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The mistrust of development in coca-growing regions in Peru: The valley of the rivers Apurimac, Ene and Mantaro

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Abstract

Since the 1970s, drug-producing regions have been the target of 'alternative development' policies. These policies aim to provide alternative crops to illegal coca, poppy, and marijuana growers, but also to initiate a greater development process in the regions concerned. The redefinition of these policies in international arenas has been widely studied, but little is known about the representations that farmers have of these policies in the production regions. This contribution proposes to overcome these limitations by examining more directly the effects of these policies at the subnational level. To this end, the case of the Valley of the Apurimac, Ene and Mantaro Rivers (VRAEM), Peru's main illegal cocoa-producing region and a post-conflict area, is analyzed. Despite an apparent consensus on development at the subnational level, tensions remain around these policies and their administration and occasionally arise between the Peruvian state and social organizations. This article shows that the implementation of development policies generates mistrust among farmers due to the ambiguity of the future of crops and the uncertainty of the benefits derived from development programs. The distrust is mainly directed at the agents in charge of implementing the programs and the leaders of social organizations who act as intermediaries. Because these policies largely exclude collective actors, they undermine trust in political representation and the Peruvian state in a region still weakened by the post-conflict context. *Keywords*: coca-growing, policies, mistrust, Peru.

Resumen

Desde la década de 1970, las regiones productoras de drogas han sido objeto de políticas de "desarrollo alternativo", que pretenden ofrecer cultivos alternativos a los cultivadores ilegales de coca, amapola y marihuana, pero también iniciar un proceso de desarrollo mayor en las regiones afectadas. La redefinición de estas políticas en el ámbito internacional ha sido ampliamente estudiada, pero poco se sabe de las representaciones que los campesinos tienen de estas políticas en las regiones productoras. Esta contribución propone superar estas limitaciones examinando más directamente los efectos de estas políticas a nivel subnacional. Para ello, se analiza el caso del Valle de los ríos Apurímac, Ene y Mantaro (VRAEM), principal región productora de cacao ilegal de Perú y zona de post-conflicto. A pesar de un aparente consenso sobre el desarrollo a nivel subnacional, siguen existiendo tensiones en torno a estas políticas y su administración, y en ocasiones surgen entre el estado peruano y las organizaciones sociales. Este artículo muestra que la aplicación de las políticas de desarrollo genera desconfianza entre los agricultores debido a la ambigüedad del futuro de los cultivos

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y a la incertidumbre de los beneficios derivados de los programas de desarrollo. La desconfianza se dirige principalmente a los agentes encargados de aplicar los programas y a los dirigentes de las organizaciones sociales que actúan como intermediarios. Estas políticas, al excluir en gran medida a los actores colectivos, minan la confianza en la representación política y en el Estado peruano, en una región aún debilitada por el contexto post-conflicto.
Palabras claves: cultivo de coca, políticas, desconfianza, Perú.

Introduction

To address drug production, international policymakers have long advocated the creation of compensation mechanisms to lift farmers out of poverty and prevent them from turning to illicit markets. Branded as "crop substitution initiatives" during the 1970s, "integrated rural development" in the 1988 UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic or "alternative development" in the 1998 UN General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS), these policies sought to provide alternative crops to illegal coca, poppy, and marijuana growers by initiating a process of regional development (Buxton, 2020; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2015). These development policies have also long been driven by the consolidation of a security-development nexus in illicit production areas (Gillies et al., 2019). Indeed, since the beginning of their implementation in the 1960s, they have maintained an ambiguous relationship with the goal of reducing the number of parcels of illicit crops by often combining coercive measures with voluntary or forced crop eradication, although there was great variation in implementation among the targeted regions. In recent decades, the content of these policies has been reshaped by international organizations in an attempt to adjust the imbalance into drug control strategies, a development-oriented approach, in a much clearer way, broadening the perspectives to align with sustainable development. The global debate on drug policy also explains that the semantics of alternative development policies have changed (Jelsma, 2018; UNODC 2015; UNODC, 2017).These new approaches promote the multisectoral aspects of public action and a much broader prism of policy intervention than just agriculture (Alimi, 2019; Brombacher & Westerbarkei, 2019).

A brief review of the literature shows that alternative development policies have mainly been analyzed from the top. Some studies have examined the transformations in international institutions (Alimi, 2019; Brombacher & Westerbarkei, 2019; Jelsma, 2003; Thoumi, 2002) by showing the reluctance of development professionals to adopt policies conceptualized as drug-supply reduction measures (Alimi & Hynes, 2015). Much has also been said at the national level about the competing interests and actors in the implementation of these policies (Laserna, 2011; Zevallos Trigoso, 2013; Mansfield, 2016) or the links between development programs and drugs production (Gootenberg & Davalos, 2018). Although more and more localized investigations have been conducted in illicit crop growing areas (Grisaffi, 2019; Heuser, 2017; Le Cour

Grandmaison, 2016) we still lack information to understand farmers' perceptions beyond the economic motivations for growing illicit crops (Nacimiento, 2016; Stockli, 2017).[1]

For Goodhand et al. (2021), the consensus around the need to integrate drug control, development, and peace-building programs in regions of illicit production inevitably leads to tensions and trade-offs between the actors involved at different levels. Based on this observation, this article proposes to examine the representations of the inhabitants with regard to these trade-offs and conflicts of agendas during the implementation of development policies in the drug-producing regions. For this reason and because alternative development seeks to promote a more multi-sectoral approach, these policies should not be analyzed from a single sectorial drug reduction strategy, but from a broader point of view, as public policies. More specifically, they are development policies in which several actors (international, national, and local) take part and that generate, in return, different representations and indigenous conceptions of what is presented in these regions as "development". For this reason, we refer throughout the text to the terms "development policies" or "development programs."

In order to analyze the representations of development, I rely on a mixed approach that brings on critical sociology of public action in development (Mosse, 2004; Murray Li, 2007; Olivier de Sardan, 1995) and an anthropology of rumours (Bonhomme, 2019; Piccoli, 2014; Santos-Granero & Barclay, 2011). I take the case of the Valley of the Rivers Apurimac, Ene and Mantaro (VRAEM), the main illicit coca-production zone in Peru. What we observe is that the uncertainty regarding the future of coca crops and the potential benefits (or lack thereof) derived from development programs create tensions, mistrust, and resistance. Mistrust is mainly focused on the agents in charge of implementing the programs and the social organization leaders who act as intermediaries. Because these policies largely exclude collective actors, they may undermine trust in political representation and the Peruvian state in a region which is still weakened by the post-conflict context.

This article is based on a three-month immersion field investigation in the VRAEM region between April and July 2017. During this time, I conducted 20 interviews with farmers, leaders of social organizations, and agents and officials from the Ministries of Agriculture and Defense. I also observed twelve meetings with various social organizations at the VRAEM regional and village levels and attended many informal scenes. I conducted my research primarily in three villages in Pichari district, but interviews were also conducted in Kimbiri, Santa Rosa and Samugari districts. In accordance with the ethics certificate approved by my university, all participants named in this paper freely gave their oral consent to participate in this research. For security reasons, all names of individuals and villages with fewer than 1,000 inhabitants have been anonymized. The research took place during the implementation of the Special Project for VRAEM (PROVRAEM), implemented since 2015. Funded through the Peruvian Agency for International Cooperation and the Ministry of Agri-

culture, PROVRAEM does not present itself as an alternative development program, but seeks to work towards agricultural reconversion and rural infrastructure development. One of the main components of the program is to provide conversion assistance to farmers who wish to reduce or eliminate their coca plots in exchange for products such as cocoa, coffee or pineapple. In exchange, farmers receive 650 soles per month, as well as the help of agricultural engineers who come to the villages every month to provide them with seeds, fertilizers and amendments and to make soil studies. The main stakeholders of PROVRAEM are the Ministry of Agriculture (Minagri), its agencies Agroideas and INIA, and the local reconversion associations. There is also a PROVRAEM agency. This agency has the same name as the program, but does not implement it. It is in charge of its promotion. The perceptions of development policies detailed in this paper are therefore mainly related to this program, but are also put into perspective with the previous development policies that followed in the VRAEM.

The article is divided into three sections. In the first section, the VRAEM case study and the theoretical framework are presented. I explain how development policies could be studied as a "manna" causing suspicion, mistrust, and resistance among farmers. The second section addresses development policies, which focus on the possible dispossession caused by the loss of coca cultivation and how their implementation may benefit outsiders in the VRAEM. In the third part, I discuss the effects of development policies on social configurations in the VRAEM. These policies are undermining old social organizations and their popular modes of operation in favour of new ones. These transformations erode farmers' trust in their representatives and give rise to an increasingly conflictual relationship with political representation.

Development manna, mistrust and resistance in the VRAEM

In Peru, coca cultivation is legal for farmers who are registered with the National Coca Company (ENACO). However, due to weak political pressure, the ENACO register has barely been updated since its creation in 1978 (Manrique, 2022), so a significant number of farmers produce coca in margin of the law. With an estimated 90 percent of coca destined for illicit markers, the VRAEM is today considered as the main illicit coca production zone in Peru (UNODC, 2018).

The VRAEM, a Peruvian illicit coca production zone in a post-conflict context

In this region, coca cultivation began to increase significantly in the mid-1980s, during the armed conflict opposing the Peruvian state, the Maoist guerrilla group of the Shining Path and peasant self-defence groups in the 1980s and early 1990s (Durand Guevara, 2005; Pino, 1996), and has never stopped since then. The VRAEM thus began an exemplary case of borderland with in-

creasing state interventionism due to the presence of an illicit economy linked to drug production, involving anti-drugs, peace-building, and development policies (Goodhand et al., 2021). Of these three political agendas, only the counterinsurgency policies pursued since the beginning of the armed conflict (1980) have been followed over time, despite a slight decrease in military presence between 2000 and 2007 (García, 2009; Koven, 2016; Zevallos Trigoso & Rojas Boucher, 2012). Even today, the VRAEM remains militarized due to the presence of remnant Shining Path columns in the area, reconverted into the protection of drug trafficking routes (Taylor, 2017).

Regarding anti-drug policies, the Peruvian state has supported a supply-reduction approach since the 1980s, implementing coca crop eradications with US support (Cotler, 1999). However, eradication efforts have widely varied by region (Zevallos, 2013). VRAEM has been only marginally involved, as over the last twenty years only 116 hectares have been eradicated, and this in the single year of 2019 (Paredes et al., 2021). Therefore, the alternative development approach deployed in VRAEM – not conditioned by crop eradication – was different from that which accompanied those in other Peruvian coca-producing regions. In the VRAEM, alternative development policies began in the mid-1990s. First accepted by the local populations, they were the subject of significant VRAEM regional controversy in the early 2000s (Durand Guevara, 2005; Durand Ochoa, 2014; van Dun, 2009). Their removal was a central demand of coca farmers, strongly mobilized by the Federation of Agricultural Producers of the VRAEM (FEPAVRAE). In 2002, the offices of Care International, the main NGO implementing these programs, were burned during a protest (Durand Guevara, 2005).

New development policies were implemented in the Valley beginning in 2012, after being put on hold for a time. They were in line with a renewal of approaches as described above at the international level. Greater state investments were made in agriculture, education, and health at the regional level. Spurred on by government consultation with regional social organizations, new decentralized regional development agencies have also emerged (Mendoza & Leyva, 2017). Despite this apparent renewal and consensus around development, tensions remain around these policies and their administration, and occasionally arise between the Peruvian state and social organizations (Busnel, 2019; Zevallos Trigoso & Casas Sulca, 2019). Moreover, these development policies have been subject to little continuity over time, with a strong reconfiguration of actors and approaches. It is therefore difficult to speak of a real incrementalism of public policies in this field (Lindblom, 1959).

Development manna and its suspicions

Recent studies have shown how the Peruvian state, thanks to a sustained dialogue with the social organizations of the VRAEM and the implementation of development policies, has succeeded in building its legitimacy among the coca

growers of the VRAEM (Heuser, 2017; Paredes et al., 2021; Zevallos Trigoso & Rojas Boucher, 2012). However, this does not erase the significant mistrust and resistance that can be found in the region. Even today, the agricultural federation regularly calls for demonstrations that bring together several thousands of farmers, and any researcher entering the villages of the Valley is likely to be greeted by armed self-defence groups and ordered to report to the village authorities.[2] In this post-conflict context, these behaviours can be classified on a continuum ranging from suspicion, and mistrust, to hidden resistance (Scott, 1990). In order to analyze them, I rely on two approaches. First, I draw on the sociology of public policy and its instruments (Le Galès & Lascoumes, 2011), and more particularly on critical sociology of development policies (Mosse, 2004; Murray Li, 2007; Olivier de Sardan, 1995). This entry allows me to understand who the main stakeholders of these policies are, their brokers (Bierschenk et al., 2000; Lewis & Mosse, 2006), and the consequences on socio-territorial configurations. Second, I mobilize the anthropology of rumour (Bonhomme, 2019; Piccoli, 2014; Santos-Granero & Barclay, 2011) to analyze representations of development policies. This consists of taking seriously the legends, tales, or popular figures that are attached to the actors involved in development policies, and interpreting how they relate to what farmers call "development".

Following Olivier de Sardan and his colleagues (Olivier de Sardan, 2014; Olivier de Sardan, et al. 2015), development policies are studied as a manna. Taking up Geffray's (2000) study of narcotrafficking in Brazil, they show how the development manna refers to "a gift from heaven" distributed by development agencies in a supposedly impersonal manner, but which "is far removed from the traditional local forms of financial help" (Olivier de Sardan, et al. 2015, p. 3). Bureaucratic logics of aid based on buzzwords such as "participation" or "good governance" are therefore at odds with the moral expectations regarding the distribution of resources. Because of this backlash and the many hijackings of existing institutions (such as municipalities), the distribution of development money then creates a "space of suspicion" (Olivier de Sardan, 2014).

The concept of manna has a double advantage. First, it allows us to study development through its instruments of public action, based on the study of its implementation (Lascoumes & Le Gales, 2007) and the intermediaries, facilitators and brokers of public action (Bierschenk et al., 2000; Lewis & Mosse, 2006). Secondly, the concept of manna allows us to study and analyze development based on its popular representations and its symbolic dimension. If for some philosophers, money is intrinsically linked to suspicion (Ricœur, 2010), the fact that manna refers to a religious and superstitious dimension also finds anthropological meaning in Andean-Amazonian societies. Whether for social programs (Piccoli, 2014) or for reparative policies of the armed conflict (Delacroix, 2021), receiving the Peruvian state's money for indigenous rural populations is tantamount to pacting with the "devil" and invigorates post-apocalyptic

beliefs (Santos-Granero & Barclay, 2011). Suspicion and mistrust are then directed towards the officials of these programs but also sometimes towards the members of the community who collaborate with them.

Uncertainties and fears of dispossession among farmers

For farmers from the VRAEM, development policies are the object of a double mistrust. Firstly, they leave room for doubts in terms of the expected effects on coca crops. Secondly, their implementation highlights an existing social distance between project managers and farmers, which leads them to say that they can only marginally benefit from these projects. These representations are also reinforced by the short-termist logic of public development action. The transformations in development aid in recent years have indeed been easily attributed by farmers to a failure of development programs rather than a renewal of approaches.

The fear of losing coca for development

As presented above, development policies have often been coupled with coercive measures in coca-growing regions. In the VRAEM, since the first program funded by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 1995, no forced eradication has been carried out in the Valley until 2019. This has not prevented the region from being under strict military control, due to the presence of remnants of the Shining Path, now reconverted into the protection of drug trafficking routes (Taylor, 2017). The absence of eradication until 2019 has never curbed the concerns of VRAEM farmers about development policies in this region. For many, these projects remain associated with the objective of reducing coca cultivation, whatever the case may be. This mistrust regularly translates into rumours. According to Alfonso, a farmer living in the VRAEM since 1990, some leaders rejected the presence of NGOs in early 2000 on the grounds that "they were bringing potions to make coca disappear, that these institutions were poisoning coca crops." Although often unfounded, these rumours can be interpreted as mistrust. This is due to the fact that crop eradication has often been put on the agenda in this region, only to be suspended in response to farmer mobilizations (Busnel, 2019; Durand Guevara, 2005; Durand Ochoa, 2014) or to bureaucratic dissonance within Peruvian governments (Zevallos Trigoso & Casas Sulca, 2019).

VRAEM farmers also have a strong attachment to coca farming even though much of this activity remains illegal. Coca constitutes the major economic pole of the territory. The economy of VRAEM is based primarily on this crop that is intimately linked to a global capitalist economy (Mendoza & Leyva, 2017; Vizcarra, 2018). It is common to hear in conversations or in the public square the popular saying "here we all live directly or indirectly from coca". It is thus widely accepted that this economy – because of its circularity – bene-

fits all the inhabitants of the region, whether they grow coca or not. Moreover, because coca sells well, is quick and easy to grow, and easily marketable (García-Yi, 2014), the legal products promoted by agricultural conversion programs fail to compete with this crop (Nacimento, 2013). Beyond the income that it confers, coca cultivation is linked to a *magico*-religious imaginary world for the inhabitants of the region, mostly Quechua indigenous. In the VRAEM imaginary, coca is also associated with a resource that allowed the inhabitants to organize and defend themselves against the Shining Path guerillas during the armed conflict. This memory is strongly supported by the VRAEM Agricultural Federation leaders. According to Jesús Rivera, ex-assistant secretary of the VRAEM agricultural federation:

> They [the self-defence committees] finally ended up organizing at the level of the whole VRAE. The self-defence committees confront and liquidate all of them. That was the struggle, but who financed it? Coca. That is why the state has an immense social debt to the VRAE because the role that the state should have played has been played by the farmers of the VRAE themselves. Because the state was not able to.

Many historical research studies confirm these statements, showing that the money from the sale of coca did allow self-defence groups to buy weapons and strengthen themselves in the Valley (Comisión de la verdad y reconciliación, 2003; Fumerton, 2002; Pino, 1996). Even today, it is considered that coca cultivation acts as compensation for this painful period. It also helps to establish a more or less pacified local order (Heuser, 2019). In a way, it is thus a strongly socially-embedded economic activity (Polanyi, 1983).

Finally, although forced eradications have only taken place as of 2019, the heavy military and police presence in the Valley crystallizes many fears among farmers about the future of coca. Much of the police activity in the villages is focused on seizing products of unclear legal nature. They sometimes involve illicit substances, such as coca paste,[3] but also simple coca leaves that farmers usually dry on the side of the road. These sometimes illegal exactions by the Peruvian national police not only contribute to the perception of coca as an endangered resource, but also fuel a growing mistrust of the intentions of state representatives in the area.

Local populations' fear of dispossession from development benefits

The presence of state agents – whether linked to development policies or to coercive counterparts – raises not only a fear of endangering coca, but also that development policy resources would be used to the detriment of local populations and to the benefit of "foreigners". These fears and suspicions are particularly evident toward the agents in charge of implementing these development policies, many of whom are not native to the region. Matías, an agronomist from the PROVRAEM[4] development program, was in charge of visiting and

advising the farmers involved in the conversion of coca plots. In exchange, farmers had a compensation of 650 Peruvian *soles*[5] per month. When I first met him, he confided to me to have been associated with a *pishtaco* during his first tours of the villages. A *pishtaco* is a mythical and diabolical character from the Andean oral tradition. According to the Andean cosmovision, he is generally associated with the pejorative figure of the organ trafficker and refers more broadly to a foreign figure who draws and exploits the resources of the land, with the complicity of the authorities (Ansión, 1989; Mignon, 2009; Santos-Granero & Barclay, 2011).

Even if this accusation was obviously false, identification of project staff as thieves or exploiters usually occurs because the individuals identified are not native to the region. They do not speak Quechua, are mostly graduates and come from higher social classes, which accentuates the social distance from the beneficiaries who feel that the resources provided by these development policies are not ultimately intended for them, but for the non-native. This representation was strong in the early 2000s, when the NGO Care International was implementing alternative development programs. Laura Torres, then district representative of the Federation of Agriculture, defended the withdrawal of the NGO, particularly because of the inequalities and frustrations that the programs generated:

> The engineers were just coming to... how can I tell you this? They came to ride motorcycles, with the girls... they were riding with their lovers! That was their big life. But the farmer, how was he?! They lived their best life on the backs of the farmers! They bought themselves cars, motorcycles, they bought a lot of things!

More than fifteen years later, the programs have come and gone, but for Laura Torres, the result remains similar, and despite the efforts of the agricultural federation:

> We have [since] been able to have this special project [the PROVRAEM]. It was a special request for VRAE, but it is not respected. They do not respect it... They just send outside people who do what they want. It is there, the terrible pain of the farmer.

The development policies crystallize a certain tension concerning territorial resources and are thus sometimes interpreted as a pretext for the enrichment of foreigners of the Valley. Although nowadays many inhabitants accept reconversion programs to change their coca for coffee, pineapple or cocoa cultivation, the development policies are also assimilated to a manna from which foreign employees can benefit. This is why management fees and salaries, sometimes judged prohibitive considering the living standards in the Valley, are constantly blamed by farmers. Although not usually considered in development projects, the social distance between implementers and beneficiaries is then crucial in the construction of the representations of these policies.

Farmers facing the feeling of "failure" of project-based development

In the VRAEM, although development programs were implemented from the mid-1990s, these policies operated through time-bound projects, with changing actors. In addition to the constant inability to establish public policies in a sustainable manner (Holmes et al., 2018), this project-based approach also confuses farmers. In his interviews carried out for a study of the PROVRAEM program, Pariona Flores (2018, p. 115) notes precisely these misunderstandings experienced by a VRAEM coca farmer involved in the program:

> A series of tests have been carried out in the VRAE. First, what has been done? Alternative development with USAID[6] financing [...]. They said we are going to enter with Alternative Development. They planned to work with associations and it didn't work. Then with cooperatives, it didn't work either. Now with whom? With AMUVRAE,[7] but the people still did not accept it. They worked for about two years, then they said "No, we are going to intervene through operators" and Chemonics, Winrock, Cedro[8], and others came in. But still, they did not solve the problem. "Now let's work with MINAGRI[9], directly with farmers". They are in that test now. I don't know how long this will work. But this is what has happened in the VRAE, test after test but it has never worked.[10]

Transformations in development norms at the international and national levels do affect implementation at the local level. However, the reasons for these abrupt changes are sometimes difficult to understand for project beneficiaries. By constantly renewing development policies with new approaches, a social and political construction of the failure of previously implemented projects occurs (Mosse, 2004). This representation of failure is partly incorporated by farmers when they claim that previous programs "never worked". However, despite the reluctance and mistrust that accompany these projects, they are still perceived as a policy of the lesser evil compared to the increased militarization of the region or the implementation of forced eradications in the Valley. This time-limited project approach contributes to the incorporation of a sense of "failure" of these programs among farmers. Thus, it increases the fear of a more brutal threat to coca if coercive measures were reinforced in the region.

In regions such as the VRAEM, development policies – because of their unclear intentions and objectives – raise fears, mistrust, and more or less open resistance among farmers. These fears are linked to the potential dispossession that these development policies would entail. First of all, they concern about the loss of coca, a cash crop strongly embedded in social practices and a collective memory linked to post-conflict reconstruction. These fears also concern the development policies themselves. From their experiences, farmers rarely consider themselves to be the primary beneficiaries of projects. Mistrust is therefore directed towards more directly visible people, both foreign to the Valley and socially more fortunate than the farmers. Finally, the project-based

development process, which constantly renews approaches and actors, maintains the idea of the failure of the programs previously carried out, and self-reinforces these fears of dispossession among the farmers.

Bypassing social organizations and deterioration of political representation

Nowadays, development policies claim to integrate the inclusion and participation of beneficiaries in the implementation of programs. However, the case of PROVRAEM – implemented in a region with a long history of collective action – shows that the development manna contributes to ignoring the local social organizations and their modes of operation based on principles of collective action (see figure 1). Firstly, the ways in which development policies are channelled tend to bypass VRAEM local and regional organizations. Secondly, the administration and promotion of development resources in the VRAEM often flow through individual intermediaries and brokers. This modality, therefore, relies on individuals and undermines strong collective and organizational functioning. It also fuels competition and rivalry between leaders within social organizations. Finally, these disputes and uses of development policies by the leaders of the organizations in a less transparent manner increase a feeling of mistrust of the political representation system among farmers.

Box 1. An active social fabric at the VRAEM

In the VRAEM, there is a myriad of rural micro-organizations with complementary roles. Together, they perform various social functions inherited from the 1969 agrarian reform and the armed conflict. These organizations operate at three levels: the village (or community), the district and the region. In the villages, these functions are linked to the proper guarantee of the rules of living together (community), security (self-defence committee), or the distribution of various public resources (mothers' club, community). Inside these organizations, the collective functioning of the assembly and the logic of living together generally prevail over individualistic behaviours. At the VRAEM regional scale, the self-defence committees which were strongly established during the armed conflict, have lost political weight since the end of the 1990s in favour of the VRAEM Agricultural Federation (Durand Guevara, 2005). This federation defends the interests of coca growers and is also the main intermediary with the Peruvian State.
Names of the main statutes and functions of the VRAEM social organizations
Village - Community (Community President, Lieutenant Governor, Municipal Officer) - Self-defence committee (President, civilian commander) - Mother's Club (President)
District - District self-defence committee - District Mothers' Club - District Agricultural Producers Committee
Region - Self-defence committee of the VRAE (CADVRAE) - Federation of Mothers' Clubs of the VRAE (FECMAVRAE) - Federation of Agricultural Producers of the VRAE (FEPAVRAE)

Bypassing the existing social organizations in the implementation

Despite a very active social fabric in the VRAEM region (see Figure 1), existing organizations are often bypassed by development programs. As a result, farmers' demands are poorly integrated into the implementation of these policies. Since the 1990s, aid donors and implementers have sought to promote "civil society" or "political pluralism" through the promotion of "good governance" to achieve political and economic development in targeted regions. However, these aspirations fail to fully understand the social environment of the VRAEM. In this region, development programs have been channelled both through public agencies decentralized from the ministries – which corresponds to a state-building approach – and through the activation of an associative network, which corresponds to an approach that seeks to stimulate civil society". This second area of public policy implementation has generated a myriad of new associations in the VRAEM since 2012 (Vizcarra Castillo, 2018). However, this implementation has focused mainly on multiplying fictitious micro-organizations and their intermediaries. Under the guise of a participatory approach between development agencies and associations, it bypassed existing local organizations and ignored the socio-territorial configuration.

The VRAEM village communities are very active. Nevertheless, all these village organizations have been left out of the implementation of development policies. For example, during the implementation of the PROVRAEM agricultural conversion program in 2014, the farmers, committed to converting their coca plots in exchange for a subsidy of 650 Peruvian *soles* per month, had to form producer associations. These were to take charge of negotiating the business plan with the Ministry of Agriculture's agency, AGROIDEAS, for the supply of fertilizer and seeds among the associations. However, because of their lack of a solid anchoring and their relative disconnection from village issues, AGROIDEAS imposed business plans on the associations that were considered abusive by the farmers involved in the conversion program. According to Edward Gómez, representative of the presidents of the productive reconversion associations, "there were no negotiations with the associations. They just said here's the paper, sign it and here's your plan. [...] What happened was that they imposed their plan on everyone." Under the cover of a participatory approach, the implementation of the conversion program actually bypassed existing intermediation channels to create new ones, more or less fictitious, in order to impose seeds and fertilizers that were not always in line with the farmers' wishes.

Competiting brokers: Development manna contested on an individual basis

By turning away from the existing social fabric, these development programs have not only sidelined the organizations, but also their internal functioning and their strong popular legitimacy in decision-making. As a result, the admin-

istration of resources has not been decided and discussed by the farmers within their organizations. An entrepreneurial and personalized logic, based on networks of brokers constituted in fictitious associations, was favoured in the promotion and administration of policies. Gradually, the leaders of the VRAEM Federation of Agriculture have thus complied with the injunctions of the programs. They used their personal notoriety to act as brokers for the development programs. However, this logic crystallized strong competition among the leaders and fuelled interpersonal competition. The organizational functioning of the Agricultural Federation has been undermined by these rivalries.

A good illustration of these logics could be seen during the PROVRAEM agricultural conversion program. At its launch in 2014, PROVRAEM used "social promoters" to encourage farmers to engage in coca conversion. The idea was to hire prominent individuals rather than delegate this work to existing social organizations. The contracts of social promoters were well paid and this time intended for people from the Valley. Promotors had to be well-known by the farmers, so the Agricultural Federation leaders were quickly approached. This situation was quite ironic, as the social support of these leaders was rooted in the defence of the coca culture that this program proposed to replace. To become a social promoter for a coca defender leader can certainly be interpreted as a form of acceptance of an increasingly strong consensus around development policies in the region (León, 2016). However, it was mainly the result of individual decisions and not a collective position decided within the Federation. Above all, this modality has fuelled competition among managers to become development brokers (Bierschenk et al., 2000; Lewis & Mosse, 2006). In my interviews with the leaders, they regularly told me about lack of trust, suspicion, contempt, and even insults towards their Federation counterparts.

This competition weakens the internal functioning of the Federation, which remains the main intermediary with the state in a region marked by a fragile post-conflict context. These dynamics also have longer-term repercussions on public action: Driven by these competitions and disputes over development, the VRAEM Agricultural Federation leaders do not exchange information or address books during or after their terms of office.[11] These dynamics weaken organizational memory as well as the coherence of public action in the territory. With each new mandate, civil servants and politicians must then deal with a team of leaders who are not familiar with the main issues. By relying on personal figures rather than organizational logics, the distribution of development resources contributes to bypass existing local organizations, which built and maintained a fragile stability after the Peruvian armed conflict (Heuser, 2019).

A conflicting relation with political representation and the state

The dynamics of bypassing existing organizations have not been without consequences for the relationship between the political representation of farmers and inhabitants of the Valley. In recent years, the Federation of Agriculture has become a pool of potential development brokers. Through this organization, the leaders gain visibility. They meet with government officials, NGO members and sometimes even participate in transnational meetings in neighbouring countries (Bolivia, Colombia), or in the United States and Europe. These meetings often allow them to be trained in the functioning of calls for projects, which logically also leads them to drain new projects or promises for their region and to act as their sponsors (Busnel, 2019). Then, these functions of brokers become resources to be reconverted in politics: Many leaders of the Agricultural Federation have thus held positions as mayors, or even congressmen since 2006 (Durand Guevara, 2008; León, 2016). These career outcomes are not without tension, however. In fact, they are far from reflecting a very broad consensus, as candidates can be elected with a very low percentage of the vote.[12]

In recent years, a certain mistrust has developed among the inhabitants of the region towards their leaders, whom they suspect of using their position and the issue of the defence of coca to obtain individual remunerations or to compete for elective positions. In 2016, the public revelation of the amounts obtained by the secretary general and deputy secretary of the VRAEM Agricultural Federation for serving as "social promoters" of the PROVRAEM program caused an outcry among farmers. According to Alfonso, a farmer without a position of responsibility, "they have completely turned their backs on the organization to line their own pockets". For Laura Torres, ex-leader of the Agricultural Federation at the district level,

> He [the general secretary], as a leader, no longer has a name here [...] He should never have signed, he should not have been the one to sign. [...] He should never have signed, he should not have received anything as a state worker… And he took the money from PROVRAEM. That's really... No, that's a crime.

The publicization of the social promoters' contracts on the Peruvian state's transparency website and the collective commotion thus demonstrated that, in the eyes of many farmers, a social organization leader is not supposed to get remuneration from a state agency. This type of event feeds a "space of suspicion" so common to territories characterized by significant development aid and distribution logic that are unclear to the inhabitants (Olivier de Sardan 2014). It also raises the effects of political pluralism. This pluralism, often seen as a sign of democratic dynamism and a guarantee of the proper implementation of programs by development professionals, increases, in the Peruvian context, not only competition between intermediaries, but also suspicion of those

who manage to capture the development manna. As Olivier de Sardan (2014) points out, the norms for allocating aid are plural and based on differentiated logic depending on the aid donors, the intermediaries and also the beneficiaries. In this sense, the moral expectations of VRAEM farmers rarely match those of the Peruvian state. Finally, behind the targeted leaders, it is the system of representation that is undermined. And in a region where the Agricultural Federation of the VRAEM is the main democratic organization to ensure a role of intermediation with the Peruvian state, it is also affected by the accusations of corruption that punctuate local politics.

As evidenced by the recent Odebrecht corruption scandals and the removal of three Peruvian presidents in just three years (2017-2020), the issue of corruption is also salient at the national level (Dammert & Sarmiento, 2019). It must be interpreted as forms of straddling between logics of illegal accumulation and elective politics which have translated in recent years into an increased mistrust of political representation in Peru. However, in the VRAEM, mistrust of elected representatives also relates to the use of public resources which do not come from mega-projects linking elected representatives and large multinationals, but rather from the development manna. Development policies are thus sometimes at the heart of suspicions and accusations of corruption, particularly because they escape existing organizations and collective decision-making logics. And so, mistrust is no longer focused on people outside the territory, but on the representatives and leaders. Behind these dynamics, belief in the system of representation deteriorates. Paradoxically, these development policies reinforce everything that "good governance" practices are intent on fighting against.

Conclusion

This paper provides insights into the mistrust and tensions surrounding development policies. As in other coca, poppy, or marijuana-producing regions, farmers' mistrust in the VRAEM is fuelled by ambiguous and not necessarily avowed intentions towards illicit crops, which are always under the threat of eradication. The development policies themselves also raise strong suspicions about those who manage to profit from them. If the agents of the projects – the first visible individuals in the villages – are the main targets, mistrust has spread in recent years to the leaders of social organizations, and in particular to the representatives of the VRAEM Agricultural Federation. This mistrust is the result of development policies that bypass existing organizations, either by refusing to involve them in implementation, or by canvassing the leaders on an individual basis, and by ignoring the organizational logic at work in the VRAEM.

This paper opens up various avenues of research that could inspire social scientists and development professionals. First of all, by focusing on the representations, mistrust, and resistance of farmers, this paper reminds us of the im-

portance of considering and analyzing the feelings of beneficiaries in the implementation of development policies. This detour is all the richer because it provides us with keys to understanding the institutional mistrust increasingly evident. The analysis of development programs in VRAEM also shows that there is an analytical value in decompartmentalizing the study of alternative development programs beyond the issue of drug supply reduction. If the policies implemented in the regions of production are increasingly multisectoral and borrow approaches from development authorities, then they must be analyzed in the light of the sociology of public policy and development. Using the case of the VRAEM, this approach allows us to understand what makes the state and its public policies hold together in these regions. The legitimacy of the state's action is in fact based more on its capacity to rely on intermediary organizations and on its respect for their operating procedures than on its officials, its bureaucracy or its coercive use. Today, it is no longer a question of knowing *why* development policies should be implemented, but of knowing *how*. In this respect, scrutinizing the aspirations and modes of local government should be encouraged. Moreover, the mistrust and resistance that result from these discrepancies must be taken seriously, as they alert us to the effects that development policies have on political representation and democracy.

* * *

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Notes

1 See also reports from civil society organizations on this topic: Youngers and Walsh, 2010, Cruz Oliveira et al., 2020.

2 See ethnographic descriptions from Heuser (2017), Vizcarra Castillo (2018) or Busnel (2019).

3 Coca paste is produced by maceration in a pit where coca is mixed and pressed with several synthetic chemicals such as ether or kerosene. This product can be consumed as such or be refined again for transformation into cocaine hydrochloride.
4 Special program for the VRAEM.
5 The equivalent in 2017 of €185.
6 United States Agency for International Development.
7 Association of VRAE Municipalities.
8 Chemonics International is a privately funded US company specializing in international development. Winrock International is a US NGO specialising in international development. Finally, Cedro is a Peruvian NGO specialising in drug prevention.
9 Ministry of Agriculture.
10 In this quote, the chronology made of the actors involved is not totally accurate. This error actually reveals the plurality of actors involved in time and the confusion of memory that it engenders.
11 Each Agricultural Federation executive team is elected for two years.
12 With the exception of the 2006 elections, when candidates from the Federation of Agriculture won the municipal elections by a wide margin. Since then, there has been a significant deinstitutionalization of the party system in the VRAEM. Elected officials are elected with a small percentage of the vote. This dynamic is also evident in the rest of Peru (Levitsky, 2018).

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