourage potential business partners to deal with a reputed violent entrepreneur. The case of Griselda Blanco, 'The Black Widow', is well known. A leading figure in the Miami cocaine wars, her cruelty endowed her with too many enemies. In the same fashion, Tano explains:

"...Tico was the guy for the job. Not like Paisita who is impulsive and you never know. Tico is perfect; he remains cool no matter what. He looks dangerous and you should have seen these Suris looking at him, they were scared. With Tico is much better, Paisita caused lots of problems."

Excessive violence, as I will show later, can also attract the attention of authorities or can provoke an escalation that could damage market performance.

Entrepreneurs themselves use several other mechanisms to prevent or avoid the use of violence. Even when trust has failed there is still a gap before actual violence. For example, in cases of business failure or rip-off, entrepreneurs would first try to get 'civil' compensation: money or a favour in return. In other cases, they would just forget about it or they would be satisfied with an explanation. In fact, the number of conflicts and problems faced by entrepreneurs that are solved in a non-violent way is amazing. Again Miguel, in a joking mood:

"I had to stop in Venezuela for a couple of days, just two days, but I stayed for a month 'cause I met a beauty. Can you imagine? Yes, you pay with life if you rip-off the patron. He was really worried, so he sent two men after me. They found me, but when I showed them that the merchandise was with me and it was all right, nothing happened. They just told me to move my ass..."
Fear also neutralises violence. So does the threat of being denounced to the police. The frequent use of relatives and old friends also places limitations on the use of violence, turning, for example, a killing into a denunciation. Almost every cocaine entrepreneur in Colombia knows that it is better to bribe a policeman or a politician than to kill him. They have killed a lot, but those using less violence against the state had more chances to survive or even keep in business.

Finally, violence affects their relation with civil society. Again, too much violence would deny them both the acceptance from the traditional elite and the tolerance from civil society that is essential for survival.

The clear success of valluno cocaine entrepreneurs after the Medellín group started to collapse in 1991 was less the effect of the so called 'cartel wars' of 1990, than of the fact that they were, at the same time, investing in a legal business empire, cultivating political influence, and, more importantly, adjusting and improving their business methods: reducing risk, achieving economies of scale, just-in-time supply, developing new products - heroin - and markets - Europe and Japan -, and introducing new technologies.

9.1.2. Colombian violence in the Netherlands

The initial quotation from The Godfather, to some extent a cliché in the mouth of Don Corleone and by no means a general trend in late modernity, expresses, however, the paradox of violence for illegal businessmen. This paradox has been particularly evident in the Netherlands for Colombian traquetos: they have had to silence their guns, to restrict settling scores, to rely on reputations, in sum, to behave as civilised people in a pacified country.

After briefly presenting some cases of physical violence around the cocaine circuit in the Netherlands, I will argue why they do not happen more frequently.

Dead bodies

The number of cocaine related homicides in the Netherlands involving Colombian victims or offenders is extremely small compared to the situation in Colombia. Many informants had friends or even partners killed there, and some experienced death threats, escaped from desperate situations or were 'sentenced' to death. Miguel told me in prison:

"The people who sent me will try to kill me. But I'm not going to live in fear. I have two chances: either I go to live in another Latin American country or I face them and tell them 'here I am, let's arrange things right now.' I think I'll do that."

While some people suggested that the situation in the Netherlands had deteriorated over the last 5 years, the number of dead Colombians from liquidations or rip-deals does not surpass one or two per year. Moreover, the cases do not receive much publicity, partly because the police and the Colombian community prefer to keep things quiet, partly because the victims involved are not powerful enough. Father Wim argued that:

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4 Massacres and guns were still big business in the year 2000, but are now privatised or recollectivised, dispersed, deregulated, neo-tribal, marketed in/by the media, do-it-yourself style, and consumed as shocking stimuli (Bauman 1995).
5 The Netherlands stands as the antithesis of Colombia regarding the state monopoly of physical violence. Following Elias (1982) one could deduce that Colombians tend to be violent in their own country, while they are forced to hand over or repress violence when they operate in more 'civilised', internally peaceful states-societies. However, this idea overlooks the dynamic interweave between state violence and 'drug violence' as well as other factors such as the nature of the Dutch drug market, the drug policy, the Colombian community, the level of corruption, and so forth.
"Colombian violence is entering the Netherlands slightly. This isn’t what it used to be. Before they were just settling scores, but today we go from one deadly rip-deal to the next."

Indeed, 1996 was a particular deadly year. In December, two young Colombians were found shot-dead in a flat in Amsterdam. They were both involved in cocaine import. The case shocked the community since one of them was a woman with children in Colombia. However, nobody wanted to talk. People distrusted the police and feared possible retaliation if they became involved. The Consular authorities wanted to do just the strictly necessary about the case. After some weeks with the unidentified bodies, Father Wim made a dramatic appeal to the community on a Sunday Mass:

"Let’s show to the Dutch police and the Colombian authorities that the people know more than they do! Please, if somebody know their real names and can identify them, I beg you to do it so we can send them to Colombia for burial."

After a month of silence their names were revealed and they could be cremated and sent to Colombia. Riverito knew the couple. He had met them while working in Amsterdam, but he would not say what happened to them. When he was detained, the police found a photograph in which they appeared together. They thought he was connected, but no evidence was found:

"They tried to incriminate me with those killings because that picture. Ridiculous."

Only one month before, another case had shocked the Colombian cocaine circuit in The Hague. Two Colombian men were found dead by a passer-by, tied inside the trunk of a car in a quiet street in The Hague. The bodies were bound with tape and had more than 30 stab wounds. ‘Rambo’, one of the victims, was a wholesaler well known in the street prostitution circuit. He was well-established, had double nationality, a car, and a good standard of living. His helper, a 24 years old Colombian, had just arrived two months before. An informant:

"He hung around the [prostitution] street. He was cooking arepas for the girls in a little kitchen. A man lent it to him for a month. When he left the street, nobody saw him again, not alive."

Many stories circulated about the case until suspects could be detained and convicted. The first version, reflected in the first police reports and propagated amongst Colombians, talked about the settlement of a score performed by Colombian sicarios sent by a man from Bogotá to whom the victims owed money. The sicarios would have entered and left the country unnoticed, so the case was covered by powerful images of professionalism, organised violence and powerlessness. A second more moderated version involved Yugoslav hired killers and 2 kg cocaine. However, things finally changed when the police detained three men accused of the killings. Two Dominicans and one Colombian - respectively 21, 25 and 24 years old - were charged and later convicted with sentences between 15 and 20 years. They killed the Colombians to steal them a little over 1 kg cocaine in a rip-deal.\(^6\) One of the Dominicans was also involved in armed robbery.

A third case was still fresh in the memory of some people. In 1993, two Colombians and one Antillean were selling cocaine to a Turkish wholesaler in The Hague. When the merchandise was being delivered, the Turkish man took a gun and killed the Dominican and one of the Colombians. The other Colombian jumped through a window and eventually told

\(^6\) See De Volkskrant, 29-03-97 and Haagsche Courant, 20-09-97.
everything to the police. Both Colombians were in fact well known in the local cocaine circuit.

Next to these and other cases, always involving rip-deals, Colombian men are occasionally involved in shootings or fights that bear no direct relation with a drug deal but ensue from personal conflicts, sentimental quarrels or alcohol abuse. They tend to happen at night around the most frequented salsa discos in major cities and usually involve non-Colombians as well. In one occasion, Paisita was beaten up by other three Colombians in El Llano Bar in The Hague. From the floor, he managed to hear one of them telling to the others 'no vayan a matarlo' (don't kill him). He left running and never came back to the place.

Sicarios

Some informants in the Netherlands had close experiences with sicarios (hired killers). While Miguel was working in a cocaine kitchen near Cali, he shared a house with two sicarios, both contracted by his patrón. He remembers:

"It was awful, we were having lunch or dinner and they would go on and on talking about the people they had to limpiar [lit. 'to clean', to kill]. They did it in a normal tone, making jokes, being funny, and openly enjoying truculent details while eating. But there was mutual respect. On those days I wore my gun 24 hours a day. I would not kill for money as they did, I would only kill someone who would harm me. For a while I was a personal bodyguard of the patrón, but I did not like the job."

A desperate Colombian woman explained that she had a teenage son. She had long been divorced from the father of the child, a Colombia sicario who lived in Colombia. However, he kept phoning to his son in the Netherlands to tell him that if he was to become a 'real man', a 'tough guy', he had to be able to kill and he could start by 'cleaning' a desechable (disposable), for example, a drunken beggar or a junkie. Even if I find the story hard to believe, the violence of such representation speaks for itself.

In the European context, the recruitment of sicarios from Colombia has been restricted to dealing with powerful targets or groups. In September 1994, a Galician from the clan de los Charlines was killed by Colombian sicarios after having testified against his local associates in a case involving the import of 1 ton of cocaine.7

However 'present' the sicario is in Colombian experiences and imagination, everybody agreed that it is difficult, expensive and dangerous to import sicarios to the Netherlands. Despite a couple of cases during the 1980s in which Colombian sicarios were hired by local groups (Bovenkerk 1995b), collected evidence indicates that Colombians use local individuals to settle scores with non Colombians.

Many 'violent' people refrained from violence. I found ex-bodyguards dealing drugs, or even score settlers just keeping an eye on their bosses, but as Emilio explained:

"To kill somebody here, you need protection, you need to be able to guardarte [to hide, to conceal yourself]. I am not talking about a rip-deal or a sudden reaction. I mean a planned assassination. No man, it is too risky, too risky... You hear many threats and also some 'pressure', and they are enough. No, everybody has relatives there. They settle their scores in Colombia..."

Drug dealers cannot move with bodyguards unnoticed or tolerated. Even those with clear instructions refused to play the sicario for one reason or another. Miguel:

M: "My instructions were to kill the courier if he stole the merchandise. But everything went fine."

7 El País, 29-05-95.
DZ: "You told me you would not kill for money. Would you have done it?"
M: "I don't know. I am not a sicario. May be not. But then I would have been in trouble myself. I would have followed the guy, get the thing back, and scare him really bad so he learned the lesson."

Others shifted their ethical boundaries. Joel, for example, claimed to be rather peaceful, and many people around confirmed the fact. However, once his nephew in Colombia misbehaved during a particular operation, causing Joel considerable financial damage. He then hired two sicarios to punish him. They kidnapped him, and phoned Joel to ask when would they 'break' him. He told them that they had got it wrong, that he did not want a dead body. He just wanted to have him incarcerated for a couple of days. In the Netherlands, Joel did not carry any weapon and only relied on other people for the actual threat of violence. He also denied killing or ever having ordered a killing.

**Kidnapping**

As a mean to either pressure or punish others, some Colombians resorted to unsophisticated forms of kidnapping. These actions were usually poorly planned and even more badly executed, nothing resembling the accounts of Garcia Marquez (1996) on the kidnapping industry in Colombia.

In 1997, Riverito, William and Charly were detained in an attic in Amsterdam. The police trapped them with no guns (only William carried a knife) and no cocaine. They only had telephone taps and the key declaration of somebody who had been supposedly kidnapped by the Colombians. Riverito:

"I told you we were robbed. They just took the kilo with pointing guns. We were desperate, we went back home and we took the Aruban guy with us. You see, he knew these people; we just wanted either the thing back or the money. I assure you we only wanted him to help us. But we did not touch him; he was not handcuffed or anything. They were even playing Nintendo with William. He even went out to phone somebody, for sure his uncle, because he is a cop. Since that moment we were lapped and observed and later of course detained."

The victim, however, convincingly told the Court that he had been handcuffed and threatened during those two days. Riverito received 4 years, 2 of which for kidnapping.

"The police were brutal. They took Charly and they broke his arm, so badly he had to go through rehabilitation therapy. But they scared him and he confessed. I don't blame him. He had too much pressure. But, you see, he was not a bodyguard of Pablo Escobar as he claimed (laughs) (...) it was unfair, that is why we appealed. They gave me two years for the kilo when the rule is only one. Two years more for kidnapping. But first, my lawyer says that the normal would have been 18 months, and, second, it was all a fucking trap. The doctors did not find any sign of violence. It was purely his word. I would have accepted two years, but four is too much."

Indeed, Riverito received a relatively high sentence compared to similar cases. In prison he met another Colombian who received 30 months. He had the same charges, but the victim had cigarette burns on his arms.

In a slightly similar case in 1996, the 15 year old brother of two cocaine dealers was kidnapped from his parent's house in Den Bosch. He was held for some days in order to force his brothers to return 5 kg of cocaine that they had presumably stolen. When it was clear to the perpetrators that the kidnapping was not going to be successful, they decided to release the teenager instead of harming him, despite earlier threats to do so. The police found one kilo
and later arrested three people. A Colombian who was not detained had to disappear for a while after telling some people that he had been involved in the case.

In a third case in 1996, Colombian exporters hired a couple of Yugoslavs to kidnap a close associate of a Dutch buyer (main importer). They wanted to force the Dutchman to pay for the 70 kg that he had bought from them and sold on to an Italian group that ‘delayed’ payment. The kidnapping was ‘monitored’ by the police and finally forced a new deal. After the event, and despite the fact that no Colombian could be captured, the Dutch police (IRT) decided to intervene in order to preclude further violence.

All cases known involved victims closely related with the business, and were not punitive but were intended to elicit payment.

*Going Dutch: low profiles and quiet markets*

The actual use of physical violence in the Colombian cocaine circuit was, in the Dutch context, restricted to very specific cases. Dealers tended to keep low profiles, and were rather negative about the use of violence. Most kidnappings and killings were connected with rip-deals and not used as punishments or score settles: violence was regarded as a costly social resource.

Most people did not carry fire-arms. Moreover, they also regarded them as dangerous. Knives were more common, but only to be shown in extreme cases. Some salsa discotheques tolerated the entrance of weapons, but even in cases of personal fights people tried to calm things down. On two occasions I witnessed how people shouted ‘no guns, no guns’ when a fight broke out between visitors who were totally drunk.

Again and again, people pointed out that ‘threats are enough’ and only exploited the Colombian reputation for violence. Powerful *traquetos* seemed to measure more the costs attached to violence, balancing invulnerability, negative costs and symbolic benefits.

Several factors, some not independent from each other, can be identified for the fact that Colombians have tended to keep cool while dealing cocaine in the Netherlands.

Firstly, the Colombian community is too small and unorganised to successfully conceal the use of violence. Colombian immigrants are neither intimidated nor protected by drug dealers, so they are also not forced to conceal their actions. In fact, it seems to me that the fragile community ‘tolerates’ drug dealers as long as they do not engage in internal violence. The high number of women and mixed couples almost certainly has an impact on keeping the resort to violence restricted.

A second factor involves the Dutch social environment. The Netherlands has, certainly in comparison with Colombia, low crime and impunity rates regarding violent crimes. This monopolisation of violence is indeed acknowledged by *traquetos*, who feel more ‘exposed’ and recognise the risk of ‘damaging the market’. Many are aware that stupid fights can invite police attention, so they try to keep out of trouble.

A further element that must be taken into account is the cocaine market dynamic at the level in which Colombians are involved. The market in the Netherlands has remained rather stable, with peaceful competition amongst different groups with no monopolist claims. Furthermore, there has been no interest or power amongst Colombian groups (most of them from the Cauca Valley area) to fight internal wars in the Netherlands. Even those who had clashes in Colombia preferred to ignore each other while operating in the Netherlands. In this sense, the close and constant contact with Colombia constituted an outlet rather a violence source, allowing for many conflicts to be diverted to Colombia.

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8 *De Volkskrant*, 20-08-96.
9 *De Volkskrant*, 31-01-97.
Finally, low levels of violence are also related, paradoxically, to the lack of an American or Colombian model of internal war on drugs. *Traquetos* in the Netherlands do not have to react against military operations, para-legal violence or summarial executions, actions that would logically expand the number of dead bodies on all fronts. Colombian *traquetos* seem to get the implicit message from Dutch authorities: 'we tolerate you as long as you keep quiet and you don’t get rich here'. It can also be argued that state corruption - especially police and customs corruption - and a tied link with local legal arrangements - transport companies, import businesses, banks and so forth - further helps to discourage the use of violence.

9.2. Secrecy

9.2.1. The public nature of *traquito’s* secrets

It is not difficult to imagine the centrality of secrecy for cocaine entrepreneurs. They have to minimise risks, avoid detection and neutralise competition. Secret measures or practices can be seen at any level: production, smuggling, and so forth. The spread of mobile telephones and even the use of secret words or codes show that secrecy is essential to close deals or pass information. Discretion is highly valued by business partners or employers, and therefore the people who 'keep their mouth shut' also. They cover up their activities, and sometimes they even hide them from family and friends. Arlacchi claims that:

"A very high degree of secrecy must also be established... Operational secrecy is a crucial element in drug-trafficking." (1986: 196-197)

He also suggests that secrecy is guaranteed by 'common membership to the same culture, the same ethnic and regional community' (1986: 198), in which a 'criminal elite' is formed by members of particular ethnic minorities. This emphasis on secrecy in connection with 'ethnic organised crime' is so popular and accepted that, during my fieldwork, almost every second question I received on my research was how did I manage to get access to my informants.  

For cocaine entrepreneurs, secrecy is a social resource, an adaptive device to conceal information, activities and relationships to protect a very profitable business. While even the very existence of the group can be kept secret from some outsiders, cocaine enterprises cannot be considered secret societies but open associations that keep some operational matters secret. As explained in chapter VIII, their flexible arrangements disable any sort of permanent 'secret membership'. They do not move with some secret set of rules, but with very pragmatic and changing measures, which can include secret procedures. *Traquetos* do not rely on secrecy to maintain an exclusive monopoly on any sort of knowledge, idea, right or leadership.

Naturally, as with any other enterprise that engages in economic competition, a possessed knowledge about contacts, partners, clients, markets and so forth, is carefully protected to gain a power advantage over competitors. This sort of secrecy can be internal and external, and does not differ much from that of craft organisations, guilds or modern corporations. However, cocaine entrepreneurs cannot rely on bureaucratised or standardised

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10 The first question always referred to violence: is it not dangerous?
11 Secret societies are groups whose continued existence relies totally on the continuous concealment of ideas, objects, activities, plans, objectives and membership from outsiders with a high degree of internal secrecy as well (Tefft 1980: 324). Typical examples are religious or political groups such as cults, Mafia-type organisations, revolutionary factions or community groups for ritual socialisation and social mobility (see Simmel 1950; Tefft 1980 and Blok 1991a).
marketing methods as in legal business.\textsuperscript{12} For a single transaction, there are often many contacts made, a good number of meetings, and very long discussions about small operational details (Krauthausen and Sarmiento 1991: 196). This marks a first limit to secrecy: it is not surprising that one of the most successful police methods against cocaine entrepreneurs has been telephone tapping.

On the other hand, secrecy is also directed at concealing the illegal business from social censure and legal punishment. However, more importantly, to conceal information about potential harmful others - thus more powerful - who can take action if that piece of information is disclosed. Chino, for example, occasionally expressed concern about the publication of the material, but not so much for what I could say about him. He was only afraid of one traqueteo in particular:

“If he recognises me and discovers that it was me who told you that, I could be in trouble.”

Secrecy thus seems to arise more from conflict of interests - between insiders and outsiders, but especially between insiders - than from mutual self-interest. In the drug business, secrets are kept not so much for the sake of loyalty but basically due to fear and self-interest. Here lies a second fragile side of secrecy: since the traqueteo’s loyalty to other groups or individuals (relatives, friends, other immigrants, or, why not, researchers), often supersedes responsibility to their employers and employees, they tend to disclose secrets as soon as they do not feel threatened or they are offered a better deal.

This is why successful operations do not seem to rely that much on keeping shared information secret. To know and exchange the strictly necessary information is often the case along the different levels of a cocaine operation. In this way, secrecy manifests itself as social fragmentation rather than as a bounding or integrative device. Many employees ignore the essential whereabouts of their employers. By keeping employees misinformed - a rule, for example, with drug smugglers - the employer is protected from both capture and betrayal.

In fact, cocaine entrepreneurs seem to dislike secrecy all together. As Ernesto, who was involved in the cocaine business in Cali for a while, explains:

“...It is a hard life, all the time hiding from police or people who want to kill you. I used to walk all the time looking everywhere. I can range 180 degrees without moving my eyes. I know people like me who left the business because they were just very tired...”

Secrecy also operates as an obstacle in two different ways. In the first place, regarding the business itself. After all, they have a merchandise to sell, and in one way or another they have to advertise it: cocaine entrepreneurs need to let potential partners know that they have a good quality product, that they manage a good price, and that they are able to deliver it. As in any legal business, a good public reputation counts. Naturally, they will try to limit the number of buyers for security reasons,\textsuperscript{13} but with too much secrecy they would simply be unable to operate.

Secondly, secrecy creates a clear problem for their social expectations and reconversion strategies. Illegal entrepreneurs want to be recognised as successful

\textsuperscript{12} Allowing for quite impersonal and standardised exchanges, and displacing secrecy to the powerful realm of institutional frames. “A great deal of corporation secrecy is maintained not by conscious design but by the mere fact that the corporation is so complex and has so many diverse operations that even the most persistent outsider finds it hard to learn much about the financial and other economic affairs of the business bureaucracy.” (Tefft 1980: 202). These businesses are also better prepared to conceal ‘dirty secrets’ about illegal activities such as price fixing, tax fraud or money laundering.

\textsuperscript{13} For exporters and wholesale distributors, the ideal would be to sell large quantities to very few people, maybe two or three. However, this is sometimes difficult for smaller entrepreneurs. For retail dealers, secrecy is even a bigger problem, since they have to compete much more for new and better customers.
entrepreneurs and be accepted as such. They have invested a lot of money and effort to become 'public' figures, in many cases without really hiding their obvious source of income.

The more powerful they are, the more open and public they become. Even Arlacchi acknowledges that:

"The mafia entrepreneur is a talker, giving regular interviews in which he makes himself out to be a persecuted benefactor. (...) He has got beyond the marked distrust that the old-style capo felt towards newspapers, journalists and mass communications media" (1986: 118).

They use - and indeed like - to show up in well-known restaurants, bars or discotheques. It is not rare that they even talk openly about business in these places. For an outsider, it takes only a matter of minutes to recognise them. People will not know about their operations, but will usually be able to point out 'who is who'. In small towns, everybody knows the big shots' even by name. In the Netherlands, local dealers working for different traquetos immediately knew about busted operations and captured people.

For many business actors, their daily activities are a subject of conversation with friends or close people not involved. Feelings of pride, compassion, regret, hate, fear or misery come up frequently with the job and are often a trigger to talk with outsiders. It is not rare to find people that behind a paranoid discourse on secrecy, in fact talk and share openly their experiences within the cocaine business. Alcohol drinking, and the particular pattern of recreational activities and consumption codes that surround the illegal business, contribute to the disclosure of sensitive information and codes. As explained by Adler and Adler (1980: 459), unless someone shares the knowledge of his activities with others, there is no way he can get the respect and admiration that he has earned and desires so intensely.

As mentioned earlier, I was not only surprised about the amount of information outsiders knew, but also about how much traquetos and their employees openly talked and showed me around. Despite some details always remained secret, especially regarding violent acts and specific whereabouts, many things - including incidental access to a 100 kg cocaine load - were indeed open once acceptable levels of trust were built. Amongst Colombian immigrants, the topic of drugs was present at certain stage of any conversation.

In their pioneering work, Adler and Adler (1980) analysed what they called the 'irony of secrecy' in the drug world. Drug dealers, they found in their research, are torn between conflicting forces that prompt them to both keep and tell their secrets: an erratic movement between purposive and impulsive behaviour, between rational strategies and hedonistic lifestyles. However, I am not convinced that this 'irony of secrecy', also visible amongst Colombian traquetos, expresses a tension between rationality and irrationality. This juxtaposition seems to be grounded in their romantic believe that drug dealing is above all - which maybe was the case during the 1970s in California - an expressive and hedonistic activity opposed to the logical and mundane routinely world of work and business. For Colombian traquetos, I argue here, there are enough rational motives to disclose secrets as there are to keep them.

9.2.2. Public and secret places

A small number of top cocaine entrepreneurs try to avoid public places that they consider to be dangerous. They rarely go to church; they do not hang around prostitutes' windows, and only frequent well-known Salsa discotheques occasionally. They often prefer to go to typical

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14 See section 1.2.4. for fieldwork limitations.
15 Some of these people are what I refer in chapters V and VI as envoys and discreet professionals.
Dutch bars, take-away stores of various kinds, some coffee-shops, or Spanish and Italian restaurants. They avoid large groups and being in public with prostitutes. Some even choose Dutch girlfriends, and try to follow a ‘normal’ life. Their strategy is to pass unnoticed, not to remain within secret circles. In fact, traquetos know that there is nothing secret about Latino ‘underworld circles’.

Other - usually smaller - drug entrepreneurs and employees behave in a completely different fashion. They could not care less about hanging around in 'hot' scenes. They go to church and the Salsa discotheques in vogue, they walk around the prostitution areas, and they openly advertise their involvement in the illegal business in many ways: they wear expensive clothes, spend lots of money when people are around, talk about the business on ordinary telephones, and even play loud music until late in the places they live, often shared with other Colombians or with passing-by visitors. For them, only operational details are a matter of secrecy.

For both groups, going to the telephone centres to phone abroad means a certain degree of disclosure and publicity. These places are indeed public, anything but discreet, with many people gathering by chance or appointment. Even big traquetos have to go there, since talking to Colombia for instructions or information exchange is such a very delicate matter that it is dangerous to delegate. There, secrecy is taken to its ultimate boundaries. Apart from the fact that any person present can hear everything that is being said in the improvised cabins, some people even stay to comment with competitors about prices, the market situation, or to talk about a mutual friend in prison. The telephone centres and the bars around are also used to discuss operational matters or recruit people for particular jobs.

These places are maybe the best example of the structural limits of secrecy for Colombian traffickers.

9.2.3. Nicknames

Joel was rarely addressed by his real name. He was named 'The Uncle', 'uncle J' or 'Charly' by different people around, while in Chicago he used other names still. This was not only the result of a planned strategy on his part to disguise his real identity. Sometimes he liked to use his real name: once he even left it recorded in a message on my answering machine.

Nicknames were ambiguously used and reflected people's intentions to keep distant, feel close or be allusive and parodie (Blok and Buckser 1996). Tico, for example, started to call him 'uncle' being his real nephew. He only became 'The Uncle' when others like Tano or Chino adopted the nickname, showing on the one hand respect but on the other undermining his authority: in hierarchical terms, 'uncles' are not particularly well placed.

The constant flux of names and nicknames amongst traquetos, I believe, is only partially related to the secretive character of their activities. It primarily reflects the fluid and ephemeral nature of a business in which very personal relations are paramount, several levels of interaction often mix (for instance including relatives, friends and strangers in a single transaction), and identities and reputations are constantly negotiated and at stake. I seldom found people that could keep a strict separation between names, aliases and nicknames. Some nicknames referred to kinship relations (the nephew, the uncle), while others were simply old nicknames from childhood. Others made reference to a violent reputation (the scorpion, the black widow, the knife), a physical attribute (the fat, the coca queen, the blond), an occupation (the student, the doctor, the engineer), a skill (the rocket, the chess player) or an origin (the paisa, the Mexican).
9.2.4. Counterfeit secrecy

On many occasions, people manipulated secrecy for various purposes. A first form of manipulation involved exaggeration or paranoid attitudes. Some people in the business who tended to see 'secret conspiracies' against them - from enemies, competitors, business partners or the police - developed paranoid discourses about secrecy with no real commitment to conceal information. In three different cases, informants would stress in the beginning that 'you do not talk about it' or 'you have to be very careful', but neither they put these ideas in practice nor they could stop talking once they got into the conversation. Others, especially some Colombian immigrants with no relation to the cocaine business, just liked to 'lock' traquetos in the realm of underworld secrecy, claiming, for example, that drug organisations were extremely closed. Later in the conversations, however, they would show more knowledge about them than originally indicated. Both forms of self-deception demonstrate how the notion of secrecy can be used to either reinforce a traquito identity as well as to establish social boundaries.

A second and very common form of manipulation involved a game of pretence. Many people around drug dealers were aware of their secrets but pretended they did not know them either to escape stigmatisation, to protect the secret holders, or to preserve the relationship with them. I found cases in which relatives in Colombia were told stories about 'being on a business trip'. Even in cases of imprisonment, I met people who concealed the fact to their families for years. In Colombia, I met a woman who 'thought' her daughter was studying in the States. She was instead facing a 12 year sentence in a Federal prison. Sometimes, friends and acquaintances also faked ignorance or indifference to maintain the amicable relation. A general attitude of distrust amongst Colombians in the Netherlands was accompanied by one of turning a 'blind eye'.

9.3. Trust

Trust refers to a particular level of the subjective probability with which an agent assesses that another agent or group of agents will perform a particular action, both before he can monitor such action and in a context in which it affects his own action (Gambetta 1990: 217). As a risk minimising strategy, trust is a very important feature for successful business performance. This seems to be true for any sort of transaction involving risks, whether it is legal or illegal. However, the huge profit margins and the absence of a formal juridical apparatus to order and regulate transactions, contribute to an increase in the chances of 'dirty play'. The particular combination of constraint (illegality, few choices), risk (physical danger) and interest (huge profits) seems to call for trust as a social device. Mutual trust, Arlacchi argues, is 'far more necessary among criminals than among businessmen' (Arlacchi 1986: 198). Agreements have a great chance of being transgressed or misinterpreted, and so there are temptations to cheat, steal, denounce or even kill counterparts. For example, expectations for a single successful theft of 100 kg cocaine - worth around US$ 2 million - can prevail over the interest to continue business with an entrepreneur. To avoid rip-off or detection, it is essential to work with trustworthy people, both as employees and as business partners.

During my fieldwork in the Netherlands, trust building was a central part of the research process. Informants only started to be co-operative (and reliable) after a certain confidence was guaranteed. I had to show credentials - by 'receiving' people at my university office - or present my intellectual work and skills - by appearing in public, handing over my publications or engaging in discussions. I also had to gain the good will of influential
'gatekeepers' who gently afforded me access to their social networks. I offered help or friendship to various people who eventually helped me in return. As explained in the introduction, trust was both an essential precondition and a precious result of the interaction with my research population.

9.3.1. Building trust

Cocaine entrepreneurs have many ways of constructing trust. Firstly and foremost, through the use of relatives and close friends. It is extremely common, if not a rule, to find brothers, cousins, nephews, partners and old good friends constituting the core of cocaine enterprises. Bonds created around a common socialisation or kinship are important guaranties for mutual trust. This is the case at all levels, from cocaine production to distribution, and for long distance relationships between different market levels.

Again, the mere instrumental nature that blood or artificial kinship has in the Colombian cocaine business should be emphasised. Organisations do not have any fixed labour, organisational or hierarchical division around kinship. Who owns the business is just a matter of skills, luck or other variables. Two brothers might be partners or one may work for the other. Women might both participate or give orders to their sons or husbands. Many relatives may not be involved at all, and close friends might be, as it is often the case, more important than blood-related people. Colombian cocaine enterprises differ from other illegal organisations where 'clans' or 'families' are basic in their constitution and reproduction. In this sense, the 'collective spirit' that means to trust a relative or a friend has less to do with an abstract identification with 'equals' but more with shared aspirations and aims: to successfully make money and to remain at liberty (Krauthausen and Sarmiento 1991: 43).

A past in common can also facilitate trust, from a shared criminal background to a common past in the police, some guerrilla group or university. However, it is not possible to work only with known people. Another way to build trust is through the intervention of a third common trusted person who can introduce or recommend a newcomer. The closer and more powerful this third party is, the better the chances of gaining trust.

Trust can also be pushed forward by the existence of a power relation. Dependence of any sort can expand unilateral trust, even when it is a pragmatic one. People owing favours, people who have been given a 'second chance', people who can be potentially blackmailed ('he knows my family') or denounced ('he knows many things about me') have some chances to be co-operative. However, as I will further explain, (illegitimate) coercion in fact tends to reduce mutual trust and to provide a weaker alternative means to enforce co-operation.

Further, trust seems also to increase when everybody is happy about profit distribution or remuneration (Krauthausen and Sarmiento 1991: 202). If somebody feels exploited, badly paid or not earning what he or she should be, there are strong possibilities that he would try to look for other partners or employers, including the police.

Above all, as in any legal branch, trust is only gained in doing business: sticking to agreements, achieving maximum labour efficiency, bravely assuming the risks of illegality and protecting personal as well as others integrity. Even between relatives, trust is often afforded to the better qualified. Joel:

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16 It can be argued that some of these social relations constitute a form of artificial kinship (Blok 2000: 87). Friends can become compadres, or godfathers and godmothers of other's children. Many traquetos treat each other with the word hermano (brother). However, the use of this idiom of kinship and blood in social discourses and practices is so common in Colombia that it is questionable if it means anything special for cocaine traffickers.
"If I go back to Colombia, Tico [his nephew] will get the line. Paisita is too emotional; he can make a mess. Tico has 'papers' and speaks Dutch. He is cool no matter what happens."

Good workers and partners are highly appreciated and carefully kept. On-the-job reliability can only be shown with experience. In some cases, for instance with the contract of hired-killers, after credentials have been accepted, a test or proof can be demanded. Others will have to start from below and go through a trial period to gain know-how and see what the person is up to. There are also 'test-deals' to assess the trustworthiness of certain partner or line.

With this, I suggest that while some degree or provisional mutual trust is a pre-condition for co-operation amongst drug dealers, real trust also seems to appear as a result of co-operation. The cocaine business environment, however, does not stimulate the development and reproduction of 'accumulated trust': flexible relations vanish, many deals result in one-off operations and expectations about future co-operation are rather limited. In fact, *traquetos* provide an excellent case for researching the limits of trust.

9.3.2. Distrust and betrayal

Most informants were obsessed about distrust and betrayal. The scepticism of Tico, for example, was commonly shared:

"...you can not trust anyone in this business. People will try to steal from you if they can. Police are easier to recognise, but I trust no one..."

An ideal trustworthy person would be a relative who is both responsible and economically satisfied. However, such people rarely exist and only one of the variables mentioned before is too little to gain trust. In fact, in the cases when trust does exist, it seems to be transitory, fragile, always at the edge of collapse.

Betrayal and distrust are also essential resources for survival in the cocaine business. Betrayal between blood relatives is infrequent, though not rare. Joel, for example, worked in Chicago with his brother as a wholesale distributor. Once he had to collect some US$ 150,000 from a client. When he arrived to his debtor's place, he was told that his brother had already collected the money. Joel's brother went back to Colombia and used the cash to pay off personal debts. Joel felt cheated and for a long time did not see his brother again. More mythical cases are often publicised in Colombia: the Ochoa brothers are said to have killed their uncle to get the business in their hands, while a famous operator in Miami known as the 'black widow' had the reputation of having killed a former husband to get control over his assets.

Betrayal between old friends is very common, even between people who have worked together for many years. In fact, familiarity through friendship or kinship tends to expand trust that leads to co-operation only under certain conditions. Firstly, social costs of exit or betrayal have to be high, at least higher than those incurred with strangers. Otherwise, the 'strong tie' only serves to improve, rather than decrease, the chances of betrayal. And even in these cases, difficulties of 'walking away' from friends or relatives can have little to do with trust and much with coercion or fear for punishment or ostracism. Secondly, 'blind' trust (loyalty, global trust beyond local disappointments) often endorsed to friends and relatives cannot only lead to co-operation but to deception as well (Gambetta 1990: 218).

The intervention of a third party or the recommendation by known people is a trust source that cocaine entrepreneurs often regret. As Riverito lamented from prison:
"These paisas are all the same. They are tough and to certain extent trustful but they live from a
reputation not always deserved. Look, my friend said that the guy was his friend, but in fact they
saw each other only two or three times before! (...) I trusted the guy. He said he had good contacts
and spoke with a fluent Colombian accent. I though he was from the [Colombian] coast, but he was
from Aruba. He was a thief, and also a sapo [police informant]. In fact, I even mistook in trusting
my friend Charly."

Trust as a result of 'job satisfaction' or agreed profit distribution is also fragile. If
business goes well, usually people would think in terms of more money, better tasks, or in
becoming more independent. Even when a cocaine deal is successful for everybody, there is a
strong tendency from each party to believe that they are 'smarter' than the other. Even when
people want or have many motives to trust, they suspect that the other party wants to play
dirty even if it is not so. Finally, trust constructed through work reliability - skills, efficiency,
responsibility, and so forth - seems to be stronger, and partly explains the international
character of the people involved in the business.

The paradox of trust is that, unlike other devices such as violence, the very same
constraints, risks and interests that set the conditions and the need for trust tend to put severe
limitations on its development.

Firstly, the need for trust supposes a degree of limited freedom for the two - or more -
parties involved. In order to need trust, both persons should be able to freely leave the stage at
any time. If only one course of action is possible or even expected from the other (with no
alternative for exit, betrayal or defection) trust would not be required. Traquetos can only trust
each other when they have an alternative (to steal, to deal with other party, to kill, and so
forth). However, some informants, especially employees, often claimed to have 'no choice'
and participate out of coercion or acute economic hardship. Take the example of the unskilled
drug smuggler. He neither has to trust his employer nor does he need to be trusted when the
smuggler's relatives can be hurt or his properties seized due to failure or deceit. Illegitimate,
coercive constraints based on power differences are common in the business and constitute
alternative means for bringing about co-operation. In those cases, distrust is more likely to
develop. Coercion and violence, as alternative resources to trust, increase the chances for
betrayal and the classic stab in the back.

At the same time, dealers or actors with too many alternatives - for example, the police
informant that can receive alternative protection, the dealer that has a large network of
business contacts, or even the peripheral adventurer who can easily return to a 'straight'
occupation - receive lower levels of trust.

A second condition refers to the nature and perception of risk. I have shown that not
only different actors face very uneven degrees of risk, but also that they assess risk in various
ways. Again, trust is required but difficult to arise when these differences are so strong. Trust
is a highly problematic resource in a business environment so unstable that in any risk
calculation - including that of law enforcers - there are always unintended and unforeseen
outcomes (Giddens 1991: 112). Many Colombian cocaine entrepreneurs I met were either
fatalist or paranoid, and both types had problems with trusting others. People with a fatalistic
outlook - often failed dealers but also some who felt immune, powerless or frustrated -
showed a resigned acceptance that events should be allowed to take their course. Their appeal
to fortuna (Giddens 1991: 113) was reflected in many circumstances. Some justified their lot
(prison sentence, debts) invoking fate and destiny. Others preferred to give chance almost the
same status as risk. For example, for a 'fateful moment' such as the despatch of a large
shipment by sea, some exporters would require the advice of experts and outsiders, the
counsel of foretellers and the help of the Virgin Mary. Finally, some fatalists just 'hoped' that
certain persons would help them or leave them alone.
Another attitude was to overstate risks and develop a paranoid distrust about others whether they were individuals or institutions. Paranoid reactions suddenly appeared even inside trusted relationships and challenged the continuity of co-operation.

Economic interest, a major drive behind co-operation in drug enterprises, was also often a weak incentive for trust. Everybody pointed out, especially in Colombia, that short-term ‘wolfish hunger’ for large profits, and speculative behaviour around an ephemeral economic boom, far from propagating trust, increased distrust and the so called ‘dishonesty trap’ (Thoumi 1995).

Suspicious reputations

That the drug business is at odds with trust is also evidenced by a common attitude found amongst Colombian immigrants in the Netherlands: a basic internal distrust as a weapon to resist stigmatisation, negative images and bad reputations. Even more, as a way of avoiding any sort of problem. Tano explained me that:

“You don’t ask in the beginning ‘what do you do for living?’. Nobody asks that question, they will tell you later. A typical answer is: ‘y ahi, viendo lo que se hace...’ [well, seeing what’s up...]”

In fact, I soon discovered that most immigrants avoided the question when they suspected something. Places with bad reputations were avoided or condemned, and on many occasions people would gossip about ‘successful’ immigrants. The few legal ‘ethnic entrepreneurs’ had to battle to demonstrate the transparency of their businesses. Many informants had to ‘calm down’ worries from home (Colombia) about a possible involvement in drug dealing or prostitution. I found some Colombians who even avoided contact with co-nationals since they regarded them as a source of problems.

9.3.3. Trusting the other: the management of business reputations

Trust attached to particular groups can favour their inclusion or exclusion from the cocaine business. Both paisas and vallunos, for example, tended to distrust people from the Atlantic Coast, which they felt closer to other Caribbean groups such as Antilleans or West Indians.

I frequently asked Colombian dealers active in the Netherlands about their opinion of the trustfulness, in business terms, of particular ethnic or national groups encountered in Europe. Some had little concrete experience with specific groups but had nevertheless something to say. Interestingly, the reasons given to like or dislike a particular group were remarkably convergent, all revolving around four concrete issues.

A first variable referred to their perceived skills for business performance (professionalism). A second aspect concerned the respect for keeping one’s word and sticking to agreements (word). A third issue rested on a vague notion of honour, including readiness to talk to the police, ethical dignity, courage, coolness and ‘guts’. Finally, a forth element referred to the degree in which they could access and control the groups (accessibility).

Ethnic groups were indeed perceived as more or less trustful as far as these features were positively or negatively judged. Colombian dealers tended to regard Italians and Spanish as the more reliable, while they were consistently negative about the Surinamese and Antilleans. In general:

17 Siegel and Bovenkerk (2000) found the same phenomenon for the Russian community living in the Netherlands. They distrust each other, while they manipulate to their advantage dominant stereotypes about the Red Mafia.
18 Only some came regularly into picture, so I dare to mention them. Some people clearly distinguished between Surinamese and Antilleans, the latter being more positively considered.
The question remains about the extent to which these stereotypes of reliability spelled out by Colombian dealers had a concrete materialisation in terms of co-operation. It is my impression that dealers also tended to reproduce standardised images about the groups, and that trust (or positive image) and actual co-operation did not always coincide. For example, while Turks were regarded as having more ‘honour’ than Dutch dealers, their business interaction with the Dutch was by far more significant. On the other hand, Surinamese and Antillean groups were negatively depicted as less professional and honorific than the Russians, but their smoother and more fluid contacts with the former groups contrasted with their sporadic encounters with East Europeans.