

Revisiting the Birthplace of the Cannabis Social Club Model and the Role Played by Cannabis Social Club Federations

Journal of Drug Issues

1–17

© The Author(s) 2018

Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/0022042618815690

journals.sagepub.com/home/jod

Laurent Jansseune¹, Mafalda Pardal¹, Tom Decorte¹,
and Òscar Parés Franquero²

Abstract

Cannabis Social Clubs (CSCs) are a nonprofit model for the supply of cannabis originating in Spain. This article aims to provide an overview of current CSC practices in Barcelona, exploring the role played by CSC Federations in shaping them. This analysis draws on 32 semistructured interviews with CSC managers ($n = 15$) and with other stakeholders in Barcelona ($n = 17$). We build also on field observations at other CSCs based in Barcelona. We found a heterogeneity of CSC practices, some of which were not in line with the self-regulatory codes developed by the CSC Federations. In applying an earlier CSC typology, we identified also country-specific CSC features. While the CSC Federations have contributed to unifying the cannabis movement and made efforts to homogenize CSCs' practices, in the absence of (government) cannabis regulation, their efforts have to some extent been undermined.

Keywords

Cannabis Social Club, federation, cannabis, supply, Barcelona, qualitative research

Introduction

Cannabis Social Clubs (hereinafter CSCs or clubs) are typically registered nonprofit associations, which collectively organize the cultivation and distribution of cannabis among their adult members (Decorte et al., 2017; Pardal, 2016). The model emerged during the 1990s in Spain and has since been implemented by activists in other European countries (Decorte & Pardal, 2017). Although CSCs have been present in that country for over two decades, the CSC model has not been regulated by the Spanish legislature at the national level. The CSCs have nevertheless exploited the particularities of the domestic legal context to pursue their activities. Key to their claims has been the fact that possession of cannabis for personal consumption is not punishable under Spanish criminal law, as well as the doctrine of “shared consumption”—which equates “possession for shared consumption amongst a closed circle of drug consumers within the concept of non-criminal personal consumption” (Decorte et al., 2017; F. A. García & Manjón-Cabeza,

¹Universiteit Gent, Belgium

²International Center for Ethnobotanical Education, Research & Service, Barcelona, Spain

Corresponding Author:

Mafalda Pardal, Faculteit Rechtsgeleerdheid, Universiteit Gent, Universiteitstraat 4, 9000 Gent, Belgium.

Email: mafalda.pardal@ugent.be

2009; Manzanera et al., 2000; Marks, 2017, p. 10). In this article, we explore the case of CSCs in Barcelona, which given the historical roots and long-standing presence of the model in the region of Catalonia (Decorte et al., 2017), constitutes an interesting setting for analysis. The objective of this article is twofold. First, we seek to shed light onto how current CSCs in Barcelona are operating. Second, we focus on whether and how CSCs' affiliation with a CSC Federation has shaped their practices. In particular, this exploratory study aims to uncover the differences and similarities between federated and nonfederated CSCs and investigates whether Federated CSCs adhere in practice to their respective codes of conduct. To better contextualize the potential variance in terms of CSC practices, we refer to the CSC classification developed by Pardal (2018).

Key Milestones in the Emergence and Development of the Model in Spain

Several scholars situate the emergence of a cannabis activist movement in Spain in the early 1990s (Arana & Montañés, 2011; Barriuso, 2011; Calafat et al., 2000; Marín, 2008; Marín & Hinojosa, 2017). Accordingly, the passage of the "Law Corcuera" (Law 1/1992), which introduced administrative sanctions for the public consumption and possession of cannabis may have been a precipitating factor for the development of the movement as "the vast majority of users considered it deeply illegitimate" (Marín, 2008, p. 163, own translation). The establishment of the Ramon Santos Association for Cannabis Studies ("Asociación Ramón Santos de Estudios Sobre el Cannabis" [ARSEC]) in Barcelona was another important mark for the start of the movement. This association achieved an important breakthrough in 1993: the so-called "Catalan breach" (Parés & Bouso, 2015). At the time, the association enquired of the public prosecutor whether it would constitute a crime to cultivate and share cannabis for personal use. In response, the public prosecutor noted that if the cultivation was limited to small amounts, the activity would not constitute a criminal action (Arana & Montañés, 2011; Bewley-Taylor, Blickman, & Jelsma, 2014; Marín, 2008; Montañés, 2017). The association then set up the first cannabis cultivation which would have been distributed among the members of the association (Decorte et al., 2017). Although a few months later that cultivation was confiscated by Spanish law enforcement agents, in the following years several new associations were established following ARSEC's initiative (Barriuso, 2012c; Kilmer, Kruihof, Pardal, & Caulkins, 2013).

Another important milestone was the legal analysis by Muñoz and Soto (2000). This analysis explored in detail whether and how it would be possible, in the context of the applicable Spanish legislation, to create an association where members would be able to obtain cannabis for personal use (Muñoz & Soto, 2000).¹ Accordingly, Muñoz and Soto (2000) highlighted a number of detailed criteria such associations should meet to operate within that framework (e.g., CSCs should seek to reduce the harms associated with the consumption of cannabis, CSCs' premises should be closed to the general public, etc.). Some of the active associations at the time, which followed ARSEC's denomination as "associations for cannabis studies," seem to have adhered to the guidelines included in Muñoz and Soto's (2000) legal analysis, adopting also the denomination of CSCs. The first officially registered CSC of this new wave was the Barcelona's Cannabis Taster's Club ("Club de Catadores de Cannabis de Barcelona" [CCCB]), founded in 2001 (Barriuso, 2011). For the first time, these associations explicitly included in their official bylaws the goal of producing and using cannabis, as well as offering a private consumption space to their members (Marín, 2008).

As the movement evolved and the number of CSCs increased, in 2003, 21 CSCs came together forming a supraorganization that would represent them: the Federation of Cannabis Clubs ("Federación de Asociaciones Cannábicas" [FAC]; Barriuso, 2011; Martínez, 2015; Montañés, 2017).² The FAC's main stated goal is to gather CSCs, cannabis users, growers, researchers, and activists to share ideas, debate, and strive for a change in drug policy (FAC, 2016). Due to the growing popularity of the model and the increasing demand for information about how to create

a CSC, FAC developed its own guidelines on how a CSC should operate (FAC, 2010; Kilmer et al., 2013). Besides FAC and its local subdivisions (e.g., CatFAC in Catalonia, ARAFAC in Aragon, etc.), other CSC Federations have emerged in Spain, providing their own frameworks for CSC self-regulation (Belackova & Wilkins, 2018; Montañés, 2017). In Catalonia, there are currently two key CSC Federations, which have separate codes of conduct: CatFAC (a subdivision of FAC set up in 2011) and FEDCAC (established in 2012), each counting approximately 15 CSCs as members—a small segment of the CSC phenomenon, as discussed next.

The “CSC Boom” in Barcelona and the Emerging Diversity of Practices

Between 2011 and 2014, the number of CSCs in Spain, and in Barcelona more specifically, grew significantly. In 2014, the Catalan Health Department reported more than 400 registered CSCs in Catalonia and 185 in Barcelona alone (Casals & Marks, 2015; Estrada, 2016). Beyond these, it is unclear how many unregistered CSCs may be also active in the region/city. Alongside CSCs, the broader cannabis industry flourished as well, with an increasing presence of grow-shops (about 1000), cannabis magazines, cannabis law firms, and even cannabis consultancy companies (Arana & Montañés, 2011; Marín, 2008; Redacción GM, 2018).

During this period of expansion, some authors reported that, in part due to the lack of formal CSC regulation, a commercial version of the CSC model has emerged alongside the nonprofit and cooperative-based CSC model originally developed and promoted by the first CSC Federation FAC (Barriuso, 2012b, 2017; Parés & Bouso, 2015). These “Cannabis Commercial Clubs” often seek more clearly to maximize profits, may not produce the cannabis within the CSC, have a large(r) membership base (up to thousands of members), and rely on more hierarchical and less participative decision-making processes (Barriuso, 2012a; Parés & Bouso, 2015). Some of these CSCs have seemingly also relied on promoters to actively attract tourists.

Analytical Framework: A CSC Typology

While in a recent analysis of (six) Spanish CSC Federations’ codes of conduct, Belackova and Wilkins (2018) highlighted that several propositions included in those self-regulations (e.g., in relation to CSC registration, guidelines to cultivation, limited access to adults, etc.) are “in line with the aims of cannabis regulation” (p. 30), the authors recognized that the practices of individual CSCs may have, in some cases, deviated from those recommendations and that a variety of CSC models may coexist. Pardal (2018) further explored this emerging diversity of practices, drawing on empirical data from a study of CSCs in Belgium to identify nine dimensions where important operational differences emerged between CSCs. Our analysis builds on and contributes to this body of work, drawing on new insights from the birthplace of the CSC model.

The initial CSC typology included above (Figure 1), and to which we refer in our analysis, considers (a) CSCs’ function: the extent to which CSCs are actively supplying cannabis and/or engaging in activist action; (b) CSCs’ staffing, noting whether the clubs are primarily volunteer-run and/or rely on professional staff (e.g., health professionals, social workers, etc.); (c) CSCs’ business model, highlighting the difference between primarily nonprofit CSCs and the so-called “Cannabis Commercial Clubs”; (d) CSCs’ public profile, that is, the extent to which CSCs’ presence and action are known to the public (e.g., whether CSCs’ complete a formal and public registration, engage with the local media, organize public activities); (e) CSCs’ size, with reference to the number of registered members; (f) CSCs’ organizational structure (and differentiation), distinguishing single-unit CSCs from CSCs with a more complex structure of subdivisions or local branches; (g) CSCs’ access, alluding to whether CSCs admit recreational and medical cannabis users, or if access is restricted, for instance, to individuals using cannabis for medical reasons only; (h) how CSCs organize the supply chain: if the cannabis is produced and distributed

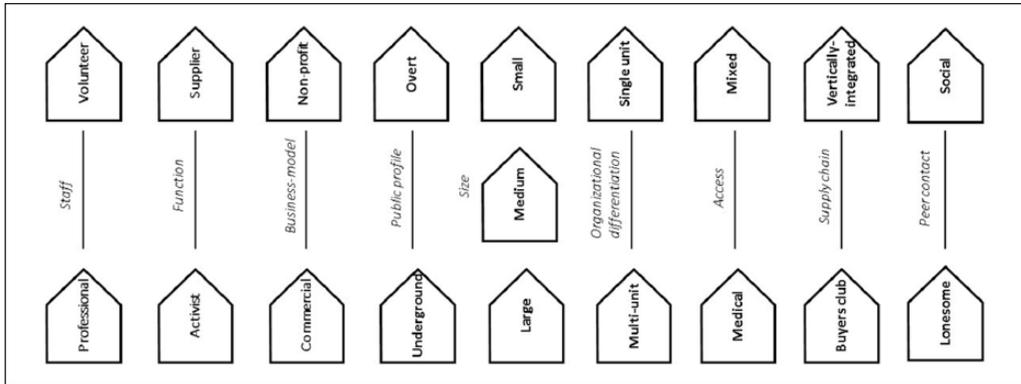


Figure 1. The CSC typology proposed by Pardal (2018).

Source: Pardal (2018).

Note. In practice, CSCs may shift between the two ends of each dimension and may also align with different “CSC types” as several dimensions may apply to the functioning of particular Clubs (e.g., one CSC might become more or less activist-oriented, while at the same time being a mixed and overt CSC). CSC = Cannabis Social Clubs.

internally by the CSC or if, akin to buyers’ clubs, the CSCs purchase the cannabis from external sources (e.g., illicit market); (i) the degree to which CSCs stimulate peer contact, distinguishing between CSCs operating primarily as selling points (“lonesome CSC”) and those truly social CSCs which organize a range of activities for members and promote social interaction between them (Pardal, 2018).

Method

The analysis presented here draws primarily on qualitative data collected in Barcelona by one of the authors, during the period between February and September 2017. To gather firsthand insights into the functioning of CSCs in Barcelona, 32 semistructured interviews were conducted among two groups of individuals knowledgeable about that model. First, we interviewed 17 stakeholders who had ongoing collaboration with or knowledge of CSCs in Barcelona. These stakeholders were able to provide us with otherwise hard-to-reach information about the current context and legal situation of CSCs in Barcelona. They were also important gatekeepers for further access to the field, namely aiding in the subsequent contacts with CSC managers. The group of stakeholders interviewed included health professionals, researchers, lawyers, directors of CSC Federations, government employees, cannabis consultants, and activists. These were identified through our own network of contacts, preliminary exploratory online searches and further snowballing. The interviews with key stakeholders focused on their relationship with CSCs and other actors, and their views on the presence and functioning of CSCs.

In a second phase, 15 managers of 16 different CSCs³ based in and near the center of Barcelona were interviewed (Figure 2). Among these CSCs, six were members of the Federation CatFAC, four were members of FEDCAC, and six were nonfederated clubs (Table 1). The interviews were conducted on the basis of an interview schedule previously developed for a study of CSCs in Belgium (Pardal, 2018), which was adapted for the purposes of this analysis, and translated into Spanish. For the identification and recruitment of CSCs in Barcelona, we relied primarily on information collected at the time of the interviews with stakeholders and additional snowballing. Furthermore, we consulted “Weedmaps,” a website including contact details of cannabis dispensaries, CSCs, and coffee shops worldwide (Weedmaps, 2016). Building on our searches through that platform, we were able to compose a list of 100 email addresses of CSCs in Barcelona, which

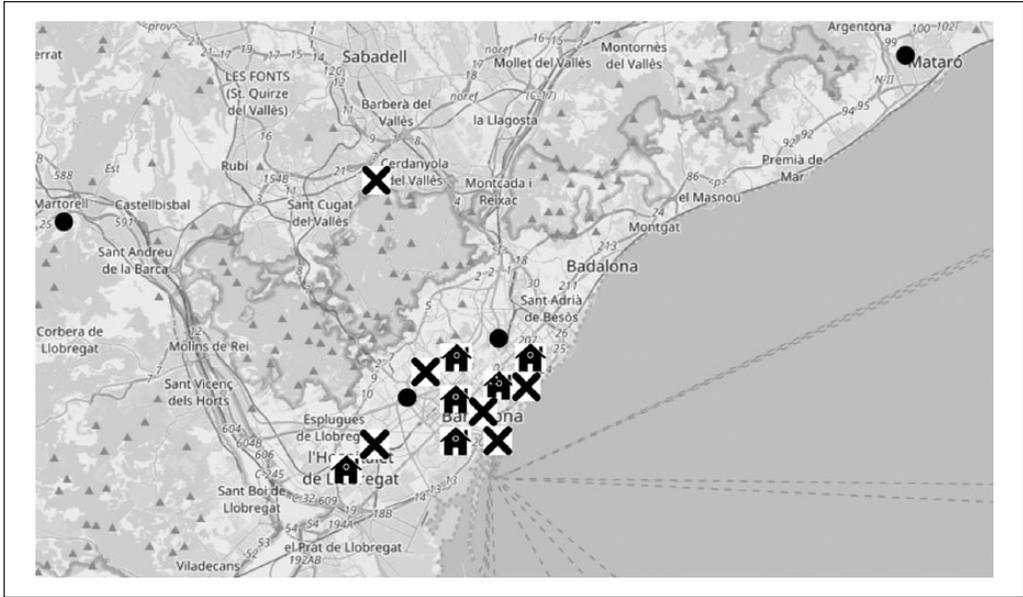


Figure 2. Geographical overview of CSCs participating in the study.

Source. Adapted from Open Street Map (2018).

Note. Legend: X: participating CSCs affiliated with the CatFAC Federation; ●: participating CSCs affiliated with the Federació d'Associacions Cannábiques Autoregulades de Catalunya (FEDCAC) Federation; 🏠: participating CSCs nonaffiliated with a CSC Federation. CSC = Cannabis Social Clubs; CatFAC = CatFederación de Asociaciones Cannábicas.

we contacted. Only two of these responded to our request and agreed to take part in an interview. The interviewees were briefed about the goals of the study, and an informed consent form was used. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in Spanish or English, and the interviewees did not receive any incentive for participation. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed as close to verbatim as possible. The data were thematically analyzed using NVivo11 software package.

In addition, all authors conducted field observations in Barcelona between October 2016 and September 2017, including visits to several CSCs. During these visits, we were able to observe the space of different CSCs and held informal conversations with staff of the associations as well as members, gathering additional insights. Finally, other documentary sources (e.g., legal documents, gray literature with information about CSCs) were also mobilized for the analysis presented here. For instance, we contacted the City Council of Barcelona and received the official list from the Registry of Associations with the number of registered CSCs operating in the city ($n = 159$, circa June 2016).

Results

In this section, we present the key features of CSCs in Barcelona with reference to the CSC classification proposed by Pardal (2018)—Figure 1.

Joining a CSC Federation

Two CSC Federations currently represent CSCs in Catalonia: CatFAC and FEDCAC. CSCs interested in joining these supraorganizations are expected to contribute with a membership fee and to adhere to their respective codes of conduct (CatFederación de Asociaciones Cannábicas

Table 1. Overview of the CSC Sample.

	Federated CSCs		Nonfederated CSCs
	CatFAC-affiliated	FEDCAC-affiliated	
Number of participating CSCs	6	4	6
Size of participating CSCs: Number of active members	98-600	190-700	50-1,500
Size of participating CSCs: Number of nonactive members	150-5,000	250-4,000	150-5,000

Note. The distinction between active and nonactive CSC members was discussed by the CSC managers we interviewed and relates to the extent members have recently visited their respective CSC (typically, in the past 2 months). If the members remained “nonactive” for a whole year, they were usually removed from the list of members. We return to this issue in the Results section. CSC = Cannabis Social Clubs; CatFAC = CatFederación de Asociaciones Cannábicas.

[CatFAC], 2015; FEDCAC, 2015). The interviews with the spokespersons of both Federations revealed differences in the types of membership. FEDCAC offers only one type of membership, requiring their members to adhere to the Federation’s code of conduct, and contribute with a monthly fee of 50 to 200 EUR (proportional to the size of the CSC). In contrast, CatFAC offers three types of membership: (a) full membership with voting rights at the Federation’s General Assemblies for CSCs meeting all the recommendations of that Federation’s code of conduct, corresponding to a monthly fee of 200 EUR; (b) sympathizers’ membership for CSCs with partial adherence to the Federation’s code of conduct, without voting rights but able to join the discussions at General Assembly meetings, amounting to a monthly fee of 100 EUR; and (c) “friends of CatFAC,” without voting rights and a cheaper membership fee (50 EUR/month), which only receive news and other information about the work of the Federation.

In the past, the ideology and codes of conduct of each of these Federations were somewhat discrepant, with CatFAC taking a more activist stance (e.g., by promoting a dialogue with politicians and media, advocating transparent financial management and the organization of regular assembly meetings), and emphasizing the cooperative aspects of the CSC model (CatFAC, 2015). However, nowadays both Federations have more closely aligned their codes of conduct (and are developing a shared code of conduct). They have engaged in collaborative action by forming, for instance, an activist and political platform called “We are what we grow” (“*Som el que cultivem*”). The aim of the platform is to further advocate and lobby for a regulatory framework for the CSC model in Barcelona and Catalonia (FAC, 2017).

According to their codes of conduct, federated clubs (both at CatFAC and FEDCAC) should formally register as associations at the National Registry of Associations (NRA). The NRA is the agency responsible for the registration and monitoring of all nonprofit associations in Spain. When a new association seeks registration, the NRA reviews the association’s founding bylaws and may consult the Prosecutor’s Office if concerned about any potentially criminal objectives of the association. Some requirements in terms of access to the clubs are also foreseen in those self-regulated codes: for example, to avoid the promotion of “cannabis tourism,” the federated clubs should apply a 15-day waiting period between membership application and access to a CSC by new members (CatFAC, 2015; FEDCAC, 2015). Federated clubs are also expected to adhere to the cultivation and distribution protocols developed by their respective Federations. For instance, FEDCAC’s code of conduct recommends that the cannabis should be stored in a closed room with a ventilation system, near or at the grow site, and that the cannabis should be transported only by authorized staff and with some formal documentation produced by the CSC (including the date of packaging and transport, the amount of cannabis, the destination and route; FEDCAC,

2015). In addition, according to the Federations' guidelines, the federated clubs are expected to organize at least two harm reduction events per year (such as lectures or workshops about the use of cannabis; Catalan Health Department, 2015). The Federations recommend also the observation of the resolution issued by the Catalan Health Department, which indicates for instance that the use of alcohol or other substances (beyond cannabis) on CSCs' premises should be forbidden (Catalan Health Department, 2015).

There was no consensus among our sample of CSC managers about the added-value of joining a CSC Federation. Some referred to differences in the approach and guidelines proposed by the two Federations to explain their choice:

At that moment, CatFACs' model was too purist, and we didn't identify ourselves with their model. For this reason, we joined FEDCAC. (M8)

Others noted that becoming federated would result in increased media visibility, which some perceived negatively as they preferred to keep a low(er)-profile, as illustrated in the following quotation:

One of the CatFAC associations told the media where their cultivations were, so the police intervened several times. We would rather stay on the side line to avoid those things. (M6)

Furthermore, other interviewees considered the membership fee to be too expensive (especially for smaller clubs).

On the contrary, clubs explained their decision to join a Federation in light of the social and legal support they receive from those organizations:

The nicest thing about being federated is that you have a group of people around you, sharing the same interests, so you can share your problems with them. (M1)

Finally, some of the interviewees thought that by joining a federation they would support the broader activist movement and be better placed to strive for the introduction of regulation for the model.

Function: Activist Versus Supplier CSCs

The core activity of CSCs in our sample is the supply of cannabis among their members. Only one of the CSCs (CatFAC-affiliated) was not engaging in the supply of cannabis, following a judicial action. Nevertheless, the managers of that CSC continue to make efforts to contact politicians and have shifted their focus to exclusively develop activist action. Among the FEDCAC-affiliated CSCs in our sample, two (out of four) reported having contacts with the media, with politicians and researchers. The nonfederated CSCs were only minimally involved in activism. The process leading to the approval of the "Green Rose" bill ("*La Rosa Verda*") is illustrative. The "Green Rose" was a popular legislative initiative promoted by the Catalan cannabis activists and which collected over 56,000 signatures in support of cannabis clubs and legal protections for cannabis users in general. The law was approved in July 2017 (Ley 13/2017) but suspended by the Spanish Constitutional Court some months later. This initiative was the first law in Europe regulating the full chain of cannabis supply for therapeutic and recreational use (Sánchez & Collins, 2018). While the CSC Federations and some of the affiliated CSCs developed a number of initiatives to raise support for the bill, the nonfederated CSCs in our sample indicated having signed the campaign in support of the bill, but did not publicly engage in the lobbying efforts nor in the contacts with other stakeholders.

Staff: Professional Versus Volunteer-Run CSCs

The CSCs in our sample typically rely on two to eight staff members, depending on the size of the club. Besides cannabis distribution, CSC staff are responsible for cleaning, serving snacks and drinks, organizing events and activities, and informing members about the products available. In general, the interviewees had difficulties in quantifying their salary and that of their staff. Only two managers of CatFAC-affiliated clubs estimated earning between 1,000 and 1,500 EUR per month. In an informal conversation, one of the nonfederated staff members indicated receiving between 7 and 10 EUR/hr. In this regard, there were no clear differences between federated and nonfederated clubs. In addition, the majority of CSCs in our sample have in-house growers who cultivate cannabis for the CSC. Typically, these growers only charge the clubs for the production costs, but in a few cases they receive a monthly wage.

All federated CSCs in our sample had contacts with health professionals, who provided talks, lectures, and consultations. The two Federations (CatFAC and FEDCAC), as well as two nonfederated CSCs, reported working with the Kalapa Clinic and Medcan. These two institutions offer medical advice and alternative cannabinoid-based therapies (Kalapa Clinic, 2017; Medcan, 2017). Furthermore, one CatFAC-affiliated club reported having an in-house physician (who received a monthly salary from that CSC).

In addition to the in-house staff, all CSCs we interviewed—federated or not—told us they had some form of contact with lawyers or other “cannabis consultants.” Three of the interviewed managers reported that specialized companies and law firms actually “sell” ready-made CSCs (i.e., they have already secured a location fulfilling the City Council’s requirements, and have to some extent equipped the space with ventilators, etc., so that a potential new CSC can start operating). Nevertheless, lawyers and consultants are not necessarily trusted by or very popular among CSC managers. One of the managers noted that

You consult with lawyers when you really need them, but most of them aren’t really “cool.” I think it’s better to stay away from them, unless the police catches you. (M8)

Some of the CSC managers we interviewed felt, to some extent, that the lawyers tried to “monopolize” the CSCs and some of them advised against registration or enrolment with a CSC Federation, as the following quotation illustrates:

A lot of lawyers recommend their clients [CSCs] to stay away from federations. The lawyers want a lot of money and they don’t want their clients to spend money on other organisations. (M7)

Finally, quality control of the cannabis products supplied is another important aspect of the functioning of CSCs—but an area in which CSCs rely on external expertise as well. Both federations recommend their affiliated CSCs to have their products analyzed and controlled by a professional organization for potency, quality, and purity (CatFAC, 2015). To that end, CatFAC cooperates with Energy Control, the CANNA Foundation (Fundación CANNA, 2016) and the Cannabis Center for Natural Therapies (“Centro Cannábico de Terapias Naturales”), which provide drug testing services. In the past, FEDCAC also cooperated with the CANNA Foundation, but during the course of data collection that Federation was working with Alpha-Cat (2017) (an organization which tests and sells also cannabinoid analysis kits). Due to the costs associated with such testing procedures, slow test results, and the lack of clear legislative framework for this type of testing, both federated and nonfederated CSC managers admitted that they do not regularly rely on laboratorial analysis. The managers noted that they implement informal testing and tastings on a regular basis, to review the quality and potency of their products. For instance, in 2014, the CANNA Foundation conducted laboratorial analyses of 55 samples of cannabis from 31 CSCs in

Catalonia. The results were somewhat mixed as five samples had “high bacterial levels” and 13 samples had “significant fungal levels,” but 15 others had “an excellent quality profile.” An analysis of CANNA’s report thus concluded that

even though just a minority of the 55 samples would not be advisable for human consumption, due to the high levels of bacterial and/or fungal diversity, this should be enough to alert clubs and associations to the fact that they could be selling samples not suitable for their members. (Bouso, 2014)

Business Model: Commercial Versus Nonprofit CSCs

All the interviewed CSCs apply an annual membership fee, ranging from 10 to 25 EUR. However, based on our observations at nonfederated clubs, in the more touristic areas of the city, we found that some CSCs allowed a weekly membership fee of 5 or 10 EUR. Some of them also used promoters to distribute flyers about the CSCs, which could be used as a voucher to waive or reduce the membership fee.

All nonfederated CSCs in our sample did not apply a waiting period for new members, which in practice meant that new members were able to immediately acquire cannabis from those CSCs. Based on our observations, such CSCs did not impose any limitation as to the amount a member could obtain per transaction, and quantity discounts were also advertised. One of our interviewees referred to the practices of these CSCs as follows:

These clubs are open to tourists, with low quality cannabis and high prices. They are like coffee shops. You buy it, you smoke it, and you leave (S12).

All managers we interviewed stated that the value charged for their products was dependent on the incurred production costs. The Federated clubs in our sample tended to offer cheaper products than the nonfederated clubs. While the price for one gram of cannabis in a federated CSC varies between 3 and 10 EUR, nonfederated clubs reported asking between 6 and 20 EUR/gram. Furthermore, nonfederated clubs, but also a few CSCs members of FEDCAC, tended to offer a wider variety of derivatives and extractions, such as oil, cream, wax, cannabidiol-based products, and tinctures. These products often were more expensive and could cost up to 80 EUR/gram.

The managers of both federated and nonfederated clubs stated that any CSC profits would be reinvested into the association, for instance, in redecorating and improving the facilities of the clubs (e.g., purchasing TVs, PlayStations, etc.), investing in cultivation materials or in the organization of activities for the members.

Public Profile: Overt Versus Underground CSCs

The procedure to formally start and register a CSC in Barcelona is similar to the practices reported elsewhere in relation to other Spanish CSCs (Barriuso, 2011; Decorte et al., 2017). In sum, a board of directors or managers including three members (a president, treasurer, and secretary) is required. The board drafts the bylaws of the association, often with the assistance of a lawyer or consultant. The bylaws are then submitted to the National Register of Associations, which decides on its approval. According to most interviewees, the approval process lasts about 2 months. All federated clubs in our sample had completed registration. There was only one case of a nonfederated and nonregistered CSC.

Four managers of federated CSCs (three from CatFAC and one from FEDCAC) offered to share details of their financial situation to the research team, in stark contrast with the nonfederated CSC managers, who did not wish to discuss these matters. The latter also had less contact

with the domestic media (only two nonfederated clubs stated that they have been interviewed by journalists, blogs, and/or other media). The nonfederated clubs preferred to keep a more underground profile and did not engage in other activist activities either.

Size: Small to Large CSCs

In term of the size of the CSCs in our sample (based on the number of members their managers reported), we found some variation. First of all, the interviewees reported a difference between active members, which they define as those members who have recently visited their club, and nonactive members, that is, members who have not approached their club during the last 2 months. As presented in Table 1, the general number of nonactive members is very high. As most managers explained, only about one fourth to one third of all members were still active and frequently engaged with their CSC. One of the interviewees offered the following remark with regard to members' involvement in the CSC:

There aren't many members that join the Assemblies. At our last one we only had 40 members. 40 out of 4000, that's very little (M8).

Furthermore, the number of active members of nonfederated clubs is much higher than CatFAC and FEDCAC-affiliated clubs.

Organizational Differentiation: Single Unit Versus Multiple-Unit CSCs

In our sample, multiple-unit CSCs were not identified, but one of our interviewees mentioned managing two CSCs. Although both Federations represent their (CSC) members, federated CSCs are still managed independently. One of the stakeholders we interviewed also mentioned that (domestic and foreign) commercial outlets involved in the sale of cannabis seeds and other cannabis paraphernalia have collaborated with or established several CSCs in Barcelona.

Access: Medical Versus Mixed CSCs

Our interviewees referred to similar basic membership requirements for candidate members. For instance, new members have to be introduced by a current member (a so-called "endorser" or "avalador") and are asked to confirm that they are already regular cannabis users (and to estimate their typical consumption pattern). The candidate members are also asked to show their national identification document and must be at least 18 years old (and in some cases 21 years old) to be admitted.

Some differences emerged in terms of the admission process at federated and nonfederated CSCs though. For instance, six nonfederated CSCs told us of not applying a 15-day waiting period for new members, and in three of the nonfederated Clubs in our sample new members could join without being introduced by an extant member. In contrast, two managers of CatFAC-affiliated clubs noted that new members using cannabis for medical reasons are asked to have a chat with the physician consulting at the CSC upon admission. In one of the FEDCAC-affiliated CSCs, new members are introduced in person at the monthly assembly meeting and explain why they would like to join the association.

Although primarily focused on serving recreational cannabis users, all the CSCs in our sample (both federated and nonfederated) counted among their members those using cannabis for medical reasons. All the federated and two of the nonfederated CSCs offer specific services to these members, such as the possibility to contact a therapist, discounts on their products, and, in some

cases, an exemption from paying the membership fee. Both nonfederated and federated clubs offered discounts of at least 10% to medical user members of the club. For instance, one of the FEDCAC-affiliated CSC managers told us that

My products are ecologic and cheap. I give cannabis for free to the therapeutic users, like a gift. I'm not going to charge them if I can help them. They can also use the vaporizer for free. (M5)

Furthermore, one of the CatFAC-clubs offered medical consultations by a professional practitioner at the facilities of the club. Before benefiting from these discounts and services, these members have to inform the club about their pathology. They can do this by consulting health professionals and/or showing an official document from doctors or medical and research institutions.

Supply Chain: Buyers' Club Versus Vertically Integrated CSCs

All CSCs in our sample rely on staff and/or volunteers to organize the cultivation, storage, and transport of the cannabis. The majority of the CSCs we interviewed have a grower, who is a member of the association, cultivating cannabis for the association. To meet the preferences of CSC members, the majority of the interviewed CSCs (particularly those with a larger number of members) reported producing various cannabis strains. Although 12 of the CSCs in our sample primarily cultivate cannabis indoors, cannabis grown outdoors is also provided (typically after the summer months, and as long as there is stock). According to the managers, outdoor cultivation is more vulnerable to theft and police controls. The size of the cultivations varied between small(er) cultivations, between 8 to 30 plants, and larger grow sites including up to 500 plants.

At the same time, both based on our field observations as well as on the interview data, we found that both federated and nonfederated clubs often buy a part of the cannabis they supply their members on the illicit market. The following quotation is illustrative:

Most of the hash is bought in Morocco, because for each kilogram of leaves we can only produce 50grams of hash. That's not a lot, so we buy it from someone who produces a good product. These guys also cultivate for other associations. (M4)

During fieldwork at two nonfederated CSCs we were also able to observe interactions between growers and producers of other cannabis products who were supplying the CSCs. CSCs explain this practice based on several reasons: (a) it is at times cheaper to purchase in bulk from the illicit market than it is to produce in-house; (b) it can be less risky, in the sense that the club does not depend only on the result of their own harvest; (c) based on the "shared consumption doctrine" purchasing from the illicit market with the goal of sharing among a closed group of users, without the intent to generate profit, might be legally interpreted in similar terms to the sharing of one's own produce (under certain conditions, as outlined in previous Supreme Court rulings). Disagreement among CSC representatives remained as to whether to cultivate in-house or to purchase from external sources.

Peer Contact: Lonesome Versus Social CSCs

One of the potential advantages of CSCs from the perspective of empowering consumer agency is the participation of the members in the decision-making process of the associations (Belackova & Wilkins, 2018). Every registered CSC is required by law (like any other nonprofit association) to organize at least one General Assembly per year. The federated (and smaller clubs) often try to

get their members together more frequently on a quarterly or monthly basis. A manager of one of these CSCs commented that

We are a social club where the members participate in meetings. Each month we organise an assembly, where the members can ask and propose anything they want. (M1)

The managers were also asked about how many members attended these gatherings. Their estimates suggest that CatFAC-affiliated CSCs tended to have more member attendance at General Assembly meetings. In any case, attendance of the meetings was relatively small, as one of the managers noted:

Only a small segment of the members show up for the assemblies. In the last assembly we only had 30 members attending, of which 15 were actually staff members. From a total amount of 4000 members, that's not a lot. (M9)

More generally, some managers thought that often CSC members did not necessarily seek to engage in the decision-making or broader activities of the organizations, as the following quotation illustrates:

People enter the club and they have the feeling that they are just clients. Most of them obtain the cannabis and return home. (M13)

Nevertheless, the organization of social activities for members is somewhat common among CSCs in Barcelona. In our sample, 12 managers stated that they organized at least one event or activity per month. These activities include music and theater performances, art expositions, tattoo-workshops, speeches and lectures, cannabis extraction-workshops, movie or football nights, and poker-nights. In one of the nonfederated clubs, the members had also the possibility to practice alternative therapies on each other. One of the managers of a CSC associated with FEDCAC noted:

We always expose art and have performances from local artists to promote the urban and local scene and to let our members get in contact with each other. (M9)

Only one CSC in our sample (a FEDCAC-affiliated club) did not have a social space where members could use cannabis. Among the nonfederated clubs included in our analysis, three could also be visited at night and members could buy and bring alcoholic beverages.

According to the Health Department of Catalonia and the code of conduct of the CSC Federations, the CSCs should also engage in harm reduction activities (at least two activities per year). One of the initiatives that was frequently mentioned during the interviews related to “organising speeches and lectures regarding responsible drug use.” Five out of six CatFAC-affiliated CSC managers and two out of four FEDCAC-affiliated CSC managers reported fulfilling these requirements in practice. Only one nonfederated club mentioned organizing such activities. To support these activities, both federations collaborate with the Kalapa Clinic and with the Spanish Observatory for Medical Cannabis (Observatorio Español de Cannabis Medicinal, 2015). FEDCAC also reported collaborating with several other organizations, including the harm-reduction nonprofit Energy Control, Medcan, the International Center for Ethnobotanical Education Research & Service (ICEERS), and the treatment and prevention Community and Health Foundation (“Fundació Salut i Comunitat”; Energy Control, 2017; Fundacion Salud y Comunidad, 2017; ICEERS, 2017). In most of the federated clubs participating in the study, information-sheets, magazines, and books about responsible drug use were displayed in the CSCs.

Discussion and Conclusions

The data presented here shows that in the birthplace of the model a variety of CSC models have emerged, in line with the findings of previous research into Spanish and Belgian CSCs (Decorte et al., 2017; Pardal, 2018; Parés & Bouso, 2015). Some CSCs reported maintaining a low(er) profile, limiting the public visibility of their activities by not pursuing formal registration, reducing or refraining from media contact, avoiding enrolment with CSC Federations or limiting the type of activities organized. At the same time, other CSCs were rather overt in relation to their practices and have sought to enhance the public visibility of the model, participating in the broader repertoire of action of the cannabis movement with the support of their CSC Federations (Marín, 2008). We have also some evidence that a more commercial variant of the model, which some authors have alluded to (Barriuso, 2012b, 2012c; Bewley-Taylor et al., 2014; Decorte et al., 2017; Parés & Bouso, 2015), has indeed been developing in Barcelona as well—primarily among nonfederated CSCs. This deviation from the original nonprofit ethos characteristic of the CSC model should not be understated as it could potentially blur the distance between this and other commercial models (such as U.S. recreational dispensaries or Dutch coffee shops).

The application of the CSC typology developed by Pardal (2018) allowed us to keep stock of this CSC heterogeneity, but also of areas where common practices emerged. In general, two “types” of CSCs identified by that author in relation to the Belgian CSC context were not present among our CSC sample in Barcelona. First, we found no cases of CSCs with a complex system of multiunits. In Barcelona, the CSCs tended to have a larger membership base (in comparison to Belgian clubs) but did not develop subdivisions or local branches, maintaining a central unit only (Decorte et al., 2017; Pardal, 2018). Nevertheless, some of the interviewees discussed cases of “ownership” or close management of CSCs by other (for-profit) cannabis enterprises. Second, while in Belgium the establishment of a “medical” CSC or a separate subdivision exclusive for members of the CSC using cannabis for medical reasons has been reported (Pardal, 2018; Pardal & Bawin, 2018), we could not find any such type of club in our study sample. Both federated and nonfederated CSCs, but most notably the federated CSCs we interviewed, tended to make specific arrangements to better accommodate their medical members, but admitted both recreational and medical users. At the same time, the CSCs in our sample seemed to rely more on professional, paid staff than what has been reported in relation to the Belgian clubs (which are, with a few exceptions, typically volunteer-run). These differences point to country-specific developments of the model. Although CSC activists are aware of and some may engage with their counterparts abroad, some degree of experimentation seems to still be taking place and some CSC practices may not have been (or not yet) replicated in other contexts.

What is more, our data suggest that federated CSC practices tend to be in line with the self-regulatory codes or guidelines developed by the clubs or by their CSC Federations. Nevertheless, in some areas that was not the case. For instance, although the CSC Federations support and recommend that the cultivation of cannabis takes place collectively and is undertaken by a number of members of the CSC, the federated clubs in our sample discussed often purchasing cannabis from the illicit market. Similarly, while the Federations indicate that their affiliated clubs should run quality control tests of the cannabis they supply, the federated clubs in our sample admitted not being able to implement that in practice. Adherence to CSC Federations’ recommendations is thus not fully reflected in CSCs’ practices. Therefore, while the self-regulatory codes developed by these “umbrella organizations” (and even by the individual CSCs) may be aligned with or reflect some of the goals and/or strategies of public health-oriented regulations, as argued by Belackova and Wilkins (2018), it should not be assumed that those correspond to the actual features of the model in practice. As our analysis demonstrates, there are important divergences and a diversity of practices that go beyond CSCs’ own stated goals and rules.

Differences in practices between federated versus nonfederated CSCs were blurred for most areas included in the CSC typology (Pardal, 2018). For instance, the main activity of both groups of CSCs in our sample was distributing cannabis and only (some of) the federated clubs actively engaged in activism. We found also cases of “vertically integrated supply” (i.e., CSCs producing in-house the cannabis that is being supplied to the members) and “buyers” clubs’ (i.e., CSCs purchasing the cannabis that is being supplied to the members from outside sources) practices among both groups of CSCs. There were also no clear differences emerging between federated and nonfederated clubs in relation to the degree they stimulated peer contact, by organizing social activities and other events for members. However, as noted above, federated clubs tended to engage more in harm reduction activities. Important differences emerged in (at least) two areas though. First, with regard to the profile of federated and nonfederated CSCs, typically those CSCs affiliated with a CSC Federation seemed to have a more public profile. Second, in relation to CSCs’ business model, our data suggest that commercial practices may be more common among nonfederated CSCs.

In terms of the role played by CSC Federations in shaping the way CSCs operate in practice, a somewhat mixed picture thus emerged. The CSC Federations have to some extent played a unifying role within the cannabis movement. They have tried to homogenize CSCs’ practices (especially, the preservation of the nonprofit variant of the model). As such, they may be important points of reference for policy-makers willing to engage in developing regulatory frameworks. However, in the absence of (government) cannabis regulation, their efforts seem to have been, to some extent, undermined by individuals and organizations that do not wish to adhere to those self-imposed rules. Lessons from other fields have also pointed to the inherent limitations of (exclusively) relying on self-regulation. For instance, studies in the field of the regulation of alcohol marketing illustrate that self-regulated codes are often circumvented by the industry (Noel, Babor, & Robaina, 2017; Smith, Cukier, & Jernigan, 2014). As a result, these types of self-regulatory bodies often fail to achieve their objective to protect vulnerable groups (e.g., minors) from exposure to alcohol marketing (Hastings & Angus, 2009; Noel et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2014). The high number of deviations from the self-regulatory frameworks is attributed, in part, to the ambiguous and vaguely formulated provisions and the inability to impose deterrent sanctions (Hastings & Angus, 2009; Noel et al., 2017).

We should note that this exploratory study drew on a small sample of CSCs ($N = 16$ out of approximately 200 CSCs in Barcelona—according to the local registry of associations). There are also other important limitations to our dataset which are worth noting: we were not able to collect sufficient information concerning the clubs’ financial activities and their growing and transporting methods or to deepen the discussion about their purchases from and overall relationship with the illicit market. This was information that the managers interviewed mostly were not willing to reveal to the research team.

Finally, our analysis raises several questions that could be explored in future research. Given the historic presence of CSCs in Barcelona (and Catalonia, more generally), it is unclear whether the different variants of the model we discuss in our analysis are the result of the involvement of different groups of actors. In a first phase, the appearance and development of CSCs in that region seems to have been driven by activists rooted in the broader cannabis movement (Barriuso, 2011; Marin, 2008). In subsequent phases, have other groups of actors entered the field and reshaped the CSC model? What are their motivations, their vision for the model, and who are their supporting actors (see, for instance, the increasingly present role of specialized lawyers and of the broader cannabis industry)? Second, the high number of “nonactive” members in both federated and nonfederated Clubs is intriguing. Are these tourists or occasional users? Why do they join a CSC? We could not answer these questions on the basis of our data, but further enquiry into some of these (and other) aspects of the model might provide important answers for future debates on cannabis regulation and the choice between for-profit and not-for-profit models.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: Laurent Jansseune received an Erasmus scholarship from Ghent University. Mafalda Pardal was supported by the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO, Grant No. G.0A85.15N).

Notes

1. In 2013, an updated report with new criteria for CSCs was released by the Basque Institute of Criminology (Arana, 2013).
2. At the time of writing, this Federation had recently changed its name to CONFAC.
3. One of the interviewees was managing two CSCs at the time of data collection.
4. Nevertheless, this recommendation can also be understood in light of the resolution issued by the General Attorney (2013), which stated that leaders of registered CSCs can be pursued for forming a criminal group.

References

- Alpha-Cat. (2017). *Test kits*. Retrieved from <https://www.alpha-cat.org/product-category/test-kits/>
- Arana, X. (2013). *Código de Buenas Practicas de los Clubes Sociales de Cannabis* [Code of Good Practices for Cannabis Social Clubs]. Retrieved from <http://www.eusfac.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/hemeroteca/4-CBPCSCDefinitivo.pdf>
- Arana, X., & Montañés, V. (2011). Cannabis cultivation in Spain—The case of Cannabis Social Clubs. In T. Decorte, G. R. Potter, & M. Bouchard (Eds.), *World wide weed: Global trends in cannabis cultivation and its control* (pp. 163-177). Surrey, UK: Ashgate.
- Barriuso, M. (2011). Cannabis social clubs in Spain: A normalizing alternative underway. *Series on Legislative Reform of Drug Policies*, 2, 1-9.
- Barriuso, M. (2012a). *Between collective organisation and commercialisation: The Cannabis Social Clubs at the cross-roads*. Drug Law Reform. Retrieved from <http://druglawreform.info/en/weblog/item/3775-between-collective-organisation-and-commercialisation>
- Barriuso, M. (2012b). *Los Clubes Sociales de Cannabis en la encrucijada: Entre la autogestión y la mercantilización* [Cannabis Social Clubs at the crossroads: between collective organisation and commercialisation]. Retrieved from <https://www.tni.org/en/node/11903>
- Barriuso, M. (2012c). Ni prohibición ni mercantilización: Buscando el equilibrio en la regulación legal del cannabis [Neither prohibition nor commercialisation: Seeking the balance in the legal regulation of cannabis]. In *Cannabis: usos, seguridad jurídica y políticas* (pp. 167-182). Vitoria-Gasteiz: Ararteko.
- Barriuso, M. (2017, January). Una nueva era para los clubes cannábicos en España [A new era for cannabis clubs in Spain]. Retrieved from <https://sensiseeds.com/es/blog/una-nueva-era-para-los-clubes-cannabicos-en-espana/>
- Belackova, V., & Wilkins, C. (2018). Consumer agency in cannabis supply—Exploring auto-regulatory documents of the cannabis social clubs in Spain. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 54, 26-34.
- Bewley-Taylor, D., Blickman, T., & Jelsma, M. (2014). *The rise and decline of cannabis prohibition*. Retrieved from <https://www.tni.org/en/publication/the-rise-and-decline-of-cannabis-prohibition>
- Bouso, J. C. (2014). *Bacteriological and cannabinoids analysis*. Fundación CANNA. Retrieved from <https://www.fundacion-canna.es/en/bacteriological-and-cannabinoids-analysis>
- Calafat, A., Juan, M., Becona, E., Fernandez, C., Gil, E., & Llopis, J. J. (2000). Estrategias y organización de la cultura pro-cannabis [Strategies and organization of the pro-cannabis culture]. *Adicciones*, 12, 231-273.
- Casals, O., & Marks, A. (2015). *Proceso de regulación de clubes sociales de cannabis en Catalunya 2014-2015* [Regulation process of Cannabis Social Clubs in Catalonia 2014-2015]. Retrieved from <http://observatoriocivil.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/OC-2015-3-Informe-170-v3.pdf>

- CatFAC. (2015). *Codi de Bones Pràctiques per a les Associacions Cannàbiques* [Code of good practices for Cannabis Associations]. Retrieved from <http://catfac.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Codi-de-Bones-Pr%C3%A0ctiques-CatFAC.pdf>
- Catalonian Health Department (2015). *Resolució SLT/32/2015* [Resolution SLT/32/2015]. Retrieved from <http://observatoriocivil.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/OC-2015-3-RESOLUCI%C3%93-SLT322015-SALUT-PUBLICA.pdf>
- Decorte, T., & Pardal, M. (2017). Cannabis Social Clubs in Europe: Prospects and limits. In R. Colson & H. Bergeron (Eds.), *European drug policies: The ways of reform* (pp. 285-299). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Decorte, T., Pardal, M., Queirolo, R., Fernanda, M., Sanchez, C., & Parés, O. (2017). Regulating Cannabis Social Clubs: A comparative analysis of legal and self-regulatory practices in Spain, Belgium and Uruguay. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 43, 44-56.
- Energy Control. (2017). Available from <https://energycontrol-international.org/>
- Estrada, M. (2016). In *60th session of the Commission of Narcotic Drugs*. Wenen: Cannabis Social Clubs Phenomenon.
- FEDCAC. (2015). *Manual de Buenas Prácticas de la FEDCAC* [FEDCAC's manual of good practices]. Retrieved from <https://studylib.es/doc/8125466/manual---fedcac>
- Federación de Asociaciones Cannábicas. (2010). *Como crear un Club Social de Cannabis* [How to create a Cannabis Social Club].
- Federación de Asociaciones Cannábicas. (2016). *Qué es la FAC?* [What is FAC?]
- Federación de Asociaciones Cannábicas. (2017). *Som el que cultivem* [We are what we grow].
- Fundación CANNA. (2016). *Estudio microbiológico y cuantificación de cannabinoides en muestras de cannabis procedentes de CSC* [Microbiological study and quantification of cannabinoids in cannabis samples from CSC]. Retrieved from <http://www.fundacion-canna.es/estudio-microbiologico-y-cuantificacion-de-cannabinoides-en-muestras-de-cannabis-procedentes-de-csc>
- Fundacion Salud y Comunidad. (2017). *Fundacion Salud y Comunidad* [Health and Community Foundation]. Available from <https://www.fsyc.org/>
- García, F. Á., & Manjón-Cabeza, A. (2009). *El delito de tráfico de drogas* [The crime of drug trafficking]. Valencia, Spain: Tirant Lo Blanch.
- General Attorney. (2013). *Instrucción de la Fiscalía General para perseguir clubes cannábicos y cultivos* [Instruction of the General Prosecutor's Office to prosecute cannabis clubs and crops]. Retrieved from <https://observatoriocannabico.wordpress.com/2013/09/14/instruccion-de-la-fiscalia-general-para-perseguir-asociaciones-cannabicas/>
- Hastings, G., & Angus, K. (2009). *Under the influence: The damaging effect of alcohol marketing on young people*. London, England: British Medical Association.
- International Center for Ethnobotanical Education, Research & Service (2017). ICEERS Foundation. Available from <http://www.iceers.org/>
- Kalapa Clinic. (2017). Available from <https://www.kalapa-clinic.com/>
- Kilmer, B., Kruithof, K., Pardal, M., & Caulkins, J. J. R. (2013). *Multinational overview of cannabis production regimes*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- Manzanera, R., Torralba, L., Brugal, M., Armengol, R., Solanes, P., & Villalbí, J. R. (2000). Afrontar los estragos de la heroína: Evaluación de diez años de un programa integral en Barcelona [Dealing with the damage of heroin: ten-year evaluation of a comprehensive program in Barcelona]. *Gaceta Sanitaria*, 14, 58-66.
- Marín, I. (2008). *La cultura "cannabica" en España (1991-2007)* [The cannabis culture in Spain (1991-2007)]. Granada, Spain: Universidad de Granada.
- Marín, I., & Hinojosa, M. (2017). Veinticinco años del movimiento cannábico español [Twenty-five years of the Spanish cannabis movement]. In D. P. Martínez (Ed.), *Las sendas de la regulación del cannabis en España* (pp. 123-135). Barcelona, Spain: Edicions Bellaterra.
- Marks, A. (2017). Treating the "personal" as private: Contextualising the normative framework of Cannabis Clubs in Spain within a "global model of constitutional rights." *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 68, 1-49.
- Martínez, D. (2015). Cannabis Social Clubs: Normalisation, neoliberalism, political opportunities and prohibition. *Clivatge*, 3, 92-112.

- Medcan. (2017). *Medcan: Medical Cannabis Association*. Available from <https://medcan.es/>
- Montañés, V. (2017). Evolución del activismo cannábico en España [Evolution of the cannabis activism in Spain]. In D. P. Martínez (Ed.), *Las sendas de la regulación del cannabis en España* (pp. 145-159). Barcelona, Spain: Edicions Bellaterra.
- Muñoz, J., & Soto, S. (2000). El uso terapeutico de cannabis y la creación de establecimientos para su adquisición y su consumo [The therapeutic use of cannabis and the creation of establishments for its purchase and consumption]. *Boletín Criminológico*, 47, 1-4.
- Noel, J. K., Babor, T. F., & Robaina, K. (2017). Industry self-regulation of alcohol marketing: A systematic review of content and exposure research. *Addiction*, 112, 28-50.
- Observatorio Español de Cannabis Medicinal. (2015). *Quienes somos*.
- Pardal, M. (2016). Cannabis Social Clubs through the lens of the drug user movement. *Tijdschrift over Cultuur & Criminaliteit*, 2, 47-58.
- Pardal, M. (2018). Belgian Cannabis Social Clubs' supply practices: A shapeshifting model? *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 57, 32-41.
- Pardal, M., & Bawin, F. (2018). *The supply of cannabis for medical use through Cannabis Social Clubs in Belgium*. *Contemporary Drug Problems*, 45(2), 127-145.
- Parés, O., & Bouso, J. (2015). *Innovation born of necessity: Pioneering drug policy in Catalonia*. New York, NY: Open Society Foundations.
- Redacción, GM. (2018, May). El crecimiento de la industria del grow shop en España [The growth of the grow shop industry in Spain]. *Grandes Medios*. Retrieved from <https://www.grandesmedios.com/industria-grow-shop-espana/>
- Sánchez, C., & Collins, M. (2018). *Better to ask forgiveness than permission: Spain's sub-national approach to drug policy* (Policy Brief 12). Global Drug Policy Observatory.
- Smith, K. C., Cukier, S., & Jernigan, D. H. (2014). Regulating alcohol advertising: Content analysis of the adequacy of federal and self-regulation of magazine advertisements, 2008–2010. *American Journal of Public Health*, 104, 1901-1911.
- Weedmaps. (2016). *Weedmaps*.

Author Biographies

Laurent Jansseune is a criminologist (Master of Science in Criminology, Ghent University). During his semester abroad as part of the Erasmus exchange programme, he conducted research into and wrote his master's thesis about Cannabis Social Clubs in Barcelona.

Mafalda Pardal is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Institute for Social Drug Research (Ghent University), where she has been studying the Cannabis Social Club model in Belgium, Spain and Uruguay. She has been a visiting researcher at the Catholic University of Uruguay.

Tom Decorte is full professor of criminology at the Faculty of Law and Criminology at Ghent University, Belgium. He is director of the Institute for Social Drug research (ISD), and a founding member of the Global Cannabis Cultivation Research Consortium (GCCRC).

Òscar Parés Franquero holds a degree in Philosophy and Anthropology, and a Masters degree in Drug Addiction. He is Deputy Director at the ICEERS Foundation and a consultant in the regulatory process of Catalonia's Cannabis Social Clubs.