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Hierarchy vs dispersion:  
Catalonia's drug smuggling and human trafficking criminal networks' structure

Dissertation submitted by  
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## Abstract

Drug smuggling and human trafficking criminal networks are usually described as pyramidal hierarchical organizations with multiple members in charge of a specific position in the network according to their tasks. However, the reality is more complex and the structure of both crimes networks vary according to their position in the criminal chain, for example between networks in charge of the recruitment or production of the illicit good and those in charge of the distribution or exploitation phase of the crime. The analysis of 96 final judicial rulings of drug smuggling and human trafficking in Catalonia shows consistency with this thesis. Drug smuggling criminal chain of cocaine and hashish, the two main drugs that are smuggled to Catalonia and from there to Italy, France, Netherlands, and Switzerland, includes suppliers in the drug's country of origin, especially South America and Morocco, networks in charge of the transportation and wholesales of the drugs, and local wholesalers and retailers that are in charge of the local market. Similarly, the human trafficking criminal chain presents recruitment networks in the victim's country of origin, transportation networks with multiple contacts in the transit regions, and finally exploitation networks based in Catalonia. Moreover, there are links with other networks specialized in specific tasks such as the falsification of documents and the corruption of public officers. Consequently, a difference must be made between the structure of the criminal chain that involves all the networks necessary to commit the crime and the structure of the single networks that are part of the chain. The latter implies segmented loosed structures with multiple networks involve in the different phases of the crime while the former presents a more traditional hierarchical structure.

## 1. Introduction

Organized crime is a highly profitable activity. This is evidenced from the observations made by UNODC's study, in 2009 on transnational organized crime which observed that such crimes produced revenues that reached equal to 3.6% of the global GDP, which is around USD \$2.1 trillion, with drug smuggling accounting for one-fifth of the total crime proceeds and 50% of all transnational organized crime profits (2011, 5 and 7). Estimations for the trafficking of human beings suggest a total revenue of \$32 billion worldwide for traffickers with over 2.5 million exploited victims, however, it should be noted that the true profits from human exploitation are harder to identify and calculate. This is due in part because the trafficking of human beings intrinsically reduces the expenses and costs for a criminal organization who use trafficked individuals for labor exploitation in the agriculture or textile industry or non-observed economic situations as sexual exploitation (Belser 2005; Petros 2005).

Considering these profits, organized criminal groups tries to maximize profits by lowering costs through cooperation, exchange of services, corruption, and by synergizing its activities and diversifying into new criminal markets, such as drug trafficking (ONU 1975, 52; Trapero Álvarez 2010). Previous studies support the idea that criminal organizations are willing to commit both drug smuggling and human trafficking due to efficiency and maximization of profits (Aronowitz, Theuermann and Tyurykanova 2010, 32; Cornell 2009, 56; Klerks 2003, 101; López and Vizcarra 2012, 80; Shelley 2012, 243 and 251; Thachuk 2007, 167–69).

Theoretical and practical research shows a connection between the structure and characteristics of a criminal organization involved in drug smuggling and human trafficking; however, available data is neither systematic nor precise. First, both crimes operate with a parallel stage structure with the first phase being the recruitment or supply, the second phase being transportation, and the third phase being exploitation or

distribution of human beings or drugs. International reports suggest a possible relation during the first phase when human trafficking victims are used as labor force by drug cartels (GRETA 2018, 38; UNICEF 2006, 91). Secondly, during the smuggling process, both crimes use the same national and international routes, and human trafficking victims are recruited as mules to smuggle drugs through local, regional, and international borders (United States Department of State, 2018; UNODC 2016, 36).

However, these studies focus only on one crime or its implications for other domains such as development, security, or child labor amongst, and this information is scattered among both academic and non-academic sources (Petros 2005, 2). Consequently, the information available regarding the overlap of criminal organizations involved in drug smuggling and human trafficking requires an evidence-based systematic analysis (Gozdziak and Collett 2005, 121–22). This thesis aims to reduce this gap by providing quantitative data on the characteristics of criminal organizations involved in drug smuggling and human trafficking and their operations in Catalonia, Spain.

The research question that drives this study asks: how do criminal organizations related to drug smuggling and human trafficking operate within the local context of Catalonia? The main objective of the study is to identify, describe and analyze the structure and the characteristics of the different criminal organizations related to both crimes to provide recommendations for the design of effective public policies for their prosecution. The methodology includes both qualitative and quantitative research methods. It is based on a single region and case study, the autonomous Spanish region of Catalonia, and the identification, collection, and analysis of the complete set of judicial rulings related to drug smuggling and human trafficking during the period 2015-2020.

The thesis is divided into five sections: the first provides an overview of the existing literature on the structure of organized crime and the particularities of criminal organizations involved in drug smuggling and human trafficking. In this section both a

summary and synthesis of secondary sources will be conducted that will be developed alongside a theoretical framework that will guide the empirical discussion. The second section describes the thesis case study, including Catalonia's context and the main characteristics of drug smuggling and human trafficking cases in the region. The third part of the thesis examines the research methodology including the different research methods, the software used for data analysis, and the steps followed for the examination of the judicial rulings. The fourth section includes the presentation of the empirical analysis and main findings of the judicial rulings' examinations, along with a discussion and interpretation of the results. The fifth section will elucidate the main conclusions of the research along with providing policy recommendations regarding the persecution of drug smuggling and human trafficking criminal organization in Catalonia.



## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Crimes' cost-benefit analysis and choice-structuring properties

Crimes are rationalized and committed, among other reasons, from an internal after a cost-benefit analysis at an individual level which includes the socialization processes of a criminal; the characteristics of the crime; and the characteristics related to the specific context where the crime will be committed (Becker 1968, 176; Short 1997). The choice-structuring property theory expands on Becker's cost-analysis proposal, states that the reasoning behind a specific criminal course of action includes the inherent characteristics of the crimes and details of the crime itself, such as - type and amount of payoff, perceived risk, skills needed, criminal experience, abilities, and expertise, etc. (Clarke and Cornish 1987; Massari 2005, 8).

The cost-benefit analysis also involves specific variables related to the context where the criminal organization operates such as - geographical features, the effectiveness of law enforcement and the judicial system, the crime rate, and even the potential characteristics of the victims (Chatterjee 2005; EUROPOL 2017, 13; Matsueda 2013; Short 1997, 63). These external characteristics influence the different potential levels of profits that criminals can earn according to the local, regional, or national context of their operations (Matsueda 2013, 289; UNODC 2011, para. 51 and 53).

Critics of the model state that cost-benefit analysis, related to criminology rational choice theory, presumes the complete rationality of the criminal and considers that they have full information regarding the internal and external characteristics of the crime (Akers 1990, 654; Matsueda 2013). For example, research related to incarcerated armed robbers showed that only 25% of the interviewees reported a detailed plan of their crime, 25% stated a total lack of planning and 50% declared partial planning (Petersilia 1978).

Consequently, bounded rationality and asymmetric information are the main concerns that must be considered when analyzing the behavior of the criminal organization.

## 2.2. Organized crime and social network analysis

Considering the internal and external characteristics, crimes have diverse levels of complexity which in certain cases require the organization and cooperation of different actors leading to the formulation of criminal organizations. This study adopts the definition of an organized criminal group prescribed by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime<sup>1</sup> which defines an organized criminal group as structured groups of a minimum three persons acting in concert to commit serious crimes for a period, where serious crimes are understood as those offenses punished with a minimum of four years of deprivation of liberty (United Nations General Assembly 2000, art. 2).<sup>2</sup> During the preparatory debates, different States highlighted that organized crime structures and characteristics evolve quickly over time, and therefore the adopted definition is required to be broad and general in order not to lose effectiveness (UNODC 2008, xxii).

To avoid this problem, the Convention also states that a structured group should be understood as any group not randomly formed for the immediate commission, including groups without a formal structure, roles, or continuity of membership of its components

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<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2000, by resolution 55/25, and entered into force on September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> The 2000 Convention against Transnational Organized crime, art. 2, defines organized crime as:

(a) “Organized criminal group” shall mean a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit;

(b) “Serious crime” shall mean conduct constituting an offence punishable by a maximum deprivation of liberty of at least four years or a more serious penalty [...].

(United Nations General Assembly 2000, art. 2.c).<sup>3</sup> The interpretative note of the article highlights the comprehensive meaning of the term which includes non-hierarchical organizations whose members do not have specific functions (UNODC 2008, 18). As can be seen later on in the analysis section, most of Catalonia drug trafficking and human trafficking criminal organizations belong to the latter category, however, there are problems during the trial phase for the extensive application of the definition according to the international treaty which leads to low-level convictions.

This definition's need of adjustment is especially necessary for the persecution of those crimes whose profitability depends on their satisfaction of the demand for prohibited goods or services such as illicit drugs, firearms, forced labor, and sex workers or victims (UNODC 2011, 51). The satisfaction of that demand requires an intricate procedure to obtain the goods at the place of origin and to transport and distribute it at the destination place. Ergo, even if criminal organizations are usually described as monopolistic hierarchical organizations, controlling the whole criminal process can be more complex in reality as demonstrated by the study conducted by Cressey on Italian Mafia structure (Chatterjee 2005; Cressey 1967; Klerks 2001, 54-55; Massari 2005, 11-13). It includes different actors as organizations or single individuals, small clans, families, friends, etc., related to the different criminal stages who create networks to achieve their goal and maximize their profits (Gerry Qc et al. 2018; Kenney 2007; Organization of American States 2013).

As the social network theory states, network ties are built up over time through human relationships, such as family relations, previous crimes connections, friendships, among other similar factors, and involves a division of task and knowledge about the operations

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<sup>3</sup> The 2000 Convention against Transnational Organized crime, art. 2, defines organized crime as:  
(c) "Structured group" shall mean a group that is not randomly formed for the immediate commission of an offence and that does not need to have formally defined roles for its members, continuity of its membership or a developed structure [...].

between the different actors (Kenney 2007, 235; Klerks 2001, 57–58; McIlwain 1999; Paoli and Reuter 2008). This structure provides flexibility to the drug smuggling and human trafficking networks, protects it, and allows it to overcome negative situations as an effective police operation, including rebuilding the network and constructing new ties (McIlwain 1999; Salt and Stein 1997, 478). Furthermore, different linkages and their importance in the network allow some individuals to act as brokers between criminal organizations, to minimize transaction costs and to replace pieces of the puzzle when they disappear from the map (Coles 2001, 584–86; Klerks 2001, 62).

The analysis of drug smuggling and human trafficking definitions leads to noticing that both crimes have a three-phases process (Geronimi 2002; Kenney 2007, 241–42; Organization of American States 2013, 15–17). The first phase is related to the cultivation and production of the drugs or the recruitment of the victim; the second one includes the transportation of the product, or human, to the destination point, a process that can take several steps according to the distance between the illegal markets and the place of origin; and, finally, the third phase involves the sale of the drugs or the exploitation of the victim. This three-stages process makes drug smuggling and human trafficking criminal organizations' structure and procedures very similar as a fluid system with flexible exchange networks that adjust their behavior according to the market and regulatory constraints (Chatterjee 2005; Kenney 2007, 235) (Kenney 2007, 235).

### 2.2.1. Drug smuggling criminal organizations: features and structure

The 1988 Convention Against the Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances defines drug smuggling as the cultivation, production, manufacture, transportation, distribution, and sale of any narcotic drug and psychotropic substance. The last ones are defined in the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and the 1971

Convention on Psychotropic Substances.<sup>4</sup> The definition of drug smuggling for this study also includes the manufacture and transportation of the materials or substances used for the illicit cultivation, production, or manufacture of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances; and the organization, management, or financing of any of these listed activities, according to the treaty.

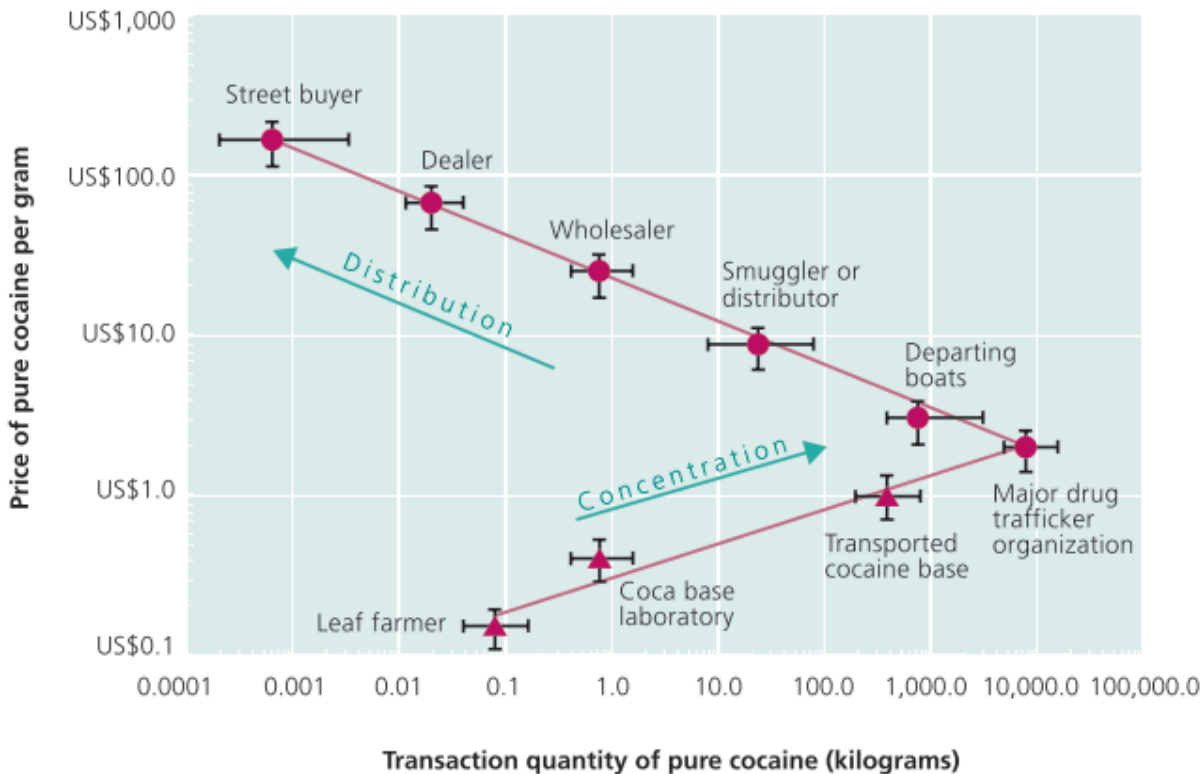
There exist differences amongst the various drug markets related to differing routes, market sizes, and criminal organization structure. On the one hand, for example, cannabis exchange mostly prevalent in local markets were cultivation, production, commercialization, and consumptions are carried out in the same area; while on the other hand, cocaine is usually related to transnational organized crime and production, transportation and commercialization phases are executed in different countries or regions (Paoli and Reuter 2008; UNODC 2011, 10).

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<sup>4</sup> The 1988 Convention against the Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, art. 3, defines drug trafficking as:

- i) The production, manufacture, extraction, preparation, offering, offering for sale, distribution, sale, delivery on any terms whatsoever, brokerage, dispatch, dispatch in transit, transport, importation or exportation of any narcotic drug or any psychotropic substance contrary to the provisions of the 1961 [Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the 1961 Convention as amended or the 1971 [Convention on Psychotropic Substances];
- ii) The cultivation of opium poppy, coca bush or cannabis plant for the purpose of the production of narcotic drugs contrary to the provisions of the 1961 Convention and the 1961 Convention as amended;
- iii) The possession or purchase of any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance for the purpose of any of the activities enumerated in i) above;
- iv) The manufacture, transport or distribution of equipment, materials or of substances listed in Table I and Table II, knowing that they are to be used in or for the illicit cultivation, production or manufacture of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances;
- v) The organization, management or financing of any of the offences enumerated in i), ii), iii) or iv) above ()

**Figure 1. Late-1990s price-quantity trends for consolidation and distribution segments**



(Anthony and Fries 2004, 16; UNODC 2011, 72)

As Figure 1 shows, there are three different groups of people: producers which are in the country of origin, wholesalers that import drugs in big quantities and sell it to their network of retailers, and retailers who resell the drugs to even smaller retailers or the final consumers (Anthony and Fries 2004, 16; Massari 2005, 8).<sup>5</sup> All of them, according to their internal and external characteristics, fall into four main categories: corporations as more structured groups, communal business, family business, and freelancers, where family and ethnicity ties are important linkages between the different sections of the structure and the drug smuggling process (Natarajan 2000, 274; Paoli and Reuter 2008, 5:25–26).

This criminal structure implies that only a few categories of criminal organizations that are related to the import of the drug, its distribution, and final sale operate in destination

<sup>5</sup> UNODC defines wholesales as all cocaine transaction above 28.4 grams (UNODC 2011, 83).

countries such as Spain. The importance of these organizations, from the point of view of criminal prosecution, is based on the quantity of drug imported which is added on to the profits achieved by the members of the network (Klerks 2001, 56).

### 2.2.2. Human trafficking: loosely criminal organization structures

The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, 2000, which specifically focuses on Women and Children and also supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, defines human trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, or receipt of a person, using those means for the control of the victim and the exploitation (Gallagher 2009; Gozdziaik and Collett 2005, 104).<sup>6</sup> Consequently, for this study, human trafficking is understood as the process that leads a victim towards exploitation, which includes not only sexual abuse but also labor exploitation, slavery or servitude, removal of organs, etc. (Bales and Robbins 2001; Wharton 2010).

Moreover, human trafficking is different from human smuggling. The latter is the facilitation of the illegal international border crossing of a migrant which agreed on a payment or a material benefit for the smuggler (Aronowitz 2001; Brolan 2003; Gozdziaik

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<sup>6</sup> Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, art. 3:

- a) "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;
- b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;
- c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;
- d) "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.

and Collett 2005, 106). However, both crimes often overlap, for example, smuggled victims for sexual exploitation or smuggled migrants which end up being exploited to pay the debt of the smuggler, result in difficulties for the persecution system in establishing identification of a migrant as a human trafficking victim (Carling 2006, 9–11; Gallagher 2001; Salt 2000; Srikantiah 2007, 776).

Human trafficking like drug smuggling is a criminal business that aims to provide profits and involve various stages that are carried out by different actors in different geographical locations (Salt and Stein 1997). The most common ones are the recruiters in the place of origin of the victim also called *sponsors*, the transporter or smuggler and the final exploiter also called *madam* (Belser 2005, 18; Prina 2003, 29–30). However, similar to drug trafficking organizations, mom-and-pop organizations are common: few members related by family or friendship linkages, with a loose structure, different roles and organized in small operational cells, that operate with partial information and with the support of external persons in charge of particular duties as providing false documents, receive the victims or control them during the journey (Okojie et al. 2003, 86; Salt and Stein 1997, 476–79).

The criminal organizations operating in this field incur several costs related to the distance between the place of origin and final destination, type of transportation, provision of documents, number and characteristics of the victims, and external characteristics of the places of recruitment, transportation, and destination (Petros 2005, 12). Consequently, different criminal organizations likely have similar features, for example, the same safe routes of transportation, corruption of public officers, among other characteristics (Shelley 2012, 243 and 251; Thachuk 2007, 167–69). Moreover, these operations require a wide range of information regarding transportation, State-prosecution operations, and border controls, asylum-seeker procedure gaps, and false documentation providers, as well as a financing system that allows the network to provide cash to the cells or persons in charge of the different task. However, specific roles,



gains, and costs of the different actors involved in the complex institutionalized networks related to human trafficking are difficult to determine (Salt and Stein 1997, 468 and 479).

### 3. Literature review: Catalonia case study

#### 3.1. Catalonia: a profitable city-node for drug smuggling and human trafficking

The external characteristics of the place where drug smuggling and human trafficking crimes are committed, such as the geography, the political context, the socio-economic conditions, and effectiveness of the judicial system, are important variables to understand the nature and structure of the criminal organization involved in such activities (Chatterjee 2005). Concerning this, Europe presents some appealing conditions like the absence of borders controls between states that facilitate transnational criminal operations, particularly the transportation of the illegal products among countries; an integrated transportation system, a well-developed communication infrastructure, and large intercultural urban centers where a criminal organization can find same-nationality partners (Curtis and Karacan 2002a; McIlwain 1999; Maftai 2012). Moreover in 2017, in Europe, 30% to 40% of the criminal organizations had a loose structure and 20% of them operated for short periods (EUROPOL 2017, 14).

Additionally, West and Central Europe depict a profit maximization hub for criminal organizations related to drug smuggling and human trafficking (EUROPOL 2017, 14). In 2011, according to UNODC, three-quarters of cocaine trafficking retail and wholesale profits were produced in developing countries (\$84 billion) of which \$26 billion were accrued from Western and Central Europe (2011, 10). Furthermore, in 2009, the average import price per gram of cocaine from Western and Central Europe was \$ 2.2; the average wholesale price was \$ 84; and the average retail price was \$ 273, with an approximate consumption of 122,793 kilograms of cocaine (UNODC 2011, 59). These prices are not only higher than those reported from the North American market but also presents a great opportunity of illicit earnings considering the quantity of consumption per population.

During the past years, Europe has shown an increase in the number of human trafficking victims, a crime whose proceeds are then invested in other crimes such as drug and arms smuggling (CoE 2000). Concerning human trafficking, annual profits per victim, are estimated in \$ 67,200 in industrialized economies like Spain, considering the price of sexual services – which are higher in developed economies with high levels of income and prohibitive legal regimes, the number of the customers per victim is estimated to be 3 to 4 per day (even if ILO's database shows a ratio of 5 to 10 customers per day), and the payment to the victim for the services which usually is null due to the debt that the victim has to pay to the trafficker (Belser 2005, 13–14). Furthermore, the main routes target African victims, especially from Morocco to Spain and from Nigeria to Italy, with the average cost of movement being \$6,533 (Okojie et al. 2003, 47; Petros 2005, 6).

Barcelona presents several characteristics that make the city an appealing market for criminal organizations related to drug smuggling and human trafficking. Its geographical position, as one of the major Spanish seaports for both cargo containers and tourism, and along with the European Union open borders policy, makes Barcelona a city-node that functions as an entry point of drugs and human trafficking victims to Europe (Ministerio de Fomento de España 2019, 4 and 24; Salt and Stein 1997, 475; UNODC 2011, 67). This role of the Catalan region dates back to the early 1980s with heroin smuggling to Europe, especially France, and it is still relevant now for hashish and cocaine market routes (Maftei 2012; Missaoui and Tarrius 1999, 10–13).

The international environment and the presence of diverse diasporas are also important features of Catalonia (Curtis and Karacan 2002b; Massari 2005, 2). Analysis of judicial rulings shows that Catalonia's criminal organizations are mostly based on nationality or family ties inside the organization, which creates links and contacts between the network in Catalonia and the drug suppliers in the country of origin.

Furthermore, the selection of the crime and *modus operandi* is dependent on the effectiveness of the prosecution system, including police, prosecutors, and judges. Holding other variables constant, the probability of conviction and punishment would decrease the number of crimes committed, where the increase in the probability of conviction has a greater effect than an increase in punishment (Becker 1968; Curtis and Karacan 2002b; Matsueda 2013; Paoli 2018). In this regard, the analysis of the Catalonia final judicial rulings (judgments) reveals that a substantial number of drug smuggling criminal organizations receive minimum prison sentences which entail recidivism and the inefficacy of the conviction.

### 3.2. Drug smuggling in Catalonia

Spain has the highest ratio of annual cocaine users to cocaine traffickers in Europe (12.4:1) with a total of 69,800 estimated drug traffickers in the whole country (UNODC 2011, 75). In Catalonia, during 2018, the prevalence of cannabis use among the population between 15 and 64 years old in the 30 days was 11.9%, which was highest in the country (Observatorio español de las Drogas y las adicciones 2019, 40). Moreover, Catalonia is the Spanish region with the largest amount of marijuana, cannabis, and heroin seizures in 2018, especially in the region of Barcelona and Girona (Ministerio del Interior 2019, 233–34). As per the last reported data, Catalonia's prisons have 1101 inmates (962 men and 139 women) for offenses related to public health that include drug smuggling, with 280 in Barcelona's prisons (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2020; Ministerio del Interior 2019, 306).

Catalonian drug trafficking criminal organizations, as explained in the theoretical model, have different characteristics based on the type of drug smuggled. Domínguez Figueirido *et. al.* analyzed Barcelona's synthetic drug market and identified a three-level structure with low-level retailers among the group of friends (*menudeo*), middle-level retailers with a fixed clientele and a market area, and an institutionalized level with a loose and flexible structure and whose members act as wholesalers (2003; Massari 2005). According to the

data and interviews of the study, middle and institutionalized levels of foreign members are based on nationality linkages, including ethnic relationships with drug providers outside Spain (Domínguez Figueirido et al. 2003, 109).

The ethnicity linkages amongst organizations' members and between different organizations are also relevant at the European level. Specific market sectors are dominated by specific ethnical groups as Turkish and Albanian groups with heroin, Colombian with cocaine, and the native population with cannabis and synthetic drugs (Paoli and Reuter 2008). This drug market division is a consequence of the criminal organizations' cost-benefit analysis where distance and contacts in the place of origin of the drug provide an advantage for certain organizations over others (Massari 2005, 4). In the case of Catalonia, similar to previous studies related to Spain and Morocco, nationals are in charge of hashish imports, which is in line with the findings of this study (Fijnaut et al. 1998, 65; Maftei 2012, 166; Missaoui and Tarrius 1999, 15).

### 3.3. Human trafficking in Catalonia

The archetype of the human trafficking victim in Catalonia is the Nigerian young girl. During 2017, authorities identified 81.65% cis women, 14.68% trans women, and 3.67% cis men as human trafficking victims (UTEH 2018, 21). Among them, 46.79% were Nigerian cis women and with 49.54% being between 25 and 39 years old while 32.11% were between 18 to 24 years old (UTEH 2018, 21–22). This is in line with previous studies that place Spain as the third European destination country for young Nigerian human trafficking victims (Okojie et al. 2003, 28–29; Prina 2003, 27).

The main method of recruitment, often occurring outside Spain – in the country of origin of the victim, is through the personal relationship between the potential victim and the trafficker who is usually a member or friend of the family, a partner, or a trusted person of the victim (Okojie et al. 2003, 55–56; Prina 2003, 32; UTEH 2018, 12). The means to

maintaining control over the victims include the retention of personal documents, physical and psychological threats and violence, and isolation of the victim by their continuous movement between different places to avoid support networks or personal relationships (Bales and Robbins 2001, 36; Hopper and Hidalgo 2006; Wharton 2010, 773). Additionally, it is common that the victim contract a debt with the trafficker, particularly in those cases where human trafficking and smuggling are interconnected, debt that for Nigerian victims is estimated in US\$ 40,000 to US\$ 100,000 (Carling 2006, 7).

Regarding Sub-Saharan victims, especially Nigerian ones, the typical criminal organization structure involves an (i) Madam, or Mama, in the country of origin, who perform *voodoo* or *juju* rituals used to create psychological bondage between the victim and the trafficker; (ii) the Madam in the place of destination who controls the victims and ensure its exploitation, and (iii) several middlemen in charge of the transportation of the victim between Nigeria and Europe (Aghatise 2002; Carling 2006, 7; Okojie et al. 2003, 15; Prina 2003, 35; Salt and Stein 1997, 477). As shown below in this study, this is the main structure of human trafficking cases of Catalonia.

## 4. Methodology

The study is based on the collaborative use of quantitative and qualitative research methods to reach an evidence-based proposal on the structure of criminal organizations involved in drug smuggling and human trafficking in Catalonia (Bennett 2004, 19). First, it includes the identification, analysis, summary, and synthesis of secondary sources as previous academic studies, governmental reports, international organizations, and non-governmental organization's reports, among other documents. This process aims to provide an overview of the main concepts used in the thesis, the theoretical background on criminal organizations' structures and similarities among different crimes, and the current status of drug smuggling and human trafficking in Catalonia. It also highlights the need for deeper evidence-based research on the topic to provide evidence regarding the characteristics and structure of the criminal organizations in Catalonia.

Consequently, the thesis focuses on the collection and analysis of the final judicial rulings on both crimes existing in Catalonia's judicial system. The collection of the judicial rulings has been done through the *Centro de Documentación Judicial* [Judicial Documentation Center] of the *Tribunal Superior de Justicia de Cataluña* [Superior Court of Justice of Catalonia], using as search parameters the keywords: "drug trafficking", "human trafficking", "slavery", "sexual exploitation", "labor exploitation", "forced prostitution" and "organize crime". The search was limited to final judgments during the period 2015 to 2020. After a data cleaning process to ensure that all the judgments were related to organized crime, the final population includes 146 judgments on drug smuggling and 37 judgments on human trafficking. As populations were unequal, a random sample of 59 judgments was chosen among the drug smuggling judgment population.

Once obtained, the judicial rulings were analyzed using the Discourse Network Analyzer 2.0 (DNA 2.0) software, which allows the identification of important qualitative data regarding patterns of structures, individual roles, and operations among the different

criminal organizations. Simultaneously, this qualitative content analysis tool was used to convert qualitative data into quantitative one, by identifying, organizing, and coding the main categorical and discrete variables and by creating a multivariate dataset.

Quantitative analysis and graphs were made through the statistical analysis software R studio. Furthermore, a sample of 4 networks was chosen to build the networks' matrix and diagram them with the social network analysis software UCINET. The 4 networks were chosen due to their suitability to show the main characteristics of the criminal structure, including different phases of the criminal process and different types of networks. This allows us to present the main findings in network diagrams which make it easier to understand the structure and main components of the different criminal organizations involved in both crimes.

It is important to be aware that the approach used in this research has a limitation common to all studies based on criminal cases: the representativeness of the sample concerning the total real-world cases (UNODC 2011, 15). Most of the accessible data related to crime or criminal organizations come from law enforcement institutions such as the police, the public prosecutors, or the judicial system, which means that it only contains data of the cases that those institutions were able to persecute. However, even aware of this limitation, case studies based on judicial rulings can be useful to understand criminal behavior, patterns of operations and characteristics, prevalent problems during the persecution process, among other important findings (Bichler, Malm, and Cooper 2017; UNODC 2015, 8).

Finally, the study is a partial view of the structure of drug smuggling and human trafficking criminal organizations. As it is based on Catalonia's judicial rulings it shows only a phase of the criminal chain of both commodities and can provide local skew results in comparison with a worldwide scene of drug smuggling and human trafficking criminal organizations (Curtis and Karacan 2002b, 22; Gozdzia and Collett 2005, 116).



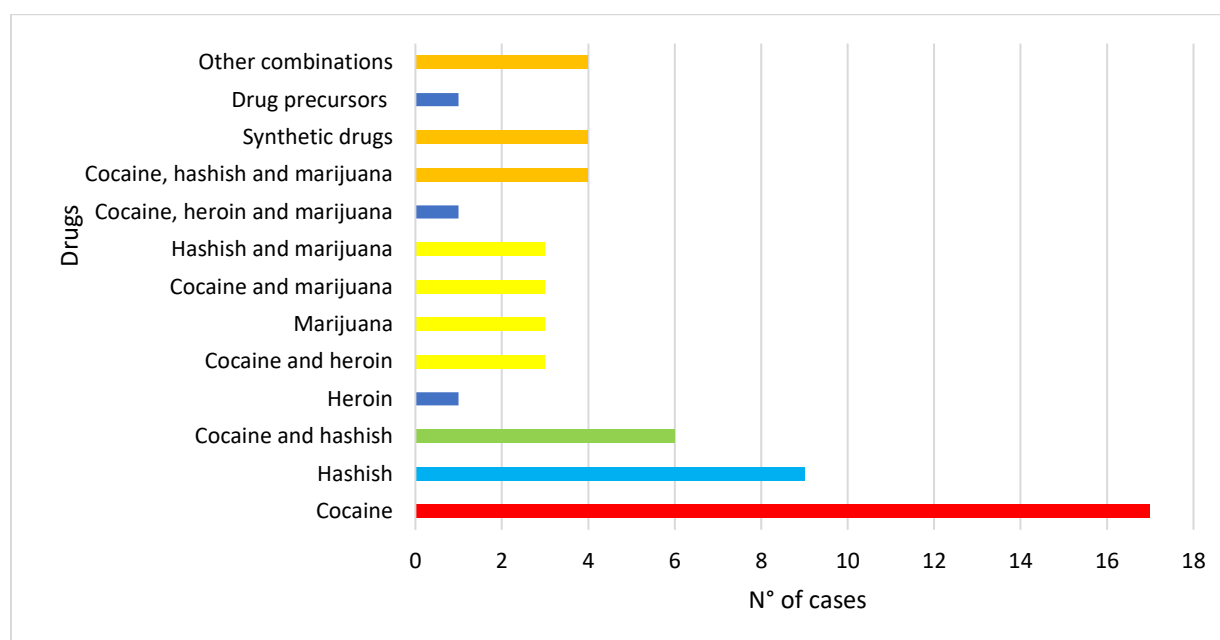
Consequently, the findings must be read considering that specific context and by avoiding generalizations regarding other phases of the criminal processes that occur outside Catalonia's borders.

## 5. Empirical analysis and main findings

### 5.1. Drug smuggling

Catalonia's judicial system has 146 drug smuggling final judicial rulings from 2015 to 2020, from which a sample of 59 was chosen for the analysis. Each one of them counted as a case for this study.

**Graph 1. Number of cases per type of drugs smuggled**



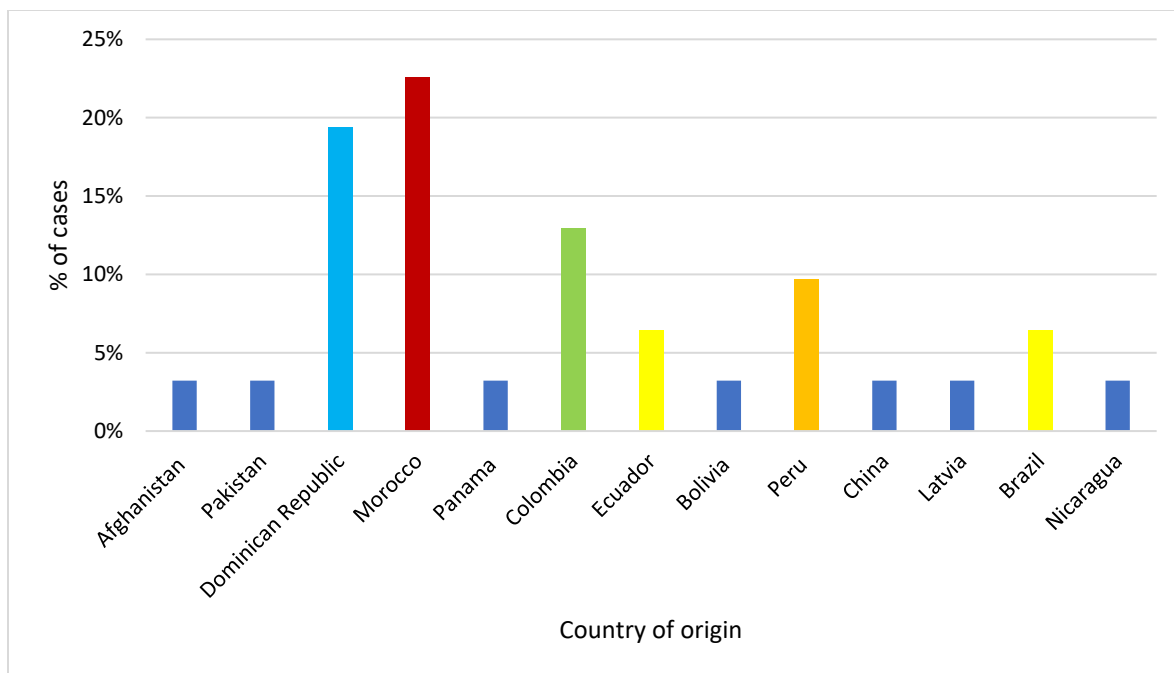
Source: Own elaboration

Cocaine and hashish appear as the main drugs smuggled to the Spanish autonomous region, while marijuana -also present in an important amount of cases- is mostly locally produced and distributed by criminal organizations who use legal Cannabis clubs as facades. Graph 1 shows the different combinations of drugs present in the analyzed cases: cocaine appears in 34 cases and hashish in 22 cases. This finding is consistent with the country of origin of the drugs identified in the judicial rulings. As cocaine and hashish are the main drugs smuggled to Catalonia, the largest number of cases are related to Morocco

and South and Central American countries (Dominican Republic, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, and Brazil). Morocco is the main provider of hashish while cocaine is imported from South America.

The whole dataset only contains one case related to heroin smuggling from other countries, specifically Afghanistan and Pakistan, the rest of the cases are related to local distribution and retail and do not provide information regarding the drug's country of origin. Finally, China is related to the drug precursor case.

**Graph 2. Percentage of cases per drug's country of origin**

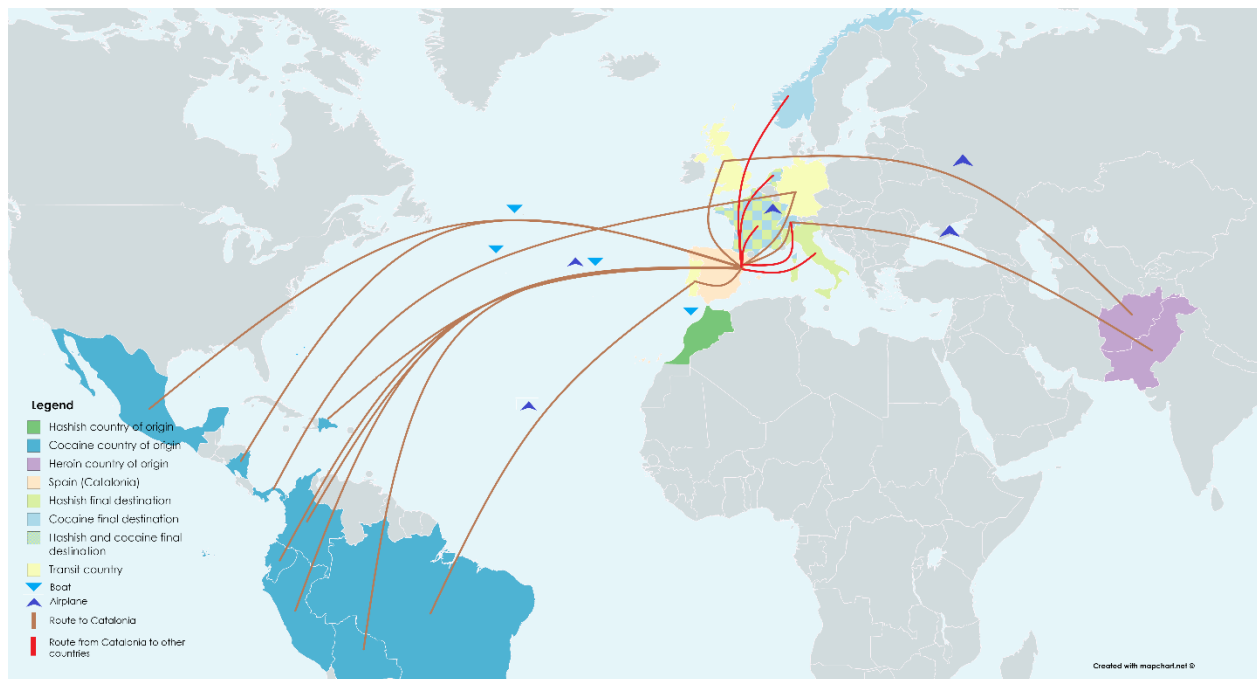


Source: Own elaboration

Considering these findings, Map 1 shows the main routes of Catalonia's drug smuggling cases. Multiple routes depart from South and Central American countries where preferred transportation means are containers in cargo ships and human mules. While most of these routes had Barcelona as a final destination without any transit country, Brazilian cases are the only ones that show consistency in the use of Portugal as a transit country. In the case of Morocco, hashish's country of origin, criminal organizations use

informal vessels to reach the South coast of Spain (Algeciras, Cadiz, Ceuta, and Malaga) and then trucks or private vehicles to move the drug to Catalonia. Land transportation in the Spanish territory includes the use of multiple vehicles, some of them with the drug, and the others as *vehículos lanzadera*. The former are vehicles without the drug that verify the presence of the police during the route and, in case of persecutions, are used to confuse the police and allow the vehicle with the drug to run away.

**Map 1. Main routes of Catalonia's drug smuggling cases (2015-2020)**

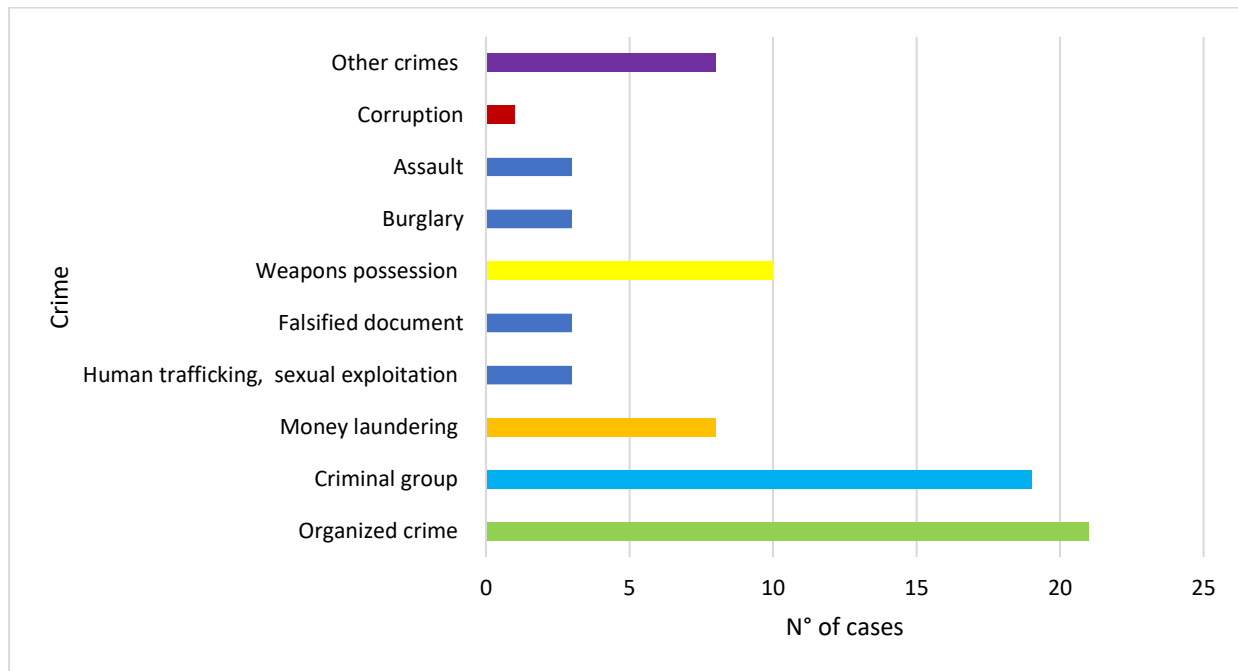


Source: Own elaboration

Furthermore, drug smuggling criminal networks are also involved in other crimes that are necessary to achieve the criminal purpose. Weapons possession, falsification of documents, and corruption appear in several cases. Moreover, the main finding is the distinction between organized crime and criminal groups. This difference is consistent with the provision of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, where criminal groups are those with a less formal structure than the one that appears in the so-called organized crime groups. However, it is important to highlight that the judges use this difference to impose less severe convictions on the criminal groups in comparison

with those organizations cataloged as organized crime. As discussed later in this study, this implies an erroneous understanding of the difference between the two categories and the structure of the drug smuggling criminal chain.

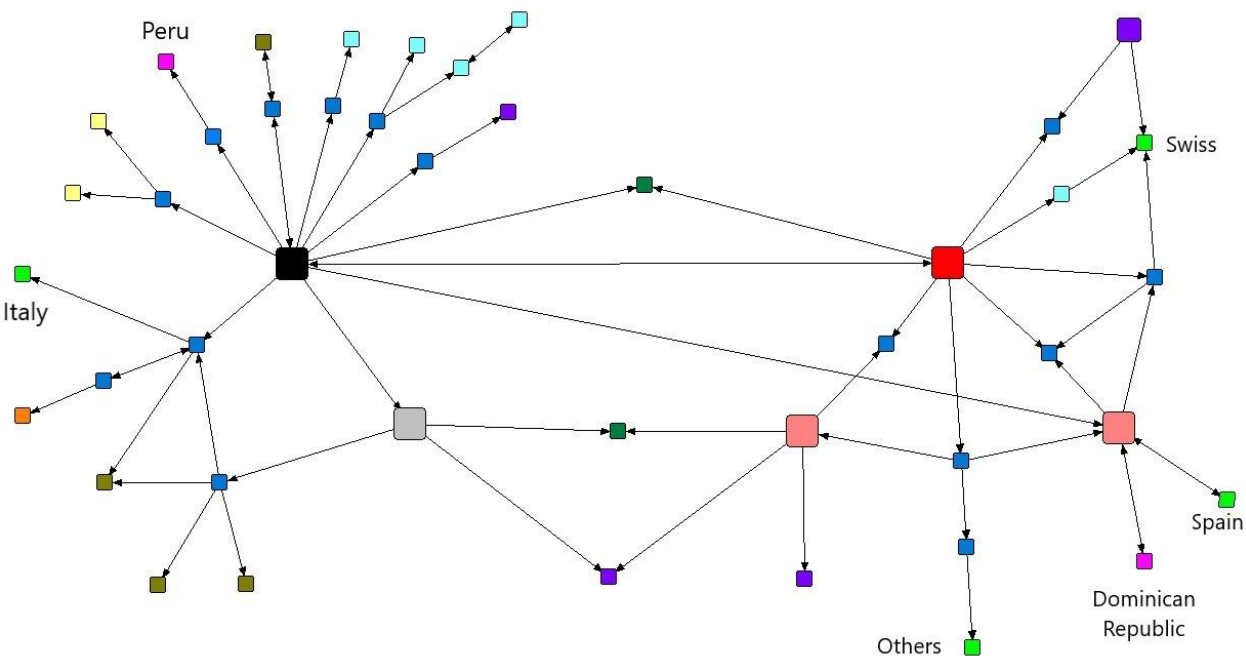
**Graph 3. Concurrent crimes of Catalonia's drug smuggling cases (2015-2020)**



Source: Own elaboration

In this respect, Graph 4 and 5 present the diagram of 2 drug smuggling networks, the first one related to the provision, transportation, and wholesale of cocaine and the second one associated with a local distribution and retail network. Cocaine, as stated before, has South and Central America as main suppliers of Catalonia's drug market, however, this does not mean that the different organizations compete among them. The analysis demonstrates linkages between a Peruvian and a Dominican Republic network, both suppliers of cocaine to the same wholesalers and with common intermediaries between the networks' leaders.

**Graph 4. Cocaine smuggling network**



Source: Own elaboration based on the data provided by the judicial ruling N° SAP\_B\_10761\_2016

**Legend**

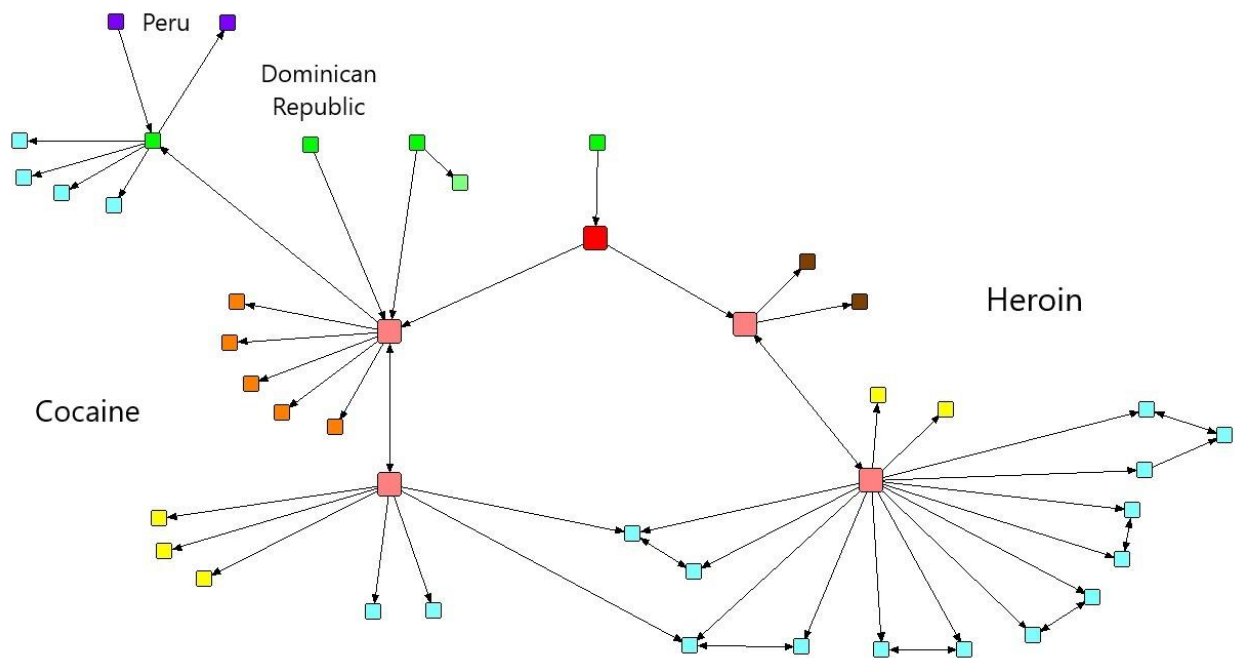
|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
|  | Dominican Republic network's leader            |  | Cocaine suppliers                      |
|  | Dominican Republic network's second-in-command |  | Cocaine buyers                         |
|  | Peruvian network's leader                      |  | Human mules                            |
|  | Peruvian network's second-in-command           |  | Transportation                         |
|  | Network members/Task support                   |  | Frontmen/women (remittances transfers) |
|  | Intermediaries                                 |  | Frontmen/women (remittances receivers) |
|  | Wholesalers                                    |  |  |

Moreover, in the case of the Peruvian network, the leader shows a higher betweenness centrality (the leader connects all the different clusters of the network) than the leaders of the Dominican Republic network. This means that if the police detect one cluster (a specific part of the network that oversees a task, for example, transportation or human

mules' recruiters), it will not have information regarding the other clusters. Consequently, a higher betweenness centrality gives more security to the network (Bichler, Malm, and Cooper 2017). On the other side, the Republican Dominican network has more links between the different members which means that it is a highly connected organization.

There are differences between the structure of these networks and the one related to the local distribution of drugs in Catalonia, indeed Graph 5 presents a more hierarchical network based on family linkages.

### Graph 5. Cocaine and heroin local distribution network



Source: Own elaboration based on the data provided by the judicial ruling N° SAP\_B\_4511\_2015

### Legend

|  |  |  |                                 |
|--|--|--|---------------------------------|
|  | Network's leader (Family clan)                 |  | Drug quality tester             |
|  | Network's second-in-command (son and daughter) |  | Drug storage                    |
|  | Peruvian cocaine suppliers                     |  | Transportation                  |
|  | Drug suppliers                                 |  | Drug dealers (couples/families) |

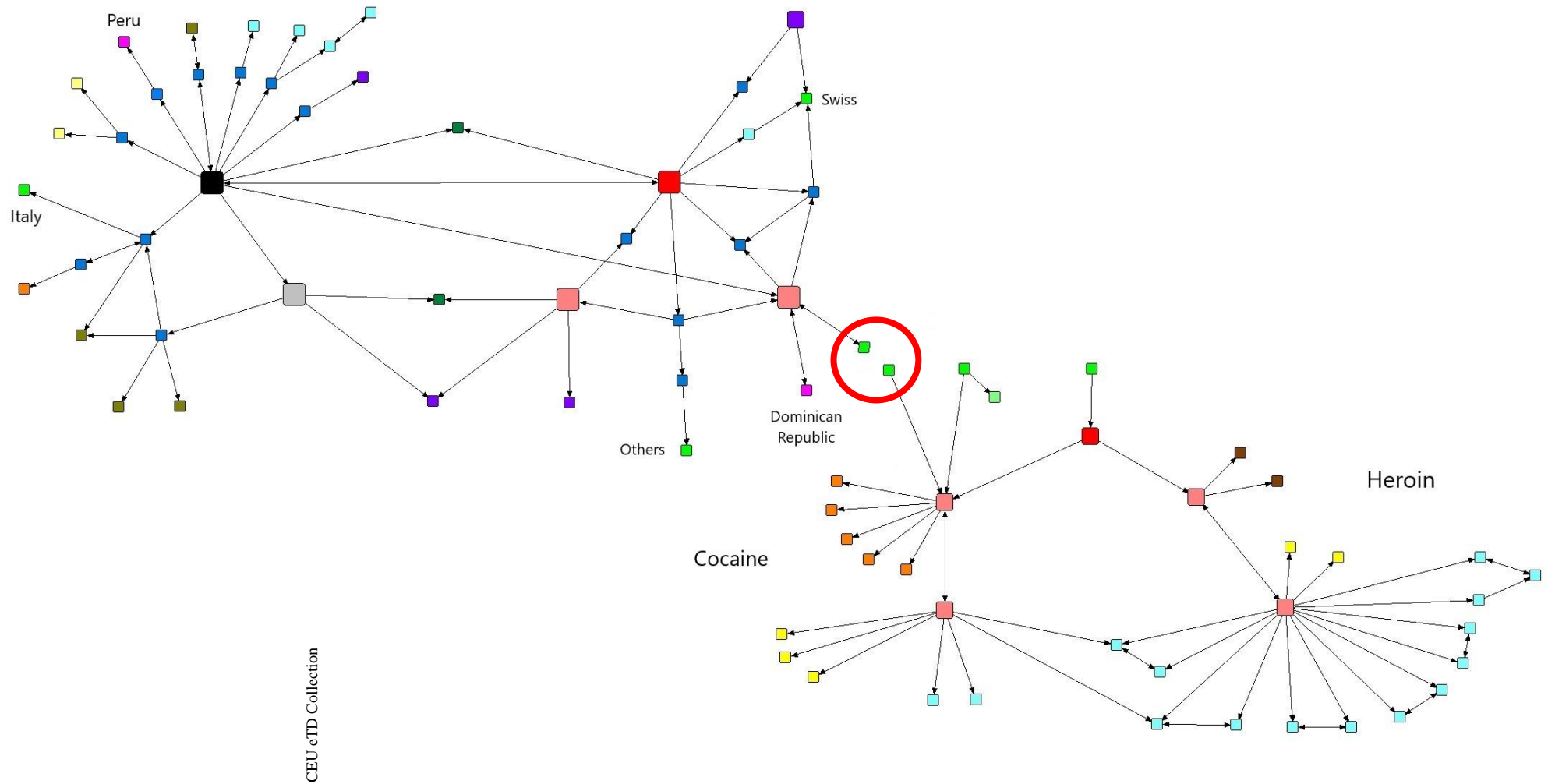
This distribution and retail network is highly structured with a precise task distribution among the different members of a family clan. The network has several suppliers from different countries which is consistent with Graph 4 analysis regarding the relationship between different suppliers towards the same distributors in Catalonia. Furthermore, the clan leaders negotiate with the different suppliers and test the quality of the drug which gives strength to the argument of drug smuggling as a competitive business. Then, the drug is stored and transported to the different dealers or retailers of the organization.

The relation between the retailers and the distributors presents the same pattern of high betweenness centrality within the network as the Peruvian cocaine case. Consequently, this structure gives more security to the whole criminal organization because if the police discover one of the retailers, they will not have information regarding the rest of the organization's dealers. This problem appears in several of the analyzed judicial rulings where the police found a *narco piso* (cocaine retail house) but did not have evidence or information regarding the rest of the network.

Finally, it is important to bear in mind that both Graph 4 and 5 show a part of the whole drug smuggling criminal chain, consequently, suppliers, distribution, and retailers networks are all part of a big criminal structure divided according to their different tasks. Therefore, Graph 6 presents a hypothetical drug smuggling network that merges the suppliers with the distributors and retailers.



Graph 6. Hypothetical complete drug smuggling network with suppliers, distributors, and retailers

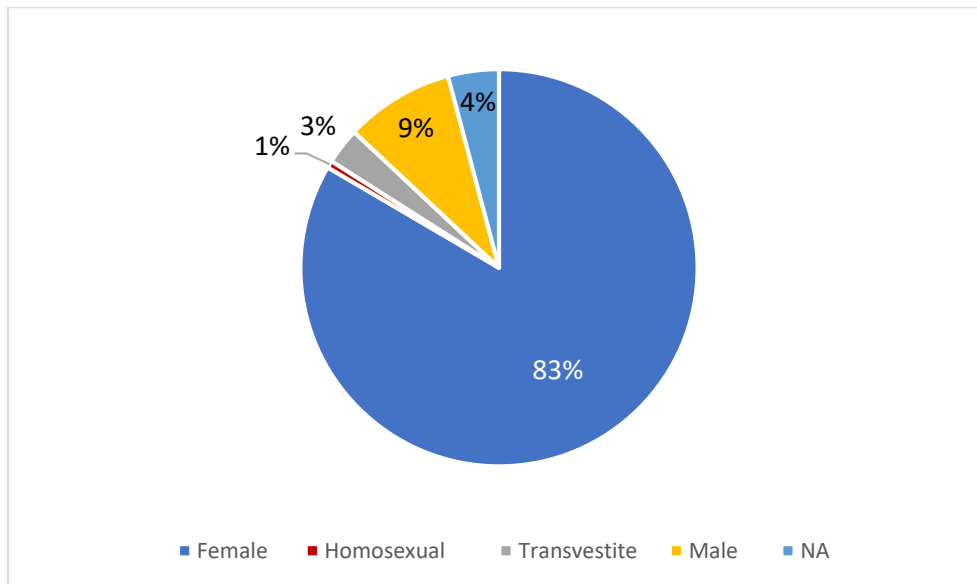


The hypothetical network demonstrates how drug smuggling networks can have a loose structured among the different specialized networks that compose it. Indeed, the leader of the Dominican Republic's cocaine supply network does not have any sort of relation and command towards the leader and the members of the distribution and retail network. Furthermore, the red circle of Graph 6 indicates that further networks can be placed there as wholesalers and intermediaries between the suppliers and the retailers. Simultaneously, single specialized networks can have different structures with higher or lower hierarchy, centrality, and connections between members. In conclusion, drug smuggling's criminal networks can be studied as wholes complete networks composed by different organized crime groups in charge of different phases of the crime with their characteristics and structures.

## 5.2. Human trafficking

Catalonia's judicial system has 37 human trafficking final judicial rulings from 2015 to 2020, each one of them counted as a case for this study.

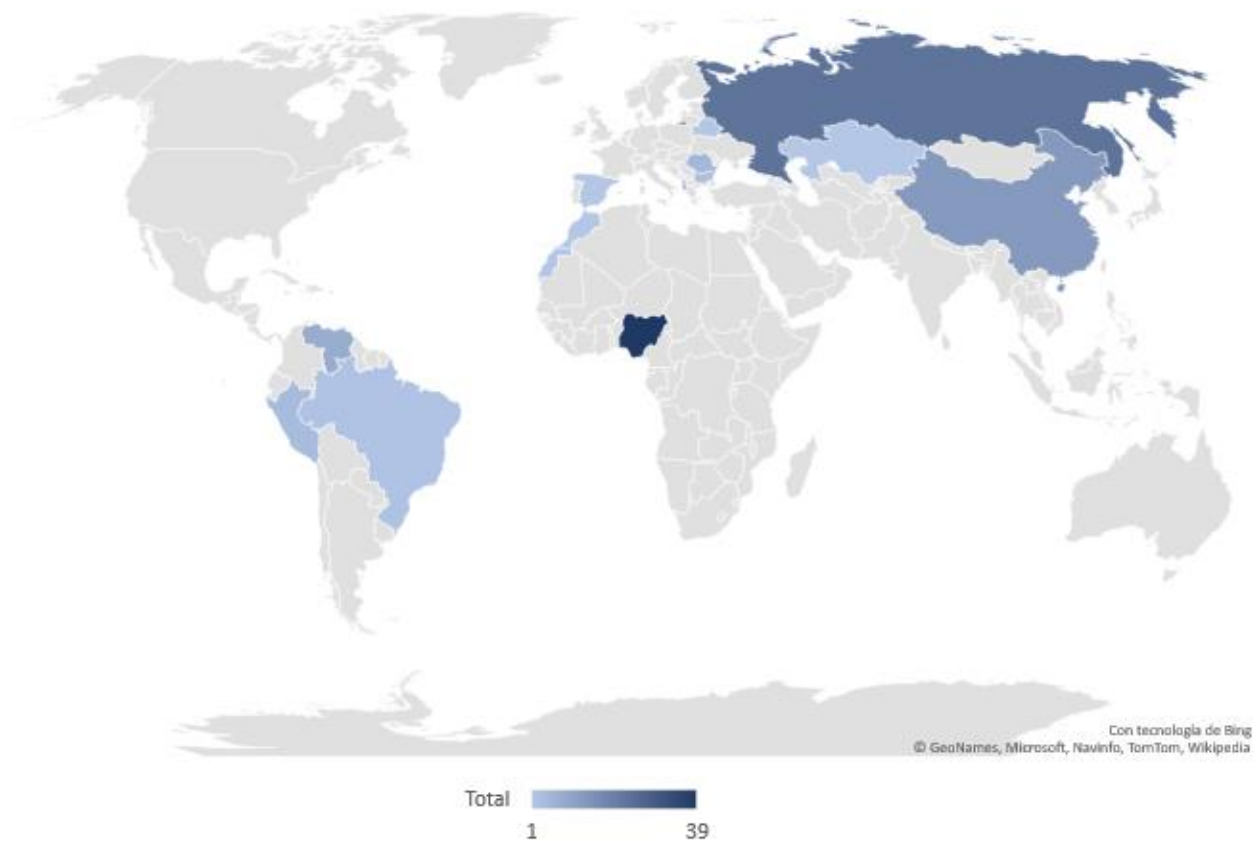
**Graph 7. Percentage of victims according to their sex or sexual orientation**



Source: Own elaboration

In total, the authorities identified 169 victims, as Graph 7 shows, mostly female victims (n = 141), with few male victims (n = 15) related with the labor exploitation case, and one case with LGTBI victims: transvestite men (n = 5) and homosexual man (n = 1), all of them related to the Venezuelan case. Furthermore, in some cases, the judicial rulings include the place of origin of the victims, as shown in Map 2:

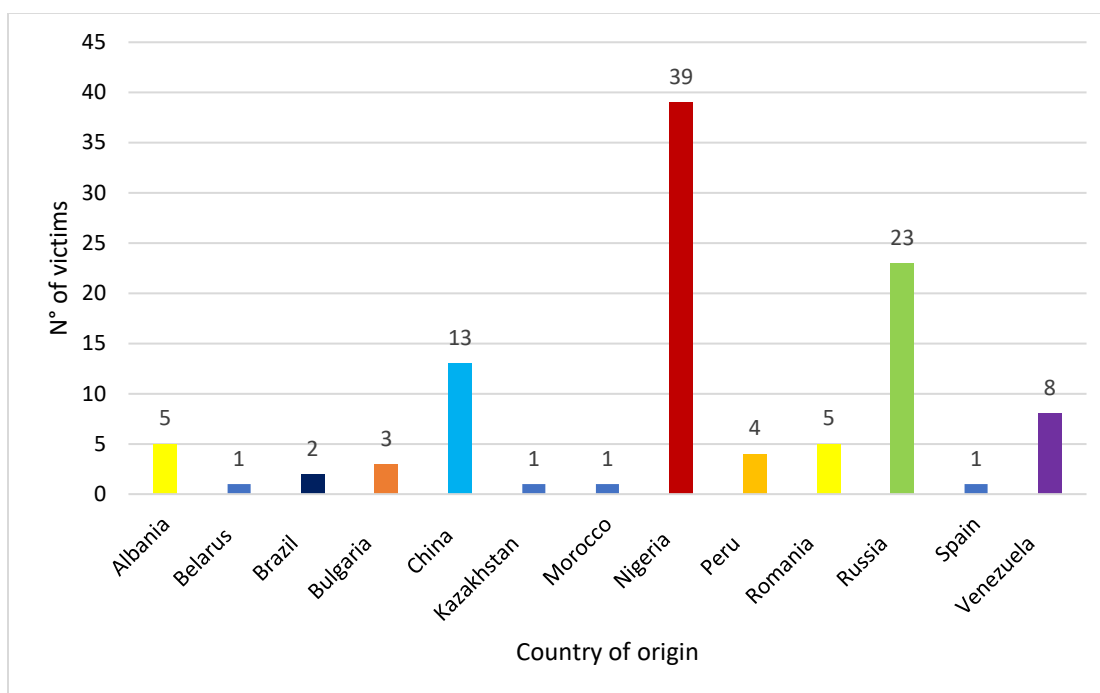
**Map 2. Place of origin of human trafficking victims in Catalonia (2015-2020)**



Source: Own elaboration

The countries with the major number of identified victims, according to Graph 8, are Nigeria (n = 39), Russia (n = 23) and China (n = 13). It is important to highlight that in the case of Russia and China, all the identified victims are related to single cases while there are other countries that even if they have more persecuted cases, such as Albania with 4 cases, the number of identified victims is lower (5 victims in total per Albania).

**Graph 8. Number of victims per place of origin**



Source: Own elaboration

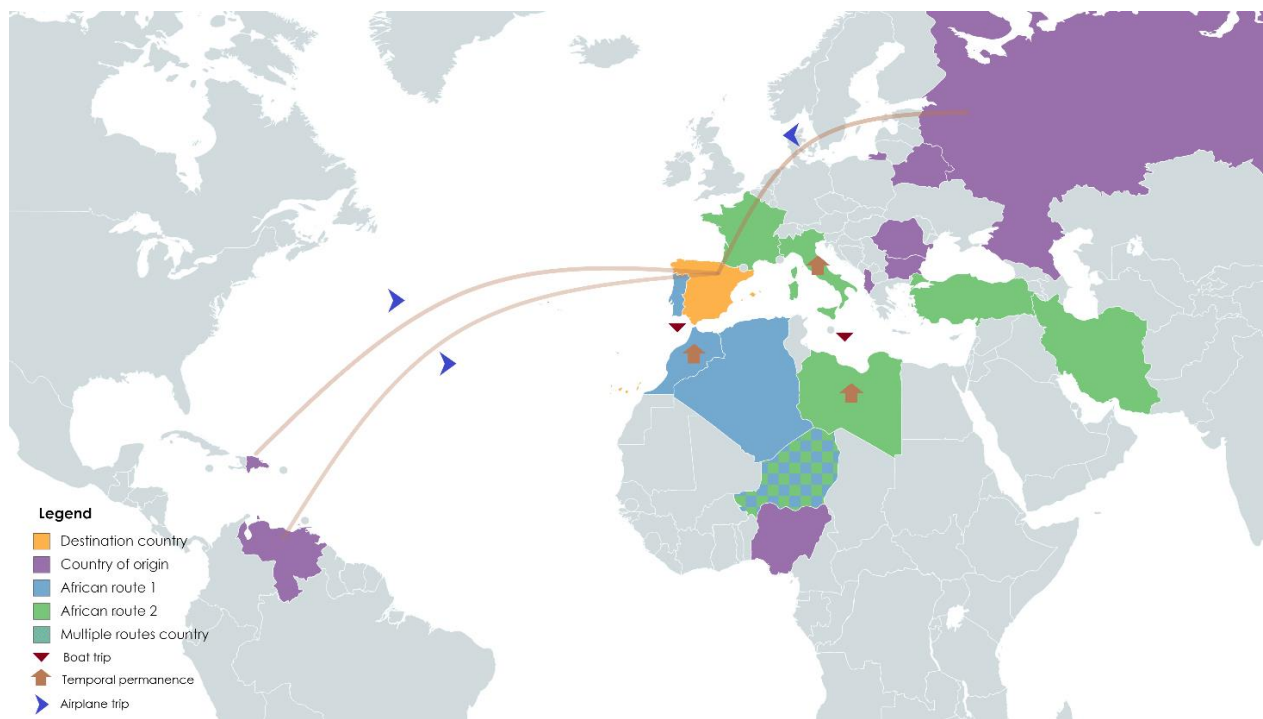
In all the cases, the recruitment means was the abuse of the position of the vulnerability of the victim, especially due to its socio-economic situation of poverty, lack of education and job opportunities, plus an emphasis on the deception regarding job or study opportunities in the destination country. Moreover, in 7 cases the recruitment process was facilitated by the linkage between the trafficker and the victim based on family relations or friendship.

Regarding the situation of the victim in the destination country, in 91.89% of the cases, the victim was trafficked for sexual exploitation (n = 34), in 3 of those cases the victim was also forced to commit crimes such as robbery (n = 2) or to beg (n = 1), while the rest of the cases are related to crime commission, labor exploitation in a textile factory and human organ trafficking (n = 1 per exploitation purpose). Only 15 cases provide information on the retention or control methods used by the traffickers in the place of exploitation, however, all of them include physical and psychological violence, threats against the

victim or her family, and the obligation to pay the debt generated by her trip and permanence in Catalonia.

Despite not all the judicial ruling include information on the routes and transportation means used by criminal organizations to introduce victims in Catalonia, some main routes could be identified during the analysis as diagrammed in Map 3.

**Map 3. Main routes of Catalonia's human trafficking cases (2015-2020)**



Source: Own elaboration

From Nigeria, there are two main routes. One uses Niger, Algeria, and Morocco as transit countries in North Africa, where the victims are transported by land, then the victims stay temporarily in Morocco waiting for the arrangement of the transit to Spain. During this period of their journey, the traffickers reveal to the victim the real purpose of the process and, in some cases, they are sexually exploited in cities as Meknes, Fez, Tangier, or Casablanca to start paying their debt.

The trip between Morocco and Spain occurs through illicit vessels arranged by human smuggling criminal organizations, however, none of the judgments includes information about the relationship between the human trafficking criminal organization and the formers. Once arrived in Spain, victims are moved by land using trains, buses, or private vehicles to their destination. The relation between human trafficking and human smuggling criminal organizations is similar to the one between drug suppliers and drug wholesalers and retailers. Both operate in the same human trafficking criminal chain whole network but they oversee different functions, have their structures, and collaborate among them as business partners or service providers.

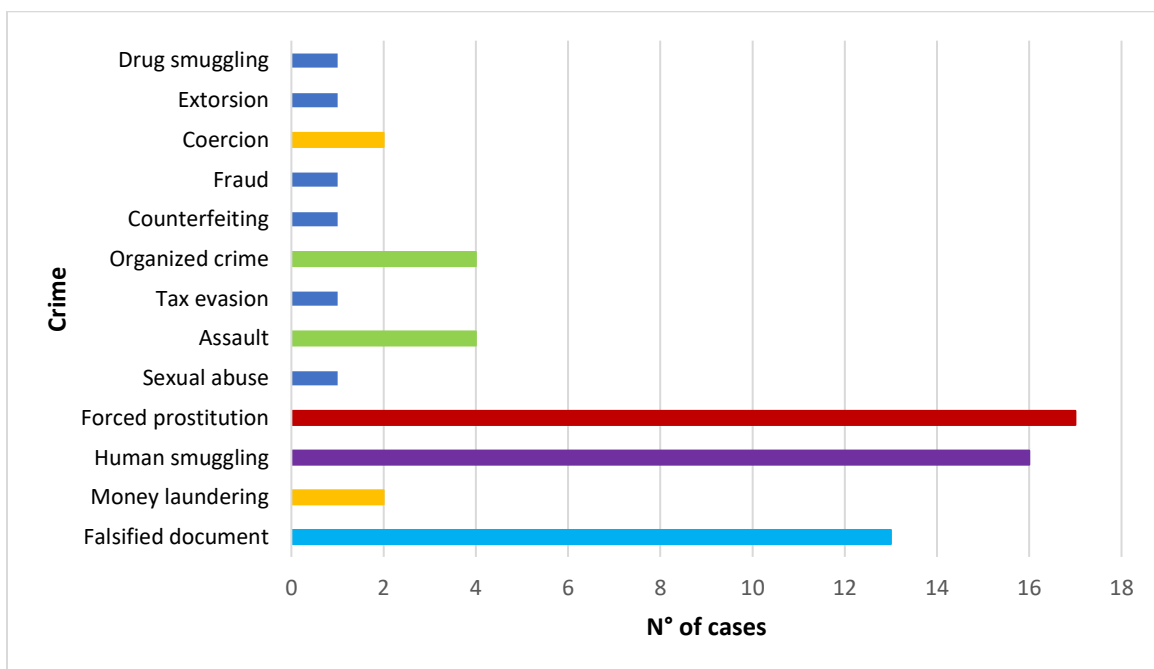
The second route for Nigerian victims includes Niger and Libya as transit countries in North Africa, with a temporary permanence of the victims in Libya until the vessel transport to Italy is arranged by the traffickers. In Libya, like what happens in Morocco, the victims figure out the real purpose of their journey and are exploited by the organization. According to the information of the judicial rulings, in some cases, the criminal organization decided to move the victims from Nigeria to Iran by plane and from there they continue the route to Turkey by land, and then by vessels to Greece to enter the Schengen area. Once arrived in Italy, victims need to wait until other victims arrive, and then they are introduced to Spain by land. The decision between routes is based on the political situation regarding migrant smuggling in the Mediterranean area, the intensity of the control operations in the sea which varies during the year, and contacts and facilities in the various countries to obtain false documents for the victims.

Russian, Chinese, Eastern European, and South American victims are transported by airplanes with several stopovers, like Finland or the United Kingdom, to avoid controls or to hinder police investigations, nonetheless, routes in these cases are less clear than those related with Nigerian victims or the judicial rulings do not include information regarding them. Finally, in 8 cases, Catalonia was a transit region used by the traffickers

to introduce the victims into Spain and then transported to Valencia, Palma de Mallorca, Gran Canarias, Ourense, Madrid, among other Spanish cities.

The identified routes imply long journeys for the victims and possible contacts with state authorities, indeed, in 14 cases victims had contact with public authorities in Spain or the Schengen area, including border controls, authorities in charge of asylum processes, or local authorities in charge of the registration of marriages and de facto unions. The asylum process, fake marriages, or de facto union are the methods used by the criminal organization to obtain documents for the victims. Also, it is important to highlight that in 7 cases the victims, including underage ones, were rescued in the sea and accommodated in temporary attention centers for migrants managed by the Red Cross or the national authorities of Spain and Italy. In these cases, victims escaped from the centers following the instructions of the criminal organizations or, in the case of underage victims, a member of the organization approach the centers pretending to be a relative of the victim to get their custody.

**Graph 9. Concurrent crimes of Catalonia's human trafficking cases (2015-2020)**

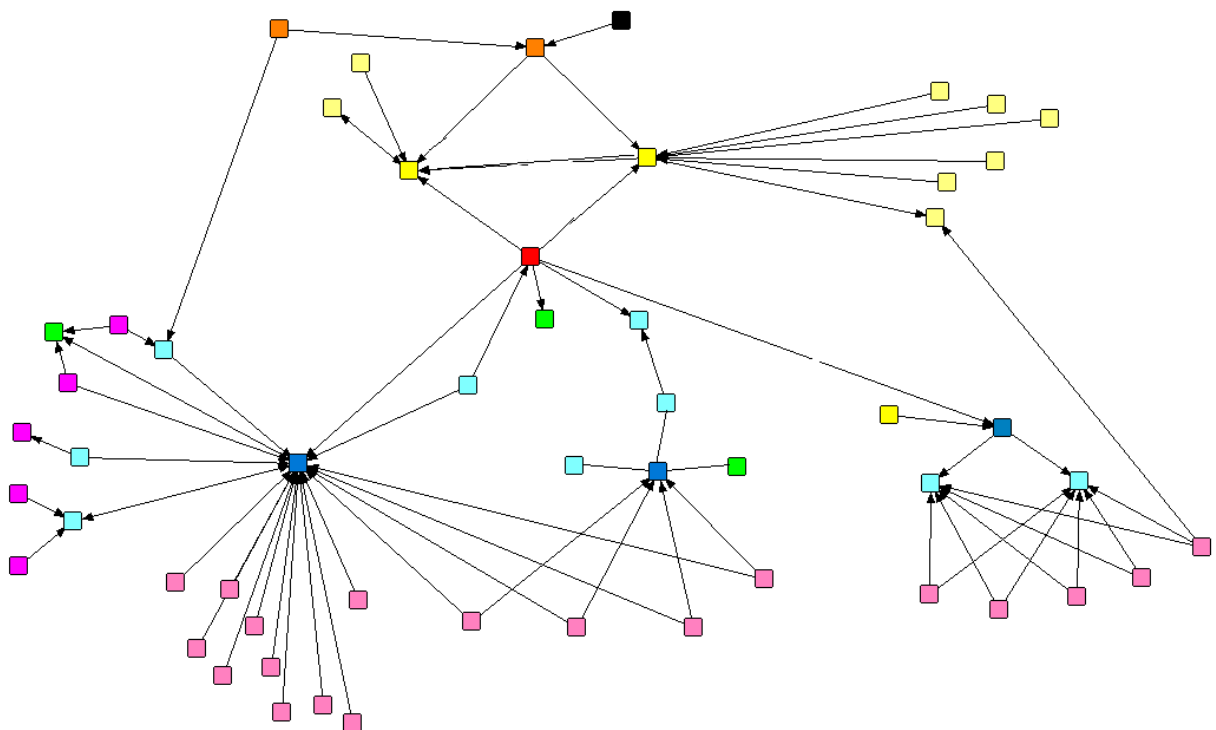


Source: Own elaboration

To minimize victims' identification by state authorities and ensure their transit through border controls, human trafficking criminal organizations provide false documents to the victims, most of them supplied by other organizations or criminals specialized in manufacturing falsified documents. This is the reason why the falsification of documents emerges as the third more common concurrent crime in the human trafficking cases analyzed in this study, only behind forced prostitution and human smuggling (Graph 9).

Human trafficking criminal organizations involved in Catalonia's cases are the sum of different criminal networks, each one of them specialized in a specific task. In order to better visualize this particular structure, Graph 10 and 11 show the organization of the different criminal networks involved in the Russian case and one of the Nigerian cases and the relationships among them, including the links between the different single networks and their members.










**Graph 10. Russian human trafficking network**



Source: Own elaboration based on the data provided by the judicial ruling N° STS\_5613\_2015



### Legend

|   |                                  |   |                               |
|---|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
|  | Network center (crime organizer) |  | Madame (exploitation network) |
|  | Recruitment network              |  | Exploitation support          |
|  | False documents network          |  | Front companies               |
|  | Corrupted public authorities     |  | Frontmen/women                |
|   |                                  |  | Victims                       |

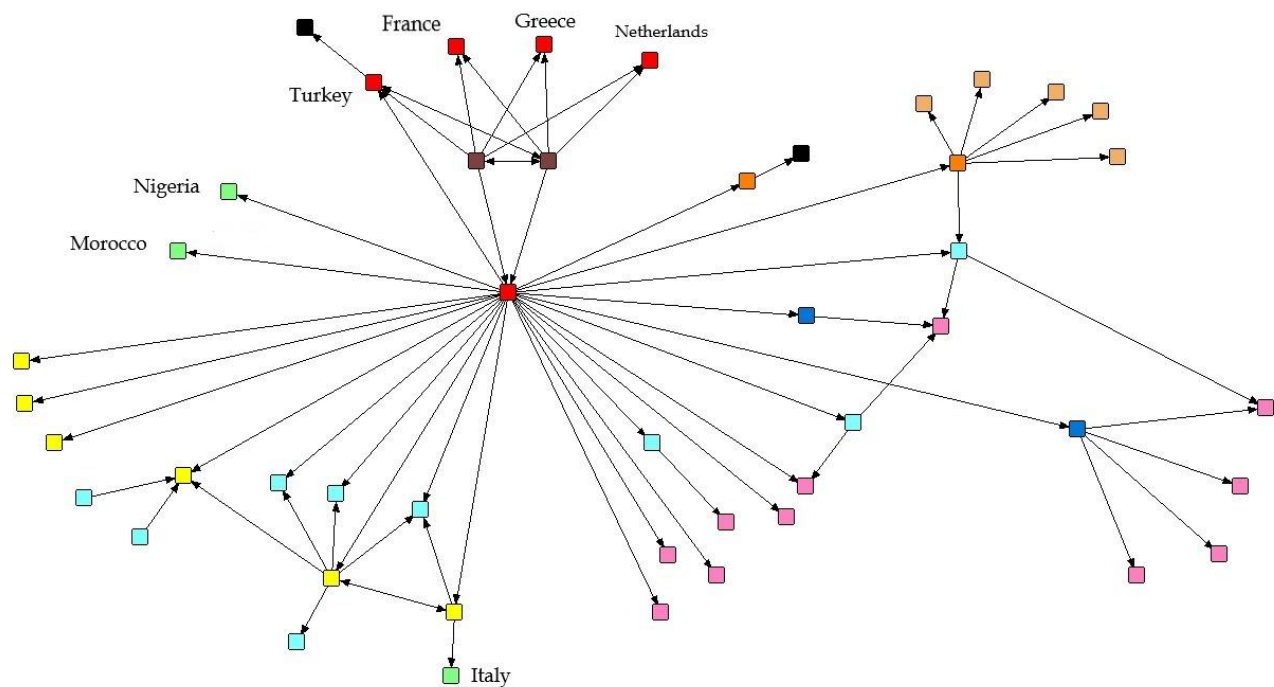
Consistently with what is stated in the theoretical framework, human trafficking criminal organizations are not hierarchical pyramidal structures but the collaboration between different organizations based on profit-making interests. For instance, the analysis of the organizations shows the existence of networks specialized in recruitment, falsification of documents, and exploitation. There is not a single leader but every single network has a leader who selects the members and sets the tasks and methods of its work. For example, the recruitment networks have a central person (yellow nodes) and several subordinates (light yellow nodes), the same for the exploitation networks where the madame (blue nodes) is the leader and works with subordinates (light blue nodes) that are in charge of the reception, transportation, and control of the victims (pink nodes).

Furthermore, each network also works with front men and women, family members of the leader who lend their name for facade companies used to cover sexual exploitation clubs and their profits. These companies are also in contact with other network members in charge of the money laundering process of illegal profits through bank investments and property transactions.

However, not all the human smuggling networks have the same structure, it depends on the country of origin of the victims and ethnic linkages. Indeed, in the case of the Nigerian network diagrammed in Graph 11, there is an international human trafficking organization called EIYE or Supreme Eiye Confraternity (eiye means bird in Yoruba dialect), with founders and international leader. According to the police investigation,

EIYE does not have a pyramidal structure but a satellite structure, with country or regional networks like in France, Turkey, Greece, Netherlands, and Catalonia, Spain. These country networks' leaders are called General Officer Commanding or Airlords and each network is dependent on the international leaders but independent among them.

**Graph 11. Nigerian human trafficking network**



Source: Own elaboration based on the data provided by the judicial ruling N° STS\_1275/2016

### Legend

|                                       |                                     |   |                                   |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| <span style="color: red;">■</span>    | EIYE Country leaders                | <span style="color: blue;">■</span>       | Madame (exploitation network)     |
| <span style="color: brown;">■</span>  | EIYE International leaders/founders | <span style="color: pink;">■</span>       | Victims                           |
| <span style="color: yellow;">■</span> | Catalonia EIYE members              | <span style="color: black;">■</span>      | Corrupted public authorities      |
| <span style="color: cyan;">■</span>   | Subordinates/task support           | <span style="color: green;">■</span>      | Country contact                   |
| <span style="color: orange;">■</span> | False documents network             | <span style="color: lightgreen;">■</span> | Spanish citizens (fake marriages) |

The structure of the Catalonia EIYE cluster resembles the high betweenness centrality of the Peruvian cocaine smuggling network, with a central leader that acts as the

connection between the different clusters in charge of the different functions such as transportation of the victims and falsification of documents and arrangement of fake marriages or de facto unions between Spanish citizens and the victims. Furthermore, the exploitation phase is, similarly to the Russian network, in charge of a madame who has her network and subordinate members. In both cases, madams request the services of the human traffickers to bring women into Catalonia and pay them between €4000 to €8000 euros for the victim.

In other words, human trafficking criminal organizations operating in Catalonia, similarly to drug smuggling networks, are conformed by different criminal groups, some of them in charge of the recruitment and transportation phase while others control the exploitation phase. These networks have their structures and, as explained for the Russian network, leaders of the first ones do not give orders to the madams. The relationship between criminal organization is a business relationship, however, in the Nigerian case, ethnicity is also an important linkage between different organizations and members.

Graph 11 shows different country contacts (green squares) in victims' countries of origin and transit countries such as Italy and Morocco. These contacts are Nigerian citizens that do not belong to EIYE but have a personal relationship with a cluster leader or one of its members. The contacts are in charge of providing information to the network, control the victims during their permanence in the transit country, solve problems during the journey, among other functions. Moreover, the ethnic component is also present in the Russian network, in both drug smuggling networks and most of the judicial rulings analyzed in this study.

Finally, considering the judicial ruling sample analyzed, the human trafficking crime network, which includes all the single specialized networks of recruitment, transportation, and exploitation, seems easier to identify and prosecute as a whole by the Catalonia prosecution system. Despite drug smuggling has the same three phases process,

case analysis reveals more difficulties for the persecution of the whole criminal network, and only single criminal organizations in charge of one specific phase are identified, persecuted, and sanctioned.

## 6. Conclusions

Drug smuggling and human trafficking are structured in three phases: drug supply or victims' recruitment, transportation of the illicit good between the country of origin and the destination country, and drug sales or victims' exploitation. Furthermore, both crimes have similar internal characteristics such the contact with criminals in the place of origin, contact with corrupted public authorities, the need for collaboration with other organizations for transportation means, among others. Additionally, criminal organizations involved in both drug smuggling and human trafficking seek destination places with specific external characteristics, such as Catalonia. Catalonia provides for them a market for their illicit goods and, at the same time, it operates as the entrance door to the rest of Spain or other European countries.

Consequently, drug smuggling and human trafficking are committed by different criminal organizations whose main goal is to get profits from their illicit business. This means that in both cases criminal organizations seek to minimize cost through the specialization of single networks in specific phases or tasks of the whole criminal process. In that order of ideas, contrary to the stereotypical pyramidal structure, drug smuggling and human trafficking criminal networks have a loose structure made up of the sum and interrelation between different specific networks in charge of the different phases of the crime.

The distinction between the whole crime network and single networks within it is important for the persecution system because it will determine the effectiveness of its work. If persecution efforts focus only on the last part of the criminal chain, such as local retailers like the family clan network analyzed in this study, results will not decrease the drug smuggled to Catalonia because suppliers and wholesalers will replace retailers and continue with the illegal business. Information exchange among multiple prosecutions systems in origin, transit, and destination countries is extremely important to avoid this

problem, to be able to identify all the single networks involved in the criminal process and to set up simultaneous operations to stop the whole organization.

Furthermore, although the analysis demonstrates that drug smuggling and human trafficking criminal organizations have a similar structure, only in 4 cases out of 37 organized crime was raised as a concurrent crime with human trafficking. In the drug smuggling judicial ruling the relation between organized crime or criminal groups and drug smuggling was present in 40 cases out of 59. These show a problem regarding the perception of human trafficking criminal organizations as not enough structured to be considered as criminal networks. Training on organize crime is recommended for human trafficking operators in the police, the prosecution office, and the judicial system. Moreover, join training between law enforcement agencies specialized in human trafficking and those in charge of organized crime or drug smuggling are also a useful tool to reinforce common knowledge, exchange of information and strategies, and future joint work between the different agencies.

Despite the conviction related to organized crime, drug smuggling prosecution also present some problems. The analysis of the judicial rulings demonstrates that organized crime is mostly related to pyramidal and hierarchical structures where members and tasks can be completely identified. When an organization -or the information regarding it- does not reach this high standard, it is convicted as a criminal group with a lower punishment. Theoretical framework and case analysis confirm the error in that stereotype and provide evidence that can be used in future training for prosecutors and judges. Also, this investigation seeks to be the base for further research on the Spanish and European legal framework on organized crime, the evolution of the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime's definition, and the need for new, closer legal approaches to the reality of criminal networks structure to avoid the inefficiency of the prosecution system.

Finally, human trafficking criminal networks, due to the specific characteristic of the illicit good trafficked namely human beings, use the corruption of public authorities or their lack of knowledge to identify the victims as an asset for the commission of the crime. The analysis of Catalonia cases exhibits how victims pass through several border controls and have contact with public authorities in migrants' reception centers and offices in charge of asylum processes. In all the cases, victims were not identified or they were simply expelled or returned to the previous country due to the lack of appropriate documentation. It's extremely urgent to train in victims' identification of the border control patrols, public servants involved in the asylum process, and the public and private organizations in charge of the migrants' reception centers, in order to avoid these situations and consequent revictimization of the victims.

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