



**COOPERATION AND CONFLICT: THE CASE OF MIXED TRANSNATIONAL  
COCAINE TRAFFICKING OPERATIONS LINKED TO THE FIRST CAPITAL  
COMMAND (PRIMEIRO COMANDO DA CAPITAL OR PCC).**

*COOPERAÇÃO E CONFLITO: O CASO DAS OPERAÇÕES MISTAS DE TRÁFICO  
TRANSNACIONAL DE COCAÍNA LIGADAS AO PRIMEIRO COMANDO DA CAPITAL  
(PCC).*

*COOPERACIÓN Y CONFLICTO: EL CASO DE LAS OPERACIONES MIXTAS DE  
TRÁFICO TRANSNACIONAL DE COCAÍNA VINCULADAS AL PRIMER COMANDO  
DE LA CAPITAL (PCC).*

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**ABSTRACT**

In this article, we analyze the transformation of the illicit cocaine trafficking chain, from its Andean origins to its consolidation as a global network, with special emphasis on the role played by Brazil's First Capital Command faction (*Primeiro Comando da Capital or PCC*).<sup>1</sup> The central argument that we develop in this paper is that in the framework of the mixed operations linked to the PCC, in a dynamic context of internationalization of the cocaine trafficking economy, general or static forms of regulation were not configured, but rather a customary and rational intervention. This model not only made it possible to optimize cooperation and logistical efficiency, but also provided predictability to operations, prioritizing these factors over rigid hierarchies and traditional logics of capitalist accumulation. In addition, we identified that the faction managed to significantly reduce the violent confrontations that marked previous stages of its history,

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<sup>1</sup> The First Capital Command faction (Primeiro Comando da Capital or PCC) is a powerful and complex brazilian criminal faction that has evolved significantly from its origin, within the prison system of São Paulo, Brazil, to become a key social and political actor in transnational drug trafficking and other (i)llicit markets.

orienting itself towards a strategy of consolidation of points and safe passages, based on discretion and operational effectiveness, as distinctive elements of this new phase. From a multi-situated ethnographic approach, we examine how, while Brazil became a key territory for brokerage and logistics of transnational cocaine trafficking, the PCC's growing influence as a regulatory actor within this South American cocaine trafficking economy took place. From a methodological point of view, our research combines text mining techniques, analysis of police operations, observations on strategic infrastructures in South America, Europe and Africa, previous academic debates, as well as interviews with key actors.

**Keywords:** Cocaine trafficking; criminal actors; logistics changes; illicit chains.

### RESUMO

Neste artigo, analisamos a transformação da cadeia do tráfico ilícito de cocaína, desde suas origens andinas até sua consolidação como rede global, com especial ênfase no papel desempenhado pela facção Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) do Brasil. O argumento central que desenvolvemos neste trabalho é que, no âmbito das operações mistas vinculadas ao PCC, em um contexto dinâmico de internacionalização da economia do tráfico de cocaína, não se configuraram formas gerais ou estáticas de regulação, mas sim uma intervenção costumeira e racional. Esse modelo não apenas permitiu otimizar a cooperação e a eficiência logística, como também conferiu previsibilidade às operações, priorizando esses fatores em detrimento de hierarquias rígidas e lógicas tradicionais de acumulação capitalista. Além disso, identificamos que a facção conseguiu reduzir significativamente os confrontos violentos que marcaram etapas anteriores de sua história, orientando-se para uma estratégia de consolidação de pontos e passagens seguras, pautada na discrição e na eficácia operacional, como elementos distintivos dessa nova fase. A partir de uma abordagem etnográfica multissituada, examinamos como, enquanto o Brasil se tornou um território-chave para a intermediação e logística do tráfico transnacional de cocaína, ocorreu a crescente influência do PCC como ator regulador nessa economia sul-americana do tráfico de cocaína. Do ponto de vista metodológico, nossa pesquisa combina técnicas de mineração de texto, análise de operações policiais, observações sobre infraestruturas estratégicas na América do Sul, Europa e África, debates acadêmicos anteriores, bem como entrevistas com atores-chave.

**Palavras-chave:** Tráfico de cocaína; atores criminosos; mudanças logísticas; cadeias ilícitas.

## RESUMEN

En este artículo, analizamos la transformación de la cadena de tráfico ilícito de cocaína, desde sus orígenes andinos hasta su consolidación como red global, con especial énfasis en el papel desempeñado por la facción del Primer Comando da Capital (PCC) en Brasil. El argumento central que desarrollamos en este trabajo es que, en el ámbito de las operaciones mixtas vinculadas al PCC, en un contexto dinámico de internacionalización de la economía del tráfico de cocaína, no se configuraron formas generales o estáticas de regulación, sino una intervención consuetudinaria y racional. Este modelo no solo permitió optimizar la cooperación y la eficiencia logística, sino que también brindó previsibilidad a las operaciones, priorizando estos factores sobre las jerarquías rígidas y las lógicas tradicionales de acumulación capitalista. Además, identificamos que la facción logró reducir significativamente los enfrentamientos violentos que marcaron etapas anteriores de su historia, cambiando hacia una estrategia de consolidación de puntos y pasajes seguros, basada en la discreción y la efectividad operativa, como elementos distintivos de esta nueva fase. Mediante un enfoque etnográfico multisituado, examinamos cómo, a medida que Brasil se convertía en un territorio clave para la intermediación y la logística del tráfico transnacional de cocaína, se produjo la creciente influencia del PCC como actor regulador en esta economía sudamericana de tráfico de cocaína. Desde un punto de vista metodológico, nuestra investigación combina técnicas de minería de texto, análisis de operaciones policiales, observaciones sobre infraestructuras estratégicas en Sudamérica, Europa y África, debates académicos previos y entrevistas con actores clave.

**Palabras clave:** Tráfico de cocaína; actores criminales; cambios logísticos; cadenas de suministro ilícitas.

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Recebido em: 18/12/2025

Aceito em: 18/12/2025

Publicado em: 05/01/2026



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The (i)llicit chain of cocaine trafficking – base paste and hydrochloride – (Lien & Feltran, 2025; Feltran, 2019; Hirata, 2014) made from coca crops originating in the Andean region of South America such as Colombia, Peru and Bolivia has undergone profound transformations over the last few decades (Grisaffi, 2022; Vellinga, 2007; Ticker et al., 2011 and Zevallos Trigo, 2022). In the midtwentieth century, its production, trafficking and consumption was clearly delimited in territories identified as producers, transit and destination, located in a certain number of countries in the Americas. By the end of the century, cocaine consumption became massive, expanding beyond middle- and upper-class sectors of the continent's cities. At the same time, the trafficking chain became more complex, incorporating new corridors, i.e., points of exit/transit/access to consumer markets around the world (Lien, 2023 and Lien & Feltran, 2025).

In this general context, Brazil went from being an emerging consumer market to becoming the world's second largest consumer of this drug. Likewise, Brazil ceased to be the simple transit point for cocaine that circulated throughout its territory, to experience the reorganization of cocaine trafficking corridors in different logistics hubs, located in a more or less stable way in its border and adjacent areas, as well as near the productive infrastructure. financial, road, commercial and port airports, for example. This process was gradual and caused since 2001 an unprecedented expansion and interconnection of this country with the cocaine trafficking economy, which by 2013, catapulted it to become a brokerage territory within the global cocaine trafficking economy (De Abreu, 2017;

Cipriani et al., 2023; Leeds, 1996). At the same time, Brazil experienced profound social transformations, also taking place in a process of *factionalization* of marginalized sectors involved in crime, whose phases of development were marked by the war on drugs and the prohibitionism of government agencies (Feltran, 2018). With nuances, distances and textures, this complex process was, inside, the long history of the São Paulo faction thus, during the last 20 years PCC has expanded from prisons to enter the ravines, and then since 2013 it has been seeking a specific presence in logistics structures, such as in port complexes of global importance, such as the port of Santos, in the east of the state of São Paulo. Without attempting to assert that one process (economic or social) is the cause and/or consequence of the other, or vice versa, we recognize that there is a historical juxtaposition of both that was documented by previous works that we take up here, but we understand that there are few efforts that discuss these factors at the global level (De Abreu, 2017; Europol, 2024; EMCDDA, 2024).

Consequently, based on our fieldwork, we return to the debate that has recently begun (Albanese, 2000; Allen, 2005; Arias & Grisaffi, 2021; Benson & Decker, 2010; Conover, 2024; Garzón Vergara, 2012; Gootenberg, 2006; Kenney, 2007; Sergi & Reid, 2021; Shuldiner, 2023), and which will be deepened by Feltran, Pescheux, & Desternes (2025), and we investigate these processes together, understanding that they represent factors with significant implications that reconfigure what has been called the geopolitics of drugs (Sampó, 2019; Sampo

and Troncoso, 2023), a reality that must not only be analyzed from a local or regional perspective (South America), but also from a global perspective (Lien & Feltran 2025).

To this end, we summarize the argument for the existence of a growing logistical influence of the Brazilian PCC faction in international cocaine trafficking, and highlight that the faction presents itself as a key regulatory body that facilitated, through its Tuning of Progress (*Sintonia do Progresso*)<sup>2</sup> and specific operational sub-cells, drug trafficking by implementing a platform model that combines forms of agency based on individual business autonomy supported by coordination institutions (Feltran, 2025). Likewise, we also understand that this agency model is what has allowed the PCC to integrate the cocaine market with formal economies and challenge existing power structures (Aning & Pokoo, 2014; Csete J & Sánchez, 2013; Feltran, Vianna, & Bird, 2022; Kalunta-Crumpton, 2015).

However, we try to advance the debate by understanding, in the context of the economics of transnational cocaine trafficking, what challenges and/or problems arose in the trafficking operations to allow for that mixture between agency (autonomy) and structure (structure) and/or where appropriate, how they were resolved. **In this way, we argue that, in a dynamic context of internationalization of the cocaine trafficking economy, there were no general and static forms of regulation, but rather a strongly customary and pragmatic direction.**

For this reason, in this paper we explore these factors present in the trafficking economy, and methodologically we focus on daily routines of international cocaine trafficking brokerage operations <sup>3</sup> linked to the PCC faction. These operations that interest us within the universe of forms of trafficking, are those that are related to the faction either because they are carried out in the name of the individual or in the name of the faction; by an brother (*irmãos*)<sup>4</sup> and/or a collaborator of the same, as businessmen/entrepreneurs; using, in whole or in part, the logistics platform procured and made available to the *family*<sup>5</sup>.

In particular, we seek to identify, reconstruct and analyze conflicting scenes during traffic that represent the brokerage model-based intermediation scale. Thus, as a general objective, we study the way in which those operators addressed the conflict associated with cocaine trafficking at a transnational level, also influencing the entire dynamics of relationships within their organization, as well as externally, in the set of relationships with other criminal, financial and/or

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<sup>2</sup> *Tuning of Progress* is a substructure within the general structure of the PCC, specifically dedicated to regulating, managing, financing and operating the logistics of drug trafficking activities linked to the faction at the local and global levels.

<sup>3</sup> Cocaine brokerage in the context of the PCC refers to the intermediation and facilitation of the purchase, sale and transport of cocaine throughout its value chain, both nationally and internationally. It is not just the direct purchase and sale transaction, but a complex function that encompasses logistics, financing, regulation and networking to maximize the progress (growth and expansion) of the faction and the individual gains of its members and/or allies.

<sup>4</sup> Baptized PCC members are called *irmãos* brothers). Christening within the context of the PCC refers to the process by which an individual is officially accepted and becomes a full member of the faction.

<sup>5</sup> For the PCC, the term *family* has a deep and multifaceted meaning, encompassing both the criminal organization itself and the kinship and support networks that sustain it. It is used as a synonym to refer to the PCC, as well as terms such as *Party*, *Command*, *Three*, *Quinze*. Thus, the PCC as a family denotes the collective identity and loyalty among its members (brothers), represents a criminal, initiatory and philanthropic society that seeks the progress of its *brother* (*irmãos*) and/or allies.

logistical actors. For this reason, this article is another effort to understand the growing importance of brokerage in the trafficking economy by studying the everpresent conflicts of identity and interests surrounding cocaine trafficking (Lien, 2020).

To understand this microsphere of possible conflicts within the particular logistics of the PCC, we present below the methodology used, the results obtained, the discussion in which we participated, and our conclusions.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Our study focused on a **specific case of cooperation and conflict around the mixed operation of transnational cocaine trafficking linked to the PCC, which since 2013 focused on the cocaine trafficking economy, an instrumental part of the expansion strategy that began years ago, until it managed to occupy a prominent place in the logistics of trafficking that was consolidated by 2023**, favoring the multiple connection between producers, distributors and importers to final markets for the consumption of this drug. In order to collect data from different sources, we first scraped information contained in news reports, academic works, specialized publications and official reports, which we then processed from the clustering of the content with text mining using tools such as Orange Canvas<sup>6</sup> and Notebook LM<sup>7</sup>. As a consequence, after that first collection and partial analysis, we replicated this process to the documentary analysis of reports of publicly known police operations in Brazil such as *Oversea*, *Gaiola*, *Narco Brokers*, *Além Mar*, *Shark*, *Hinterland*, *Dontraz*, among others from 2013 to 2024, reconstructed from what was published in <https://www.gov.br/pf/pt-br/assuntos/noticias>. Finally, during 2022 and 2024, we planned and executed ethnographic observations in stock exchange, financial, aero commercial, road, industrial and port complexes in Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay, to which we added for 2023 and 2024 its peers in Belgium, Denmark, England, Germany, Holland, France, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and Turkey. We also conducted 15 research interviews with key stakeholders from those countries, such as academic researchers, specialized journalists, employees of the industrial, stock exchange and financial sectors, officials of security forces and border control agencies, as well as officials and operators of air, port and road complexes. All this work allowed us to carry out a multi-situated ethnographic approach with the aim of examining the multiplicity of commercial practices, management strategies and forms of conflict regulation that *the cocaine corridors linked to the PCC faction* faced in their intervention in the illicit transnational cocaine supply chain. Furthermore, all the names of the people mentioned in this work, whose routines were revealed, were changed to pseudonyms. Following Coscia and Ríos (2012), we finally implemented natural language processing and machine learning using Orange Canvas and Notebook LM to identify, validate and categorize information that allowed us to further delve into the ways in which

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<sup>6</sup> Orange was developed by the Bioinformatics Laboratory at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia in collaboration with the open-source community. <https://orangedatamining.com>.

<sup>7</sup> Notebook LM is an AI-based document research and analysis tool developed by Google. <https://notebooklm.google.com>



these operators act in the face of everyday conflict. For this reason, we also proposed a continuous and constant dialogue of our findings, which we presented in different debates, among which those we carried out together<sup>8</sup> with Dra. Marcelli Cipriani<sup>9</sup> and/or Mgter. Gabriel Patriarca<sup>10</sup> stand out. Our research process combines desk work with intensive fieldwork, supported by data science tools, together with previous academic debates to enhance the sensed analysis. Consequently, we structured our sources of information identifying themselves as A (official documents and reports, interviews and field observations) B (academic publications, journalistic news) ordered by year from which a total of A emerged: n = 0 % 108 and B: n = 0 % 450.

### 3. FINDS:

The (i)llicit chain of cocaine trafficking involves a structural/agency architecture divided by functions, regions, and responsibilities that, for example, begins in the South American Andes and extends through Brazil to the coasts of Africa and Europe. This chain combines logistical capacity, organizational discipline and operational links, bringing together different actors. Individually and/or collectively, these actors intervened by making the supply and increase in the value scale of cocaine a means or end, according to its profile. However, it was in the combined joint operation and the conflicts of everyday life, the place from which they were able to establish a global flow with a precision similar to that of the economies of licit goods and/or services that circulate globally. (according to sources a11 and b450)

Our work, which followed a transversal temporal and spatial logic, led us to investigate and understand the evidence from the production in Bolivia, Peru and Colombia; processing and logistics in Brazil; to export and reception to Africa and Europe.

Based on the statements of a journalistic source who documented the expansion of cocaine trafficking in the region and official reports from Bolivia and Brazil, we were able to establish that by 2013 the epicenter of the production of base paste and/or its hydrochloride in Bolivia was located in the department of Santa Cruz and in the Chapare region. Juan (pseudonym) operated there on that date, a producer and wholesale supplier who managed dozens of clandestine laboratories in the interior of the jungle. Juan's production was negotiated and acquired by importers from Brazil such as Danilo (PCC faction member) (pseudonym), and Alex (PCC faction member) (pseudonym). Those same documents suggested that these two cocaine corridors operated from Campinas and its surroundings, as well as with a base in Limeira, São Paulo, Brazil acquiring significant quantities

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<sup>8</sup> Between street trafficking and transnational trade: faces and forms of the cocaine market in Brazil. XIV Mercosur Anthropology Meeting. Nicolas Santiago Lien (UNC-UDA-UES XXI) and Marcelli Cipriani (UFRGS). Niteroi, Brazil. August 2023.  
First Port Command? The role of the PCC in the export of cocaine through the Port of Santos. Gabriel Patriarca, Nicolas Santiago Lien and Camila Nunes Dias. 22nd Brazilian Congress of Sociology. São Paulo, Brazil. July 2025.

<sup>9</sup> PhD in Sociology and Bachelor in Social Sciences from UFRGS. Master in Social Sciences and Bachelor of Law from PUCRS.

<sup>10</sup> Master in Sociology. PhD candidate in Sociology, University of São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil.

of drugs that were then transported to intermediate points where the warehouses (*identified as armazém, pailoes, paderias and cozinhas*)<sup>11</sup> are located for subsequent refinement and/or stretching, as the case may be and subsequently stored in other site identified as *os Paioles*,<sup>12</sup> pending its gradual redistribution at retail marketing points. (according to sources A107, B446 and B450)

Both Danilo and Alex initially developed territorial leadership within this link in the trafficking economy. However, the fact that Alex was an brother faction (*irmão*), that is, an affiliate of the PCC where he held positions such as Tuning (*identified as Sintonia*)<sup>13</sup>, for example, within the Final Street Tune semi-structure (*identified as Sintonia Final da Rua*)<sup>14</sup>, made this self-employed entrepreneur who effectively managed his own drug business, maximize profits. With the support of Danilo, it had access to a wide infrastructure of commercial relations, financial and logistical material resources that, partly its own and partly that of the PCC faction, they managed through the Tuning of Progress, which significantly improved their operational capacity. At this point, we observe that the structural mixture devised by the PCC but executed day by day in the practice of trafficking by operators such as Alex and his associate Danilo, made them have at their disposal more stable connections with different Bolivian and Peruvian suppliers, for example, and/or substantial improvements in the conditions of purchase of the cocaine negotiated on a daily basis on producers such as Juan (pseudonym). Thus, by imposing on the suppliers a demand to be supplied, consisting of orders from Alex associated with Danilo and/or orders placed on behalf of the PCC faction, these purchasers were able to quantitatively and qualitatively impose on the producers who provided them conditions favorable to their interests in the deals for the acquisition of cocaine. (according to sources A106; A107; b446; b448)

This path dependency imposed by the PCC's collaboration strategy was achieved **in daily practice through joint progress based on the existence of trafficking operations where cocaine acquired by Alex on his behalf is intermingled, and cocaine acquired and managed by Danilo in the name and with resources of the PCC faction.**

But this improvement not only reached the demand in these initial links of the trafficking chain, but on the contrary also benefited the producer/supplier Juan who managed to access clandestine airstrips in Villa Tunari, Chapare, Bolivia by

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<sup>11</sup> In the context of drug trafficking linked to the PCC, cocaine warehouses, (*armazém, pailoes, paderias and cozinhas*) refer to clandestine laboratories where cocaine base paste is processed and refined to transform it into hydrochloride, and/or prepared for sale and distribution. In other words, the strategic laboratories of the PCC are semi-industrial facilities used for the refining of cocaine base paste, or the mixture, called *baptism*, with other chemical substances such as ether, acetone, sulfuric acid, hydrochloric acid, sodium bicarbonate, lidocaine and caffeine to increase the quantity. Also in these facilities, the re-packaging of cocaine for non-varejo sale, that is, retail, is carried out.

<sup>12</sup> In the context of drug trafficking linked to the PCC, "*os paioles*" are clandestine warehouses used to store drugs, weapons and cash. They are a crucial part of the faction's logistics infrastructure, ensuring the safety and flow of its operations.

<sup>13</sup> To be a Tune of the PCC is to occupy a key position within the faction's governance structure, which functions as a thematic management office for various organizational functions linked to the faction.

<sup>14</sup> The Final Street Tune is a substructure of positions within the structure of the PCC outside the prison system, responsible for coordinating actions on the street – outside the prison system – with strategic decision-making at the street level.



the end of 2013 to dispatch small planes to rural properties in Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil on farms leased by front men linked to the PCC. Also, those official documents followed us that, as part of the drug deals, the producer/supplier Juan was provided with links with the Colombian Jose Martin (pseudonym), who specializes in providing chemical precursors for the production of cocaine that arrived from Cúcuta, Colombia. (according to sources A10 and B450)

Documentary analysis of operations by Brazilian police agencies indicated that what happened to Juan was not an isolated case. Since mid-2013 *or progress*<sup>15</sup> was replicated with Manuel (pseudonym), another product who made supply deals with Alex and his associates. Manuel organized different cocaine base paste and hydrochloride laboratories in the Valley of the Apurimac, Ene and Mantaro Rivers (VRAEM) in Perú, which was then stored in Pucallpa, Perú and then transported by truck to the border with Acre, Brazil. In this sense, we find that the drugs were introduced into Brazil through secondary rural roads that crossed the border until they were received and managed by Arturo (pseudonym), another partner of Alex, with whom on that date they agreed to import cocaine, expanding the flow to the warehouses located in Campinas and Limeira, São Paulo, Brazil, but supported once again by the internal logistics of warehouses and cargo transport companies of businessmen linked to PCC, contacted and managed through Tuning of Progress (according to sources A107 and B450)

At the same time, we also find that Manuel was linked as a producer and supplier with the Paraguayan businessman Gastón (pseudonym), as well as the importers Fermín and Andrés (PCC faction members) (pseudonym) residing in Mogi das Cruzes, São Paulo, Brazil. These self-employed businessmen were associated in different operations to finance the purchase of cocaine from Manuel, with the particularity that the fact that Andres was an *brothers*, another member of the PCC like Alex, allowed them, directly and indirectly, to support and access the aforementioned infrastructure of commercial relations, financial resources and material logistics managed through the Tuning of Progress, improving its profit margin in cocaine trafficking exponentially. Especially because Fermín and Andres were also able to access other Colombian and Bolivian suppliers, such as Atilio (pseudonym), with whom they negotiated the conditions of the drug shipments from the favorable position granted by the joint operation together with other corridors linked to operations carried out in the name and with money of the PCC faction. (according to sources A17, A74 and A102)

Although individual and/or collective actors cooperate together to operate the links of production and primary import of cocaine base paste and/or hydrochloride, they also face conflicts that put their interests and identities in tension. Despite the fact that most relationships are commercial,

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<sup>15</sup> For the PCC, the concept of progress “*o progresso*”, is fundamental and multifaceted, encompassing not only drug trafficking activity as its main source of income, but also the growth, strengthening, and overall expansion of the faction, its members, and collaborating allies.

symbolic/material elements are also present, because as Feltran (2018) and Campana and Varese (2022) point out, in the world of crime, complex criminal networks establish and maintain cooperative relationships based on matrices of references structured in values, beliefs, information, experiences, etc. For this reason, one of the most recurrent conflicts within these links in the (i)llicit chain of cocaine supply was precisely the proper management of collections and/or payments for the cocaine purchased. In this sense, the different operators relied on the structure of the PCC faction's commercial, financial and logistical resources, managed through its Tuning of Progress.

Indeed, the lack of timely integration of the entire monetary amount to be paid by all acquiring partners, especially when the shipments were seized (Kitsuse, and Cicourel, 2017) and/or **delays are observed, generated erroneous paths<sup>16</sup>, which for us represented conflicting frictions that in the mixed operating environment of transnational cocaine trafficking linked to the PCC we identify them as frictions.** (according to source A102 and A108)

*"... In the production stage, for example, there have been tensions between Peruvian and Bolivian suppliers and brokers over payment in local currency versus foreign currencies. In 2013, an operator linked to Manuel in the VRAEM retained a 150 kg batch until the agreed payment in dollars was effectively delivered. This attitude had repercussions throughout the logistics chain and generated economic reprisals by deducting amounts from the payment for the days of delay by one of the brokers affiliated with the PCC... A circumstance that led to the renegotiation of the agreements to overcome the tension, with meetings held in Bolivia while the supply from that collaborator of Manuel was suspended..."* **Ethnographic Field Record – Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia 2022.-**

The academic documents and official reports from Brazil and Paraguay analyzed also indicated that this situation was recognized by the actors themselves as having a negative impact, not only for the elasticity of their agency capacity, by undermining the trust sought between them, but also for the structure of operations by allowing its detection by the government agencies in charge of criminal prosecution and/or by criminal actors with whom it is prosecuted. They maintained situations of conflict and/or enmity, putting them internally and/or externally in a position of vulnerability. These actions generate **consequences or collections<sup>17</sup>**, because it was important for the PCC to recognize that ***much is not prohibited, but everything will have consequences.***(according to sources B446 and B449)

In this way, supported by the structure managed by the PCC, many of these actors directly and indirectly linked were able to access payment management

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<sup>16</sup> In the context of the PCC, the erroneous paths refer to deviations, irregularities or errors detected in operations linked to the faction, especially drug trafficking and/or its financial management.

<sup>17</sup> Consequences and collections are fundamental terms that describe the system of accountability and the application of internal discipline of the PCC faction, distancing itself from the concept of punishment or punishment as understood by the state legal system. For the members of the PCC, there are no punishments or prohibitions in the legal sense, but consequences of their actions or words, related more to a diet that reflects that nothing is prohibited, but everything will have a consequence. Collections are one of the possible consequences of a member's actions, reminding them of their commitment to act in accordance with PCC discipline.

mechanisms to confront and discourage persistent disagreements, which in some cases can lead to an escalation of doubly harmful violence (Silva, 2004). In this sense, those operations analyzed indicated that after entering into agreements for the constant supply of cocaine base paste with Alex, the producer and supplier Juan accessed by the end of 2013, a wide financial and operational network of collaborators so that payments for the export of the drug to Brazil could reach Bolivia. On the other hand, the challenge of managing the collection of the quantities of cocaine acquired from Manuel was solved by collaborators of the network linked to the PCC, who through a system of offshore companies in the cargo transport sector of the formal economy based in Uruguay, facilitated simulated operations based on apocryphal invoicing that mask the international remittances of money for the payment of drugs. They also provided Manuel with access to the money laundering market through intermediaries and/or front men, located in Ciudad del Este. (according to source A102; A103; A107 and a108) Consequently, by inserting himself into this network, Manuel went from producing and supplying drugs, to operating transnational financial mechanisms of payments and laundering at the regional level, which also include triangulations of capital with front banks, or without real operation, in Asunción and Pedro Juan Caballero, Paraguay. (according to sources A74 and B450) In a country where the PCC focused its strategy of regional territorial expansion, it crystallized years later (in 2016) after the murder of Jorge Rafaat Toumani (Feltran, 2018).

Also, the shipments acquired were paid to producers grouped by the Colombian Atilio and Manuel, through the commercial line of shell companies also based in Montevideo, Uruguay. These payments were made after simulating transactions in the agricultural sector, and were received through payment orders for the export of agricultural inputs made with a scheme of funds and accounts based in Dubai, all linked to Omar (PCC faction member) (pseudonym), a financial/stock market operator from the Brás area, in the city of São Paulo Brazil within the *Financial Sector of the PCC*<sup>18</sup>. (according to sources A103, A104, B446 and B450)

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Returning to our trafficking chain, the analysis of interviews conducted with public officials and workers linked to the transport and export sector in Brazil, Peru, Paraguay and Bolivia allowed us to understand the next link. On this link, we find that once in Brazilian territory, the cocaine was sent to intermediate logistics centers where warehouses. Thus, in Campo Grande, São Paulo, Brazil Rafael (pseudonym) managed temporary and changing points where the cocaine was deposited before the transfer to Campinas and/or Limeira, also in São Paulo,

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<sup>18</sup> The Financial Sector of the PCC is a highly specialized substructure within the faction, in charge of administering, controlling and managing the sums of money obtained from the different (i)llicit activities linked to the faction.



Brazil. Hernán (PCC faction member) (pseudonym) operated in these places. In these places, the drugs were repackaged and their quality controlled, under indirect supervision by Danilo. These facilities are organized with security cameras, motion sensors, and dual access. This management was carried out by Marquinhos (pseudonym), a former prison official from Mato Grosso, Brazil, who was in charge of the movements and security of the drug load, under the cover of a legally constituted logistics company. (according to sources A102; A103; A108 and B450)

For his part, with Marquinhos he collaborated with Pedrinho (pseudonym) who organized the transporters and/or pilots who transported the cocaine from different points on the border with Bolivia, Paraguay and/or Peru to Campiñas or Limeira, São Paulo, Brazil in trucks or small planes. Thus, Pedrinho had at his service a considerable number of key transporters in the trafficking scheme such as Jorge and Ivan (pseudonym), who without knowing that they are carrying hidden cocaine, celebrated among their peers, the record of having made more than 15 trips in a row without delays, since they did not have mechanical problems, nor were they subjected to any road control. For its part, this structure had the services of Santiago (pseudonym), a civilian pilot who interspersed days of fumigation of rice fields in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, for example, with cocaine shipments across the southwestern border of that country. (according to sources A77, A102, A104; B446 and B450)

To achieve an efficient flow in the operations, the trucks that were used are sent by secondary routes, although they were not the most direct, because that was where these transports enjoyed the protection of corrupt members of the government agencies of road control and police, who received from the Tuning of Progress of the PCC, different payment of sums of money not to carry out inspections and/or road controls during certain days and times, and where appropriate, to inform members linked to the PCC faction about the future existence of controls carried out by their peers not committed to *or progress*. Thus, the direct and indirect connection of these local traffic operators with Alex, for example, gave access to this network of coverage of their trafficking operations for these state agents, guaranteeing them operational immunity in Brazilian territory. (according to sources A103 and B450)

*"... In his office in Campinas, Héctor manages the money box, or "caixa" as he is the Financial Sector of the PCC faction. This university accountant supervises the payment that the faction indicates to him, to different logistics operators and corrupt government agents, who support different operations, including cocaine trafficking. Through parallel accounting mechanisms, such as the simulated payments of an alleged financial operator called Maria, it ensures money movements between São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Sums of money that, before being withdrawn in cash by Maria, reach the hands and/or offices of the collaborators of the traffic..."* **Ethnographic field record, São Paulo, Brazil 2022.-**



Academic studies and official reports from Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia indicated that over the years São Paulo, Brazil became the operational nucleus of the cocaine supply chain. By 2016, Danilo, with a position within the Tuning of Progress, operated from Limeira, São Paulo, Brazil as a *broker* (Ticker et al., 2011) which traded between South American producers and European exporters. It is documented that Alex and his other partner Raúl (PCC faction member) (pseudonym), also in Tuned position within Tuning of Progress, supplied Tomas (pseudonym) with the high-quality cocaine acquired in his own name and/or in the name of the “*Command or the family*”, that is the PCC faction, which was then negotiated for export. In turn, Tomas partnered with Armando (pseudonym) responsible for connections with international transport companies based in Diadema, São Paulo, Brazil from where they prepared significant quantities of cocaine hidden in pallets or containers used to load agricultural and mining products, ready for maritime export to other continents. (according to source A10, A102, A103, A108 and B450)

**Throughout this link in the (i)llicit chain of cocaine base paste and/or hydrochloride trafficking, cooperation between individual and collective actors was essential for the consolidation of the flow of drugs. However, this cooperation did not eliminate – but rather incorporated – tensions, disputes and disagreements that emerge as a constituent part of the network of criminal networks. Conflict, far from representing a disruption, manifests itself as an inherent instance of the daily functioning of the links, derived from the coexistence of dissimilar interests, fragmented identities and heterogeneous organizational rationalities.**

The key to the sustainability of this operational architecture lay precisely in the ability of the actors involved to process and resolve such conflicts without systematically resorting to violence, especially lethal violence. Consequently, the stability of the links depended on conflict resolution mechanisms that privileged negotiation and timely discipline. This conflict management model made it possible not only to preserve strategic alliances, but also to reconcile conflicting interests without eroding the daily functioning of the chain.

*"...During the transport of cocaine, conflicts arise when drivers or pilots demand advances that do not arrive on time. In the winter of 2013, Pedrinho faced an episode with two hired drivers, Jorge and Ivan, who, due to lack of payment, retained on the route a truck contaminated with cocaine from the PCC that was heading to Campo Grande, in Mato Grosso, Brazil. The delay compromised the transshipment operation to Campinas and resulted in a heavy internal sanction by Pedrinho, both carriers were temporarily suspended and their payments due withheld for a while, as a result of their risky behavior compromised the safety of the cargo. All this circumstance was confirmed in parallel in the payment records documented in the excel program by the members of the Tuning of Progress of PCC..."* **Ethnographic field record, São Paulo, Brazil 2022.**

"...On the border with Bolivia, the pilot identified as Santiago demanded a double payment when he discovered that the shipment he was supposed to transport included a larger amount of cocaine than agreed, under threat of grounding the plane and the drugs. The operation was intervened by Danilo's emissaries who mediated to prevent the pilot from deserting. Finally a May payment was agreed, but Santiago was temporarily suspended and removed from subsequent shipments due to his actions, instability and exposure of the structure...". **Ethnographic field record, São Paulo, Brazil 2023.**

"...In São Paulo, Tomás and Alex argued over a lost shipment in Diadema. The dispute revolved around who should bear the loss. The conflict was resolved with the arbitration of Alex, who proposed a compensation scheme that implied proportional discounts on the next shipments...". **Ethnographic field record, São Paulo, 2023.**

Consequently, we could not understand the relationships that structure these links as mere economic transactions. Complex criminal networks were also anchored in shared cultural matrices—values, symbolic codes, experiences, loyalties, sensitive information—that were validated in practice cooperatives and given meaning. In this context, one of the most sensitive points of friction was also the management of payments and collections linked to the delivery of cocaine: a recurring problem whose solution required coordination, trust and agency capacity to impose authority. In this sense, the different operators frequently resorted to practical solutions, such as the temporary displacement of the conflictive actor from the operations of the chain as a key organizing device to mediate disagreements, guarantee the execution of the agreements and sanction, without immediately resorting to violent punishment. Conflict situations, together with cooperation, represented a decisive factor in the sustained reproduction of the flow of supply and the differential satisfaction of the interests at stake.

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Operations by police agencies in Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay told us that by 2016 the drug was transferred daily to the *Baixada Santista*<sup>19</sup> regions, from where the international shipment of high-quality cocaine to Europe and Africa was operated inside maritime containers. From Guarujá, São Paulo, Brazil the self-employed entrepreneur Danilo acted as coordinator together with Alex of the local activities that involved the action of arrival/storage/contamination of cocaine of the cargoes of agricultural products, dispatched from the Port of Santos. As such, we found that the Port of Santos was established by 2016 as a strategic point in the supply chain that required decision-making on the behavior of carriers arriving there from São Paulo and/or crews of port collaborators in Santos, many of them operators and employees of the port complex of the same name. responsible for

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<sup>19</sup> *The Baixada Santista* is a geographical region that, in the context of the sources analyzed, is identified as a central and strategic point for drug trafficking operations linked to the PCC. Geographically, it covers the municipalities of Baixada Santista such as Santos, Guarujá, Praia Grande and Mongaguá. As these cities are strategic points due to the port infrastructure and/or the dense network of cities and land and/or river road communication routes, for example, the PCC faction has a specific Tuning (substructure of coordination of actions) for the *Baixada Santista* region. -

polluting the loads chosen for traffic. (according to source A14; A15; B446 and B447)

Also, Danilo (pseudonym) exploited for himself, and for the PCC faction, his close relationship with Gael (pseudonym) a local referent around the port complex who had links with local structures historically associated with smuggling, who controlled the informal accesses, and/or back doors, which allowed them to enter via the west dock, as they pointed out, to different warehouses near the cargo terminal in the Santos complex. A native of the city of Santos, Gael also provided Danilo with the contact of Theo (pseudonym), who in his position as an employee of the company responsible for operating the container scanner at the port, allowed the safe passage of cocaine-contaminated cargoes to the port terminal's beaches, circumventing the routine controls and/or inspections of the government agencies deployed in the port area. Gael also gave access to key port operators, such as Miguel (pseudonym) who was in charge of handling sensitive customs documents that had information on cargo ships, arrival times, containers, etc. Access to this information and this set of contacts provided the links involved so far with essential information to allow their articulation with the following links. In addition, the port operations of the supply chain throughout the *Baixada Santista*, had the coordinated intervention of a former official of the Brazil's tax authority (*identified as Receita Federal*), Rodolfo (PCC faction member) (pseudonym), who was responsible for corrupting former colleagues of the agency to obtain information on investigative movements of the Brazil's tax authority in exchange for money. (according to source A14; A15; B446 and B447)

Inside the Port of Santos, Danilo coordinated different crews, such as Milton (PCC faction member) (pseudonym), a collaborator specialized in the insertion and/or effective concealment of cocaine cargo inside the containers selected for the export of the drug via the port of Santos. Gonzalo (pseudonym) operated alongside Milton and was responsible for recruiting and paying different operators to help with the identification, discreet opening and closing of containers used for RipOn/RipOff traffic. However, and despite the fact that RipOn/RipOff has changed over the years, from the beginning this method required these professional profiles of the collaborators (Patriarca & Adorno, 2025a and 2025b) (according to sources a75; a17; b446 and b447)

In addition, in 2016 this link in the chain underwent a special transformation. Headed by Santino (PCC faction member) (pseudonym), a cell of crews identified as *Fish market or Tomato Sector (identified as Peixeira or Tomate)*<sup>20</sup> was structured, supported by the resource infrastructure of the PCC faction, through its Tuning of Progress, with the intention of advancing on the port complex of Santos. This substructure ended up giving life to the transnational brokerage model promoted

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<sup>20</sup> In the context of operations linked to the PCC in the Santos Port, the term fish (*identified as peixe*) was used to refer to cocaine and fisherman (*identified as peixeiro*) to operators and/or traffickers linked to the faction. Consequently, *Fish Market or Tomato Sector (identified as peixeira or tomate)* was the **metaphorical and coded term** used to refer to **the coordination substructure that operated** in the port of Santos and/or to the traffic operations related to this logistical point.

by the PCC faction arbitrating internal conflicts, article payments to collaborators, defined maritime traffic routes and operationalized part of a compensation device for losses. (according to source A103; B446 and B447)

*"...In the vicinity of the port of Santos, I began to hear testimonies about the existence of an operational structure known in the environment as the Fish market or Tomato Sector. The accounts of collaborators and indirect records allowed me to reconstruct how this group, linked to the PCC, occupied since 2016 an intermediate position in the international cocaine trafficking chain, assuming the role of... The enclave deliberately avoided any form of confrontation with state agencies and/or rival groups, while developing logistical innovations around container routes, contacts, and contamination processes. After a few years, the sector managed to consolidate itself as a key player in the export of coca derivatives to Europe, Africa and Asia, reaching an unprecedented operational capacity by the beginning of 2020... During the tours and interviews carried out in the port environment, various actors agreed that this cell linked to the PCC operated with a logic of anonymity, a kind of criminal prosopagnosia. The structure was not fixed or vertical, but responded to operational needs and was organized through mobile roles among those who shared personal or commercial affinities. The members of the group used encrypted messaging applications – such as Sky CCC, Viber, WhatsApp, Thema – and pseudonyms – often country names – assigned by a coordinator, which made it difficult to trace their real identities. Several of the same individuals maintained multiple pseudonyms, which allowed me to understand a form of functional identity within the cell – a kind of "operational name" that involved discipline, experience, and accumulated trust... The modus operandi that I observed in records and testimonies was sophisticated. First, vehicles, real estate and equipment were acquired in the vicinity of the port to ensure operations. The cocaine was then stealthily moved from the safe houses to the points where the containers were contaminated, often with the collaboration of port workers and/or government agents. Other members of the group were responsible for guaranteeing the participation of third parties through payments or exchanges of valuable goods – real estate, aircraft, boats, sailboats – while a coordination nucleus assigned tasks and schedules. The mobility between roles and the lack of rigid hierarchies made it impossible to speak of a traditional criminal career: the sense of belonging was forged in effective collaboration rather than in individual merit. As one port pilot commented: "Here they don't walk alone... they collaborate with each other." The structure was more of a brotherhood than a company... A key finding during the work was the reinsurance system: each shipment was divided into different successive loads negotiated with Andean suppliers. In part the volumes were from the importers and others from the command. In the event of confiscation, the losses will be proportionally compensated with the immediate subsequent shipments, in this way, the supply chain supported by the faction preserved its investment - progress - and its reputation. This practice promotes business continuity and strengthens trust between the parties, even when the loads were not intercepted. Finally, we found that tomatoes expressly avoided confrontations with rival groups such as the Red Command. Rather, it wove networks of loyal and functional contacts out of sustained operational success, without resorting to violence if not necessary. This way of acting, validated operation after operation, allowed it to maintain its place in the global scheme of traffic without assuming visible prominence..."*

**Ethnographic field record – Santos Port Complex, 2022.-**

During the loading for the export of the cocaine, friction also occurred with the technical personnel. Indeed, in Santos and Guarujá, São Paulo, Brazil where key





port logistics for the cocaine supply chain were structured with operations linked to the PCC, frictions arose strongly between operators in this link when they observed export volumes and speculated on sumptuous profits. (according to source A84; B446 and B450)

Specifically, we document how on one occasion, Rodolfo (PCC faction member) (pseudonym) was questioned for demanding additional payments not agreed upon to release a container. Milton confronted him in a meeting organized by Danilo, who issued a formal and direct warning to those involved, temporarily redistributing his functions to other collaborators. A similar situation occurred in Guarujá, when Gael claimed an additional commission for risks not contemplated by his role of contact with operators responsible for the storage and internal transfer in the Port of Santos of the cargo contaminated with cocaine. Milton's refusal was based on the argument that “*the table was defined before loading*”, that is, the value of the collaboration was agreed in advance, which generated a tension that almost paralyzed the list of shipments already agreed, motivating a reevaluation of the percentages of distribution and payment of the collaborations. Also, the documents analyzed have documented cases in which port operators, after handling the containers, demanded a “*higher risk*” compensation for having circumvented unforeseen controls. In another incident in November 2020, a night shift operator in Santos threatened to reveal shipment data if he didn't receive the extra payment. Consequently, the *Fish market or Tomato Sector* responded in these cases with an exemplary sanction, first excluding from the group of collaborators of the chain who sponsored the petitioners, from whom goods or values that were given to them as previous payments were compulsorily *confiscated*. (according to sources A74; A102; A103; A107 and a108)

In short, the frictions over unagreed charges in drug operations reflected not only economic conflicts, but also challenges to the criminal order promoted by the PCC. The faction, in its role as regulator, was able to gradually impose a set of rules of conduct that disciplined credit, regulated the distribution of responsibilities, and sanctioned deviations, even in cases involving individuals not affiliated with the faction. Its mechanisms based on argumentation and debate allowed the faction, through the *Fish market or Tomato Sector*, to sustain in the Port of Santos a set of different large-scale operations without constantly resorting to violence, but with a power structure that is as precise as it is valued. (according to sources A102; B446; B449 and B450)

Likewise, during the observation work in the environment in the *Baixada Santista*, particularly in Santos, the figure of the members of the *Fish market or Tomato Sector* clearly emerged. One of them was Pedro (PCC faction member) (pseudonym), a *brother* of the PCC faction based in São Paulo, who maintained close ties with other *brothers* based in Guarujá, with whom he operated. However, the existence of tensions also translated into what we identified as **disciplinary frictions** involving individuals affiliated with the faction. These micro disputes not only implied tensions around money, but also the correct process (identified

as *procedure*<sup>21</sup>) in the operation of the supply chain. Pedro's case, and his attempt to modify a charge without the authorization of his peers, was considered a harmful act against the consensual order, since the decision to mess with someone else's things, without agreement, was serious.

*"... On one of the documented occasions, testimonies told us how on one occasion Pedro personally went to a port terminal where several containers with drugs were planned to be loaded. Upon arrival, he realized that one of the containers had already been contaminated previously by another operator in the sector, linked to a different businessman. This fact generated a situation of tension. Pedro evaluated the possibility of removing the cocaine from someone else's and replacing it with that of his importer, based on the logistical urgency and the preference of his client. The matter was discussed among the consortium members, who considered an alternative: to carry out the exchange as long as the withdrawn package was immediately picked up by a vehicle outside the port perimeter. However, the group decided to abort this option due to the high risk of detection. Pedro then reorganized the operation: he removed the cargo from his importer and temporarily stored it in a safe house, located in the vicinity of the port. A week later, thanks to new information provided by collaborating port employees, he managed to place the cocaine in another container, this time hiding between glass and aluminum, on a ship with a similar route to the original one. This maneuver shows the adaptability of the sector, as well as the sophistication of its methods and the rationality that guides its decisions. In words shared during a coded conversation: "whoever sent it, sent it... who does not, will be next" ... The cocaine thus shipped was registered by Pedro in an informal system of internal traceability: his international partners received precise coordinates on the location of the merchandise inside the ship. This information is essential for the so-called extractors to act in the ports of destination, where they unload the drugs in terminals such as Algeciras, Valencia, Antwerp, Rotterdam or, more recently, in strategic points in North Africa, such as Casablanca or Tangier. Together, this group articulates multiple spheres—logistics, technology, international relations—but also rests on a fabric of reciprocity and criminal pragmatism that turns each charge into an exercise in precision. Pedro, as a medium-high level operator, embodies that figure of a local coordinator whose expertise and network of trust allow him to guarantee the constant flow of cocaine from the heart of the Brazilian port to the terminals of the global market..."*

**Ethnographic field record – East Zone of Santos, 2022.-**

By the beginning of 2020, this group, which made up the *Peixeira or Tomato Sector*, specialized in the logistics and execution of large international cocaine trafficking operations, using as its main means the export containers of perishable products – fruits, fish and sugar – that departed from the Port of Santos to Europe, Africa and other markets. Pedro was part of an environment allowing access to transnational connections. In his daily exchanges with other operators, Pedro's collaboration with foreign criminal networks, such as the 'Ndrangheta of Calabria, was frequently mentioned. Likewise, from the documents of the Brazilian police agencies it emerged that the *Peixeira or Tomato Sector* acted as an articulator of cocaine flows, using historical maritime routes, such as the old *fruit route* that

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<sup>21</sup> The term *proceed* (identified as *proceder*) is a **central and fundamental concept** in the context of the discipline of the PCC. It encompasses a **vast list of orientations** that interfere with the subtlest gestures, words, and behaviors that permeate interactions within the faction's subsystem of relationships under influence, being essential to the reputation, coexistence, and progression of individuals in the world of crime.



gave the name (Tomato) to that sector, through which South America was linked to the European Atlantic ports. for example. (according to sources A15 and B450) This historical continuity has been resigned today under a criminal network logic, through the systematic use of foreign trade infrastructure. There was also a remarkable growth in the group's operations, even under pressure from police and customs operations in the region. The daily communications between Pedro and the other members of the group were carried out through encrypted messaging applications such as Viber or WhatsApp. In these exchanges, critical aspects were coordinated, such as: the choice of container, the type of legal cargo to be used as cover, the precise day and time for contamination, and the windows in the port routine. (according to sources A25; A75; B446 and B447)

At the end of 2020, some particularities of this export link in the (i)llicit cocaine trafficking chain changed substantially. Well, some of the members and/or close collaborators of the *Fish Market or Tomato Sector* were arrested by the government authorities and/or removed by the faction itself. Thus, new structures and ways of functioning supported by the faction replaced the one we had known since 2016. The place in the trafficking economy that the PCC faction had assigned to the *Fish market or Tomato Sector* was inherited by the so-called *businessmen*. Many of them former members of the *Fish market or Tomato Sector*, who intensified the use and deployment of more complex legal and logistical structures, *the oranges (identified as laranjas*<sup>22</sup>). A series of companies in the name of members of the faction and/or collaborators assigned to its actions, which were used to hide the contamination of a greater number of loads of containers of goods, with a greater quantity of cocaine. (according to sources A24; A102; A103; A104 and B450)

Indeed, interviews conducted with different interlocutors who closely followed the operations of these *businessmen*, allowed us to understand that beyond the names, there was the concurrence of factional positions (harmony and discipline) together with the division of roles that we knew since 2016, in these new multicellular structures implemented since the end of 2020, in a new context of expansion of drug trafficking as economic activity was reactivated after the first phases of isolation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. (according to sources A104; B446; B449 and B450)

One of the most innovative roles was played by those who were in charge of the *recruitment of hosts for cocaine brokerage*. In other words, businessmen linked to cocaine trafficking offered their logistical services and placement of sales abroad to an indeterminate number of companies exporting agricultural and industrial products, such as wood, soybean oil, etc., with a strong global export demand. Promoting their export services without the need to pay in advance, since the *businessmen* also linked to the PCC offered to finance with their own money and/or that of the faction the export of goods, which translated into a zero cost of

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<sup>22</sup> The term oranges (*laranjas*) refers to *individuals or companies that are used to conceal the true ownership of assets, the identity of the beneficiaries or the illicit origin of funds, within the framework of payment schemes and/or money laundering or trafficking operations linked to the PCC.*



shipping for potential customers, until the effective arrival and payment of those agricultural and industrial products by their importing purchasers from abroad. Thus, once the merchandise arrived at its destination and its higher export value was charged by the exporting companies, the businessmen linked to the PCC deducted the price of the logistics and/or sales placement services advanced to the exporters. (according to sources A24; A102; A103; A104 and B450)

In this way, the *laranjas* linked to the PCC faction were filled with money and explorer clients who did not know that in reality many of their licit cargoes were captured and transported to be contaminated via modern RipOn/RipOff with cocaine, in private warehouses where they were momentarily diverted on their journey to the port complex of Santos (Patriarca & Adorno, 2025a and 2025b). The cargoes of licit goods were transported from the agro-industrial companies to the cocaine contamination warehouses, and from these to the Santos port complex, by third transport companies recommended by the faction's *businessmen*, with whom they apparently had no connection whatsoever. In reality, the transport companies were also other *laranjas* directly or indirectly linked to the legal, operational and financial structures of the PCC, which officiated as logistical organizers and/or sales placements. (according to sources A24; A102; A103; A104 and B450)

At the same time, the PCC faction again provided at this point in the drug trafficking chain different collaborators, employees of the government control agencies operating in the port and/or employees of the Santos complex, who in the face of the contaminated cargoes relaxed the planned controls, facilitating trafficking. Likewise, with regard to the basement of operations, it was more evident since the end of 2020 that *businessmen* delivered and demanded a series of reinsurance from cocaine suppliers and importers. Different material assets - llicit and illicit - were negotiated and made available to guarantee possible losses due to the inefficiency of the operations. Specifically, the businessmen acquired and/or delivered to the importers a considerable sum of cocaine on account that was kept safe, while they demanded that the importers to consumer markets deliver as a guarantee sums of money or goods that they also safeguarded. (according to sources A24; A102; A103; A104 and B450)

In addition, in the case of new actors involved in trafficking, we found that a parallel system of guarantors was established, such as Batista (PCC faction member) (pseudonym), who, in exchange for a part of the drug load and/or money, financed the immediate previous payments of the trafficking chain in the event of loss of shipment until temporarily covering the losses with subsequent return of drugs after the effective completion of new shipments. Thus, suppliers and importers had guarantees at their fingertips, which, in the event that operational successes did not take place, those goods could be executed without further ado, thus avoiding violent conflicts between the parties.

Consequently, in the export stage, frictions due to collections were present, increasing as traffic operations increased. This circumstance led the *Fishing market or Tomato Sector* first, and the *businessmen* linked to the PCC later, to establish a regime of *internal audits* to track operations, payments and balances.

Thus, in a conversation held between Milton and Gonzalo, both discussed *the loss sheet* and the debts of a European importer who had already received his cargo. This discipline sought to strengthen the cohesion of the (i)llicit chain in a period -2016/2020- of expansion of its operation based on an exponential increase in its operations, by reducing uncertainty and sanctioning those who threaten the flow of cocaine supply. Thus, in cases where the loss of a shipment is confirmed without direct liability, the operators supported by the logistics structure financed and managed by the PCC, activated their compensation system. (according to sources A24; A102; A103; A104 and B450)

All this way of managing possible conflicts led to the expansion and consolidation of trafficking networks in Africa, where cocaine shipments were received mainly in Luanda (Angola), Casablanca (Morocco) and Cotonou (Benin). In Cotonou, Mrs. Akin (pseudonym), a Nigerian-Beninese citizen, coordinated the reception and redistribution agreed upon with people linked to the PCC faction. Likewise, other key actors in Ghana acted as logistical intermediaries in the secondary ports of the African country for the transshipment of cocaine. The same happened in Casablanca, where historic smugglers unloaded containers with cocaine from Brazil and stored them until their subsequent transshipment to other maritime containers destined for Europe – according to conditions also agreed upon by actors linked to the PCC who traveled to that continent. (according to sources A15, A83 and B450)

From these ports in North and West Africa, cocaine shipments continued to Europe, where from Valencia, Antonio (pseudonym) organized the reception and extraction of the drug negotiated in Brazil with people linked to the PCC. He was assisted by Francisco (pseudonym), who is based in Zaragoza, and Gabriel (pseudonym), who operated a front company in Almeria, Spain. Both were Alex's preferred importer and managed the European redistribution logistics using shipping companies. Once in Rotterdam, another cell of members of a Balkan drug distribution network received the drug from Africa. This cell redistributed part of the merchandise to Germany, Belgium and Slovenia, in motor homes for example, and was also linked to clandestine methamphetamine laboratories on the outskirts of Prague, a drug that was later used as part of the payment for logistics used to transport South American cocaine. (according to sources A10 and B450)

*"...In 2022, an operation with 480 kg hidden in juice cans was documented, organized by Fernando (pseudonym) from Limeira. This operation was articulated with legally authorized exporting companies..."* **Ethnographic field record – Morocco, 2023.-**

*"... High-quality cocaine shipments hidden in licit goods, such as juices, coffee, or machinery, and loaded on commercial ships bound for Africa. Santino (PCC) maintains direct communication with the international cell led by Norbert (pseudonym) a European operator who coordinates with Serbian mafias in Rotterdam and Italian clients in Naples..."* **Ethnographic field record – Antwerp, 2023.-**

Thus, frictions at each link in the chain reflect not only logistical failures, but also power disputes, internal competition, and challenges to faction authority. In practice, the PCC has developed a criminal regulatory system that combines discipline, arbitration, and punishment as part of its strategy of operational continuity in transnational cocaine trafficking.

*"... During our tracking of criminal flows linked to cocaine trafficking, we identified several points of friction between the PCC and its international intermediaries, especially in West Africa and Europe. In the port city of Cotonou (Benin), Mrs. Akin, in charge of receiving shipments, withheld part of a delivery in claim for an outstanding debt. This action generated an urgent reaction from Valencia, where the operator known as Antonio depended on that cargo. The situation prompted the intervention of Danilo, a senior leader of the PCC, who authorized an economic transfer from Dubai to resolve the conflict. Similar cases occurred in Casablanca (Morocco), with the Omm (pseudonym) family, where tensions also arose due to contractual disagreements, although they were resolved more informally, appealing to previous reciprocity codes. In Western Europe, profit margins are rising, but so are operational risks. In Valencia, Merlin rejected a game as low quality, which generated an immediate response from Alex. The Tuning of Progress – a structure of the PCC faction that guarantees organizational coherence – intervened to prevent the conflict from escalating. In Rotterdam, Zeta (pseudonym), a Serbian trader, withheld 180,000 euros citing losses from customs controls. This decision was interpreted as a threat to the PCC hierarchy, prompting a disciplinary response by Santino, who warned of consequences for those who try to break with the established system. Another conflict in the same city involved an Italian buyer who refused to pay because of differences in the weight of the cargo. After verifying the logistical data, the Tuning of Progress sent a clear warning to ensure the settlement. These episodes reveal how the PCC applies a strict business logic, based on logistical efficiency, contractual compliance and internal control of Tuning of Progress. Alex (PCC) and Santino (PCC) figures play a key role in crisis management, especially in regions with high institutional instability such as West Africa and in highly regulated markets such as Europe. Conflict resolution is not based exclusively on violence, but also on norms of loyalty, deterrence and organizational sustainability..."* **Ethnographic field registration, Lisbon 2024.**

With the coordinated international reception, it led to the expansion of links and structures of contact, cooperation and conflict resolution within and under the (i)llicit chain of cocaine supply based on the mixed trafficking operation. While the PCC plays behind the scenes a role of "**Wire Nutt**" articulator of the global cocaine trade, integrating suppliers, brokers, financiers, exporters, collaborators and distributors in a disciplined, efficient and decentralized network.

#### 4. DISCUSIÓN

The debate on (i)llicit cocaine trafficking has moved from approaches focused on the State and large criminal organizations that will dispute its sovereignty, to more complex approaches aimed at examining everyday operators and decentralized structures. Consequently, based on our fieldwork, we return to the focus recently raised by Feltran (2025) and investigate these processes in an articulated way, considering that they configure dynamics with significant implications in the reconfiguration of the geopolitics of drugs (Sampó, 2019; Sampó and Troncoso, 2023). This reality cannot be understood only from a local

or regional perspective -South America-, but also from a global perspective (Lien & Feltran, 2025).

In this framework, the present study set out to advance in this line of discussion by analyzing the challenges and problems that arose during cocaine trafficking operations that we identified as **frictions** in order to understand how an articulation between agency (autonomy) and structure was possible, or how these elements were combined in practice. We propose that, in a context of increasing internationalization of the cocaine trafficking economy, static or universalized forms of regulation are not emerging, but rather **customary and pragmatic orientations that guide the decisions and actions of operators**.

For this reason, this paper focuses on the dynamics of logistics brokerage in international cocaine trafficking linked to the PCC faction, where we analyze routes associated with such intermediation. Our interest was focused on those mixed operations that have **links with the PCC faction, either because they are carried out individually or collectively under the name of the organization, carried out by a brother or by collaborators with business-type functions, and that make use – in whole or in part – of the logistical infrastructure provided by the “family”**.

Specifically, we seek to identify, reconstruct and analyze conflicting scenes that express different scales of intermediation based on the brokerage model. The general objective we set ourselves was to identify emerging conflicts and study the ways in which these operators faced them, in the framework of transnational trafficking operations, and how these resolutions had an impact both on the internal dynamics of the supply network and on external relations with other criminal, financial and logistical actors. In this sense, our article constitutes a new contribution to the analysis of the growing relevance of brokerage in the trafficking economy, based on the conflicts of identity and interests that persistently cross these practices (Lien, 2020).

In this context, the sector we will analyze, known as the *Fishing Market or Tomato Sector*, constitutes the progressive crystallization of a logistics brokerage model in the wholesale cocaine trade. This cell developed gradually as a response to the operational demands of the transnational trafficking economy and a political decision by the faction to provide an alternative, articulating efficiency, flexibility and adaptability through its own cooperative forms of intermediation. Its capacity to intervene did not seek a monopoly of operations in the port of Santos, much less rigid territorial control, nor the establishment of a centralized hierarchical structure. On the contrary, the faction articulated this port cell with a flexible, cooperative articulation aimed at the operational efficiency of its own human, material and logistical resources supported by other substructures, such as **the Financial Sector, the Tuning of Progress and Tuning of Baixada (Santos)**. That is, substructures specialized in general financial/accounting management, operational management of drug trafficking and/or local relations management. Consequently, far from promoting an autonomous structure based on the idea of dominance, the cell that was deployed with a specific focus – transnational cocaine trafficking – in Santos, facilitated the flow of cocaine from producers in

the Andean countries to consumer markets, on different continents, integrating various contemporary actors and disciplinarily minimizing conflicts through customary logistical agreements.

The empirical findings suggest that the structure of the PCC has promoted the organized coexistence of semi-autonomous operations—such as those headed by the *Fishing Market or Tomato Sector*—avoiding a vertical and rigid architecture. The intervention of the members of this cell was carried out through low-profile tactical devices, preferably through the port of Santos, without exercising explicit territorial control or resorting to unnecessary confrontations. The reconstructed scenes showed us how operators employed encrypted communication applications, planned shipments intermittently, and maximized efficiency, minimizing their exposure and on-site presence at the Santos port complex to what is strictly necessary to ensure the success of an operation and avoid operational risks.

One of the most significant findings at this point was the existence of an intermittency that brought it high profits, based on the difference in the higher value of the cocaine negotiated and acquired at origin directly from Andean producers and the availability of multiple importers at its destination, which in turn had an impact. benefits for the crates of the PCC faction. On the other hand, this brokerage model made it possible to guarantee both the quality of the product and the quantity and its punctual delivery, generating mutual advantages for the different links in the (i)llicit supply chain.

Consequently, we find that in parallel the mixed operations linked to the PCC that we analyze are in fact a dual presence of the faction, which sought the consolidation of the so-called *Fishing Market or Tomato Sector as a cell specialized in port logistics brokerage for international cocaine* trafficking, while allowing the intervention of other actors associated with the faction and/or collaborators, businessmen, who without acting strictly for the faction, shared common practices, links and logistical platforms. However, from 2020 onwards, this parallel coexistence was profoundly transformed with the arrest, murder or internal removal of central figures from the Peixeira or Tomate Sector, which modified the way in which the PCC faction fought for operational hegemony in the trafficking chain, changing the game and further opening the possibility of developing one form or another form of intervention. At different points in the supply chain, not only in Brazil, South America, but on other continents. From there, an expansion was documented that was misidentified as reckless of the faction, when in reality the process studied by us in this work only intensified in an accelerated and nuanced way.

On the other hand, we find that businessmen, later linked to the PCC faction, promoted a sophisticated organizational model, based on multicellular legal and financial structures, on the one hand. In this scheme, the so-called *laranjas*, that is, legal front companies in the name of members or collaborators, began to play a central role. These structures were used as legal platforms to cover up massive contamination operations of containers of licit goods with significant loads of cocaine. In addition, these legal structures allowed for a broader operational



expansion, with greater legal coverage and logistical diversification adjusted to the demands of global markets.

On occasions, the micro networks of collaboration reproduced, albeit with nuances, the factional positions that the PCC historically structured, that is, harmonies and disciplines, to which differentiated functional roles were attached that were implemented in a coordinated manner. Among these, we find those responsible and collaborators for the collection of cocaine in warehouses in different parts of the State of São Paulo; the introduction of cocaine through states bordering Bolivia and Peru, as well as the transport and storage in the vicinity of the Santos port complex for subsequent loading into the containers using RipOn/RipOff techniques; financial management to ensure the constant acquisition of logistical inputs; and the establishment of links with port or control agency employees to facilitate illicit movement through the relaxation of inspections.

One of the most relevant innovations at this end of the operations linked to the PCC faction was the implementation of advanced host recruitment mechanisms for cocaine brokerage. Specifically, businessmen offered their logistics services to agro-industrial exporting companies – mainly soybeans, wood or oil – in exchange for facilitating free interoceanic transport and placing their products in destination markets, mainly in Africa and Europe. In exchange, once the export values were collected, they deducted the costs of these services, thus generating a contractual relationship that covered up the cocaine brokerage operation. What these production companies often ignored was that their cargoes were momentarily diverted to warehouses controlled by the faction, where they were contaminated with cocaine before entering the port.

This network of relationships was sustained thanks to a more complex network of transport companies, supposedly external, but equally controlled and connected to the PCC's logistical labs, and/or its collaborators. This represented a system of (i)llicit collaboration relationships (Lien & Feltran, 2025) that concentrated and intermingled legal and illicit legal/economic structures that articulated between different actors, allowing a fluid circulation of goods, without further ado, with little exposure and high levels of profitability. **Consequently, we believe that the economy of trafficking – actors, knowledge, infrastructure – is not an exogenous reality isolated from formal and lawful economic structures, but on the contrary is juxtaposed to it, and at some point presupposes it.**

Likewise, the cocaine brokerage model supported by the PCC faction incorporated other financial assurance devices between suppliers and importers, that is, there were sums of money, loads of cocaine and material goods that were offered, negotiated and/or demanded as guarantees prior to shipment, in order to cover eventual losses derived from seizures or operational failures. These reinsurance policies were kept under the protection of both parties and could be executed automatically in the event of failures in the operation, avoiding violent conflicts and preserving the commercial stability of transnational relations. For its implementation, instances of dialogue and argumentation were established



between the parties with the idea of measuring the possible internal/external responsibilities that would give rise to extraordinary and exceptional solutions, mainly associated with lethal violence.

**At this point, the widely spread image of charismatic leadership based on indiscriminate violence was relegated by our evidence that highlighted the existence of strongly rational forms of intervention and conflict resolution based on customary discipline.**

Overall, a transformation took place and is taking place, a significant metamorphosis of drug brokerage, but linked to the PCC. Although cooperative logic, logistical efficiency and decentralization were there from the beginning, what changed was the speed at which the modifications of the form of intervention were adopted. In particular, we observe it around the substitution of actors, the sophistication of financial and logistical tools, and the incorporation of covert legal services, constantly redefining the role of the PCC as a key articulator of cocaine trafficking in the contemporary global scenario.

The PCC went from regulating illicit activities within a territory by offering parameters of social and political subjectivation, to establishing a regime of interpersonal relationships by which its members and associates are linked to the outside world (Feltran, Rodrigues, & Zambon, 2023). The most recent power structure that we analyze was not limited to being an instrument of regulation in the world of crime on the urban margins (Feltran, 2020a, 2020b), but represented a set of complex networks of decisions and actions that provided criteria of opportunity allowing effective operational interventions. Far from the idea of zero-sum conflict, the faction consolidated a model of dual structure and operation based on decentralization and cooperation between different relinked actors.

This finding allowed us to corroborate that, in the wholesale dimension, the expansion of trafficking for cocaine consumption was accompanied by both a quantitative and qualitative transformation in the mechanisms of drug intermediation. In a context where the improvement in the production and refining processes of hydrochloride has reduced costs without affecting the quality of this product, a growing sophistication and non-conflictive specialization of brokerage supported by advances in communication technologies, have made it possible to negotiate, operate and process hundreds of shipments of tons of cocaine via Brazil, from Bolivia, Peru and Colombia (according to sources a107 and b450). But, unlike "*retail drug trafficking*" where exposure to violence and police persecution remains a determining factor, at the wholesale scale the constant was to adopt a network structure, based on trust and commercial collaborations with multiple actors, minimizing the use of lethal force and ensuring the stability of the supply chain. (Feltran, 2018)

**In operational terms, this form of intervention by the PCC faction in the position of intermediary, from the brokerage of the wholesale cocaine trade, represents a new phase in its history. Specifically, this group has not only facilitated the importation of cocaine through the port complex where we warn that it operated, but also redefined the brokerage methods, channels and gateways of exit/access of cocaine to Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania**

**through the implementation of a reliable and stable operational point strategy without territory.**

Thus, the PCC has consolidated a new phase of its history under its own management model that knows how to take advantage of the opportunities offered by globalization and has put it in favor of traffic. In this way, **the brothers add to the drug trafficking economy their own management model based on their novel cellular and decentralized operational structure, which with relative autonomy grants predictability to operations based on cooperation and logistical efficiency, over the hierarchy and logics of traditional-capitalist accumulation. Also, this faction group managed to avoid the violent confrontations that characterized its own history decades ago, focusing on betting on this strategy of points and/or safe passages based on discretion and operational efficiency.**

In general, this model of intervention represented for us a renewed phase in the history of the PCC. The emphasis is no longer on hegemony based on coercive power or territorial symbols, but on a logic based on logistical efficiency, cooperation and predictability. This form of organization does not depend on charismatic leadership or rigid hierarchies, but on the ability to maintain continuous and safe flows in an increasingly competitive market.

Finally, this reconfiguration of criminal brokerage that we observe in these mixed operations raises relevant theoretical implications. On the one hand, we question the approaches that postulate an absolute monopoly of the PCC over cocaine trafficking; on the other, we discard the idea that its operation is based on the violent control of the territory. Instead, a reading focused on cooperation networks, logistical specialization and an adaptive cellular structure is proposed. From a methodological point of view, the study focuses on the daily practices of transnational brokerage linked to the PCC, with special attention to micro-operational decisions, emerging conflicts and the resolution strategies implemented. From our analysis of empirical reconstructions, it was possible to make visible the role of the PCC in these mixed operations as an articulator of a globalized traffic, which we define as **Wire Nutt**, by assembling suppliers, intermediaries, financiers, exporters and distributors in a network of complex, decentralized, disciplined and functional networks.

From an expanded methodological perspective, our work proposes the usefulness that Social Network Analysis (SNA) could represent in the future as a tool for the study of complex criminal structures such as mixed trafficking operations linked to the PCC. With the findings reached so far, we believe that the integration of judicial data, qualitative analysis, and network visualization would offer another in-depth look at interaction patterns, the centrality of actors, and key links in the cocaine trafficking economy. In this sense, we propose the need for a future research agenda aimed at developing comparative studies based on SRA, comprehensive and contextually informed.

## 5. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

This paper allowed us to observe a substantive transformation in the organizational dynamics linked to cocaine trafficking operated by actors linked to the PCC. Since 2013, and as a result of multiple processes of state repression, internal rearrangements and deaths of historical members, a less hierarchical and more atomized form of operation of cocaine trafficking has been consolidated. This new stage was led by what we call here mixed **operations, that is, criminal ventures developed by businessmen affiliated with or linked to the PCC, who deployed a flexible and intermittent brokerage model that combined criminal practices with legal front structures. Together with them, the presence in the port of Santos of its own operational logistics cell was established, but strongly supported by the substructures -Sintonías- of the faction.**

Unlike traditional factional logic, based on explicit affiliation, territorial control, and vertical articulation, in one case or another, mixed operations functioned from multicellular and highly adaptive structures. Its distinctive feature was the use and development of formal economic structures – legal enterprises – infrastructure, financial, human and material resources – in many cases held by third parties outside the trafficking economy, but which ultimately facilitated the transport, storage, contamination and export of cocaine in cargoes of illicit goods. These operations took advantage of the global expansion of agro-industrial trade, offering logistics services at zero cost to exporting companies who were often unaware that their products were being used as vehicles or capsules for international cocaine trafficking. Thus, the trafficking network managed to expand its customer portfolio and multiply its logistical insertion without the need for direct violence or territorial control.

The use of laranjas made it possible to conceal the direct connection between the faction and its associates and logistical operations. The cocaine was transported from Andean producing regions to clandestine warehouses in São Paulo, and from there temporarily diverted to private warehouses near the Santos port complex for contamination with the legal cargoes. Subsequently, the contaminated products were transported by transport companies recommended by the logistics operators, which had no visible links with these operators, but which in reality responded to the same network of decisions. The model also included the recruitment of port employees and co-opted officials who facilitated shipments by relaxing controls at critical points, especially in the port complex of Santos.

Another distinctive element was the system of cross-guarantees that replaced the use of violence as a dispute resolution mechanism. Instead of relying on coercive power, businessmen assured importers of a volume of cocaine as backup in case of logistical losses, while demanding deposits of money or valuable goods that remained in custody until the successful completion of the operation. This logic based on operational confidence and financial predictability articulated a more stable (i)tender economy, with lower rates of friction and conflict between the intervening actors.



At the same time, the faction politically decided on structures together with its Tunes, that is, the tomato or Peixeira operational cell, based on a logistical requirement of the system of interests of the traffic economy. In this way, the faction appears as a clear supplier in the global supply chain.

The system of mixed operations functioned as a parallel economy network, but juxtaposed with the formal, highly sophisticated export economy, **where reputational capital and logistical efficiency were more relevant than the direct use of force.**

These forms of intermediation show a shift from the classic model of organized crime towards **more horizontal and cooperative socio-political and economic schemes, where the role of the PCC as a support is not so much that of an omnipresent controller, but that of facilitator and/or symbolic guarantor of operations.** This poses a challenge to traditional approaches to analysis, which are still based on rigid and territorialized pyramidal models. On the contrary, what our study evidences is a cooperative model of diffuse traffic, based on intermittent dynamic networks, in which the boundaries between the legal and the illegal are functionally redrawn and strategically used.

Finally, this new scenario also requires rethinking the methodological tools with which these structures are addressed. In this sense, Social Network Analysis (SRA) is presented as a particularly fertile instrument for understanding the morphology and dynamics of these organizations. As proposed by the study of violence in Yakuza networks using multilevel models (Baradel and Breuer, 2024), the ARS allows us to observe how different levels of relationship—individual, group, and structural—are articulated in scenarios where multiple forms of authority, legitimacy, and resources coexist. The relational logic of the SNA makes it possible to reconstruct the trajectories of actors, links, nodes and flows of exchange, overcoming static or essentialist visions of organized crime.

The application of the ARS enables the temporal and spatial analysis of evolving criminal networks, allowing the identification of moments of reconfiguration, breaking points, emergence of new actors and displacement of old ones. The study of the PCC's logistics networks under this prism will make it possible to map the variable geometry of its operations, detect intermediation patterns, areas of institutional vulnerability and concealment strategies. Moreover, it would make it possible to explore how legal, financial and relational resources are combined to give rise to mixed operations that operate more like criminal markets for services than as closed mafia structures.

Also, the possibility of continuing with multi-located ethnography in other *hubs* around different continents along the (i)llicit trafficking chain following the work dynamics continued by Lien & Feltran (2025), to advance in the knowledge of the new forms of reconfiguration of the *geopolitics of drugs* (Sampó, 2019; Sampó and Troncoso, 2023).

Finally, we believe that future research should deepen the empirical study of these mixed structures. Only through a comprehensive and relational approach will it be possible to understand the new forms of transnational drug trafficking, its economic rationality and its insertion in contexts of hybrid governance. Far from

disappearing, complex criminal networks such as the PCC faction seem to have mutated into more subtle and effective forms of transnational intervention, challenging both the knowledge that has been held so far and the traditional analytical categories.



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