

# **Structure and Trends of the Croatian Illicit Drug Market from The Perspective of Actors On the Illicit Drug Market**

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## **Abstract**

The illicit drug market reflects the social, economic and political aspects of an environment. The more unstable these characteristics, the more they favor the illicit drug market, subsequently forming various actors, more unstable and temporary structures and more complex trends, on account of which the structure of the illicit drug market is further empowered. Characteristics of the illicit drug market in terms of its organization have been described in literature, but also its lack of organization, where such markets are often called flexible, adaptable, fluid, exhibiting a network structure which is easily broken but even more easily renewed. Research into the structure and trends of the illicit drug market combine numerous and different scientific research methods, often by multidisciplinary teams, which increases the probability of obtaining quality, scope and detailed insight into the market, where a significant role in the methodological approach from previous research is given to qualitative methodologies.

This paper presents characteristics of the illicit drug market in Croatia as explained by convicted actors from that market. Those involved in the research are experienced in participating on the illicit drug market, and who are currently serving prison sentences or are in juvenile detention facilities. The methodology used is qualitative in line with the principles of descriptive phenomenology. Endeavors have been made to explain the gained insights into the way the illicit drug market operates in Croatia and whether such obtained and analyzed information can assist in better quality prevention, as well as treatment of convicted perpetrators of drug offenses.

The results testify to the large number of roles on the illicit drug market, some of which are occasional, temporary or short-term. This means that improving prevention programs requires understanding the motives behind someone entering the illicit drug market, including protection and exposure to victimization and detection, as well as other aspects impacting estimates of risk and gains, i.e., the decision on whether to get involved and participate or not.

The Croatian penal system does not offer dedicated rehabilitation programs for perpetrators of drug-related crimes or secondary drug-related crimes, i.e., for those who are not addicts or perpetrators of violent crimes. This population poses a challenge in estimating the possibility of recidivism, for which their role and position on the drug market at the time of arrest is

important, given that research in other European penal systems has uncovered very different roles and positions of this convicted population, as well as various approaches to rehabilitation. The illicit drug market reflects the social, economic and political aspects of an environment. The more unstable these characteristics, the more they favor the illicit drug market, subsequently forming various actors, more unstable and temporary structures and more complex trends, on account of which the structure of the illicit drug market is further empowered. Characteristics of the illicit drug market in terms of its organization have been described in literature, but also its lack of organization, where such markets are often called flexible, adaptable, fluid, exhibiting a network structure which is easily broken but even more easily renewed. Research into the structure and trends of the illicit drug market combine numerous and different scientific research methods, often by multidisciplinary teams, which increases the probability of obtaining quality, scope and detailed insight into the market, where a significant role in the methodological approach from previous research is given to qualitative methodologies.

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**Key words:** illicit drug market, actors, qualitative methodology

## Introduction

Criminological literature often describes the illicit drug market as *disorganized crime* (Calderoni, 2012), and several studies over the last two decades have spoken of the existence of small, flexible, mutable networks and organizations with a limited number of actors, as well as cooperation between well-structured organizations and a number of small unstructured criminal groups (Reuter and Haaga, 1989; Dorn et al. 2005; Decker and Chapman 2008; Reuter 2009, Benson and Decker 2010, Bouchard and Ouellet 2011). The explanation for this form of *disorganization* provided by the authors is to be found in the specifics of the drug market and type of associated criminal activities, on account of which the illicit drug market forms criminal actors and associated activities, which is more often the case than actors forming the illicit drug market. To reduce the risk of disclosing identities, arrests and sanctions, Calderoni (2012) points out that the organizations should not be large, structured and monopolistic. The results of other research describe the specifics of criminal organizations in illicit drug trafficking through a fluid form, including loss of a sense of connectedness between members or parts of the criminal network and their ability to rapidly change and modify the organizational structure in response to changing circumstances (Dorn et al. 2005; Decker and Chapman 2008; Reuter 2009, Benson and Decker 2010).

Bright and Delenay (2013) documented and analyzed the growth of criminal networks in the drug trade and were the first to identify structural and functional changes in the networks occurring over time. The analysis shows that criminal networks are flexible and adaptable. People who are part of the network, in time change their roles to changing needs and goals. The density of the network remains stable over time, and the network gradually undergoes decentralization.

Importantly, researching the illicit drug market combines numerous, different methods, and is often carried out by multidisciplinary teams, increasing the likelihood of getting a better, more comprehensive and detailed picture of the illicit drug market, but this creates numerous challenges when comparing such methods (Calderoni, 2012). The emphasis in this paper is on a qualitative study.

One of the earlier influential studies on the structure and trends of the drug market by authors Reuter and Haaga (1989) using a qualitative methodology, analyzed data collected from convicted drug traffickers to gain a necessary understanding, and described markets at a *high level* in a comprehensive manner, including an analysis of the challenges in undertaking the study. Earlier studies, such as those by Chaiken and Chaiken (1982), according to Reuter and Haaga (1989), also relied on interviews with convicted offenders in analyzing individual criminal careers, although Reuter and Haaga (1989) were the first endeavoring to capture more than just a personal dimension. They analyzed criminal organizations and drug trafficking, which led them to make the following observations: (a) Illegal drug traffickers encounter entry barriers at multiple levels, but these are minimal. Many were able to assume positions without long-term development of their criminal career or without providing a major financial role. A certain amount of energy, discretion and luck was necessary; (b) A successful drug business does not require establishing a large or permanent organization. They exist but are organized for smuggling and importing purposes. Supplier-consumer relationships are not exclusive, however if they are exclusive, it is on a voluntary basis; (c) A high-level trafficker can operate

without resorting to violence; (d) The wholesale illicit drug market operates on a national rather than local level. The opportunistic nature of the market means that criteria for doing business are credibility of the source and customer, not the territory. In assessing challenges stemming from the study, the authors highlighted advantages such as the willingness of participants to provide detailed information in interviews about market specifics and conditions, the role of violence and earnings. They also point to the difficulty of persuading participants to get involved, given that distrust and rejection prevails. To reduce subjectivity of the data collected through interviews, the authors also used a survey questionnaire.

In analyzing a number of studies on the illicit drug market at a *higher level* using a qualitative methodology (Adler, 1985; Reuter and Haaga, 1989; Dorn, Murji and South, 1992; Riggs, Hafley and Tewksbury, 1995; van Duyne, 1996; Natarajan and Belanger, 1998; Dorn, Lutz and White, 1998; Pearson and Hobbs, 2001, 2003; Zaitch, 2002; Gruter and van de Mheen, 2003; Desroches, 2005) the conclusion is that criminal organizations are covert and difficult-to-reach institutions with a relatively small number of actors, imbued with various regional, national and transnational tasks and functions, which, in the case of weak collaboration with police and detective actors, continues to remain insufficiently accessible to researchers in developing appropriate theories or a critical evaluation of social policies.

The *local level* of the drug market in Frankfurt and Milan was investigated by Paoli (2000) using interviews with consumers, dealers and the police. The obtained results offer an explanation for the demand, supply, prices and response of the community and compared these two European cities. The conclusions show that the illicit drug market in both cities is served by a large number of actors united in relatively small and often temporary organizations. Some organizations are family-related, and occasionally collaborate with other small organizations that are not family-based. Organizations may be ethnically linked or rally around a charismatic leader to achieve a certain degree of stability and organizational structure. There are also individuals who collaborate together for short periods depending on the particular situation. The Matrix Knowledge Group (2007) conducts studies that interviews with narcotics players in Great Britain. They have characterized the local and national market as changeable, flexible and open to all types of drugs. Entry level players usually start with low-level careers and, more often than not, act at other levels independently or in temporary groups. Some limit their business dealings at the kilograms level, do not serve numerous clients, but concentrate on maintaining status, hence they establish contacts and secure some form of protection from law enforcement.

Research in Italy, Slovenia and Germany has analyzed information from interviews with convicted drug-related offenders while serving their prison sentences, with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the manner in which drug traffickers organize their businesses, strategies and careers, and their utilization of corruption and risk management (Tzvetkova, Pardal, Rena, Liquori, Libanchi, Disley, Talic, Forberger, Khan and Perschall, 2014). The results show that entering the illicit drug market usually requires some ties to friends or family, and the motivators are economic deprivation such as unemployment, personal enrichment and a luxurious lifestyle. A significant proportion of drug traffickers are motivated by their own consumption and the need to obtain drugs and lead the lifestyle of an addict which generally does not involve employment, education and affirmation in other areas of life (Matrix Knowledge Group, 2007; Tzvetkova et al., 2014). The mentioned motivations are in line with the research findings of a number of authors who have stated that their respondents have

different views on progress and risks, had on a number of occasions ceased participating in the illicit drug market for a while and most reached higher levels prior to their arrest. Available investment capital, a strong network of contacts and a suitable personality are seen as the most important elements of success (Reuter and Haaga, 1989; Zaitch, 2002; Ruggiero and Khan, 2006; Desroches, 2005, 2007; Bucerius, 2007; Dunlap, Johnson, Kotarba and Fackler, 2010; Grundetjern and Sandberg, 2012; Taylor and Potter, 2013).

In Croatia, there are numerous studies on the prevalence of drug use, addictions as well as different models and approaches in treating drug addicts, but there is an insufficient criminological approach to drug market research, its structure and trends, the actors involved, and factors relating to stability and change. A number of research and expert reviews have addressed the specificities of Croatia from a criminological perspective, such as analysis of the heroin market in Split in the 1990s by Dražen Lalić (1995) and the way addicts get money for drugs. The connection between drug use and criminal behavior was analyzed in another study, indicating, for example, that the population of drug addicted women is specific in nature and basically not involved in criminal behavior. However, the authors also noted that socio-pathological behaviors were not included in the research, which in Croatia raises various research questions on this issue (Šarić, Sakoman and Zdunić, 2002). Petković (2008) analyzed the proportion of minors and young adults in the total number of reported drug abuse offenses in the period 2001–2005 based on police statistics. The crime perspective of drug abuse and the related primary, secondary and tertiary crime was presented by Klarić (2008) in a comprehensive article, discussing the prevalence, accumulation and flow of illicit money, as well as connections, organization and trends in drug-related organized crime. The mentioned author suggests modes of drug selling at the street level and suggests strategies for state repressive and preventive measures.

This paper presents some of the results of the first comprehensive study on the trends and structure of the drug market in Croatia from a criminological perspective, where the specifics cover collection of data from the actual actors on the illicit drug market as well as use of quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

## **Methodology**

The paper is based on the results of the scientific research project called *Research into the Drug Market in Croatia – The Role of Secondary Crime* (Jandrić Nišević, Doležal, Maračić, Novak, Šuljak, 2016) and *Research into the Structure and Trends of the Illicit Drug Market in Croatia* (Jandrić Nišević, Doležal, Lotar Rihtarić, Jeđud Borić, Novak, 2017), the Office for Combatting Drug Abuse, Croatian Government, and was conducted by scientists from the Department of Criminology and the Department of Behavioral Disorders, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences (University of Zagreb) including the Police Academy, Croatian Ministry of Internal Affairs and Prisons in Zagreb. For the purpose of this paper, data was chosen that testified to the structure and trends on the illicit drug market in Croatia with respect to adult and juvenile perpetrators of drug-related crimes. The data was collected and analyzed using qualitative methodological procedures.

The research approach is phenomenological in nature and aims to describe the nature of researching phenomena from the perspective of relevant actors (Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 1997, 2009, Sousa, 2014). The phenomenological view accepts the role of cognition in a

comprehensive sense, with regard to all experiences belonging to the individual (Giorgi, 1997, 2009). This approach has been used in philosophy, psychology and education with the aim of presenting information, experiences, opinions and attitudes of participants and searching for meaning (Maxwell, 2013). This paradigm emphasizes conducting studies in a natural setting while endeavoring to discover and interpret the meaning of information that people present, and search for specific patterns in the actual data source (Creswell, 2013; Beck, Keddy, and Cohen, 1994). The analyzed data in this analysis is summarized and structured into thematic units (Mesec, 1998; Punch 1998; Mayering, 2000). Once grouped, the data provides answers to questions on the persons studied and experiences in relation to the phenomenon under investigation, and the context or situation influencing their experiences, behavior, attitudes and values (Moustakas, 1994).

## **Research Goals and Research Questions**

The goals of this research are:

- a) To analyze the ways in which the structure and trends of the illicit drug market present actors of the illicit drug market,
- b) To analyze topics which actors of the illicit drug market who are (not) prepared to share in the circumstances in which they currently find themselves (have received a prison sentence or juvenile correction measure, in some form of institutional treatment)
- c) To recognize whether issues that have not yet (sufficiently) been covered appear in this specific scientific approach and in how should it be directed in future analysis and research,
- d) To recognize the benefits of the research results for improving rehabilitation of convicted perpetrators of drug-related crimes.

Starting from, a phenomenological philosophical position, this paper endeavors to answer the following research questions: In what way does the Croatian illicit drug market describe actors of the illicit drug market? What aspects of operations involving the illegal drug trade are convicted perpetrators of perpetrators of crimes related to the illicit drug trade willing to talk about? Can analyzed information obtained in this way be useful in prevention and/or treatment of convicted perpetrators of drug-related crimes?

## **Survey Respondents**

The study sample is specific and targeted to include three subsamples:

- 1) A subsample comprising 156 convicted male perpetrators of crimes in line with Articles 190, 191 and 191a of Croatian Criminal Code (illicit production and trafficking of drugs, facilitating drug use and illicit production and trafficking of substances prohibited in sport), or perpetrators of other drug-related crimes (secondary crimes), serving sentences under maximum security conditions, and who have agreed to complete the questionnaire. The age of the respondents is between 21 and 63 years, where the average age is 35.8 years (SD = 8.019). The sample does not include those who have refused to complete the questionnaire or completed it vaguely/incompletely due to illness, which is less than 16% of the total sample size.

- 2) A subsample comprising 7 males aged 32-48 years, convicted of the above-mentioned offenses under Articles 190, 191 and 191a of the Criminal Code, multiple recidivists for the same offenses in addition to property offenses, and who have consented to be interviewed. Personnel at the prisons and penitentiaries helped to identify these respondents (due to their familiarity with the backgrounds of the convicted criminals, crimes committed, personality traits, state of health, cooperation in rehabilitation programs and behavior in prison) and to motivate potential respondents. About thirty potential participants (respondents) from several prisons and correctional facilities were chosen, of whom seven eventually participated in the interview.
- 3) A subsample of 15 youths from juvenile correction facilities (aged 15-17 years) experienced in the production and resale of narcotics, and experience in liaising with consumers of different types of narcotics, who agreed to participate in the focus groups. All other information concerning them, their crimes and circumstances remain confidential. These young people as respondents are also part of the total population of young people in Croatian juvenile correctional facilities who have received a court order to serve time at a juvenile correction facility for the above-mentioned offenses in addition to drug-related secondary crimes.

All three subsamples in this paper represent a complete sample of perpetrators of crimes related to the illegal drug trade or drug-related secondary crime, serving prison sentences or undergoing correctional measures.

## **Data Collection**

The data was collected using the survey or questionnaire containing multiple choice questions and open questions requiring a written answer, including individual and group interviews. The questionnaires were personally delivered by the researchers to the professional personnel at the penal institutions and who were subsequently familiarized with the goals and purpose of the research, instruments and ethical standards. Participants (respondents) received explanations of the goals and purpose of the research, the principle of voluntariness, anonymity and security. The voluntary respondents submitted completed questionnaires, which were kept in a sealed envelope in a prepared box. The response to completing the questionnaire did not pose a problem but it was difficult motivating individuals for the actual discussions. Many of the respondents stated that participating in the questionnaire could pose a serious problem if their participation became known, and they might be seen as *informants* or be subjected to violence in order to divulge what they had received in return as informants. Prison officers and treatment personnel ensured the necessary conditions to conceal where and why the participants (respondents) had discussions. The interviews lasted about 2 hours, in the office of the Prisons in Zagreb, with a security officer present, in line with prison rules. Given that recording audio and video is not permitted in prisons and penitentiaries, the researcher took brief notes and noted interesting statements. Transcripts of discussions were done after the interview by recollecting the facts, in an effort to utilize as much detail and as accurately as possible based on what was said. During the interviews, when the researcher deemed the testimonies to be interesting and authentic, facts were noted. The participant had insight into the information. Such testimonies were part of the analysis in its original form. The interviews were conducted by researchers with many years of experience and trained in criminalistics and qualitative penological research.

Juvenile participants chose the group interview themselves rather than individual interviews due to mutual trust. Three focus groups were organized, each lasting 2 hours. The participants were ensured voluntariness, anonymity and security. Participants were able to read all the researcher's notes, during and after the focus group, while some sought, at their own initiative, that their testimonies be noted.

## **Instruments**

The research upon which this paper is based used a number of instruments. This paper used data collected using the following instruments:

- 1) **Questionnaire for researching the structure and trends of the Croatian illicit drug market** which, in addition to quantitative variables, also contains 5 open questions which respondents answer descriptively, and relates specifically to organization of the illicit drug market.
- 2) **Guide for semi-structured interviews with adult perpetrators of drug-related crimes**, comprising a series of open questions on the organization of the illicit drug market, its actors, roles, collaboration, prices, differences in regard to geographical location, collaboration with juveniles, and drug-related crimes.
- 3) **Guide for semi-structured interviews with juveniles experienced in consuming and training in drugs**, comprising a series of open questions on the organization of the illicit drug market, its actors, specific role of juveniles, and drug-related crimes among juveniles.

## **Approach To The Analysis**

The analytical approach in this paper follows the principles and procedures of descriptive phenomenology as described by Giorgi (1985; 1989; 1997), Tatano Beck, Keddy and Zichi Cohen (1997), Sousa (2014) and adapted to this particular study. This research is specific in its use of analytical procedures focusing on summarizing, structuring, explaining and drawing conclusions about the content rather than on interpretation.

Based on the guidelines of qualitative phenomenological research, this paper presents the following phases and principles of analysis:

- Stage One - repeated reading of the entire research material with the aim of gaining insight into the entirety.
- Stage Two - coding, aimed at giving importance to parts of the content.
- Stage Three - categorization, deciding on ways to associated differently coded sections of the content.
- Stage Four - selecting authentic statements that support the way in which parts of the content are associated.
- Stage Five – drawing a conclusion on the meaning attributed by researchers in understanding the researched phenomenon from the perspective of the interviewed respondents.
- Stage Six - intersectional coding aimed at providing further interpretation of the context and explication (collection of additional information from the same or other sources), extending beyond the scope of a hierarchical presentation of results. The aim of this

stage is to answer questions that arose after the previous stage. The answers are considered the context of the category from which they stem.

The same data can represent parts of other categories.

The triangulation principle was used to analyze the data. Three researchers, i.e., the authors of this paper, endeavored to reach consensus on reducing subjectivity at each stage of the analysis. The techniques used in the analysis are summarization, structuring, interpretation and explication. Table 1 illustrates the steps in the analysis.

**Table 1.** Stages and examples from the analysis

Stage One	Relating to the entire content, multiple times, along with notes, consulting the literature and collaboration between the three researchers	
	<b>Input information / processing</b>	<b>Output information</b>
Stage Two	Statements: “addicts sell up to 5 years, heroin, for themselves, to have some...”, “the twenty-fives are kids...they sell marijuana to other kids, steel...they barter everything and anything...”	Codes: “twenty-fives – minors – pup”, “fives – addicts”
Stage Three	Codes (revised): “juvenile sellers” (different motives and statuses)	Categories: Dealers by the gram / Street selling / Friendly network
Stage Four	Statements: “I had this kid who started as a five and quickly advanced, very capable, fearless...now he’s running his own business”.	Categories: Circumstances behind development of a career as a drug dealer
Stage Five	Context: illicit drug market needs a large number of end users and small dealers, where the population of youth represents the most important source of new actors	Question: How do young people enter the business? What must they do to advance?
Stage Six	Statements: “It’s recommended that you have a pedigree”, “Daddy’s boys, who have money and think they’re Pablo Escobar”, “a lot of juveniles started making contact with the large dealers and taking larger quantities”, “the most popular person in the crowd is always sought after, that’s the job of the lower ranked dealers, if you know how to keep quiet and contribute, you advance quickly” Codes: juvenile dealers / recommendation / advancement / family business Categories: circumstances in developing the career of a drug dealer	Conclusion on the meaning (based on a number of codes): There are a large number of actors, clear structure in street selling which depends on the quantity and type of drugs. It is possible to advance in early youth from lower street level to some sort of autonomy. That requires circumstances, belonging and personality.

## **Methodological Constraints**

The most frequent complaints against qualitative studies are the value of the data. Some of the criticism is that data collected using qualitative methods lies somewhere between information, speculation and empirical data. An explanation against some of the criticism relating to the qualitative methodology and also this research can be given, as well as some understanding and caution in drawing conclusions.

One of the methodological constraints in the study is the fact that actors in the illicit drug trade who are part of the research are not necessarily representatives of the entire population of drug dealers, therefore the nature of the sample indicates that the issues are covered by a smaller sample unit. Future research should increase the sample size to also include those respondents who are serving prison sentences under all possible security conditions, and those serving sentences for other crimes, who are not addicts, but have a history of convictions and sentences for drug-related crimes and are on probation. The reliability of the information obtained in the specific circumstances of the research is also a constraint in the study. Researchers have endeavored to improve the reliability by collecting information in writing and spoken form, and by repeating key questions in a different context. Some information on adult participants (respondents) was verified from prison documentation (internal authenticity). Transcripts of the discussions were not verified, and participants were not given feedback on analysis of the data. However, those testimonies which the research assessed as very important and key in their authentic form were noted in writing along with providing insight and assistance to participants (respondents) during the interviews and/or focus groups. Naturally, there are a number of challenges in analyzing data subsequently obtained from transcripts or from understanding the actual transcript if the researcher has not conducted the data collection and concerning which there is supporting experimental research such as by the author Roth (2015) who showed the importance of including researchers in all phases of research, as well as disadvantages of doing so. One of the researchers in this study performed data collection and participated in all phases of the analysis, whereas the two other researchers joined during the analysis, interpretation and in drawing the conclusions. Accordingly, the possibility of having an impact on the results is reduced due to a prior understanding, ad hoc understanding and neglecting to gain insight into the contradictoriness during analysis.

Due to the research approach in selecting participants (respondents), collecting data and analyzing data, including all the mentioned constraints, the analysis in this paper retains the level of structure in meaning and relational coding, without deeper interpretations. The phenomenological approach enables this step, as it stays at the summarized and structure presentation of information and relationships between them. This is also in line with the research goals and questions.

Consistency in information collected is based on clearly planned and structured procedures, conforming to the nature of institutions in which they are implemented, and where security is a priority. The presence of security personnel could have impacted the way answers were given. This challenge was met by the researchers in that they emphasized their general interest according, and that it is not necessary to divulge events from one's personal life, keeping in mind that the context of the story will generally open in others freer communication even if it involves one's own experiences. In choosing juvenile participants in the focus groups, the

researcher did not influence the homogeneity and heterogeneity when creating the groups. Given that he was not adequately familiar with the participants (respondents), they were allowed to form their own groups, which they did on the basis of their existing friendship. Given that participating in a familiar or friendly group is a way of contributing to the richness of content and group interactivity, this challenge provided an advantage.

## Results and Discussion

Categories describing the topic of the structure trends on the illicit drug market in Croatia obtained in this research link together actors of the illicit drug market along with quantities and types of drugs, to certain socioeconomic characteristics as well as motivation and opportunities to advance within the criminal organizations. They include the following categories: 1) Distributors in terms of the quantity and type of drug, 2) Suppliers in terms of the quantity and type of drug, 3) Producers in terms of the type of drug, 4) Carriers in terms of affiliation and persistence, 5) Actors in terms of the environment and motives for entering the business of illicit drugs.

Categories 1 to 4 comprise codes linking actors and the quantity of drugs, type of drug or affiliation to a criminal organization, whereas the terms in parenthesis are most often used colloquial terms. Category 5 comprises codes and descriptions originating from the situations, events, persons and general state of the illicit drug market.

Descriptions along with the codes represent conclusions on the meaning for which there are supporting statements (author in possession of the original statements and in the Report on the Project *Researching the Illicit Drug Market in Croatian – the Role of Secondary Crime* and *Researching the Structure and Trends on the Croatian Illicit Drug Market*).

Summarized and structured results are given in the following matrix:

### **1. Distributors by quality and type of drug**

- **Dealers by the gram (aka *cockroaches, guttersnipes, the cantons*)**. If these dealers sell only one type of drug, it is usually marijuana in quantities (packages) of 5 grams, or if only heroin (along with substitution treatment) then in quantities (packages) of 1 or 2 grams, whereas substitution treatment comes in bars. If selling several types of drugs, it is mostly a combination of club drugs (cocaine and MDMA in packages of 1 gram, sometimes in addition to marijuana).

- **Dealers by the kilogram (aka *players, businesspeople*)**. This is usually a single type of drug, and in the case of cocaine or heroin, and it is also sold with fillers (a proportion of active substances is diluted to increase profit). They do business within the country but not over the border.

### **2. Suppliers by quantity and type of drug**

- **Dealers trafficking quantities between tens and hundreds of kilograms (aka *real players, bosses, emperors*)**. They are actors of the so-called Balkan route for a single type of drug, investing their own capital and organizing transport, border crossings and contacting other dealers who traffic by the kilogram.

- **Dealers by the ton (aka corporation).** These actors belong to international routes trading a single type of drug which is first bought from producers, ensuring its arrival to the place of storage or distribution in a European country.

### **3. Producers by type of drug**

- **Growers of marijuana and/or mushrooms (aka agronomists, botanists, gardeners).** Though numerous, but not a significant presence on the market compared to the quantity of marijuana coming from Albania onto the local market.

- **Producers of synthetic drugs (aka laboratory technicians, chemists).** They are insignificant given the availability of synthetic drugs coming from the Netherlands onto the local market.

### **4. Transporters by affiliation and persistence**

- **Members of criminal organizations (aka those maintaining the route).** Continual organization of related actors.

- **Occasional carriers (aka debtors and/or rabbits).** Temporary or one-off actors, without any significant relation to other actors.

### **5. Actors by circumstances and motives for entering the illicit drug business (and other socioeconomic characteristics)**

- **Blenders.** They are people who have a legal job to ensure contacts, jobs, protection or combined earnings.
- **Temporary small-time drug dealers or once only carriers.** They are outside the criminal environment, experiencing financial difficulties and accept one job or intend to get involved in the drug trade and/or transport for a short time until they solve their problems.
- **Drug traffickers forced by certain circumstances.** These people are the young and middle generation who do not see any opportunities in making (sufficient) earnings in a legal manner, and who agree to be part of a criminal environment at the lowest level of the hierarchy.
- **Non-dealers.** They do consider themselves to be drug dealers. They are in fact consumers and dealers for their own pleasure and earn to party and buy luxury goods.
- **Young people from marginalized families and/or communities.** They come from families and/or communities with an exceptionally poor socioeconomic status and are members of the Roma ethnic minority entering the initial status of (street) drug dealers.
- **Members of criminal families.** They are young people and adults who have a clear affiliation, position and move up through criminal structures.
- **Addicts.** They are long-term users, where drug trafficking is only a way of obtaining drugs to maintain their own (mostly heroin) addiction.
- **New players.** They are new actors in the illicit drug market who come from a different criminal environment or a *blender* position and enter with their own (financial or personal) capital and tend to occupy a position within the trafficking by the kilogram structure, in cooperation with existing actors, and which may be only temporary.
- **New major players.** These people are new players entering the market with a large amount of capital or higher quality drugs, destined for new routes, with connections and access, and assisted will join and assume a permanent supplier position.

Given below is information derived from a relational coding which provides answers to the research questions, achieves the research goals and supports conclusions from the study. It will be presented as part of the discussion.

Convicted drug dealers, as well as perpetrators of drug-related secondary crimes, participants (respondents) of this research, were prepared to provide various information on the characteristics of actors on the illicit drug market, their roles, positions, motivations, affiliations, including information on the types of drugs, their presence on the Croatian market, the way drugs arrive, distribution and prices. Most of the information that they provided are already known from information presented in the media on drug raids and arrests or are available on documentaries covering the Balkan illicit drug market. However, some already known information contains various details, links, information, that which actors on the illicit drug market deem less dangerous and feel more relaxed to talk about because it will not incriminate them, but such information is less valuable to experts and scientists involved in the battle against drug abuse in the widest possible sense. Such information falls into three groups for use in this discussion: a) microlevel or personal level specific for each individual, the circumstances of their life and participation on the illicit drug market, b) middle level or personal knowledge of the illicit drug market among actors with whom they have come into direct contact, and c) macrolevel or information that they possess on illicit drug market operations at a global level.

One of the more important topics at the microlevel and stemming from relation coding, and which is present throughout the entire study is *the question of whether participating in the illicit drug market was worth it*, especially for the actors who are currently incarcerated and serving sentences. This topic deserves additional treatment and analysis. It has always been tied to the dilemma of personal choice at a particular moment in life and particular circumstances. The question revolving around the decision to participate or not, is an especially important topic. Trends on market are a predisposition for its stability, which in turn requires many different actors, harboring various motivations, expectations and experiences, all for the purpose of assuming various positions (except for the highest levels of the hierarchy) within the drug trade. This key topic is also directed to considerations concerning the effectiveness of rehabilitating convicted actors on the illicit drug market, because upon ending incarceration, these same people will make the same decision, this time based on different information and a different view, all of which depends on the success or failure of the rehabilitation process. This is indeed a topic that has been inadequately addressed but nonetheless remains an important one.

The key topic for the middle level which can provide answers to research questions is the number and variety of positions on the illicit drug market related to the economic and social situation. The groups of actors on the illicit drug market defined in this study, which are undoubtedly a reflection of the economic and social reality, are primarily the *blenders*, temporary dealers and carriers, dealers and carriers forced by circumstances and finally the marginalized youth. This is a population of young and middle-aged people who are healthy, able to work, who are generally not part of the working or school environment, for whom the illicit drug market is an opportunity to fulfil their socioeconomic needs, and thereafter their desires, personal goals, as well as acquiring social status. A similar structure of actors on the illicit drug market exists in European countries with a high unemployment rate and low socioeconomic standard, where actors are unemployed young people and the middle-aged primarily males, as addressed by Tzvetkova et al. (2014), Matrix Knowledge Group (2007), Dunlap et al. (2010), Grundetjern and Sandberg (2012), Ruggiero and Khan (2006), Taylor and Potter (2013), Hajdari and Hajdari (2020). In this sense, Croatia is not specific, and this research defines such groups of actors and their basic traits. This research requires additional analysis,

but also ongoing research in order to delve deeper. These groups are the most noticeable in terms of disclosure of identity, arrests and sanctions. However, they are also the easiest and quickest to replace as actors on the illicit drug market. Their removal from the illicit drug market does not impede operations on the illicit drug market. Some authors testify to the fact that the least significant actors on the illicit drug market are also the most numerous in prisons and penitentiaries. For instance, research on international drug smugglers in has showed that of those serving sentences in British prisons for drug-related offenses, two-thirds account for carriers participating in international routes (Caulkins, Burnett and Leslie, 2009). This proportion in Croatian prisons and penitentiaries will be identified further upon analyzing the data and in the next publication.

The topic on the macrolevel that is linked to set research questions refers to the role of Croatia's geographic position in the structure and trends on the illicit drug market. This is an extensive topic; however, important research data are changes occurring during the tourist season. This research has no such relevant data, because the participants were not willing to divulge information on the topic or the provided information was very obscure, generally cited as confidential but nonetheless known to police. Hence the answer is given to the research question as to what information are participants not willing to provide concerning the structure and trends on the Croatian illicit drug market. The absence of information is also in some way information and understandably the presumption is that the drug trade occurring throughout the year is less than during the tourist season. Though there is no such information in this research, some data on the presence of drugs in wastewater during the tourist season is indicative. A significant increase in the quantity of consumed drugs such as amphetamines, cocaine and MDMA in Zadar during the tourist season has been recorded (Terzić and Ahel, 2013), even a twenty-fold increase in MDMA along with a significant increase in other psychostimulants during the Ultra Festival in Split, analyzed in 2017 (Office for Combatting Drug Abuse, 2017)

Though direct and concrete testimonies from participants are lacking, in terms of the analyzed content in this research it is possible to ascertain that in the summer months: a) different rules prevail on the illicit drug market, b) there is stricter control of the drug trade from higher hierarchical levels, c) seasonal dealers selling smaller quantities as well as seasonal *blenders* appear on the illicit drug market, d) unwanted actors on the illicit drug market appear (foreign nationals), and e) the regulation of unwanted actors dealers takes place.

The illicit drug market reflects the social, economic and political aspects of a geographical area, where the more unstable becomes the mentioned characteristics, the more it favors the illicit drug market. This kind of market is then able to form various actors, more unstable and temporary structures and more complex trends, on account of which the structure is again strengthened. This explanation of success and strengthening of the illicit drug market, as addressed in various ways in study by authors such as Haaga (1989), Dorn et al. (2005), Decker and Chapman (2008), Paoli (2000), Reuter (2009), Benson and Decker (2010), Bouchard and Ouellet (2011), Calderoni, (2012), Bright and Delenay (2013), has also been reflected in the results of this research. It is therefore important to continue collecting more detailed information on actors on the illicit drug market, on recruiting processes with an emphasis on the vulnerable part of the population, i.e., minors and the youth. This is to be followed by building on such information modes of preventing their entry onto the illicit drug market, continually assessing and improving the effectiveness of sanctions, rehabilitation programs and estimating possibilities of recidivism. Some of the more important and relevant parameters are characteristics of the role, position, motivation and affiliation of actors on the illicit drug market.

## **Conclusion**

Though only fragments of a complex social and criminological phenomenon have been presented, and only the information dealers convicted for drug-related crimes or drug-related secondary crimes were willing to provide, a number of topics important to experts involved in prevention and rehabilitation procedures have arisen.

Improving prevention programs is important for understanding the motives behind entering the illicit drug market, followed by the position and roles on the market, including protection and exposure to victimization and identity disclosure, which together influences assessments of risk and benefit, i.e., the decision to become involved and participate. In terms of prevention, the focus should be on the younger population and those who decide to join the illicit drug market temporarily, occasionally or on a one-off basis, those without prior experience in criminal activities, nor adequate information as to what it will mean for their future. Given that these actors are numerous and important for the stability of the illicit drug market, and that they generally do not consider themselves to be drug dealers, reducing their access and involvement can have an impact on the stability of the illicit drug market structure. Adequate information on recruiting techniques for participation (voluntary or forcibly), eliminating the myth of small risks, quick profits and support for finding different opportunities, harder over the short term, but more beneficial over the long term, should all be emphasized in preventive strategies for this population.

Rehabilitation of convicted perpetrators of drug-related crimes (as well as all other perpetrators of crimes) within the Croatian penal system takes place for the population of addicts based on the model of combining pharmacological therapy and psychosocial treatment. This approach offers a series of advantages and disadvantages, but continually takes place and is improved. However, there are no dedicated rehabilitation programs for perpetrators of drug-related crimes or drug-related secondary crimes if they are not addicts or perpetrators of violent offenses. This population in the Croatian penal system has not previously been addressed, defined nor considered a separate group of convicted criminals. They certainly represent a segment of the population that is challenging in terms of assessing recidivism, and based on their characteristics, are probably similar to perpetrators of other crimes such as property offenses. What would be interesting is to investigate their role and position on the illicit drug market either at the time of their arrest, given that research in other European penal systems has suggested very different roles and positions of these convicted segment of the population from country to country. A detailed analysis of the characteristics and scope of the population in the Croatian penal system can lead us to some information on the trends on the illicit drug market, characteristics of its actors, manner of identifying their activities, assessing possible recidivism as well as purpose and manner of creating approaches to rehabilitation.

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