

THE FAILURE OF GLOBAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY:  
MOROCCO'S CANNABIS RESIN MARKET AS A CASE STUDY

By

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*Submitted to Central European University*

*School of Public Policy*

*In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Public Policy*

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Budapest, Hungary

2020

## **Author's Declaration**

I, the undersigned Nouhaila Bouhout hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where proper acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material, which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language.

This is a true copy of the thesis, including final revisions.

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## **Abstract**

For over a century, the international drug control regime has failed to effectively reduce the harms associated with drugs. This is despite prohibition and eradication-based methods of addressing illegal crop cultivation. This thesis analyses these failures by focusing on a specific case study: Morocco's cannabis resin market. Regardless of drug policies and international treaty obligations to eradicate cannabis cultivation and production, the Rif—Morocco's most disadvantaged region—remains the largest producer and supplier of cannabis resin, globally. In order to understand these controversial outcomes, this thesis conducts a drug control policy impact assessment. It identifies and examines unintended drug policy impacts on the Rif's economic, environmental, and social development. This thesis perceives and measures drug policy from a broader social context as the key drivers of drug markets stem from the demand-side of the drug trade, an approach global drug policy metrics fail to consider as they are focused on law and order. Therefore, in order for drug policy to effectively confront the world drug problem, it should recognize that the production of drugs occurs primarily within the fragile realities of rural, patriarchal, and impoverished regions.

## Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my mother for her heartiest support and encouragement throughout my academic journey but especially for having endured my stress while writing this thesis during the most difficult times of COVID19.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to my professor and supervisor, Julia Buxton, primarily for teaching and encouraging me to be confident in my work. The main arguments and ideas behind this thesis were inspired by her course, *The Politics of Drug Policy*, which has provided me with an invaluable and eye-opening learning experience. I thank you for your endless support and guidance throughout this academic year.

I would also like to extend my appreciation for having spent this one year at the Central European University, although partially disrupted by unforeseen events, has still provided me with a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

My hometown, Tangier, Morocco also deserves special attention, as it is its influx to drug trafficking, production, and consumption, which motivated me and inspired me to continue my work on drug policy.

Lastly, I dedicate this thesis to all people that have been and continue to be harmed by ill-designed drug policies. Change is coming.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

AD	Alternative Development
DH	Moroccan Dirhams
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction
EU	European Union
EUR	European Monetary Unit
GCDP	Global Commission on Drug Policy
GDPR	Global Drug Prohibition Regime
HCP	Morocco's High Commission for Planning
HRC	Human Rights Council
HREA	Human Rights Education Associates
IA	Impact Assessment
IDCR	International Drug Control Regime
INCSR	International Narcotics Control Strategy Report
ONDA	National Observatory on Drugs and Addiction
THC	Tetrahydrocannabinol
UN	United Nations
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

## **Introduction**

In the interest of humanity and welfare, global drug control policy obliges states to ban all psychoactive drugs. In practice, this binding UN treaty system translates into prevention methods of prohibition, eradication, and criminalization of participants involved in the illicit drug trade. These strategies are implemented to ensure adequate production, consumption, and distribution of illicit drugs for medical and scientific purposes. However, this comprehensive framework is gradually collapsing as the failures of drug policy become significantly apparent and imminent (Bewley-Taylor 2012). For more than a hundred years, the outcomes of drug policies have proven to be severely detrimental to national development, human rights, global and human security. As a result, governments are progressively shifting away from prohibitive methods of drug policies that have revealed to do more harm than good. Conversely, countries are increasingly leaning towards alternative approaches that are more cost-effective, humane, gender-sensitive and evidence-based.

This thesis aims to contribute to the global advocacy of drug policy reform as it recognizes the urgency of more pragmatic and scientific-based policies. It achieves this by strengthening the literature on the failures of the international drug control system including the war on drugs and eradication methods of illegal crop cultivation. It further identifies and fills in the gaps of the research on drug control policy and its impacts on vulnerable groups involved in the drug trade, particularly women. Accordingly, the literature generally discounts country context indicators especially on developing and drug-cultivating countries. Additionally, the literature mainly focuses on supply-sided strategies primarily because this is how drug policy is designed. This work, by contrast, pays close attention to the demand for the use and cultivation of cannabis. Hence, this is considered to be the key market driver.



Using Morocco as a relevant country case study, this thesis analyses the unintended impacts of national drug policy that is largely dictated by an international drug control system. This system is defined by a tripartite series of conventions, obligating all nation states to collaborate in fulfilling the ultimate goal of a “drug free world” (Buxton 2010). This work addresses this global policy framework by examining its influences on state-level policy making, implementation, and monitoring. Hence, while the literature focuses on the outcomes of drug markets, it pays very little attention to evaluating the impacts of the main root cause, drug control policy.

Accordingly, Morocco continues to be the world’s leading producer and supplier of cannabis resin despite the government’s obligation to comply with anti-drug mandates. This issue stems from the global drug control regime that disregards countries’ political systems, financial capabilities, religion, or societal construct (Buxton 2010). Thus, these controversial outcomes are driven by a set of economic, environmental, and social factors. First, cannabis resin production in the Rif, the main cultivating region in Morocco, has reached record highs over recent years as a result of rural poverty and a strong European demand. Second, the Rif’s fragile environmental conditions have led to ineffective eradication policies and alternative development (AD) programs. Third, drug policy’s lack of attention to gender is reflected in rural women’s invisible role in cannabis cultivation.

Thus, this thesis also analyses the gender discourse of drug policy in order to identify how ill-designed policies impose an extreme burden on women and their development. Literature indicates that women disproportionately suffer from the harms caused by gender-insensitive drug policies as their roles in the supply chain of illicit drugs is commonly ignored (Malinowska-Sempruch and Rychkova 2016; Kensy, et. al. 2015). Despite the Commission on Narcotic Drugs recently recognizing the harms and risks associated with women who use

drugs, it fails to address the impacts on women involved in drug cultivation (Resolution 59/5 2016). In Morocco, women have grown a dominating and influential role in cannabis resin production (Afsahi 2015 and Mouna 2011). However, drug policies continue to focus entirely on standard drug supply metrics and turn a blind eye to women's valuable contribution to the cannabis market. This policy agenda is further exacerbated by Morocco's inherent patriarchal socio-political construct.

This thesis is divided into three main chapters. Chapter one will explore the different approaches, theories, and perspectives on drug control policy from a global and national perspective as these are interchangeably linked in the drug context. The literature review focuses on the international drug control regime, cannabis cultivation and prohibition, as well as how drug policy impacts women with a specific emphasis on their involvement in cannabis cultivation. Chapter two will discuss the historical evolution of the Moroccan cannabis market including a contextual analysis of the national drug policy framework. Chapter three will assess the unintended impacts through an analysis of the drivers of cannabis resin production in the Rif, a lack of effective AD programs and eradication policies as well as rural women's role in cannabis cultivation.

Having evaluated the impacts of drug policy through the subject of Morocco's cannabis resin market, this thesis concludes that drug policy is ineffective and counterproductive in effectively alleviating the drug problem. It continues to disregard the economic, environmental, and social vulnerabilities of the most impoverished communities and underdeveloped regions. This consequently undermines effective implementation of drug control and controversially, deteriorates human development. The concluding section summarizes these main arguments, addresses the research limitations, and discusses suggestions for further research in the context of drug policy in Morocco.

## **Methodology and Research Design**

This thesis uses qualitative methods to analyse how drug policy has influenced the Moroccan cannabis industry. The research focuses on cannabis resin cultivation (rather than the use or traffic of cannabis) and identifies the failures of drug policy through the lens of cannabis production and gender-insensitivity. To validate this hypothesis, the thesis seeks to answer the following research question: “How does drug control policy impact economic, environmental, and social development in Morocco?”

The literature used throughout this research is analysed through a saturation approach. In order to assure high-quality research, this method is used to evaluate all relevant sources until information cannot be replicated (Saunders et al. 2014; Fusch and Ness 2015). For the purpose of this thesis, it is used to achieve a comprehensive sample size of the literature and develop a thorough understanding of the topic. This method has been preferred not as a result of ‘exhausting sources’ but rather, due to the quality of the literature.

Additionally, a saturation approach is essential for this research that could not have been complimented by other qualitative methods due to the emergence of COVID-19. While this global pandemic has restricted field research and in-person interviews, informal interviews with key informants (experts on Morocco’s cannabis market) were conducted on-line. It is worth noting that their work is referenced throughout the thesis. While this thesis is centered on cannabis, an illicit drug, and cannabis cultivation, an illegal activity, no harms have occurred throughout the course of the research. Hence, this work does not raise any ethical concerns because it does not include any vulnerable participants involved in the illicit cannabis industry. However, it is important to consider that the thesis is attributed with sensitive data analysis and includes controversial approaches that may have an impact on Morocco’s conservative society and individuals involved in the illicit cannabis trade.

Furthermore, drug policy in Morocco will be analysed through a drug control policy impact assessment (IA). This assessment is conducted in order to determine whether drug policy has achieved its purpose in reducing cannabis production and supply. Additionally, it is used to identify drug policy impacts and their influences on Morocco's economic, environmental, and social development. This assessment will also explore how drug policy impacts women and whether gender inequalities have exacerbated or improved as a result of women's involvement in cannabis cultivation.

**Table 1 Moroccan Drug Control Policy Impact Assessment**

When?	Type of IA	Criteria	Tools
	Implementation Progress Review	Efficacy, Efficiency, Equity	Qualitative Impact Indicators
Outcome Evaluation (Final Stage of Policy Cycle)	Issue-specific Evaluation	Drug: Cannabis Resin Practice: Cultivation Region: Rif	Quantitative Impact Indicators

*Source:* Author.

The impact evaluation assessment described in table 1.1 above is based on two types. First, it uses an implementation progress review to verify whether Morocco effectively implements drug policies. Second, it includes an issue-specific evaluation due to the focus on the type of drug (cannabis resin), practice (cultivation) and region (Rif). In order to develop an inclusive drug policy evaluation, the criteria is based on effectiveness, efficiency, and equity, which are measured through qualitative and quantitative impacts indicators.

This thesis focuses on a mix of quantitative and qualitative impact indicators because global standard metrics of drug policy have failed to identify and alleviate the harms associated with drugs. The UNODC monitoring bodies have been, for sixty years, using only quantitative indicators to measure the successes of drug policy. These methods have further exacerbated

the drug problem and have proven to be extremely biased, insufficient, and ineffective as drug markets reach historic highs (Bewley-Taylor and Nougier 2018; UNODC 2019). Evidently, there are serious gaps and limitations in the current methods of data collection that fail to take into account the full magnitude of the drug problem.

The UNODC mainly focuses on data from Europe and North America (Bewley-Taylor and Nougier 2018). Hence, the Global South faces major challenges in data collection as a result of weak epidemiological and resource capacities. This undermines effective and accurate monitoring of drug-related issues in developing countries. Additionally, the quality and quantity of data is extremely limited as there tends to be “better reporting” on drug supply rather than drug demand (2018). Accordingly, while Morocco has been reporting its progress in reducing cannabis production, this data is overwhelmingly subjective, unreliable, and aggregated. On sensitive topics and in fragile contexts, surveying hidden populations in remote, rural areas is a major challenge that undermines adequate data collection and impedes gender-disaggregated data. Therefore, in an attempt to comprehensively evaluate national drug policy, the impact indicators are defined in the following structure:

**Table 2 Drug Policy and Cannabis Resin Market Performance Metrics**

Indicators	Economic	Social	Environmental
Quantitative	Supply metrics: quantity seizures, level of production, ha eradicated	Family's income from cannabis vs. other crops	Degrees of potency
	Retail prices, cannabis market value estimates and impact on GDP	Employment rates for cultivating families	Rural population and households involved in cannabis cultivation
Qualitative	Influences of cannabis market on rural population's livelihoods	Drug policy impact on rural women cannabis cultivators and shifts in gender roles	AD programs, agricultural innovations

*Source:* Author.

## Chapter 1. Literature Review

It is essential to understand how Morocco is the world's largest cannabis producer and supplier despite national and international drug control policy. It is equally important to analyse the gender impacts of drug policy as these are under-explored. To outline these arguments, the literature review is organized in three main sections. First, it reviews the international drug control system through different approaches to its origins, objectives, and outcomes. Second, to strengthen the thesis argumentation on cannabis cultivation, the review will include historical accounts and different perspectives on cannabis cultivation and prohibition. Lastly, to justify whether drug policy outcomes have marginalized or empowered women, the review will unpack the relationship between gender and drug policy.

### 1.1 The International Drug Control Regime

The international drug control regime (IDCR), or the global drug prohibition regime (GDPR) as referred to by Bewley-Taylor (2012), was originally established to solve the world drug problem in the early 1900s. What was the world drug problem? As confirmed by Buxton (2006), drugs were historically and mainly used for medical purposes as recreational use was restricted to the elites until commercialization spread among the lower classes. Cannabis, in particular, was used for physical stimulation, cultural and spiritual uses, as well as pain relief (Buxton 2010). The idea of prohibiting drugs only emerged following mass commercialisation of psychoactive substances and heavy drug-dependencies resulting in increased drug-related deaths (2006). Nevertheless, the origins of the drug control system ranged from the toleration of use, regulation, to prohibition (Buxton 2006; Jelsma 2011). This evolution of drug control was contingent on an international consensus primarily between European countries and the U.S. Accordingly, prior to the Second World War, the Europeans were against prohibition because they sought to protect their colonial interests.

However, as the U.S. emerged as a superpower following the war, it pressured all states to shift drug control from regulation to prohibition and criminalization. Buxton further convincingly explains that the key strategy of U.S. diplomacy to enter the international sphere of influence, largely relied on campaigning for strict anti-drug legislation which was fundamental in setting today's IDCR (2010).

While the IDCR was convened in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the current system is still centered around its by-products; a series of “suppression conventions” (Barrett et al 2017) known as the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs as amended by the 1972 Protocol, the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances and the 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic (UN treaty database). This “complex” framework seeks to eliminate the production, consumption, and distribution of all psychotropic drugs except for scientific and medical reasons (Bewley-Taylor 2012; Buxton 2010). As affirmed by Buxton, this legal structure obliges states to comply regardless of their political or religious ideologies, financial capacities, or position in the drug market (2010). In this context, states are obligated to adopt prohibitive policies in order to maintain a beneficial relationship with the U.S. which is, to most developing countries, a very valuable asset. Thus, it is the developing countries that have to struggle with huge costs of prohibition, a major challenge that is not imposed on powerful countries such as the U.S.

Early research has correlated current drug control strategies to the alcohol prohibition era in the U.S. (Buxton 2006; Bewley-Taylor 2012; Jelsma 2011). Hence, the advocacy against drugs is primarily based on U.S. ideologies that were globally commercialized and translated into an international accord in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Buxton 2010). However, Buxton effectively argues that anti-drugs campaigns are rooted in racism, political and social tensions, and most

importantly, in a lack of medical and scientific knowledge that have resulted in a regrettable misconception of drugs (2006). Accordingly, while the influx of diverse immigrants in North America during the 19<sup>th</sup> century created a state of xenophobia and led to the first U.S. anti-drug laws legislation (2006), in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, political and socio-economic tensions in Morocco led state authorities to control cannabis (Blickman 2017). Overall, the literature concludes that the construction of the IDCR was insisted by the U.S., the most vehement model of prohibition, as a result of a long-established motive to join the political, economic and diplomatic scene that it was largely excluded from. As a result, the current system guiding national drug laws is based on a zero-tolerance approach that further translates into practice with the war on drugs.

### ***The War on Drugs Debate***

On one perspective, the war on drugs, launched by the U.S. in 1971, is used as an implementation tool of the IDCR. The war strategies are conceived to be most effective in reducing drug-related harms and crimes through violent methods of forced eradication and criminalization. Arguably, targeting the supply-side of the drug trade will successfully reduce the overall production, consumption, and traffic of drugs (Coyne and Hall 2017; Piaggio and Vidwans 2019). The (il)logic here is that reducing the quantity of drugs would increase retail prices which users could not afford, therefore reducing the overall consumption (2019). Conversely, under prohibition, most narcotic drugs have remained affordable if not decreased in prices (UNODC 2019; Piaggio and Vidwans 2019).

The second perspective considers the war on drugs strategies as ineffective, failing to achieve their main objectives (GCDP 2011). Drawing on reports of the Global Commission on Drug Policy (GCDP), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the



World Bank, the war on drugs has failed to solve the world drug problem as drug markets have expanded more than ever before in history (UNODC 2019). In reality, the outcomes have led to a proliferation of human rights violations, violence, corruption, health diseases and deaths, further impeding national and global development (GCDP 2011). In response, this new model advocates for drug policy reform that is based on scientific evidence, gender-sensitivity, and human-rights-based methods that prioritise instead, the demand-side (2011).

According to numerous academic works (Alekseevich Eremin and Petrovich-Belkin 2019; Jelsma 2011; Coyne and Hall 2017), the war on drugs is primarily set to meet a U.S. political agenda that seeks to expand its influence and protect its interests in foreign relations. During the Cold War, President Nixon was committed to containing communism in the Western Hemisphere which, the authors persuasively argue, was the primary concern and thus, motivation behind the global drug war (2019). The U.S. mainly focuses on the supply chain of the drug trade in order to consolidate power in Latin America e.g. the “Iran Contras” Affair (Alekseevich Eremin and Petrovich-Belkin 2019). Jelsma (2011) also supports this argument as the role of the drug war only became a priority when the Cold War was coming to an end. Coyne and Hall (2017) argue that the U.S. continues to use the drug war for political interests today through its mission in Afghanistan against the war on terror considering the terrorists’ finances stem from the illicit (opium) drug trade (2017). The authors further emphasize that this politically-motivated war on drugs was highly due to the lack of scientific or expert knowledge on effectively managing illicit drug markets. Evidently, the war-based strategies are not sufficient in solving the drug problem because the demand of drugs primarily stems from a social dimension (2019).

The controversial literature on the war on drugs reveals that the measures taken to tackle the world drug problem have done more harm than good. While pro-prohibitionists argue that

repressive methods are effective in minimizing harm-related drug use, evidence has shown that they have been counterproductive. Additionally, countries that do not agree or follow supply-reduction policies, are prone to receive economic or political backlash. In Morocco's case, both the U.S. and Europe invest heavily in eradication projects in the Rif which further exerts more pressure to adopt and implement prohibitive strategies.

### ***Cannabis Policy Reform***

While international drug conventions are implemented through a counterproductive war on drugs, cannabis policy reform is progressively taking place around the world. Various countries, or “soft defecting states”, (Bewley-Taylor 2012) are advocating for policy alternatives in terms of legalizing cannabis. This is not necessarily fragmenting the drug control regime but rather, challenging the counterproductive methods used to solve the drug problem (2012). Previous research by Blickman and Jelsma (2009) suggests that governments need to shift their focus to the demand side while legalizing and decriminalizing cultivation on the supply side. This new drug policy paradigm sets to involve all civil society actors to participate in establishing effective, humane policies based on scientific evidence (2009).

Additionally, countries are increasingly redefining their approach towards cannabis consumption despite it being classified as a narcotic drug under the UN drug schedules (Jelsma 2011) Hence, the gap in the prohibition of cannabis is prevalent in the flexibility of drug conventions that enforce an ineffective religious ban on the traditional use of cannabis. This is in turn, undermined by strong societal resistance (Bewley-Taylor et al 2014). Countries including Spain (Catalunya), Switzerland, Portugal, Netherlands, Czech Republic, and various states in the U.S. have all opted for more pragmatic and tolerant cannabis policies. Consequently, this new drug policy agenda is providing for more maneuver in national drug policy for cultivating countries. Accordingly, in recent years, Morocco has

started to progressively discuss the legalization of cannabis for medical and industrial uses (Bewley-Taylor et al. 2014). While these cannabis policy changes have not yet effectively led to global drug policy reform, they are nevertheless undermining the repressive treaty system.

## 1.2 Trends of Cannabis Cultivation and Prohibition

There is substantial research on the global evolution of cannabis cultivation and prohibition by Bewley-Taylor, Blickman and Jelsma (2014). Previous research is also outlined in the book, *World Wide Weed: Global Trends in Cannabis Cultivation and its Control* (2011) through a series of chapters by different experts on the field. The authors recognize that cannabis was controlled (definitions vary) in different national contexts prior to the establishment of the international drug system that was primarily concerned with opium prohibition (2014). Cannabis resin, or hashish, was prohibited on the basis that it was commonly used among the lower classes and “rebellious youth”, serving as a threat to society (2014). As confirmed by the authors’ research, the lack of scientific knowledge on the use of cannabis has led to the prohibition of cannabis since ideology claimed it was as harmful and addictive as opium (2014). Accordingly, the authors strongly argue that cannabis was not scientifically tested and is thus, misclassified under current UN drug schedules (2014).

Despite the contradictory debate on cannabis, under drug control conventions, cannabis use, cultivation, production, and trade is prohibited. However, according to Potter, Bouchard and Decorte (2011) trends of cannabis cultivation are increasing at an extremely rapid pace due to globalization and new agricultural practices that permit outdoor and indoor cultivation (mainly for herbal cannabis). This leads consumer countries to cultivate their own cannabis, making cultivation a universal practice (Bewley-Taylor et al. 2014; Potter et al. 2011). Furthermore, the authors confirm that cannabis is primarily driven by demand, intimately associated with culture, and fundamentally linked to a social tolerance of use. More

importantly, the authors insist that cannabis is a beneficial tool for ecological development (2011). This is significant for the purpose of this thesis that focuses on a cultivation-prone region and a poor, fragile environment, the Rif. This research conclusively confirms, however, that the tolerance and normalization of cannabis in societies helps increase the successes of cultivation (2011).

### **1.3 Drug Policy and Gender**

The outcomes of drug policy continue to inflict human rights violations against the most vulnerable groups involved in the drug trade (Garzon and Pol 2015). The literature review on drug policy and gender reveals that the impacts on women caused by drug policy have not been adequately and sufficiently addressed (Kensy et al 2015; Schleifer and Pol 2017; Malinowska-Sempruch and Rychkova 2016; UN Women 2014). The following (limited) research suggests that women, as participants or victims of the drug trade, continue to be marginalized, discriminated against as a result of drug policy (Schleifer and Pol 2017; UN Women 2014). Although the research has illuminated the harms associated with drug use and trafficking, there is extremely limited study that has examined women's role in cultivation and how this influences their levels of development. Nevertheless, the available research indicates that only a minority of women are socio-economically independent from their participation in the drug trade (Kensy et al 2014).

It has been argued that drug prohibition policies are predominantly gendered and women continue to suffer disproportionately in the drug context (Malinowska-Sempruch and Rychkova 2016). Research has shown that while women's participation in drug cultivation is increasing (UN Women 2014), their contribution to drug production is undervalued and they are generally excluded from land tenure of cultivating areas (Schleifer and Pol 2017). On the one hand, the key implementation tool of gender mainstreaming and human rights is

through the *International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy* (Barrett et al 2017). However, Schleifer and Pol disagree since gender is meant to be understood from a much broader social and cultural construct that is imminently rooted in gender roles and norms (2017). In addition to these obstacles, the authors strongly indicate that gender mainstreaming efforts by the UN remain systematically rhetorical considering drug conventions exclude women's right to non-discrimination in regards to the drug problem (Schleifer and Pol 2017; Kensy et al 2015). Contrarily, another study points out a gap within the UN's architectural structure; while the UN's fundamental principle is to protect and fulfill human rights, drug control conventions under the IDCR, contradict the entire system, contributing to massive human rights violations (Barrett et al 2017).

Schleifer and Pol reaffirm that gender roles are pre-determined in some societies with associated duties, privileges, and expectations (2017). Research has further confirmed that the majority of women farmers in drug-cultivating countries are more likely to get involved in drug cultivation as a result of poverty or social exclusion (Schleifer and Pol 2017; Kensy et al 2015). The authors effectively note that there is a deep level of stigma and discrimination against women involved in drugs due to ingrained stereotypes centered around women's domestic roles (2017). This is further exacerbated by drug conventions that prohibit illicit drug cultivation and fail to take into consideration the social and economic conditions of developing countries. Hence, for most poor families, illicit drug crops are the only means of achieving adequate standards of living (Kensy et al 2015). As a result, the authors conclusively note that drug conventions, specifically eradication operations, further reinforce existing inequalities and poverty (Schleifer and Pol 2017; Barrett et al 2008).

Numerous studies explain that forced drug crop eradication has a severe impact on livelihoods which further exacerbates rural poverty (Barrett et al 2008; Kensy et al 2015).

This method leads to violence, human rights violations, political and social tensions (2008). Thus, alternative livelihoods in the drug context controversially serve as a major threat to food security, land quality, and displacement especially for minority, indigenous, and rural women (Schlifer and Pol 2017; Malinowska-Sempruch and Rychkova 2016; Kensy et al 2015). It is also interestingly argued that women's disregarded role in cultivation is a strategy to provide alternative livelihood programs since recognizing women's involvement in cannabis cultivation will, to a lower extent, normalize the practice.

This chapter has argued on the different approaches to the IDCR and its impacts on cannabis cultivation and gender. The first section has analysed global drug control policy and how its prohibition-based strategies influence state-level policy-making and implementation. The counterproductive outcomes of drug policy, exacerbated by the war on drugs, have consequently helped explain the rationale behind the current shifts towards cannabis policy reform. The second main section has confirmed that the gaps in the drug conventions and the tolerant nature of cannabis have increased cultivation practices globally despite prohibition policies. Lastly, the third section has explained that women's dominating role in cannabis cultivation is undervalued as a result of a gendered drug policy that fails to consider gender from a broader social context of drug-cultivating and developing countries. Chapter two will further explain how these issues are contextualized in Morocco.

## Chapter 2. From Regulation to Prohibition: Morocco's Cannabis Policy in Context

This chapter serves as the first step in illustrating the root causes of counterproductive drug policy outcomes. It aims to contextualize Morocco's cannabis policy, dictated by the IDCR, by analysing how cannabis control has shifted from regulation to prohibition across different periods of time. These arguments are outlined in three main sections that discuss the traditional uses of cannabis, the political economy of the cannabis market, and the national drug policy framework.

### 2.1 The Use of Kif in the Rif

*Kif* stems from the traditional cannabis sativa plant grown in the Rif. It is usually smoked through a traditional Moroccan pipe, *sebsi*, containing a mixture of cannabis herb and tobacco (Afsahi and Mouna 2014; Blickman 2017). When cannabis first appeared in the Maghreb, originating from central Asia (exact origin varies), in the seventh century (Chouvy 2018), it was used for five main purposes. First, the main driver was industrial use, otherwise known as hemp, that helped produce textile fiber, paper products, and biofuel (Bellakhdar 2013). It was also an essential tool for maritime trade as textile hemp was used in marine carpentry (2013). Second, it was cultivated for food, producing a variety of beneficial products such as hemp oil and seed (Benabud 1957). Kif was also commonly transformed into a mix of hashish and food ingredients to produce sweets such as *maajoun* (Moroccan hash-based jam) (Afsahi 2015a). Third, due to its palliative properties, the most significant driver was medical use (Afsahi 2017; Bellakhdar 2013;). Cannabis helped alleviate pain, cure skin, scalp and hair ailments, treat digestive, dental and acoustic problems (2013).

Similar to how the chewing of coca leaves by indigenous mine workers in South America became used as religious sacraments (Buxton 2010), cannabis, for the Berbers, has become

an integral part of their culture and way of life. For this rural population, and especially indigenous farmers, it is perceived as a spiritual drug and widely used in sacred rituals and religious ceremonies (Afsahi 2017). As a result, the historical use and cultivation of cannabis is considered to be intimately linked with Berbers' cultural traditions. Thus, any legal cannabis policy change negatively affects these social and cultural dynamics that ultimately represent the Rif's identity.

Lastly, following mass commercialization during the French protectorate period, kif became used for recreational purposes. The French administered various coffee shops, "smoking houses", factories of kif and tobacco, as well as warehouses that accumulated cannabis from their cultivation area zones (Afsahi 2017). However, during this time, kif use grew mainly among the elites including artisans, traders, authors, and artists. The use and cultivation of cannabis became a socially tolerated practice among the community. It was essentially cultivated everywhere from private gardens, farms, to vegetable fields (2017). The idea of prohibition only emerged when the use grew among women, specifically (2017).

## 2.2 The Political Economy of Cannabis

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, under the reign of Sultan Moulay Hassan I, Morocco's *makhzen* (governing state actors), authorized cannabis cultivation and distribution among the local population (Chouvy 2018). During this time, the sultans of Morocco were hesitant between monopolizing the cannabis market or prohibiting cultivation (Mouna 2018). However, socio-economic and political dynamics dictated the state's approach to drug policy. Accordingly, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of an economic and political crisis, the makhzen was obligated to govern the cannabis market. In order to pay European debts, they permitted five *douars* (Berber tribes) to grow cannabis under tax regulations (Afsahi and Mouna 2014; Mouna 2018). This regulatory system was the basis for drug control prior to



the 1961 Single Convention resulting from the shifts in political and economic power following the Second World War.

During Morocco's colonization period, the control over the cannabis market was transferred to French and Spanish colonial powers (Afsahi and Mouna 2014). As a result of the 1906 Algeciras Treaty, kif was regulated through a French multinational company, "La Régie Marocaine des Kif et Tabac" in Tangier (Afsahi 2017). Tangier was, at the time, an international zone, largely beneficial for foreign traders (Chouvy 2018). The Rif, however, was controlled by the Spanish through cannabis taxations (2018).

Following Morocco's independence in 1956, the makhzen regained their control over the cannabis market. The makhzen was obligated to regulate this market due to financial incapacities to improve poverty in the Rif (Mouna 2018). However, the Rif remained an impoverished region despite authorized cannabis cultivation within a regulated area. Hence, this poverty is rooted in a history of systemic marginalization due to political tensions with the makhzen. In short, the Rifians condemned the independence party as they did not feel represented (i.e. their Amazigh language was not recognized) and consequently, demanded to form their own state. In response, the state excluded the region from a nationwide socio-economic development plan of 1965-67 (2018). This forced the Rifians to resort to the only viable income source, cannabis, which further motivated market expansion. Accordingly, from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, cannabis was rapidly commercialized in the Northern region and production extended to supply Europeans (Afsahi 2017; Mouna 2018). These developments which emerged as a result of state policies and approaches to drug control, have consequently conceptualized cannabis as an economic construct in the Rif.

## 2.3 Forming Morocco's Contemporary Drug Policy Framework

Morocco's drug policy is a very complex and fragmented framework that has been exacerbated by the administration of the international drug control system. Under French rule, Morocco ratified the 1912, 1925 and 1931 Convention for Limiting the Manufacture and Regulating the Distribution of Narcotic Drugs as amended by the 1946 Protocol (ONDA 2014). Despite these ratifications, the local French kif company was still operating and production zones were extended to other central regions of the country (Afsahi 2017). After independence, however, Morocco reinforced its commitment to international conventions by signing every convention during the same year of establishment. These conventions translated into a *Dahir* (royal decree) no. 1-73-282 in 1974 (ONDA 2014). However, Morocco, is to a large extent, collaborating with the international community in the war on drugs in fear of economic sanctions. Hence, the government receives significant funding from the U.S. and the EU to implement drug policy action programmes by eradicating cannabis cultivation and tackling drug trafficking (INCSR 1998). These funds are invested primarily in law enforcement operational capacities, economic development plans and crop substitution programs in the Northern Rif (UNODC 2007). Therefore, if Morocco fails to eliminate the production and supply of cannabis, it risks losing foreign aid.

Nevertheless, there remains serious legal gaps in the national drug policy framework that further undermine effective implementation and monitoring of drug control's primary objective of reducing the production of drugs. Consequently, this represents a wide discrepancy between statutory law and effective laws in practice. For example, the drug law recognizes only three types of offences: "trafficking, incitement and use" (ONDA 2014). These offences are very broad in definition as they do not explicitly target the prohibition of cultivation. Additionally, drugs are classified into three main categories: "toxics, narcotics,

and dangerous substances” (2014). These classifications are ill-defined and provide extensive room for misinterpretations, further impeding any progress for successful drug policy.

Similarly to the drug conventions that define drugs as an “evil to mankind” (UN, 1961), Morocco’s national drug laws refer to drugs as “poisonous substances” (ONDA 2014). This not only creates a misconception of drugs but the institutionalization of drugs as “poison” further stigmatizes and marginalizes drug users and cultivators. As a consequence of the IDCR conventions, national drug policy is outdated and excludes women’s rights in drug policy. However, this is also due to Morocco’s foundational inequality norms that further undermine effective implementation of gender equality. Accordingly, Morocco’s legislative framework just recently recognized women’s rights in 2004 by amending the family code (HREA, 2004). Women’s rights were further improved in 2011 following the Arab Spring revolts which resulted in serious constitutional changes (Ruchti 2012). Nevertheless, women’s involvement in cannabis production specifically, is neglected despite the fact that they represent the majority of the rural population involved in small-scale cannabis crop farming (Afsahi 2015b). Therefore, not only are the negative impacts of drug policies on women disregarded, but the implications and harms of women’s participation in cannabis cultivation are not recognized or addressed.

Furthermore, Morocco’s penal code includes strict sentencing on drug-related offences as a means of (in) effectively implementing drug policy. The law prohibiting cannabis cultivation criminalizes farmers for two years in addition to a minimum of an 80 EUR fine (Ministère de La Justice et des Libertés, 2018; Lemaizi 2014). The law also permits Moroccan authorities to confiscate any illicit drugs (2018). Other drug-related offenses such as trafficking can range up to a maximum of thirty years with a fine of 60,000 EUR (2018). However, the usual

sentences served are between eight to ten years (ONDA 2014). It is also important to consider that these repressive policing and sentencing strategies are encouraged by foreign assistance. The U.S. and the EU are one of the largest supporters of Morocco's Anti-drugs Coordination Unit (UCLAD) as they continue to provide national law enforcement with narcotics training techniques and anti-narcotics intelligence (INCSR 1998).

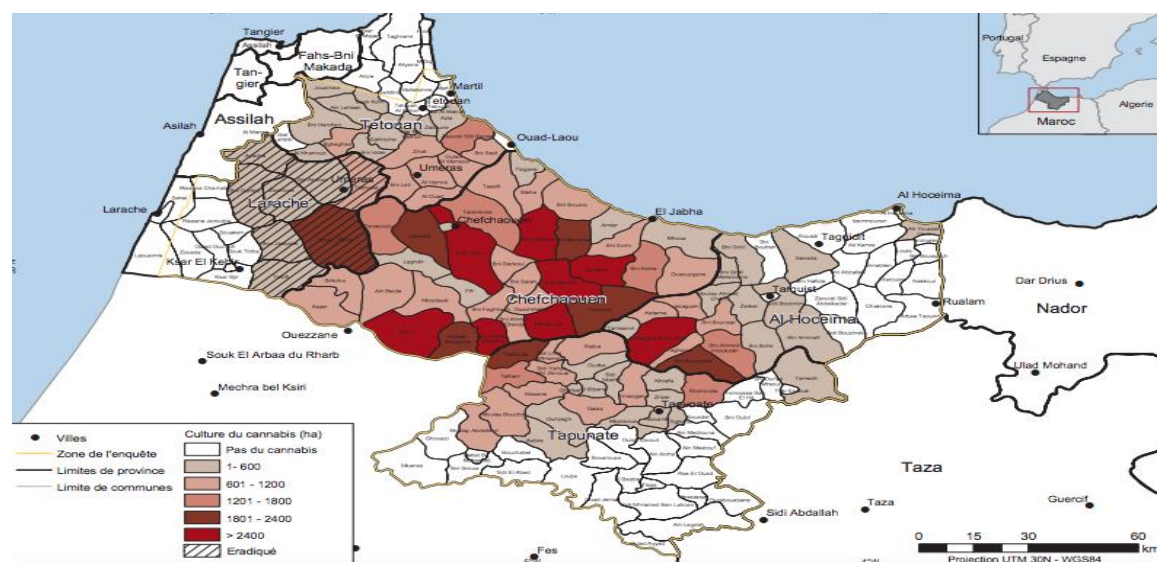
## Chapter 3. Morocco's Drug Policy: Unintended Impacts

Having discussed the formation of Morocco's drug control policy framework, this chapter seeks to address how these policy initiatives are impacted in practice through the lens of quantitative and qualitative indicators. These indicators aim to analyse how drug policy impacts economic, environmental and social development in Morocco. They are further organized into three main sections; the rise of (illicit) cannabis resin production in the Rif, the failure of alternative development programs and cannabis eradication policies, as well as the role of rural women's involvement in cannabis resin cultivation, respectively.

### 3.1 The Rise of Cannabis Resin Production in the Rif

Cannabis is the most widely used and cultivated illicit drug in the world (UNODC 2019). Out of 65 countries, Morocco continues to produce and export more than half the world's cannabis resin (Carpentier et al 2012; Chouvy 2015). The size of Morocco's cannabis resin supply market is the first unintended impact and a clear indication of the failure of drug control policy. The map below identifies the main cannabis cultivated regions in the Rif and evidently, the expansion of the cannabis industry, reaching its peak in the early 2000s.

**Map 1 Cannabis Resin Cultivation in Morocco's Northern Provinces**



Source: UNODC 2005.

This industry constantly undermines effective implementation of drug policy methods to eradicate cannabis plantations and ban cannabis cultivation. In order to comprehensively explain how and why this industry continues to expand despite repressive drug policies, this thesis perceives illegal cannabis cultivation as both a social and economic construct. As described in the previous chapter, this is largely due to the multiple realities prevalent in the Rif. Accordingly, cannabis resin production in the Rif is driven by two main factors that characterise the supply and demand side of the cannabis trade. First, the region's fragile socio-economic dynamics entail unacceptably high levels of poverty. Second, it is fueled by a long-established and strong European demand.

### ***Rural Poverty***

While extreme rural poverty in the Rif serves as one of the cornerstones of the leading cannabis resin market, these characteristics are common in most, if not all, drug-cultivating countries. In this context, cannabis production is considered an alternative development that is used primarily as a tool of survival for poor rural families. The main issue however, is that drug policy fails to recognize that development in poor rural regions is, to a large extent, contingent on the drug trade (Gutierrez 2015). The fact that it continues to ignore these socio-economic issues of developing countries, further exacerbates the impacts through repressive implementation tools that tend to backfire.

Accordingly, poverty in the rural Rif persists despite the socio-economic and cultural developments changes initiated by the government since the new King's accession to the throne in 1999. These programs were established as a form of restitution to recognize the repressive period of violence and socio-political tensions before and after Morocco's independence (Chouvy 2008). The marginalized and socially excluded Rif population was a

priority of these development support projects. However, these programs were not effectively implemented because they were extremely ill-designed, discoordinated, and lacked the financial resource capacities (2008). These issues are also heavily impacted by Morocco's drug policy which fails to address the Rif's realities influencing cannabis resin production. This discrepancy also helps explain the gaps of the drug policy framework which further hinders effective implementation of reducing cannabis crop cultivation. Counterproductively, these inefficiencies have led to the successes of the cannabis supply market today.

The Rif is a geographically isolated region in Morocco characterized by an extremely dense and poor population (Afsahi and Mouna 2014). This rural area, covered largely by mountainous landscapes, serves as a major challenge for effective drug control. The remote location of cannabis plantations thereby makes it extremely difficult, if not inaccessible, for state authorities to control and monitor cannabis resin production. This issue represents another indication of drug policy's inefficiencies because it fails to take into account that it is precisely the weak rural infrastructures that undermine the state's eradication policies.

Drug policy also negatively impacts economic development in the Rif as it disregards the region's highest levels of poverty and its population density that is three times higher than the rest of the country (Chouvy 2018). This results in increased unemployment rates and undermines the (limited) legal economic opportunities in the area (Chouvy 2018). More importantly, with continuous neglect from the state and drug policy, these issues are rapidly increasing. This is also as a result of the large rural and urban gap that further embeds social and economic inequalities (HCP and World Bank 2017). Accordingly, more than half the rural population considers themselves to be poor, specifically women (2017).

According to the UNODC, there were more than 96,600 household families involved in cannabis cultivation in 2003. This translates to a little less than a million individuals (UNODC 2003). While accurate estimates of the current number of families involved in cannabis cultivation today remains unknown, the rural population represents 40% of the total population, translating to 13.5 million people (World Bank 2018). This suggests that the Rifian population has doubled if not tripled over the last seventeen years due to two of its main indicators, the most rapid population growth rate in the country and the expansion of the domestic cannabis market. Considering the lack of rural economic opportunities and the amount of cannabis plantation areas, it can be concluded that there is an increased rural population involved in the illicit cannabis industry. This is another factor contributing to the rise of cannabis production, further highlighting the inefficiencies of drug policy.

Furthermore, alternative (legal) crops do not generate sufficient income compared to cannabis-based crops (Mouna and Essouadi 2015). While there are dire environmental issues (analysed in the next section) that lead the Rif to allocate the majority of its land to cannabis, the economic issues serve as a primary motivation for cultivating families. For instance, farms struggle to produce the bare minimum of food for the overpopulated region because they are extremely underemployed, underfunded, and lack the technological equipment for agriculture (Chaouki et al 2015). They are additionally faced with major obstacles of micro-farming, micro-living and micro-properties (2015). These conditions, aggravated by drug policy impacts, characterize the Rif's reality and ultimately explain why farmers resort to cannabis cultivation. They prefer participating in this illicit business mainly because they are extremely vulnerable to food insecurity. Hence, the restrictions on cannabis cultivation become a risk these poor farmers are willing to take. In this case, illegal cannabis crop cultivation is a development rather than a security issue for farmers as it serves as their only viable source of income to maintain a decent standard of living.



Accordingly, drug policy impacts have driven this illicit market which is valued at an annual turnover of 114 billion DH with a total farmers' income of two billion DH (UNODC 2005). This has improved rural development, motivating and allowing farmers to invest in land, housing, and education (Afsahi 2017b). In addition to securing sustainable livelihoods, cannabis revenue enables farmers to afford modern agriculture equipment, further improving irrigation. However, it is important to consider that this data was collected through a fifteen-year old UNODC survey, a highly unreliable source due to the lack of accuracy in surveys and the market's expansion over recent years. Nevertheless, while cannabis cultivation leads to economic development for poor rural families, it remains an illegal activity under an illicit market. This is a major challenge for farmers because the quantity or quality of cannabis they produce is not guaranteed a fixed or fair price.

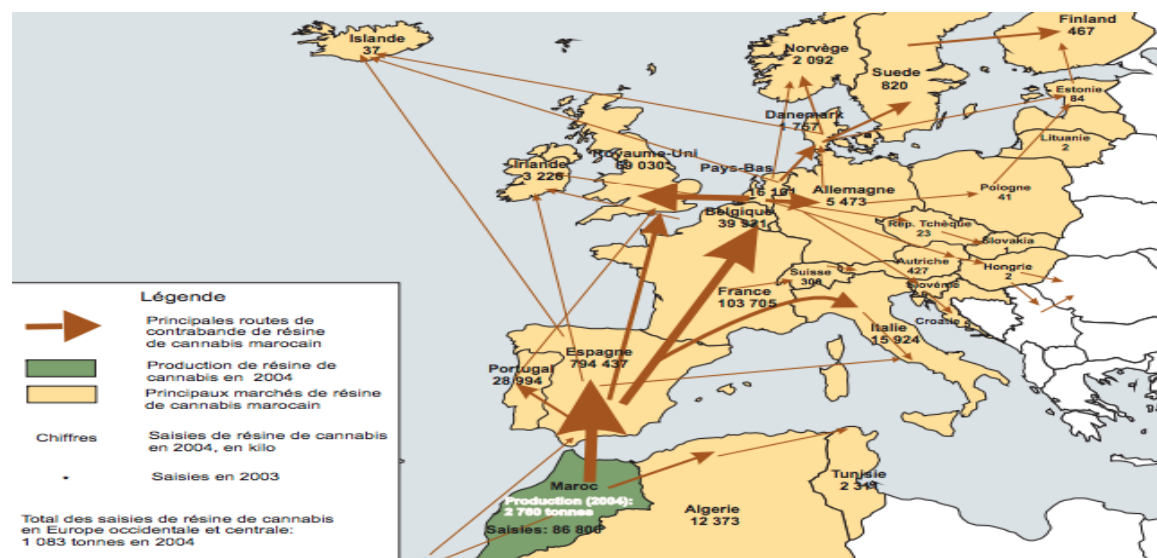
### ***European Demand***

Morocco's key geographical location and proximity to Europe serves as a major strategic point for the prosperity of the cannabis market. It is positioned approximately fifteen kilometers away from Spain, bridging two continents together and serving as a critical transit country for drugs. Morocco's imprints of European colonization also entail fundamental political and economic relations that are beneficial for distribution networks of the cannabis trade today. Hence, the strong European demand of cannabis resin and the expansion of the market stems from these two factors. Since the 1960s, the demand continues to increase, further encouraging cannabis resin production in the Rif (Afsahi 2015a). This trend is rooted in the global increase of cannabis recreational use that was commercialized during the social "hippie" movement (2015a; Potter et al 2011). Morocco's increased supply to Europe was also due to the fallout of other cannabis producing countries i.e. Afghanistan and Lebanon who were suffering from internal conflicts (EMCDDA 2017).

Consequently, farmers seized the opportunity and became adept in transforming traditional kif into hashish, Europe's most demanded derivative of cannabis (2015a; Chouvy 2018). Additionally, hashish is a practical drug to smuggle as it can be tightly compressed and stored for up to one year following harvest compared to kif, which is a much bulkier and detectable form of cannabis (Carpentier et al 2012).

However, European demand mostly proliferated from the early 1990s to the early 2000s with most of the cannabis resin supplied by Morocco (Carpentier et al 2012). While cannabis resin is supplied to all regions of Europe, it is primarily transported through Spain (UNODC 2019). This is demonstrated by the trafficking routes visible in map two below. The Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla situated across the mediterranean shores of Morocco, forming the only European land borders with Africa, serve as key transit points of cannabis resin (Afsahi and Mouna 2014). While traffickers historically used these routes for smuggling contraband goods, today, they are mainly used for the cannabis resin trade (2012).

**Map 2 Morocco's Cannabis Trafficking Routes**



Source: UNODC 2005.

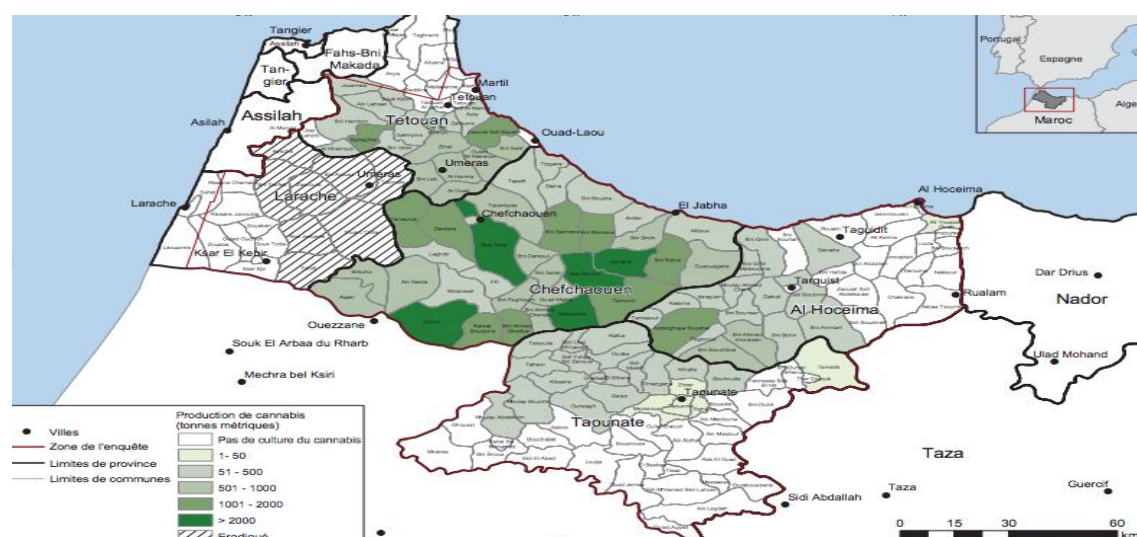
In 2003, the Rif was cultivating more than half the world's cannabis cultivation areas of 231,000 hectares (ha) (Carpentier et al 2012). Cannabis resin production in the Rif reached its peak in 2003 to roughly 134,000 ha, larger than any type of drug cultivation production in the world e.g. poppy and coca fields in Afghanistan and Colombia, respectively (2012). The Moroccan government indicates that between 2013-2017, the Rif's 47,000 ha of land was devoted to cannabis cultivation (UNODC 2019). However, this is the same area estimates reported in 2009 (UNODC 2011), while in 2017, more than 35,000 tons of cannabis was produced (2019). Evidently, the data on cultivation areas of different cannabis products (kif, hashish, or herbs) is not accurate (2012). This data is additionally contradicted by the high levels of quantity and quality consumed by Europe (EMCDDA 2017).

In 2013, Morocco is said to have supplied Europe with 641 tons of cannabis resin (EMCDDA 2017). However, this data is not reliable since 1,200 tons is required to satisfy Europe's demand of cannabis resin annually (2017). Additionally, European seizure reports indicate that cannabis resin potency has tripled; an increase from 8% to 26.6% of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) (2017; UNODC 2019). Interestingly, prices accommodating this quality have not decreased (2017). The increased quantity of cannabis produced and affordable retail prices are a clear indication that drug policy's supply-sided methods have failed. Furthermore, research has demonstrated that technological advancements have enabled indoor and outdoor cannabis cultivation (Potter et al 2011), leading to a reduction of European demand. Nevertheless, the Rif continues to adapt to these changes by introducing new high-quality hybrid seeds, estimated to produce three to five times more yields (Chouvy and Afsahi 2014; Chouvy and Macfarlane 2018). Evidently, standard drug policy metrics are not accurately measuring the supply market as the new indicator, the shift to hybrid seeds, suggests that cannabis resin production is not reliant solely on local kif-based yields (2014; EMCDDA 2017).

## 3.2 Failure of Eradication Policies and Alternative Development

The second unintended drug policy impact is on Morocco's environment which suppresses cannabis crops and enforces non-sustainable AD programs. These inhumane eradication methods fail to address the impacts on the poorest and most marginalized communities of the rural Rif. Hence, by forcefully eradicating cannabis plantations, law enforcement is eliminating the main source of income for thousands of families. This further aggravates poverty and inflates cannabis resin production; a clear indication of drug policy's inefficacy. Aside from these factors, eradication practices in traditional cultivation areas are ineffective as they fail to consider centuries-long cultivation traditions and cultural rights (Jelsma 2018). Therefore, in fear of a social upheaval, the Moroccan government usually avoids destructing traditional cultivation areas and targets instead, commercial areas (Blickman 2017; Jelsma 2018). This distinction is visible in map three below which indicates that most of the cannabis areas eradicated were in the north-west region of Larache. The historical cultivation areas surrounding Chefchaouen, evidently where cannabis resin is most produced, have not been disrupted. This discrepancy indicates that the Rif's cultural traditions of cannabis cultivation undermine effective implementation of drug policy's enforcement methods.

**Map 3 Cannabis Resin Production and Eradication in Morocco's Northern Provinces**



Furthermore, Morocco's government claims that cannabis cultivation areas have significantly decreased as a result of eradication campaigns. This has also been supported by the U.S. and the EU's financial funds accumulating to 75 million EUR between 2003 and 2013 (Blickman 2017). However, despite these large investments in cannabis crop eradication, cannabis resin production continues to increase. Hence, there is a wide discrepancy between the measurements of areas cultivated and the quantity of cannabis resin produced annually (Carpentier et al 2012). While cannabis cultivated areas are said to have decreased from 134,000 ha in 2003 to 47,500 ha to 2013 (ONDA 2014), this does not explain the increased dissemination of hybrid seeds (Chouvy and Macfarlane 2018), high levels of cannabis resin potency, and the expansion of cannabis cultivation to other regions in Morocco (Afsahi and Mouna 2014; Afsahi and Chouvy 2013; Carpentier et al 2012; Stambouli et al 2005). More importantly, while large-scale eradication policies are considered to be success indicators for measuring drug policy outcomes, in practice, they are doing more harm than good. Accordingly, these interventions, endorsed primarily by security and political interests (Mouna and Essouadi 2015), have not offered any form of restitution for the thousands of cannabis cultivating-families. Controversially, the economic and environmental impacts of eradication policies have forced farming families to resort to cannabis cultivation and grow even greater quantities of cannabis resin in order to afford the basic means of survival.

AD programs, on the other hand, generally fail in developing countries because they disregard human development and economic-based motivations for cannabis cultivation (Buxton 2016). Because of this, rural inequalities and social exclusion are reinforced and the most vulnerable farmers will most likely cultivate in other safe or less commercial areas (2016). This is also referred to as the "balloon effect", whereby cannabis production will simply move from one area to another as a result of suppressive interventions. Therefore,

cannabis production in the Rif is measured as a social and economic construct as it essentially secures the livelihoods of thousands of family households.

Nevertheless, AD projects remain the main subject of Morocco's drug policy (Blickman 2017; UNODC 2015). These programs focus on integrating the rural population and especially, cannabis cultivation-farmers into educational and health services (UNODC 2015). They seek to improve rural development in 75 communities and have so far cost the Moroccan government 85 million EUR (ONDA 2014). However, the outcomes of these programs have failed to generate any alternative agriculture productivity. This is due to the Rif's rigid and unstable climate, poor soil, high mountainous altitudes, and outdated irrigation techniques (Afsahi 2017b). Increased practices of deforestation, extensive use of fertilizers, and soil depletion have thereby made cannabis the only prosperous crop able to grow in the region (2017b). According to field observations conducted by Tom Blickman in 2013, the failure of AD programs have been identified as "an empty ramshackle office and some withered apple trees are sad reminders of a failed attempt to lure farmers away from cannabis cultivation" (Blickman 2017). This indicates that extreme poverty, a degraded environment, lack of implementation, monitoring, political will, as well as adequate rural infrastructure led to the failure of most, if not all, AD programs (2017).

### **3.3 The Role of Rural Women in Cannabis Resin Cultivation**

The economic and environmental vulnerabilities imposed by drug policy impacts discussed in the previous sections encourage rural women to contribute to cannabis production. This increased participation of women in cannabis resin cultivation serves as the third unintended impact of drug policy on social development. Hence, women's disregarded role in drug policy has led to significant societal changes and shifts in inherent conventional gender norms. These issues are generally found among indigenous, rural, and poor women because

in this context, cannabis cultivation represents a source of income and empowerment. More importantly, as a consequence of gendered drug policy, there is an extreme lack of knowledge on women's interaction with illegal cultivation practices and their contribution to the cannabis supply market.

Accordingly, women's underexplored role in cannabis cultivation is due to four main limitations that represent a major challenge for drug control. First, remote and rural cultivation regions are very difficult to access and survey. Second, a gender perspective in drug policy design and implementation is still not a priority. Third, patriarchal and conventional communities serve as an obstacle in analysing women's involvement in drug-related issues. Finally, while most women from drug-cultivating countries of the Global South suffer from similar harms inflicted by drug policy, much of the literature focuses on Latin America (Castro 2020). Additionally, most of the research focuses on women's consumption or drug-trafficking, rather than cultivation since it is more complicated to measure (Fernandez 2017).

Nevertheless, in order to understand how drug policy impacts on women influence social development in Morocco, this section will first analyse Morocco's societal construct. Accordingly, Morocco is a country largely characterized by inherent patriarchal norms that stem from Islamic beliefs and consequently translate into socio-political structures (Ennaji 2016; UN HRC 2012). Similarly to most rural patriarchal regions, this society is heavily manifested in gender stereotypes which primarily lead to discrimination against women in the private and public space (UN HRC 2012; Castro 2020). This is despite the fact that the majority of Morocco's population is women (World Bank 2020).

This inequality stems from an embedded patriarchy apparent in an authoritative familial construct. In rural areas especially, family members have a specific role to fulfill and their identity is dictated by their familial position. This is highly influenced by misconceptions of Islam which consider women amongst the lowest ranks of the family hierarchy (Ennaji 2016). As a result, they are disproportionately impacted by poverty and social exclusion (HCP and World Bank 2017), limiting their economic and political opportunities (UN HRC 2012). Additionally, the popular discriminatory Moroccan proverbs present a disempowering portrayal of women that further reinforce notions of patriarchy (2012). However, while women's rights have indeed improved over recent years (2012), there is a large divide between urban and rural regions (HCP and World Bank 2017). The Rif especially, is considered the most conventional, underdeveloped, and gender-biased (Afsahi 2015b). This also negatively impacts women as they are not only discriminated against because of their gender but due to their geographic origins of the Rif region (2012).

These patriarchal constructs and social inequalities are reflected in women's active involvement in cannabis cultivation. Similarly to the unequal familial structure, the cannabis resin market is operated under an unequal family-based cultivation. The division of labor is allocated to different family members that have specific roles in cannabis resin cultivation and production. In traditional cultivation areas, women, men, and children all take part in cultivating and producing cannabis resin (Afsahi 2011). These practices also remain within the privilege of family units (Mouna 2018). In commercial cultivation areas, families usually employ experts to cultivate cannabis crops in order to improve and increase yields (2011).

While cannabis cultivation practices are distinctively shared among all family members, it is only after men have acquired the necessary expertise that other family members can participate (Afsahi 2015b). Thus, men are the managers of the cannabis business (Mouna



2018), in charge of revenues and providing the necessary equipment and products for cannabis plantations (2011). Children, on the other hand, also participate by looking after livestock and protecting cannabis crops from any external harms (2011). Young girls, in particular, starting from age seven, are tasked with “collecting wood, weeding cereal plots, de-stemming, and uprooting male plants” (Afsahi 2011; Mouna 2018). Cannabis cultivation in the Rif is also a gendered practice as girls are trained differently by male and female family members. While fathers or brothers teach girls about irrigation and soil enrichment, mothers or elder sisters teach them how to dry, prepare and store cannabis (Afsahi 2015b).

Nevertheless, cannabis cultivation negatively impacts children’s livelihoods as it reduces their chances of receiving an education and therefore, limits their options for other (legal) economic opportunities. This, however, represents another weakness of drug policy which fails to consider children’s involvement in cannabis cultivation thereby further intensifying the harms and risks of the illegal practice. It also severely impacts children since eradication methods have proved to exacerbate poverty, which also suggests that poor families become financially incapable of sending their children to school (Barrett 2011). As a result of drug policy impacts, children essentially become a source of income for their families (2011).

Women, on the other hand, represent half of the agriculture farmers in the Rif and are primarily compelled by survival necessities to illegally cultivate cannabis. Under these conditions, women legitimize cannabis cultivation and the costs of being involved in this illicit practice are endured as a result of poverty but also as a means of escaping unequal social identities that permeate Morocco’s patriarchy (Afsahi 2015b). In this case, they tend to bear triple the burden for participating in this criminalized activity.

First, they are responsible for completing tasks in cannabis resin cultivation and production. This includes weeding and harvesting throughout the entire agricultural season (Afsahi 2011; Mouna 2018). However, in order to avoid harmful risks of the agricultural practice, they are often excluded from irrigation, planting pesticide control products, and transforming cannabis into resin or hashish (2011). Second, they have to take care of the household which commonly contains more than eight people in the rural Rif. Third, they have to endure harsh stigmatization from the patriarchal rural community. As a result of the former invisible roles, women tend to work longer hours than men by not only caring for cannabis crops, but for supplying men with heavy loads of food, water, and wood (Afsahi 2011, 2015b; Mouna 2018). Because of this, women are considered to be more hard-working and resilient than men, making them the most important participants of the cannabis industry (Afsahi 2015b).

As a consequence, rural women's active participation in cannabis resin cultivation has attached a different connotation to the conventional Moroccan society. This practice has provided women with a sense of independence from the patriarchal society and traditional gender norms that confined women to their domestic space (UN HRC 2012). With cannabis cultivation, women are now involved in work places previously reserved only to men (Afsahi 2015b). To some extent, the decent income they receive from cultivating and producing cannabis resin has led to greater individuality, economic autonomy, and empowerment (2015b). Hence, this generally increases women's privilege in decision-making beyond the household by allowing them to invest in education, health, and housing (Castro 2020). However, while their roles in cannabis cultivation have contributed to deconstructing predetermined social ties and traditional structures, their participation still requires or depends on men's authorization and the community's social tolerance (Mouna 2018). Additionally, the fact that women lack property rights in the Rif's cultivation regions (2018),

they are generally excluded from land tenure which restricts their access to bank loans (Schleifer and Pol 2017; Castro 2020).

Women's valuable yet, invisible role in cannabis cultivation struggles from additional barriers. While their involvement in this illicit market is undermined by social constraints and gender inequalities, drug policy further embeds these issues by excluding a gender perspective (Castro 2020). Consequently, it undermines social development by failing to recognize rural women's poor living conditions and social vulnerabilities that obligate them to participate in the illicit cannabis economy. Thus, the main issue is not only that drug policy continues to neglect women's engagement in an illegal activity, but how this in turn impacts their livelihoods. This is a clear indication of lack of equity in drug policy's design, implementation and monitoring of gender-related issues.

## Conclusion

This thesis approached the study of Morocco's cannabis resin market through the scholarship on the failure of global drug control policy. In order for drug policy to minimize the harms associated with drugs, it should address and recognize that drug cultivation occurs in the context of rural, patriarchal, and impoverished communities. Drug policies' design continues to neglect the economic, environmental and social vulnerabilities of the cannabis supply market which consequently undermine effective implementation of drug control. This results in counterproductive outcomes that stagnate rural and human development. In practice, drug policy's prohibition methods have strengthened the resilience of the illicit cannabis resin market and led to an increase of production. This stems from drug policy's failure to address the root causes of the cannabis supply market which further exacerbate poverty and economic inequalities. This is recognized as the first unintended impact on Morocco's economic development. Hence, cannabis cultivation serves as the main income source for thousands of rural families and is primarily driven by a European demand.

These socioeconomic dynamics have led to the failure of drug policy's principle implementation strategies that are manifested in eradication policies and alternative development. By revisiting these suppressive interventions, this thesis has shown that the second intended impact of drug policy on environmental development has been ineffective, counterproductive, and destructive. Thus, how do we account for large-scale eradication practices in the Rif, a financially constrained, environmentally damaged, and socially underdeveloped region whereby the vast majority of its people can only rely on one illegal crop for survival? Drug policy needs to recognize that eradication methods and AD programs are unsuccessful primarily because cannabis cultivation, a development issue, is also a balloon effect that will prevail unless sustainable and viable solutions that address the reality of rural people, are enforced.

These challenges however, have led to the increased yet, underexplored role of women in cannabis cultivation. Data on the cannabis resin market favors quantitative statistics on the reduction of cannabis production and largely disregards women's involvement in the illicit cannabis supply market. This is despite the fact that women represent the majority of the rural population and cultivate cannabis purely for survival necessities. Contrarily, drug policy further pervades gender inequality norms in Morocco's society by stigmatizing and discriminating against women who cultivate cannabis. Nevertheless, women continue to challenge predetermined gender roles and patriarchal family structures by engaging in a male-dominated work space. However, these developments are undermined by drug policy which excludes a gender perspective in design and implementation. Additionally, by neglecting the impacts of cannabis cultivation on women's living conditions, drug policy further reinforces gender stereotypes. Evidently, this third unintended impact on women has proved to hinder effective social development in Morocco.

The aforementioned findings of this thesis have shown that cannabis cultivation is explicitly integrated within a wider economic, environmental, and social development context. However, drug policy's unintended impacts are not unique to Morocco. The flaws of the IDCR highlighted in this thesis have come at an enormous cost to all states. Drug-cultivating and developing countries in particular, are most heavily impacted by global drug control policy as they are excessively pressured by consumer countries to reduce drug production. While evidence has shown that this method is ineffective and counterproductive, the drug issue is still not incorporated within a broader design and implementation of human development.

Given that this thesis has explored a complex and sensitive policy area on an illicit drug, there are various limitations and constraints the research has faced. As previously discussed, the fact that cannabis cultivation remains an illegal activity and drugs remain illicit substances, it is extremely difficult to accurately measure the targeted impacts and outcomes of drug policy. More importantly, the standard drug policy supply-based metrics used to measure drug policy successes have proven to be highly biased, inefficient, and unreliable in holistically evaluating the drug problem. Hence, there are major challenges to accessing legitimate data on drug policy impacts, especially for developing countries such as Morocco, which lack resource capacities to monitor and report on drug-related issues. Additionally, considering that drug policy is not gender-responsive, there is a lack of gender-disaggregated data and specifically on women's role in cannabis cultivation and the influence this has on their lives.

Furthermore, according to the author's best knowledge, this thesis is a first attempt to highlight the failures of global drug control policy through Morocco's cannabis resin market and from a quantitative and qualitative lens. However, due to time, resource, and consequence constraints of the current global pandemic, the data and information of this research was collected mainly from primary and secondary literature. It should primarily be considered that official data statistics on Morocco's supply market are outdated and the last UNODC report on the country was more than a decade ago. Therefore, further research should first fill in the gaps of this thesis through fieldwork and updated data on the cannabis resin supply market. Second, while this thesis has attempted to present a comprehensive drug control impact assessment, the impact indicators remain nevertheless, limited. Further research should identify additional performance metrics and explore the current government's approaches to drug policy considering that in the last few years Morocco has been discussing potential cannabis policy reform. Accordingly, this thesis has not discussed

how the country's political structure influences drug policy design and implementation. In this regard, it is important to take into account the ruling Islamic party that plays a major role in dictating drug control. This is another limitation of the thesis that does not include an analysis how religion, a significant characteristic of Morocco, coincides with the leading cannabis market. This is especially important when accounting for women's role in cannabis cultivation. Third, since this work has focused mainly on cannabis cultivation, it is important to extend this analysis by looking at how drug policy impacts the use and trafficking of cannabis resin within the Moroccan context. Lastly, since global drug control policy is reflected in every national context, further research should provide a comparative analysis on developing drug-cultivating countries and explore how drug policy is impacted in different settings. This is important to further enhance and strengthen the understanding of wider drug control policy failures.

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