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Deploying Plural Drug Policies After the 'War on Drugs': A Geographical Perspective

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6 “The topic is the potentially imminent breakdown of the twentieth century
7 international drug control regime. A breakdown is not guaranteed but it is
8 possible, and so it behooves interested parties to consider how events
9 might play out” (Caulkins, 2015: 2).

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12 “The question now is what comes after the drug wars” (Collins, 2016a: 6).

13 14 **Introduction**

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17 It is now apparent that the political consensus that has sustained the universal,
18 US-led, UNGASS codified, supply-side focused, ‘war on drugs’ model of
19 international drug policy since the early 1970s is ‘cracking’ (Bewley-Taylor 2012;
20 Collins 2014a: 6; 2017: 279; Inkster and Comolli 2012: 131). This is evident both
21 through the statements of some prominent politicians, drawn largely from those
22 producer and transit nations that are most directly affected by drug related
23 violence (Caulkins 2015: 4; Collins 2014b: 9; 2016b: 13 Felbab-Brown 2014: 41;
24 Inkster and Comolli 2012: 36; Mejia and Restrepo 2014: 26; Santos 2012: 2;
25 Wainwright 2016: 139-140) and in the growing incidents of nations and states
26 decriminalizing or legalizing the non-medical possession and use of certain drugs
27 (Bewley-Taylor 2012: 332; Chatwin 2017: 80-81; Jelsma 2017; Wainwright 2016:
28 241-253). This has been mirrored by a growing critical literature from drug policy
29 scholars advocating international drug policy reform, broadly characterized by
30 four principles: the advocacy of policy pluralism; experimentation; evidence
31 gathering / evaluation; and the avoidance of drug fetishization through their
32 insertion within wider discourses of economic, social, political and environmental
33 development (Collins 2014a: 6; 2014b: 13-14; 2017: 6-7; Gomis 2012: 14; Hall
34 2017; Inkster and Comolli 2012: 117-134; Levi 2014; Midgley et al. 2014;
35 Taylor et al. 2013: 422-424). This is set broadly within a drug management, rather
36 than eradication, framework and guided by concerns for trans-border justice and
37 harm-reduction (Collins 2014b: 14; Gomis 2012: 3).

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41 This paper builds upon this literature and explores some of the
42 complexities of drug policy pluralization that have arguably been somewhat
43 subsumed to date within critiques of the existing policy regime and discussions of
44 its reform and of specific policy alternatives. This is not to argue that the current
45 regime does not require reform, but rather that the complexities and problematics
46 of its reform be more squarely acknowledged and their negotiation explored more
47 directly. This paper does not set out, then, to evaluate individual drug policy
48 options. There is a raft of literature that does this, much of which this paper cites.
49 Rather, it explores potential issues surrounding the deployment of policies under a
50 more plural drug policy regime, something that has gained relatively little
51 attention in the literature to date.
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6 The paper is circumscribed by a series of questions:

- 7 • What do we mean by drug policy pluralization?
 - 8 • What are the prospects for drug policy pluralization?
 - 9 • What will drug policy pluralization look like?
 - 10 • What will be its effects?
 - 11 • How might plural drug policies be distributed across international space?
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14 Each one of these questions might be considered a complexity or
15 problematic of drug policy pluralization. The engagement of the literature with
16 these five questions is somewhat uneven. Whilst its engagement with the first two
17 is extensive, and the third partial, it is much less extensive for the final two. It is
18 the final two of these problematics that this paper addresses most directly. This is
19 timely, it is argued here, as the outcomes of the final two questions are likely to
20 have implications for the address of the first three.
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22 The paper offers a geographically sensitive reading of illegal drug markets.
23 It is structured in three principal parts. The first part (which includes the sections
24 'drug markets as regional phenomena' and 'drug markets as relational phenomena')
25 rethinks drug markets here through the literatures of economic geography. This
26 suggests a set of priorities that stem from a paucity of explicit reflection upon the
27 connections between different drug markets, the connections between different
28 sites within drug markets and the multi-scale production of drug markets. The
29 second part ('drug policy asymmetries', 'drug policy repatriation and the extra-
30 national' and 'drug policies in combination') rethinks the challenges and
31 opportunities of drug policy reform through the lens of economic geography. The
32 final part outlines some research and policy implications that emerge from this
33 project. In sum the paper argues for the greater inclusion of geographical
34 perspectives within the growing advocacy of international drug policy reform.
35 The paper proceeds now though to a short section outlining the geographical
36 principles that are applied here.
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41 **Economic Geographies of Illicit and Illegal Markets**

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43 The provision of illicit and illegal goods and services by criminal entrepreneurs
44 form significant proportions of the contemporary global economy. The global
45 trade in illegal drugs, for example, has been estimated as equivalent to 1.5 per
46 cent of all money moving through the world's financial system and 7-8 per cent of
47 world trade (UNODC, 2015: 1). If accurate, this suggests a market roughly
48 equivalent to that of the textile industry (Moynagh and Worsley, 2008: 176).
49 Whilst criminal entrepreneurs, the markets they operate within and their effects
50 have received a great deal of academic scrutiny, this has been somewhat
51 circumscribed in disciplinary terms. Within the social sciences this has emanated
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6 largely from anthropology, criminology, sociology and, to an extent, economics
7 and political science. However, cognate disciplines, such as economic geography,
8 which has otherwise been recognized as offering sophisticated readings of the
9 spatialities of contemporary economic globalization, have produced only limited
10 or nascent literatures exploring markets in illicit and illegal goods and services
11 (Hall, 2013; 2017; Hudson, 2014; 2019; though see earlier examples, Allen, 2005;
12 Rengert, 1996). This is a significant lacuna for economic geography in that it is
13 able to say little about that 15-20 per cent of the global economy (Glenny, 2008)
14 that has been attributed to these markets.
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17 Contemporary economic geography, reflecting a complex and often
18 contested evolution, offers a diverse theoretical and methodological body of
19 enquiry (Aoyama et al., 2011). A broadly political-economy perspective is
20 employed here, one that “recognises the complexity of the economy as constituted
21 by labour processes, processes of material transformation, and processes of value
22 creation and flow in specific time/space contexts” (Hudson, 2005: 13). This
23 approach recognizes the roles of multiple agents within market processes which
24 include, in this case, criminal entrepreneurs, states and international institutions,
25 policing, military and security personnel, public health and medical agencies, drug
26 consumers and civil society.
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28 This paper employs an explicitly geographical rendering of this political-
29 economy perspective, little applied to date to illicit and illegal markets, that is
30 attentive to the agency of a variety of geographical phenomena within economic
31 processes. These include spatial asymmetries both within illicit and illegal
32 markets and in the conditions and contexts within which they are situated,
33 including policy and regulatory regimes. These are both empirical outcomes and
34 active constituents of uneven development. The paper is also attentive to the
35 interplay of processes operating at, and across, different scales (Hudson, 2014:
36 780) within the constitution and operation of illicit and illegal markets. It deploys
37 this to scrutinize the potential scalar fixity and reach of their regulation through
38 policy. Further, it considers illicit and illegal markets as relational phenomena,
39 composed of multiple sites and complex connections between them. It explores
40 here how interventions, such as changes in the policy or regulatory environment,
41 at one site may produce multiple outcomes across other sites within these markets,
42 which both produce and transform their own geographies. This highlights the
43 potential significance of connections between sites, as well as sites themselves, as
44 units of analysis. Finally, the paper advances a post-structural sensitivity to the
45 ways in which the geographies of illicit and illegal markets are discursively
46 rendered, and the potentially ideological effects of such framings. The paper, then,
47 advances an economic geography perspective as a way of both understanding the
48 constitution and operation of illicit and illegal markets and also their regulation.
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Drug Markets as Regional Phenomena

Prevailing official and, many, popular discourses that have evolved under the present policy regime have tended to view illegal drugs through a legal / institutional lens that has projected universalist / globalist interpretations across a series of, arguably, discrete phenomena. Thus, the question of illegal drugs has commonly come to be understood, within such discourses, as a singular problem of global proportions. However, different illegal drugs demonstrate enduring differences in their geographies of production, transit and consumption, circulating within largely distinct regional market contexts. Similarly, they demonstrate very different material and psychoactive properties. The logic of their constituting a single, global issue, then, as distinct from a series of multiple, regional issues, potentially dissolves in the face of these empirical distinctions. Such framings can be located within longer traditions of discursive elision of discrete phenomena into single categories within official discourses of illicitness (Hobbs 2013: 18; Levi 2009; Woodiwiss and Hobbs 2009). The primary implication of this is that such widely circulated readings of drugs markets help lend legitimacy to the present international policy regime whilst peripheralizing policy strategies that might emerge from alternative drug market ontologies. The emergence of pluralist schools of thought within the drug policy reform literature challenges such globalist imaginations and invites the emergence of alternative discursive framings of drug markets.

This discussion argues that readings of drug markets should emerge primarily out of their grounded empirics. Thus, it is important to interrogate the actual connections that exist between different drug markets in ways that will either sustain or challenge the conceptual reading outlined above. For example, Rengert (1996: 15) has outlined the emergence of the Colombian cocaine industry as, in part, the product of the increased interdiction of marijuana at the US border in the early 1980s. This prompted Colombian marijuana smugglers to move into the smuggling of cocaine (see also Castells 2000 on the transferability of criminal capacities within illicit market innovation in Colombia). Further Allen (2005: 124) points out that “many cocaine traffickers have diversified in scope by expanding into the production, smuggling, or distribution of methamphetamine, marijuana, and especially heroin, in accordance with their firm-specific competitive advantages. In doing so, they spread risks by gaining exposure to a variety of markets”. Clearly, criminal entrepreneurs do diversify and may operate across or move into alternative drug markets in ways that might challenge their construction as discrete phenomena. However, pursuing such inter-market connections has not emerged as a central concern of much drug market research, leaving us with only limited understandings of their nature and extent. This leaves us relatively poorly-equipped to engage with the more ontological questions such observations raise.

Potentially rethinking drug markets as distinct regional phenomena rather than a singular global phenomenon prompts a number of responses with regard to research and policy agendas. First, emerging from this is a sense of a potential logic of developing and deploying drug policies at the regional, transnational market level, rather than the national level. Such an approach would inevitably span multiple countries and would clearly face enormous political obstacles, with many regions including Russia, China, parts of the Islamic world, Japan and many African nations strongly opposed to liberal drug policy reform (Bewley-Taylor 2012: 11; Collins, 2017: 292; Gomis 2012: 4; Inkster and Comolli 2012: 124-125). This would see a greater emphasis on innovating drug policies within and for specific market and regional contexts and an explicit critical wariness of transferring policy strategies, even where they are successful within one regional drug market context, between different contexts (Felbab-Brown 2014: 47; Gomis 2012: 14). As Babor et al. argue: “there is no single drug problem within or across societies, there is no magic bullet that will solve the drug problem” (2010: 253). Advocacy of shaping policy responses primarily around specific drugs and drug market contexts is something that is present within recent policy debates (Caulkins 2014: 17; Gomis 2012: 15; Hall 2017), if it is yet to gain significant purchase. One exception to this regional / market level approach might be marijuana markets which are, increasingly, more akin to multiple domestic markets than transnational regional markets (Caulkins 2015: 8). Here there may be more scope for national policy deployment than in other drug markets. Second, analysis of drug markets, might make the connections that exist between different markets a more central concern than has previously been the case. This would contribute to our understanding of the extent to which drug markets might be regarded, empirically and conceptually, as singular or discrete phenomena and any contingencies that relationships between markets might display. Third, the variegated character of these markets points to the effects of relationships between policies within markets, something that is picked up in the next section. Finally, as the discussion above suggests, prevailing official renditions of drug markets are a product of their current institutional framing. Evolving a more plural international drug policy regime suggests also evolving more nuanced discourses and representations alongside this which are more reflective of the empirics of the multiple, regional drug geographies of which they speak. Failing to challenge globalist discourses around drugs is likely to hamper changes in policy and attitudes towards them.

Drug Markets as Relational Phenomena

Drug markets operate across a series of sites at which interventions can be made. These sites are socio-spatial in nature and include the body of the user; the

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6 materialities of drugs; the localities of drug production, transit, exchange,
7 consumption, control and treatment; broader urban and / or rural space; the state
8 and nation; regional or transnational spaces of drug markets; global space and the
9 sites of policy, perception and discourse. Different sites are characterized by
10 different forms of intervention, typically involving different sets of actors. For
11 example, the global level includes interventions in the form of international drug
12 policy. The actors involved here include national governments and salient
13 transnational institutions, most notably the International Narcotics Control Board
14 and the UNODC, as well as those involved in public discussions of global
15 regulatory regimes including journalists, academics, think tanks, politicians,
16 campaigners, policing agencies, as well as civil society. By contrast, at the sites of
17 the body of the user and the localities of drug retail and consumption, the
18 interventions might be medical, public health, rehabilitative, policing or criminal
19 justice in nature and be undertaken by actors including medical professionals,
20 charities, local authorities, police and criminal justice systems. Traditionally these
21 sites have been viewed as discrete and have tended to be approached by those
22 engaged in interventions and academic commentators in primarily cellular rather
23 than relational ways (DeVerteuil and Wilton 2009: 481), with attempts to trace the
24 connections between different sites of intervention and their effects, at best
25 secondary concerns. This is reflected in both policy and practice and in the
26 multidisciplinary literatures of drugs and drug policy.
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30 The extant literatures of drug policy reform make their case in a number of
31 ways. These include: criticisms of the existing regime; explorations of the
32 necessity for treaty change or the capacities for policy flexibilities within existing
33 treaties; discussions of the principles that might guide drug policy reform;
34 critiques of alternatives to or modifications of prohibition policies; and evaluative
35 studies in the few, but growing, relatively affluent drug market countries that have
36 undertaken permissive policy reforms (Babor et al. 2010; Gomis 2012; Hall 2017;
37 Hughes and Stevens 2010; Inkster and Comolli 2012; LSE Expert Group on the
38 Economics of Drug Policy 2014; 2016; Midgley et al. 2014; Wainwright 2016).
39 This literature, though, ill-equips us to bridge to the modelling of international
40 drug policy in a plural, post-'war on drugs' era. There remains, to date, little by
41 way of conceptual modelling, empirical mapping and methodological assessment
42 of the distribution of policies and their effects internationally. For example, the
43 transferability of the findings of policy experimentation evaluations in places such
44 as New Zealand, Portugal and Uruguay is fettered by the lack of comparable
45 evidence from less affluent and secure regional contexts (Midgley et al. 2014: 23).
46 This is not at all to dismiss the considerable insights of this literature or to
47 underestimate the challenges it addresses (Baber et al. 2010: 258; Holmes 2016;
48 Mansfield 2016: 127). However, with a few exceptions, even the more forward-
49 looking, policy-oriented of this literature offers only limited grounding for the
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6 modelling of plural drug policy *deployment* within and across nations and regions,
7 as opposed to the evaluation of policy options per se. This might profitably inform
8 the next phase of drug policy reform literature and it is to this modelling of plural
9 drug policy deployment that this paper speaks.

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11 These limitations stem in part from a somewhat cellular approach across
12 these literatures which overwhelmingly focuses analysis and discussion within
13 single scales, usually the nation, single policies and single sites of intervention
14 within the drug production, transit, consumption, treatment, policy, discourse
15 nexus. There appears to be little dialogue, for example, between those approaches
16 and literatures that speak of drugs and drug policy from the supply-side and those
17 that speak of them from the demand-side. This is a reflection of the differential
18 disciplinary orientations of academic literatures and the different institutional
19 perspectives within drug policy circles. Supply-side literatures, for example, tend
20 to originate from disciplines such as anthropology, criminology, political science,
21 security studies and sociology and explore issues such as the damaging effects of
22 international drug policies on producer and transit nations (Atuesta Becerra 2014;
23 Gregory 2011; Inkster and Comoli 2012; Madrazo Lajous 2014; Mejia and
24 Restrepo 2014; Watt and Zepeda 2012). Demand-side literatures, however, tend to
25 emerge from within an alternative set of disciplines, most notably public health
26 and those concerned with policing and the criminal justice system (Barbor et al.
27 2010; Hall 2017; National Research Council 2014; Shiner 2016). The primary
28 focus here differs and includes, in the case of public health perspectives, for
29 example, drug use pathologies, their social costs and treatment (DeVerteuil and
30 Wilton 2009: 483). Few drug policy literatures and policies themselves, then, are
31 relational in the sense that they rarely consider, as a central concern, the
32 implications of changing the contexts within which, say, drugs are consumed,
33 through policy reform, for those contexts within which they are produced and
34 transported (though see Caulkins 2015; Wainwright 2016). Whilst these issues are
35 present in discussions to some extent, overall, looking across salient literatures,
36 their treatment remains patchy and implicit. Consequently, these approaches tend
37 towards being fragmented in that they operate in ways that are overly exclusive of
38 each other. Gomis, with reference to policy formulation and implementation, is
39 prompted to argue, then, that: “increasing the integration of policy across
40 government, including law enforcement and public health organizations is
41 essential because of the diverse nature of the drugs and organized crime problems”
42 (2012: 19; see also Babor et al. 2010: 253; Inkster and Comolli 2012: 135-136;
43 Sagrado et al 2016: 103; Shaw 2016: 89). To this we might add, equally, that
44 there is the potential for such integration within the literatures of drug policy
45 reform.

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51 It is argued here that it is an error to see and approach these sites of
52 intervention in primarily cellular ways. Put simply, interventions at one site affect
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6 conditions at other sites to which they are connected. This observation recasts
7 drug markets through a relational ontology (see Dicken et al. 2001; Sheppard
8 2002). Relational ontologies, despite their influence within a number of social
9 science disciplines, have yet to gain much purchase within the multidisciplinary
10 literatures of drugs and drug policy. Recasting drug markets in this way
11 emphasizes the interconnections between their many socio-spatial sites of
12 intervention as much as they do the sites of intervention themselves.

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14 Economic geographers Rengett (1996) and Allen (2005) offer early
15 examples of work that transcends the singularity of much drug literature and
16 which might provide transferable models of relational readings of drugs markets.
17 Here models, traditionally associated more with the analysis of the geographies of
18 licit economies, have been used to explore the spatialities of drug production,
19 trafficking, consumption and policy. To date geography has been a somewhat
20 underpowered contributor discipline to debates on drugs and drug policy. For
21 example, despite the contributions of the work cited here and others by
22 geographers (Taylor et al. 2013), DeVerteuil and Wilton can argue (with regard to
23 intoxicants generally rather than drugs specifically) that “geography’s
24 contribution to the study of intoxicants is modest indeed... as well as quite
25 fragmented” (2009: 480). Whilst geography’s drugs literature might be broad in
26 its range (see Taylor et al. 2013), it is not deep. Often the authors cited here and in
27 reviews such as those by DeVerteuil and Wilton and Taylor et al. are working
28 within very sparsely populated fields. Rengert (1996) and Allen (2005), for
29 example, remain the only economic geographers to produce published,
30 empirically grounded accounts of illegal drug markets. Thus, the geographies of
31 drugs literatures are yet to generate many ripples across either the wider
32 geographical or drugs literatures.

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34 In response, the value of an integrative geographically sensitive
35 perspective is advocated here which, it is argued, might transcend the prevailing
36 singularity of the extant drug policy reform literature. Allen (2005: 123-124), for
37 example, shows us that an intervention at one site (policy) is likely to have
38 profound effects on all others across the drug nexus. He hypothesizes the effects
39 upon “industry price structure, competitive balance and spatial organization” (123)
40 were cocaine to be universally legalized. He notes potential multi-site impacts of
41 this including upon the materialities of drugs (greater purity as firms compete
42 more through product differentiation than price strategy), the spatial organization
43 of production (likely shifts to Bolivia and Peru to take advantage of greater
44 stability and better coca leaf quality there) and simpler transport geographies that
45 no longer rely upon the smuggling expertise of Central American and Caribbean
46 criminal groups. Caulkins’, similarly hypothetical, exploration of the likely effects
47 of a single producer or transit country legalizing cocaine also highlights the
48 connections between different sites of intervention and how the effects of
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6 intervention at one site impacts on others. He shows that the effects of a producer
7 country, such as Bolivia, legalizing cocaine, whilst, if its transit to market where it
8 remains outlawed, cannot be achieved through its intermingling with licit cargo, it
9 may have little effect on violent drug transit geographies through Mexico to the
10 US, it is likely to shift those in Europe away from the present West African /
11 Iberian Peninsula bridgeheads towards Eastern Europe. Here they are likely to
12 take advantage of existing heroin and illicit cigarette smuggling routes into the
13 European Union across its extensive, and relatively easily breached land border
14 with, for example, Belarus (Caulkins 2015: 12). Overly cellular perspectives, then,
15 run the risk of missing such impacts located beyond the immediate site of
16 intervention, and spatial location, being scrutinized.
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19 Whilst Allen's and Caulkins' and others (Caulkins et al., 2015a; 2015b;
20 Caulkins and Kilmer, 2016) analyses sketch out hypothetical effects of drug
21 policy change, there is a nascent literature looking at the effects of actual drug
22 policy liberalization experiments that we are able to draw on here. The
23 liberalization of cannabis production, retail and consumption, for medical and / or
24 recreational use in a number of American states is well documented (UNODC
25 2017: 45-54; Wainwright 2016). The effects of this policy intervention at state
26 level have altered the legal context within which cannabis is consumed in those
27 affected states, but it has also affected the contexts within which it is produced.
28 Wainwright (2016: 243-259; see also Caulkins and Kilmer, 2016: 2084), for
29 example, discusses the case of Colorado which has witnessed the localization and
30 concentration of production away from dispersed, small scale home-based 'grow
31 ops' (although there remains provision in the legislation for very small scale home
32 production (UNODC 2017: 60)) and more extensive, spatially distant illegal sites
33 run by organized crime groups in Canada and Mexico (Glenny 2008: 245-255;
34 UNODC 2017: 37) into, often extensive licensed commercial units based close to
35 market. Wainwright's discussion, part of a journalistic narrative is, at most, only
36 implicitly relational in its perspective. It does, however, like Allen's, Rengert's
37 and Caulkins' accounts, join the dots between different sites of intervention in this
38 market in ways that are rarer in more circumscribed academic accounts.
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42 It would be wrong, however, to suggest that the drug policy literature is
43 unaware of the relational qualities of drugs markets. The emergent literature of
44 prospective policy change is promising in this regard, regularly hypothesising or
45 seeking evidence of the potential effects of changes to the regulatory environment
46 on other sites such as the economics of production, drug use and potency, for
47 example, (see Caulkins et al., 2015a; 2015b and Caulkins and Kilmer, 2016 on
48 modelling the potential effects of marijuana legalization in Vermont). There
49 remains, though, further work to be done along the multiple connections between
50 sites of intervention within drug markets if we are to more fully understand the
51 effects of interventions and to apply these insights to the deployment of policy.
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6 The paper now applies the geographical perspective outlined thus far to
7 scrutinize a series of questions that emerge from discussions of drug policy
8 reform. It turns first to the basic problematic of policy asymmetry.
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10 **Drug Policy Asymmetries**

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13 The question of pluralizing international drug policy is worthy of critical
14 reflection not least because it is generally acknowledged within the literatures of
15 illicit and illegal economies, and indeed those of licit economies, that regulatory
16 and policy asymmetry is a bad thing that generates opportunities for arbitrage by
17 criminal, and other, entrepreneurs (Allen 2005: 16; Hall 2013; 2018; Hudson 2014;
18 2019; Midgley et al. 2014: 9; 35; Passas 2001). Advocacy of the pluralization of
19 international drug policy, then, is a rare case of moving against what is generally
20 considered axiomatic within literatures of illicit and illegal economies.
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23 The challenges of this are something to which the drug policy reform
24 literature is attuned. We have discussions, for example, of negative externalities
25 of drug policy asymmetry including displacement or 'balloon' effects (Bewley-
26 Taylor 2012: 296; Gomis 2012; McCoy 2004; Reuter 2014: 40; Taylor et al. 2013:
27 418); grey cross-border markets, exploiting the provisional legality of some drugs
28 (Babor et al. 2010: 4; Caulkins, et al., 2015a: 131-138; Caulkins and Kilmer, 2016:
29 2086-2087; Felbab-Brown 2014: 48; Wainwright 2016: 255-257) and the
30 potentially significant and wide-ranging effects on other countries of a producer
31 or transit country unilaterally legalizing cocaine or heroin (Caulkins 2015; though
32 see Collins, 2017: 293 on the likelihood of this occurring). The spectre of policies
33 working against each other, producing a system lacking coherence, faintly haunts
34 this literature, invoking calls for international agreements and cooperation
35 (Collins 2014b: 14; Inkster and Comolli 2012: 120; Jelsma 2017; Reuter 2014:
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39 Collins (2017: 292-293) is helpful in fleshing out some of the likely
40 consequences of moving to a more asymmetrical drug policy regime. He argues
41 that such a regime would clearly not be perfect, but it would, most likely, be
42 better than the present (bad) symmetrical regime. He cites, for example, positive
43 outcomes such as the collapse of illicit drug production in some regions and likely
44 decreases in the levels of criminality associated with grey drugs markets as they
45 become sustained by commodities that are diverted into their supply chains from
46 legalized markets. He also notes possible negative outcomes such as organized
47 crime groups formerly active in illicit drug markets seeking alternative income
48 streams, and the negative economic impacts of the collapse of illicit production on
49 poorer populations where few alternative livelihood opportunities exist. He
50 further notes that to limit the international impacts of national policy
51 experimentation requires that export is prevented, something that cannot be taken
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6 for granted in an era of hyper trans-border mobility through opaque (licit and
7 illicit) commodity channels (Nordstrom, 2007; Urry, 2014). Collins also alludes to
8 the challenges of managing an asymmetrical drug policy regime: “The focus
9 should be on determining where criminalisation is required to keep the market
10 from becoming commercialised and how minimal necessary enforcement can be
11 kept” (2017: 293). However, the extent of the challenges of effective management
12 of diverse transnational policy, legal and regulatory terrains is well documented
13 within the literatures of both licit and illicit markets (Allen 2005: 16; Hall 2013;
14 2018; Hudson 2014; 2019; Midgley et al. 2014: 9; 35; Passas 2001) and might
15 profitably inform drug policy reform research agendas.
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18 **Drug Policy Repatriation and the Extra-National**

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21 At its most basic, a plural drug policy regime inherently involves different drug
22 policy strategies being enacted in different spaces. The scale through which the
23 drug policy reform literature has imagined this is overwhelmingly, and
24 understandably, that of the nation (Collins 2014b: 15; Hall 2017; Inkster and
25 Comolli 2012: 134). The arguments for more nationally responsive drug policies
26 follow the current universalist regime that has, it has been widely acknowledged,
27 produced a series of geographically inequitable impacts across producer, transit
28 and consumer nations (Inkster and Comolli 2012: 84; Mejia and Restrepo 2014:
29 27). Bewley-Taylor, for example, captures the argument for a more plural
30 international drug policy regime being characterized by some degree of drug
31 policy “repatriation”: “This would permit nations... to bring policy formulation
32 back to the national domain and allow the development and application of
33 evidence-based public health-oriented policies that suit country-specific, even
34 regional, circumstances” (2012: 299; see also Chatwin 2017: 82; Collins 2016b: 9;
35 Gomis 2012: 14).
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39 Few contemporary-oriented discussions transcend this scale, and indeed
40 the single-scale lens generally, and explicitly examine the dialectical relationships
41 between national policy reform and factors and processes at extra-national scales
42 (though see Caulkins 2015 and examples of transnational historical analysis:
43 Collins, 2017; Courtwright, 2002; McAllister, 2000; 2012; Spillane, 2000).
44 However, nascent geographical work on illicit and illegal economies reminds us
45 that they are not solely the product of their local and national circumstances, but
46 rather are “grounded in a subtle interplay between activities at different scales”
47 (Hudson 2014: 780). If we consider the factors that contributed to a drop in US
48 cocaine consumption in the late 2000s, for example, which is discussed in the
49 following section, it is apparent that they are far from located exclusively within
50 America's borders. They include, as well as factors internal to the US cocaine
51 market, policies enacted and processes unfolding in a number of South American
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6 cocaine producing nations, the Central American and Caribbean regions through
7 which the majority of cocaine entering the US was shipped, West Africa, which
8 emerged as a bridge into the European market (Reuter 2014: 37-38), and in
9 European nations that witnessed a growth in demand for cocaine at this time
10 (Kilmer et al. 2015; Kilmer 2016: 75). Whilst being spatially dispersed, what
11 unites these spaces is their being part of a cocaine market, transcontinental in
12 scope.
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14 Whilst this example illustrates the potentially circumscribed ranges of
15 national drug policies, a number of commentators have also outlined a series of
16 characteristics of the contemporary global economy, that can be broadly
17 summarized under the headings of asymmetry and opacity, that have undoubtedly
18 had profound effects on the operation of illegal drug markets such as the
19 transnational cocaine market discussed above. The criminogenic potentials of
20 “structural disjunctures, mismatches, and inequalities in the spheres of politics,
21 culture, the economy and the law” (Passas 2001: 23; see also Hall 2018: 102-103;
22 Hudson 2019; Midgley et al. 2014: 35) have long been acknowledged and were
23 discussed with reference to drug policy asymmetries above. In addition to the
24 opacity generated through the development of a number of offshore secrecy
25 spaces, through which large volumes of illicit finance, including drug revenues,
26 are channelled (Denault 2007; Gomis 2012: 7; Hampton and Levi 1999; Hudson
27 2000; Nordstrom 2007; Roberts 1995; Stewart 2012; Urry 2014), opacity also
28 emerges through the hyper, trans-border circulation of commodities within a
29 contemporary global economy which has realized “the greatest ever movement of
30 material goods in human history” (Urry 2014: 34). Much of this movement takes
31 place within the standardized shipping container, the volumes of which exceed
32 inspection capacities in even the world's largest and most technologically
33 sophisticated port spaces, creating micro spaces of opacity readily available to
34 drug traffickers (Glenny 2008: 389; Martin 2016; Nordstrom 2007: 115; Urry
35 2014: 33-34; Varese 2011: 77). The policies, that have facilitated these
36 developments within the global economy, such as the North American Free Trade
37 Agreement, designed to grow licit trade, have been described as a “godsend” for
38 large volume drug trafficking organizations (Allen 2005: 85; see also Watt and
39 Zepeda 2012: 161) and other criminal entrepreneurs and have helped underpin
40 significant expansions of a range of illicit / illegal transnational markets. This
41 reminds us that, many policies that affect drug markets are not explicitly oriented
42 towards drug issues (Babor 2010: 253).
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44 There are, then, potential problematics with the repatriation of drug policy
45 under a more pluralized regime. Specifically, whilst it is clear how such locally
46 responsive policies articulate with factors endogenous to the nation, what is less
47 clear are the ways in which they might articulate with those at extra-national
48 scales that also shape drug markets. The inherent limitations of national drug
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6 policies have prompted some calls for action at the global level. For example,
7 Midgley et al. (2014: 43) argue: “the success of domestic policies in developed
8 nations for example should be informed by global as well as national
9 considerations”. This returns us to the calls for multilateral cooperation, to
10 provide some forum for the oversight and management of a plural international
11 drug policy landscape, that, whilst they pepper the literature, remain scant of
12 detail (see previous section).
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14 The preceding discussion is not to suggest that the drug policy reform
15 literature is naive of these multi-scalar questions. Advocacy of national drug
16 policy experimentation within this literature is typically predicated on an
17 understanding of the complexities at other scales. However, there seems room to
18 bring such questions more clearly to the fore within salient debates. For example,
19 it would seem sensible not to restrict discussion of policies and their effects to the
20 scales at which they are enacted. Specifically, discussions might profitably
21 foreground the multiple dialectical relationships between national policy
22 experimentation and factors and processes operating at extra-national scales. Part
23 of this involves considering the articulation of national drug policies with non-
24 drug policies, such as trade policies, at the transnational level. Finally, this may
25 more clearly open up the space within salient debates to consider scales other than
26 the nation, such as the regional / market scale discussed earlier, as sites of drug
27 policy reform and experimentation.
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31 **Drug Policies in Combination**

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34 It is possible to discern, within the literatures of drug policy, traces that speak of
35 the potential effects on drug markets of policies and processes working in
36 combination. Kilmer (2016: 67), for example, explores the “unprecedented
37 decline in the US cocaine market” in the late 2000s. Total consumption of pure
38 cocaine in the US fell by approximately 50 per cent during this period according
39 to a RAND estimate, with a concomitant rise in the purity adjusted price of 40 per
40 cent. Whilst there is no consensus about the factors behind this decrease, Kilmer
41 et al (2015) speak of a “perfect storm” of policy and non-policy processes that
42 came together. Of these Kilmer cites: “the rapid increase in manual eradication,
43 increase in interdiction, reduced availability of sodium permanganate, instability
44 in Mexico, increase in non-US demand etc.” (2016: 75) and goes on to argue
45 “Together these events may have had more of an impact on cocaine consumption
46 in the US than the sum of their effects had they occurred at different times”.
47 Although he does add “but this remains an open question”. If such a market
48 disruption were ever categorically attributable to a set of policy interventions they
49 would undoubtedly be regarded as a major success. Put simply, if drug markets
50 are sustained by multiple factors and processes, multiple interventions, across
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6 spatially dispersed sites, might be required to significantly disrupt them. However,
7 whilst striking, this example represents only a single snapshot, of a single industry,
8 at one point in time. The extent to which broader lessons can be drawn from this
9 remains uncertain given the limited evidence base of the effects of grounded
10 interactions of combinations of policy (and non-policy) factors on the operation of
11 specific drug markets.
12

13 Elsewhere Babor et al. review the effectiveness of 43 drug policy
14 strategies, finding evidence for 17 having a positive effect in more than one
15 country. Intriguingly they argue “the cumulative and combined impact of the most
16 effective policies could have a synergistic effect” (2010: 251), though this claim
17 remains undeveloped in the ten conclusions they subsequently draw from their
18 extensive policy review. Given the potentials suggested here, it is surprising that
19 the literature offers little more than such anecdotes and tentative speculation and
20 that research is yet to substantively address the potentially synergistic effects of
21 multiple drug policies in combination, leaving us with the open question that
22 Kilmer notes above.
23

24 What this illustrates is not just the potentials of combinations of processes
25 and policies operating together, but also that these might operate together both
26 within and across sites in the drug production, transit, consumption chain. In
27 applying potentials from cases such as these to drug policy development and
28 deployment, it tentatively suggests that co-designing sets of policies directed
29 towards, say, sites of drug production *and* drug transit, which in many cases will
30 span transnational space, and explicitly attempting to ensure their mutual
31 articulation across this transnational space, represents an avenue of drug policy
32 development that might be explored further. However, synergistic approaches do
33 not necessarily transcend the realities of divisions within policy circles around
34 either enforcement or development oriented approaches (Midgley et al. 2014),
35 divisions that are likely to shape the outcomes of any specific synergistic policy
36 development. These divisions are particularly challenging for synergistic policy
37 that might, potentially, suggest combinations of enforcement *and* development
38 oriented approaches distributed towards different spaces across the drug nexus.
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40 It is important, also, not to get uncritically caught up in the potentials of
41 policy combinations to address problems associated with drug markets. Whilst, the
42 'perfect storm' example above is striking in its effects, it represents a case of
43 multiple factors working together to produce a single outcome, the reduction in
44 cocaine supply to the US. The problems of drug markets though are complex and
45 multiple (Babor et al. 2010: 253; Inkster and Comolli 2012: 127). As yet, we lack
46 the wealth of evidence, to say anything categorical about the potentials of policies
47 in combination addressing multiple issues associated with drug markets. Further,
48 we can observe instances of policies working together, both within and across
49 sites, and having negative effects, for some at least, although it should be noted
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6 the evidence base here also is very thin. Proudfoot (2017: 11), for example,
7 discusses the deployment of safe injecting spaces in some Western cities within
8 “ambivalent” social policy regimes. These, sites he argues, reflect the prevailing
9 focus in harm reduction and public health approaches to drug use reduction on the
10 individual (Rhodes et al, 2006: 1384) in that they involve treatments for drug
11 users through regimes of bodily discipline. He records instances where these
12 measures have been deployed within the context of official and popular moralistic
13 discourses of drug abuse and revanchist local policies of urban development. The
14 result here, as Rhodes et al. also note, has been their implication in “wider city
15 strategies targeting the 'purification' of urban space, unwittingly contributing to
16 the 'ghettoization' of drug users and other socially marginalized populations and
17 their exclusion from public space” (2006: 1388). Proudfoot notes, for example,
18 cases of the development of these safe injecting spaces in some cities being
19 accompanied by expansions of law enforcement directed at the removal of those
20 users who do not engage with these spaces of treatment (2017: 11). In addition,
21 Shaw (2016: 89) has cited expanded discussion of health oriented policies in drug
22 consumer countries being deployed in ways that obfuscate the expansion of
23 traditional law enforcement approaches nearer the origins of drug supply chains,
24 which could be seen as sops to 'hard liners'.
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28 Whilst design, development and deployment of combinations of drug
29 policies, including across transnational spaces, notwithstanding the very limited
30 evidence base available, appears to merit further investigation, this suggests such
31 approaches do not necessarily represent the elusive 'magic bullet' of drug policy
32 (Babor et al. 2010: 253) and, like all approaches, require careful monitoring,
33 management and evaluation.
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36 **Research and Policy Implications**

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38 It is appropriate now to consider the applications that stem from the arguments
39 outlined here. Ideally we would have a set of policies that survive the scrutiny of
40 the critical drug policy reform literature, be they alternatives to, or modifications
41 of, prohibitive policies, which could then be modelled by regional drug market
42 and / or by site of intervention and which would represent a geographically
43 informed model of plural drug policy deployment. Unfortunately this is not yet
44 the case for a number of reasons. It is possible, within the drug policy reform
45 literature, to detect degrees of consensus around the challenges that face drug
46 policy reform and the principles that might guide it, briefly outlined at the head of
47 this paper, whereas this is less the case for specific policy measures that might
48 come to the fore under a more plural, liberal, international drug policy regime.
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52 The literature is broadly in agreement around the challenges that confront
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6 drug policy generally. These include drug markets that are extensive, embedded
7 and resilient to attempts to eradicate or reduce them, peopled, in part at least, by
8 innovative and adaptive actors, and which generate problems that are complex,
9 multiple and distributed (Allen 2005: 20; Atuesta Becerra 2014: 54; Babor et al.
10 2010: 67; Bagley 2005: 37; Inkster and Comolli 2012: 67; Midgley et al. 2014: 33;
11 Rengert 1996: 30-31; Shaw 2016: 89; Shiner 2016: 59). As if addressing the
12 immanent challenges of drug markets were not enough for any reformed policy
13 regime, the literature also identifies a series of external challenges related to the
14 various environments through which drug policy reform must unfold. These
15 include an international political environment that is far from universally
16 welcoming of the possibilities of liberal drug policy reform, either because drug
17 consumption is viewed through moralistic, ideological and / or religious lenses or
18 because extant drug policies act as a trojan horse within which to pursue
19 militarized, incursive foreign policy agendas (Bewley-Taylor 2012: 11; Gomis
20 2012: 4; Inkster and Comolli 2012: 124-125; Taylor et al. 2013: 424; Watt and
21 Zepeda 2012); discursive terrains that are highly politicized, often marginalize
22 scientific evidence in the face of cultural preference and tend to view questions of
23 drug markets and their address through a series of false binaries that obfuscate
24 considerable commonalities and complexities (Babor et al. 2010: 288; Bewley-
25 Taylor 2012: 256-257; 288; Midgley et al. 2014: 20) and, evaluative contexts for
26 which there are few agreed metrics, procedures or epistemologies that
27 satisfactorily capture the complexities of policy change and its impacts across
28 drug markets, from source to market and beyond (Hall 2017; Mansfield 2016: 127;
29 Midgley et al. 2014; Thoumi 2016: 19). Finally, drug policy reform struggles with
30 both the inherent challenges of effective regulation in the age of hyper
31 globalization (Hudson 2019; Midgley et al. 2014: 35) and the restrictions that
32 stem from the treaties that underpin the current regime (Bewley-Taylor 2012; Hall
33 2017). We should note, however, that some, deploying historical and legal
34 methodologies, recognize treaty flexibilities that offer the potential for policy
35 reform without fundamental treaty change (Babor et al. 2010: 221-233; Collins
36 2016b; 2017; Thoumi, 2016). These challenges suggest, then, that drug policy
37 reform, at the extra-national level, requires dual fronts. Whilst plausible policies
38 to address the immanent challenges posed by drug markets must be developed, it
39 must also negotiate the contexts, above, through which this reform unfolds. The
40 literature, discussed below, offers a range of policy options but only limited
41 consensus on the former and recognizes the problematics of the latter but is less
42 clear on the specifics of their negotiation.

43
44 Whilst a significant subset of the drug policy reform literature offers
45 evaluations of specific policy options, it represents a range of positions and only
46 limited consensus regarding policy alternatives to the present regime. Consensus
47 tends to crystalize most around criticisms of this regime which is here universally
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6 regarded as too punitive, too ineffective and the generator of extensive harms
7 (Allen 2005: 111-112; Bewley-Taylor 2012: 14; Felbab-Brown 2014: 41; Inkster
8 and Comolli 2012; Mejia and Restrepo 2014: 26; Sagredo et al. 2014: 97;
9 Wainwright 2016). However, there is divergence around the degree to which it
10 should be liberalized. We might here look to the work of Collins (2018) and
11 Felbab-Brown and Porter (2016) who see policy pluralism primarily as a
12 mechanism for experimentation, evidence gathering and feedback. This
13 incrementalist / functionalist perspective sees policy experimentation occurring
14 around the system's more peripheral elements whilst its core remains. However,
15 these stances contrast to potentially more reformist positions. For example,
16 Bewley-Taylor (2012) and Jelsma (2017) see a push towards policy pluralisation
17 as, potentially, creating a domino effect that might trigger more fundamental
18 systemic reform.
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21 Certainly calls for policies based on the decriminalization or legalization
22 and regulation of currently illegal drugs are not universal across this literature.
23 Rather, there is a subset that advocates modifications to existing policies in the
24 form of a "kinder, gentler" prohibition, at least for some drugs (Caulkins 2014: 24;
25 see also Hall 2017: 10) characterized by less intensive policing (Babor et al. 2010:
26 166; Collins 2014b: 14) coupled with mitigation of the harms of criminalization
27 of drug users (Hall 2017: 8). Nor does this literature always call for the
28 abandonment of the current supply-side policy architecture. Rather, there are calls
29 for the continuing deployment, albeit in more strategic forms, of policies
30 characteristic of the present regime including crop-eradication (Felbab-Brown
31 2014: 41); interdiction (Gomis 2012: 18; Inkster and Comolli 2012: 134) and
32 alternative livelihood strategies (Allen 2005: 56; Felbab-Brown 2014: 41),
33 although claims for their efficacy typically come heavily qualified and they do
34 face a literature that is strongly critical of such policies on the basis of evidence
35 derived from evaluations of extant cases (Babor et al. 2010; Midgley et al. 2014).
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39 An alternative perspective emerges around calls for the decriminalization
40 or legalization of drugs, typically within the context of a strong regulatory
41 architecture (Caulkins 2016: 40; Hall 2017: 10). The strongest case is made here
42 for the legalization of marijuana. Here though there is recognition of the limits of
43 this policy shift including that it may not, depending on levels of taxation, entirely
44 eliminate illicit trade (Gomis 2012: 6) and, in itself, will not address the security
45 issues of developing drug producer and transit nations (Atuesta Becerra 2014: 49;
46 Caulkins 2015), and some potentially negative consequences including possible
47 increases in general and problematic consumption (Gomis 2012: 16; Caulkins
48 2015: 19), disruption as criminal organizations seek out alternative revenue
49 streams (Collins, 2017: 292; Inkster and Comolli 2012: 122) and specific
50 concerns about the decriminalization / legalization of cocaine and heroin
51 (Caulkins 2015:9; Hall 2017: 10). Whilst the academic literature leans heavily
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6 towards decriminalization / legalization as a broad direction of travel, it does not
7 represent a uniformly pro-decriminalization / legalization, anti-prohibition edifice.

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9 Regardless of whether individual writers advocate modified prohibition or
10 post-prohibition paradigms, there are four pillars within this literature for which
11 there is general consensus. These are, the desirability of demand reduction in final
12 drug market countries (Caulkins 2015: 4; Gomis 2012: 17-18; Rengert 1996: 128);
13 the need to address corruption, improve governance and extend state presence in
14 many drug production and transit nations (Felbab-Brown 2014: 43); following
15 this, the development of policies that undermine the legitimacy of and / or directly
16 target organized crime groups (Caulkins 2015: 4; Collins 2018: 112) and policies
17 that recognize drug markets as products of deeper structural malaises, and which
18 address underlying causes as well as their more visible manifestations (Rengert
19 1996: 127-129; Proudfoot 2017: 14-15). If the drug reform literature could be said
20 to offer pointers towards future avenues of policy development, based upon its
21 levels of academic consensus, it would be in these four areas, coupled, perhaps,
22 with the weight of calls in favour of decriminalization / legalization outlined
23 above. However, as it stands, whilst there is clear consensus here at the level of
24 principle, specific policies that emerge out of these are less apparent. This lack of
25 specific policies is coupled with a series of challenges, salient to these principles.
26 The wider organized crime literature is emphatic on the difficulties of successfully
27 and sustainably tackling organized crime (Hall 2018; Madsen 2009; Midgley et al.
28 2014). Intervening against organized crime in the context of drug markets is no
29 exception. For example, successful law enforcement against individual organized
30 crime groups operating within drug markets has been observed to generate a
31 number of perverse outcomes. These include disrupting fragile, regional, inter-
32 group accords leading to increased levels of violence; providing opportunities for
33 other criminal groups to expand; and stimulating innovation and, often,
34 decentralization within illegal markets (Allen 2005: 20; Collins 2014: 10; Rengert
35 1996: 30-31; Watt and Zepeda 2012). The barriers to translating principle into
36 policy here, then, remain considerable.

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41 Moving from a general critique of this literature to one more directly
42 informed by the arguments of this paper highlights the scalar and spatially
43 dispersed sites of effective drug policy intervention. For example, there is a
44 literature, alluded to earlier, exploring the many opacities inherent in the global
45 economy which points to the roles of banking secrecy, in both offshore and
46 onshore spaces, in laundering the proceeds of corruption in the global South,
47 including from those countries central to the production and transit of drugs (Dick
48 2009: 98; Nordstrom 2007: 65; Stewart 2012: 38; Unger and Rawlings 2008: 332;
49 Urry 2014: 46). Further, there is a small corruption literature that argues that
50 corruption manifest in the global South, which tends to be overwhelmingly
51 interpreted through an orientalist / moralist lens as as an endogenous failure of
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6 Southern nations to meet Northern normativities of good governance, is, equally
7 at least, relationally the product of illicit, neo-colonial relationships and practices
8 by Northern governments, corporations and financial institutions acting upon and
9 within the global South (Brown and Cloke 2004; Peel 2006). This multi-scale and
10 relational production of corruption has tended to elude the gaze of some of the
11 drug policy reform literature but suggests policy interventions at various sites and
12 scales, including the global, and in the corporate, government and banking spaces
13 of the global North as well as those of the global South.
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15 In sum, looking across the drug reform literature, we note that, for all of its
16 remarkable insights, it does not necessarily offer either a comprehensive
17 prescription, in that it does not speak equally to all sites of intervention, there is
18 little, for example, that addresses the discursive sphere of drug policy reform
19 (though see geographers Proudfoot 2017; and Rengert 1996: 132) nor necessarily
20 a coherent one, in that there is little here on how policies might co-articulate in
21 combination. There might be an argument for the next phase of drug policy
22 development to build policies from the broad areas of consensus within its
23 literatures outlined above, through either a modified prohibition or post-
24 prohibition framework, and explore their deployment both regionally and
25 relationally. This may offer an improvement on the present regime, but this still
26 may be somewhat premature. In moving from a universalist towards a plural drug
27 policy regime, founded on the potentials of deploying policies in combination and
28 informed by regional and relational ontologies, there are many questions that
29 remain insufficiently explored within the literature. Whilst we may not be at the
30 point where we can confidently begin to model the deployment of more plural
31 drug policies, we might consider the ways in which the research agenda might
32 more explicitly inform the arguments presented here. Specifically it might:
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- 37 • Explore the pluralist regulation of licit proxies, such as alcohol, which
38 accommodate both regional and national differences and international cooperation,
39 and to consider what lessons for drug policy reform can be learnt from such
40 examples;
- 41 • Explore the potentially synergistic effects of deploying drug policies in
42 combination;
- 43 • Explore the deployment of policies at the level of the drug market, rather
44 than the nation, certainly for those drugs whose markets are overwhelmingly
45 transnational;
- 46 • Explore the innovation of drug policies within specific market contexts
47 and develop a critical wariness of policy transfer between drug markets;
- 48 • Explore the ways in which drug policies can be deployed differentially
49 within drug markets;
- 50 • Explore the connections that exist between drug markets more explicitly
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6 and extensively and the extent to which drug markets can be considered
7 empirically distinct phenomena;

- 8 • Explore the connections that exist within drug markets more explicitly and
9 extensively, and specifically the effects of interventions at one site on other sites
10 of intervention across drug markets;
- 11 • Explore forms of international cooperation and the networking of policies
12 together within drug markets and the ways in which discrete policies in different
13 spaces may co-articulate or, on the other hand, work against each other;
- 14 • Explore the ways in which global scale enablers of illicit markets can be
15 addressed and the roles of 'non drug' policies in undermining global opacities and
16 asymmetries;
- 17 • Explore further the relationships between the processes of drug policy
18 reform and the various contexts (political, discursive, evaluative and regulatory)
19 through which it is negotiated and unfolds.
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23 Conclusion

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26 This paper echoes those that highlight the failings of the present international drug
27 policy regime. Similarly, it echoes those who call for explorations of drug policy
28 pluralization, whilst recognizing potential dangers in its uncritical embrace. It
29 argues, on the basis of the evidence presented here, that there are many
30 geographies of drug policy pluralization and geographical effects of it with which
31 the literature has yet to fully engage. It advocates that geographical reflections
32 inform efforts to move beyond the present, creaking, universalist 'war on drugs'
33 towards a more plural international drug policy landscape.
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1. **Reviewer comment:** “I think the introduction could include a more thorough outline of the geographical principles that are to be applied, at present they are only alluded to, with more focus on the drug policy foundations for the piece. Given the introduction is relatively short, I think it could be expanded to include this”.

Response: Yes absolutely agree. At the moment the geographical principles are far too implicit. To address this I have done two things. i) inserted a section after the introduction ('economic geographies of illicit and illegal markets') that brings out the geographical principles far more clearly. ii) I have also restructured the paper, bringing the sections on 'regional ontologies' and 'relational ontologies' forward and presenting these more explicitly as interpretations of drug markets that emerge through an economic geography reading of them, and I have moved the present sections 2, 3 and 4 ('drug policy asymmetries', 'drug policies in combination' and 'drug policy repatriation' and presented them more explicitly as rethinking drug policy reform through the lens of economic geography. The overall logic of the paper is now clearer and more explicit in the ways in which it is the product of an economic geography imagination.

2. **Reviewer comment:** “Re. counter arguments for pluralisation – may want to look at Collins 2017 where the conclusion attempts to address some of these concerns around arbitrage”.

Response: Yes agreed. Collins is referenced initially to balance Caulkins claims of the ‘grand fracture’ should one country unilaterally legalise cocaine or heroin. This is further developed with the addition of a new paragraph which summarises the impacts of asymmetry from Collins 2017. The conclusion from this is that whilst policy asymmetry is unlikely to be perfect, it is likely to be better than the current (bad) policy symmetry. However, this section, drawing on the lessons of regulatory asymmetry drawn from the literatures of both licit and illicit trades, argues that the challenges of managing asymmetry should not be underestimated, and might inform drug policy reform research agendas.

“Collins (2017: 292-293) is helpful in fleshing out some of the likely consequences of moving to a more asymmetrical drug policy regime. He argues that such a regime would clearly not be perfect, but it would, most likely, be better than the present (bad) symmetrical regime. He cites, for example, positive outcomes such as the collapse of illicit drug production in some regions and likely decreases in the levels of criminality associated with grey drugs markets as they become sustained by commodities that are diverted into their supply chains from legalized markets. He also notes possible negative outcomes such as organized crime groups formerly active in illicit drug markets seeking alternative income streams, and the negative economic impacts of the collapse of illicit production on poorer populations where few alternative livelihood opportunities exist. He further notes that to limit the international impacts of national policy experimentation requires that export is prevented, something that cannot be taken for granted in an era of hyper mobility through opaque (licit and illicit) commodity channels (Nordstrom, 2007; Urry, 2014). Collins also alludes to the challenges of managing an asymmetrical drug policy regime: “The focus should be on determining where criminalisation is required to keep the market from becoming commercialised and how minimal necessary enforcement can be kept” (2017: 293). However, the extent of the challenges of effective management of diverse transnational policy, legal and regulatory terrains is well documented within the literatures of both licit and illicit markets (Allen 2005: 16; Hall 2013; 2018; Hudson 2014; 2019; Midgley et al. 2014: 9; 35; Passas 2001) and might profitably inform drug policy reform research agendas.”

3. **Reviewer comment:** “P4: ‘typically remains elusive’: I agree that this hasn’t been fleshed out, but I think this is a little simplified...”

Response: Yes absolutely agree. The phrase ‘typically remains elusive’ has been cut from the end of this paragraph but has also been deployed to form the basis of a new paragraph that has been inserted into the 'Research and policy implications' sections towards the end of the paper. This expands upon this point drawing on the ideas and sources raised by the reviewer in their further discussion of this point. I have also reinforced the point about some historical and legal scholars, such as Collins, recognising the potential for treaty flexibility just before this insertion. This new paragraph is given below.

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4 “We might here look to the work of Collins (2018) and Felbab-Brown and Porter (2016) who
5 see policy pluralism primarily as a mechanism for experimentation, evidence gathering and
6 feedback. This incrementalist / functionalist perspective sees policy experimentation
7 occurring around the system’s more peripheral elements whilst its core remains. However,
8 these stances contrast to potentially more reformist positions. For example, Jelsma (2017) and
9 Bewley-Taylor (2012) see a push towards policy pluralisation as, potentially, creating a
10 domino effect that might trigger more fundamental systemic reform.”
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13 **4. Reviewer comment:** “[i] I think there is overreach on the synergies point. Kilmer’s paper
14 represents a snapshot of a single market at a specific time. Whether there are genuinely broader
15 lessons to be drawn needs more analysis than is presently offered. [ii] Similarly I think the recognition
16 of the need for synergistic or a multifaceted drug policy is widely recognised. The contention arises
17 around which types of policies. E.g. suggesting linking the production and transit elements is
18 interesting, but the outcomes of such a thought experiment differ radically depending on one’s policy
19 predilections – greater uniformity of enforcement, or greater focus on broader development indicators
20 at the expense of drug law enforcement.”

21 **Response:** [i] Yes, absolutely agree. I have added a sentence based on the reviewer’s comment to
22 acknowledge the limits of this example. [ii] Again, agreed. A short section (below) has been added to
23 acknowledge this significance of different policy-orientation positions in shaping the outcomes of any
24 synergistic policy developments.
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27 “However, synergistic approaches do not necessarily transcend the realities of divisions
28 within policy circles around either enforcement or development oriented approaches (Midgley
29 et al. 2014), divisions that are likely to shape the outcomes of any specific synergistic policy
30 development. These divisions are particularly challenging for synergistic policy that might,
31 potentially, suggest combinations of enforcement *and* development oriented approaches
32 distributed towards different spaces across the drug nexus.”
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35 **5. P5: Reviewer comment:** “discussion of ‘harm reduction’ isn’t clear and suggests perhaps some
36 confusion around the concept of ‘harm reduction’ in the field of drugs. Would suggest reading work
37 by Tim Rhodes, Joanne Csete and others to gain further insight into this and help clarify what is being
38 alluded to here. Shaw’s point on obfuscation is largely right, but is political as much as academic –
39 that ‘harm reduction’, a term with deep and entrenched political connotations within the drug control
40 field, ultimately impedes principles of ‘reducing harm’ when applied to policy around the supply of
41 illicit drug markets.”

42 **Response:** The main thrust of this section is the potentials and problematics of deploying policies in
43 combination. Whilst absolutely acknowledging the referee's point here I am keen to avoid the section
44 side-tracking into a discussion of debates around harm reduction which would deflect from the main
45 thrust of the section and open up debates for which there is insufficient space in the paper to fully
46 consider. To this end I have been more specific in my discussion of the case study, referring
47 specifically to 'safe injecting spaces', rather than 'harm reduction approaches' in the first instance
48 which is the measure that Proudfoot discusses in the case I cite. I have also cite Tim Rhodes' work
49 here to acknowledge some of the complexities around harm reduction approaches that the referee
50 alludes to. I have replaced the original passage with the revised one below.
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52 “Proudfoot (2017: 11), for example, discusses the deployment of safe injecting spaces in
53 some Western cities within “ambivalent” social policy regimes. These, sites he argues, reflect
54 the prevailing focus in harm reduction and public health approaches to drug use reduction on
55 the individual (Rhodes et al, 2006: 1384) in that they involve treatments for drug users
56 through regimes of bodily discipline. He records instances where these measures have been
57 deployed within the context of official and popular moralistic discourses of drug abuse and
58 revanchist local policies of urban development. The result here, as Rhodes et al. also note,
59 has been their implication in “wider city strategies targeting the 'purification' of urban space,
60 unwittingly contributing to the 'ghettoization' of drug users and other socially marginalized

populations and their exclusion from public space” (2006: 1388). Proudfoot notes, for example, cases of the development of these safe injecting spaces in some cities being accompanied by expansions of law enforcement directed at the removal of those users who do not engage with these spaces of treatment (2017: 11).”

6. **Reviewer comment:** “Re. Repatriation: I think in the policy literature this is correct. Not so in the historical literature. E.g. look to Collins and changing opium regimes during WWII and beyond^{VI} also McAllister, Spillane and Courtright for top level historical analyses of changes in drug regulations and markets”.

Response: Yes, agreed. A note has been added to this effect including reference to a number of transnational / multi-scale histories of drugs and their regulation.

7. **Reviewer comment:** “I think the introduction of critical concepts, such as ‘endogenous gaze’ could indeed be useful, but there isn’t sufficient interrogation of them within the article at present.”

Response: Whilst I accept this comment I haven’t developed this idea any further here. The changes I have made to the paper to address the other points have added to its length. I think to develop this idea further here would require more space than is reasonably available. I have cut the reference to ‘endogenous gaze’ within the paper but will consider developing it further in a future piece.

8. **Reviewer comment:** “Re. Scalar Hierarchy: I fear a strawman here as I don’t know of anyone arguing that drug markets aren’t interconnected across geographical frontiers as well as imagined frontiers. I understand about applying the idea to repatriation, but the idea of local experimentation as being based on a lack of awareness about these dynamics doesn’t seem the right criticism. I think local experimentation as an idea is often predicated on the recognition of the complexity of the international system.”

Response: Agree that the argument through this section could be much clearer so there has been some rewriting and restructuring to make this so. I have made it much clearer and much more explicit throughout that the main thrust of this section is the potentially problematic relationship between policy repatriation at the national level and factors and processes that operate at extra national scales. This includes slightly amending the title of the section and reordering the introduction section. I have cut the reference to the example of coca field elimination as this only muddies the main thrust of the section. I have also added a paragraph at the end that acknowledges that the drug policy reform literature is not naive on the point of the multi-scalar constitution of drug markets and argues that discussions of policy reform might also embrace more explicitly discussions of the dialectical relationships between policies enacted at one scale and processes that unfold at other, multiple scales, and that they might also admit more discussion of scales other than the nation as the scales at which reform might be enacted. On the last point the discussion again draws attention to the regional / market scale as one at which policy experimentation and reform might be directed.

9. **Reviewer comment:** “P.8: ‘prevailing discourses...’: this para is a little confused and I think actually contradicts some of the authors’ thrust inadvertently. Again it risks offering too unified a sense of the pluralistic schools of thought, many of which are self-consciously constructed to offer counter-‘globalist interpretations’.

Further, the point on universal prohibition isn’t clearly made, with the overall point obscured. McAllister, Collins and Thoumi are three authors arguing the legal complexity of ‘prohibition’ under international law. Toby Seddon has written extensively on this within legal theory contexts”.

Response: Agree that the meaning of this paragraph could be clearer. I have made it much clearer here that I am referring to official and (some) popular discourses of drugs rather than academic ones from the drug policy reform literature. I have added a sentence that explicitly acknowledges that the pluralist perspectives within the drug policy reform literature challenge the globalist imaginations that I note here. I have also removed the reference to prohibition as this adds little and is peripheral to the main point of the paragraph. Further in the next paragraph I have emphasised more clearly that what this suggests is the potential for pluralising drug policy at the market / regional level, rather than the national level.

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3 10. **Reviewer comment:** “There are key literatures on market regulation which would need to be
4 incorporated. E.g. see the work of RAND on Vermont and subsequent works.”

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6 **Response:** Agreed. This is an important source. I have included references to the original report for
7 Vermont and two subsequent works that came from this analysis at a number of points within the
8 article where they inform the points I am making.
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