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Submerged Economies in Colombia and their Link to Social Representations of Work. A Study from the Perspective of Social Psychology*

Economías sumergidas en Colombia como consecuencia de las representaciones sociales del trabajo. Un estudio desde la perspectiva de la psicología social

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Abstract

This reflection article aims at exploring the bases of the historical construction of work in Colombia, its social representations, and its incidence on the constitution of submerged economies such as illegal drug trafficking. The historical method of consulting secondary sources that testify to the behavior of Colombian society at the end of the Colony and in the Republican period is used in order to connect the historical scenarios with the present. Reference is made to the path of dependence, the critical theory of colonialism and social representations of work. The results show that social psychology and social representations of work have consequences in the creation and maturation of informal economies and in the tendency to get rich quickly and easily in some sectors of the Colombian society. In conclusion, these contexts end up being consolidated as the basis of an illegal 'industry' that constantly reinvents itself and gives rise to the development of certain skills useful to survive in an unequal and violent context materialized in the so-called drug trafficking era, which began in the 1970s.

Keywords: Concept of work; submerged economies; illegality; social psychology

Resumen

Artículo de reflexión que tuvo como objetivo explorar las bases de la construcción histórica del trabajo en Colombia, sus representaciones sociales y su incidencia en la constitución de economías

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sumergidas como el tráfico ilegal de drogas. Se utiliza el método histórico de consulta de fuentes secundarias que atestiguan el comportamiento de la sociedad colombiana al final de la Colonia y en la época republicana, y para vincular los escenarios históricos con el presente se hace referencia al sendero de la dependencia, la teoría crítica de colonialismo y la de las representaciones sociales del trabajo. Los resultados muestran que la psicología social y las representaciones sociales del trabajo tienen consecuencias en la creación y maduración de economías informales y la tendencia al enriquecimiento rápido y fácil en algunos sectores de la sociedad colombiana. Se concluye que, estos contextos terminan consolidándose como base de una ‘industria’ ilegal que se reinventa constantemente, y da lugar al desarrollo de ciertas habilidades, útiles para sobrevivir en un contexto desigual y violento, materializado en la denominada era del narcotráfico, que comenzó en la década de 1970.

Palabras clave: Concepto de trabajo; economías sumergidas; ilegalidad; psicología social

Introduction

This article aims to demonstrate how the social representations of work and social psychology, along with the distinctive creativity of some Colombians to survive in precarious situations, foster the rise of submerged economies. If we add the exacerbated individualism that derives from these situations, the result is a serious impossibility of concluding collective agreements, which favors deinstitutionalization and illegality as common actions in an unequal society. This behavior, from the social psychological theory perspective (Agnew, 1999; Alison, 2021; Shoemaker, 2018), has become an adaptive competence that filters and matures in many trades, and therefore, “indigenous astuteness”, capriciousness and intrepidity prevail more than reasoning and pondering in urgent situations (Díaz, 2012). As a result, a culture of illegality and sagacity arises and marks the emergence of a set of undeclared economic activities, called submerged economy, which take place outside of the institutional framework and, therefore, escape the control of the State and the official statistics.

From this perspective, the absence of the State, the lack of legal employment sources (Skaperdas, 2001; Círami, 2018, Kalmanovitz, 2017) and beliefs about work determined the construction of the social representation of easy work through the processes of consolidation of the various illegal armed groups. This fact agrees with the social representations theory (Moscovici, 2001; Markova, 2003), which states that the formation of institutions occurs from a complex configuration that integrates different components and persist through time as long as the same originating conditions are present (Tovar, 2009; Pierson, 2000).

The concurrence of mestizo, black and indigenous cultures and traditions, all wrapped in the strong tradition of the Catholic religion of that time, resulted in a conception of work in Colombia in its origins that was, at least, disdainful (Cabrales and Martínez, 2019; Jaramillo, 1999). It leads to evading work and finding other forms of occupation more linked to quick and easy wealth carried out initially for survival purposes, but later for prosperous illegal industries to be boosted by drug trafficking and a multiplicity of illegal armed agents.

Regarding the theories of psychological development of work, Mortimer (1988) affirms that there is a wide recognition of work as a liberating force that contributes to the development of human potential and the psychological development of the individual. Ramos (2007) considers that the conceptions about beliefs are stable ideas that individuals have, and are built through their personal experience, considering their social and cultural contexts. This is how this article takes the historical and social representations of work in Colombia and social psychology as its theoretical basis. It discusses that certain survival skills still remain in the present, linked to historical elements of the past that have served for the constitution of submerged economies and illegal practices. The absence of the State and of institutional sources of employment add to these factors, which make armed agents in substitutes for the institutional framework and provide sources of work linked to drug trafficking and countless illegal activities.

The social construction of the concept of work in Colombia

Beliefs are at the heart of personality and adaptive functioning, they are stable ideas that individuals build through their personal experience, considering their social and cultural context (Ramos, 2007; Dweck, 2008). These conceptions act as filters when reality is interpreted and become ways of acting in the contexts where they operate. They tend to be limited by the culture in which the individual acts and are also resistant to change. At the cognitive level, they act as filters for thought and information processing; they are interrelated, and also influence other personal aspects of the individual (Ramos, 2007), such as the contribution to the formation of social representations in the interaction between the social structure and the individual (Moscovici, 2000).

Concerning beliefs, Serge Moscovici (2001), a prominent social psychologist, raised within the current of sociological psychology the well-known theory of social representations that, in the words of Materán (2008) “could be valued as a useful explanation in the study of the social construction of reality” (p. 244). Moscovici (1976; 1984) conceived social representations of work as elements of great importance since they allow the understanding of events that occur in the social context as well as people’s behaviors. They offer the possibility of participating in the construction of social reality and in the definition of categories that classify the circumstances, phenomena, and individuals with whom various types of relationships are established. What makes representation social is the communication function it fulfills and

the creation of a particular, illegal and consensual reality of making a living, following the identity of the groups to which individuals belong. This ultimately legitimates the illegal social order in which they work because “criminal activities and the processes that sustain them are embedded in the transactions between individuals” (Alison, 2021, p.1).

This approach to social psychology has gained strength since the 1960s when Moscovici proposed the theory of social representations. The understanding of social life, which, in the words of Salcedo (2006), “is regulated by customs, traditions, fashions, rules, and laws, which frame and define activities that are carried out daily” (p. 68), determines the importance of analyzing the agreements, contacts, relationships and negotiations between humans and the social norms established by them (Salcedo, 2006).

Other authors refer to social representations of work, for instance, Jean-Claude Abric who, in his book ‘Social Practices and Representations’, defines social representations as an organized and hierarchical set of judgments, attitudes, and information elaborated by a social group regarding a social object. This social object is reconstructed in a symbolic system internalized by the members of a group, who share and reproduce it (Abric, cited in Torres-López et al., 2017). According to Abric (2001): “the representations are joint socio-cognitive, organized in a specific way and governed by its own rules of operation” (p. 3).

Furthermore, for McKinlay and Potter (1987) social representations and, in this case, social representations of labor, have conceptual importance because in an environment of general categories of thought, these social representations impart meaning, they have a kind of ‘coding effect’. Thus, “social representations allow an individual to pick out some part of the environment in the knowledge that the object so identified will have the same type of meaning for those who share its social representations as it does for himself or herself” (McKinlay and Potter, 1987, p. 473). In the case of social representations of illegal work in Colombia, it is possible to observe how people who participate in criminal acts within the framework of what they consider legal work, do not always assume their behaviors as inappropriate for society since, somehow, they find a way to justify, consciously or unconsciously, this work. Likewise, a large part of this population does not assume their actions within what legally fits into the concept of a crime, since they have constructed the social representation of crime from the perspective of the group to which they belong, in which making a living at any cost or not letting themselves die of hunger relativizes subjective responsibility (Caro, 2013) and allows them to break the law without any consideration. This problem of crime is especially normalized in much of Latin America. García and Devia (2018) mention some actions that, despite being illegal, are socially accepted, for instance, the purchase of pirated and contraband products, the violation of traffic regulations, tax evasion, sneaking into mass transportation systems, the pyramid model, and the issue of plagiarism among university students.

Additionally, there is a very important element in the configuration of social representation specifically in Colombia where there is a high incidence in the constitution of submerged economies: the pejorative meaning that work has for Catholicism. The Book of Genesis considers work as a punishment that should be avoided and establishes that a conceptual and cultural path that established work is evil and a burden, instead of conceiving it as the act by which daily sustenance is provided. This conception was different from the protestant perspective that considers work as one of the ways of doing God's devotion (Naredo, 2001; Cabrales, 2012; Weber, 2005), this is one of the factors that marked the differences in economic development between North and South America (Acemoglu, 2005). Under these conditions, a good disposition towards honest work cannot be expected on the part of some Colombians who live in a corrupt legal system par excellence, "that is complied with, but not fulfilled, and appearance is covered, but content is evaded" (Kalmanovitz, 2001, p. 127). Additionally, Naranjo (1965) says that Colombians have a spiritual rather than a rational substratum in which emotion prevails over a clear vision of their objectives; they have much more temperament than character, but their educational philosophy has aimed more towards the spirit than the mind, which stimulates the passionate more than the rational conduct. For this reason, the so-called "indigenous astuteness", capriciousness and intrepidity prevail over reasoning and pondering in urgent situations.

The Catholic dogma of the Spanish conquerors was imposed and prevailed over those original indigenous cults, who also had their places of worship razed. The indigenous people received the message that their deities had also been conquered by the god preached in the evangelization. While millions of indigenous people died, the majority of Spaniards triumphed and flourished; therefore, the triumph of the Catholic god over that of the aborigines was evident (Cervantes, 2021). As the adoption of the new religion was necessary, many indigenous people adapted it in their own way, undoubtedly contributing to the disputes within their own tribes and the extensive development of lies and the afro-Ibero-indigenous astuteness (Cabrales, 2021) by trying to continue secretly to worship their deities and gods and camouflage their beliefs behind their false worship of the Holy Trinity of the conquerors. Specifically, in Colombia, the initial conception of work was a social construction resulting from what afros, natives and Spaniards understood by it, but it was something different for these cultures. Concerning work, the conceptions and trades of the Spanish conquistadors and the indigenous people intervened in this representation (Naredo, 2001; Cabrales and Martínez, 2019). For the latter, the Western conception of work was not only unknown but absurd, there was no clear distinction between the work carried out to generate livelihood or provide food, and leisure. Likewise, there was no difference between "household" activities and "work" activities, and both tasks mingled in daily life (Naredo, 2001). This type of behavior, added to the corruption of the Spanish establishment in the New Granada colonies, was somehow imitated and adapted by the natives and by the mestizo who would inherit the 'tricks' of the two cultures (Kalmanovitz, 2001). The Spaniards were also protagonists of the emergence of competence or ability to evade

authority and seek the easy job, something that Cabrales and Martínez (2019) has called *afro-ibero-indigenous astuteness*, and that has become a corrupt culture.

This so-called afro-ibero-indigenous astuteness can be related to what Negura et al. (2020) would call an establishment of hierarchies from different layers of knowledge. At that time, hierarchies of knowledge were being built in what they perceived as social representations of labor, and a compilation of knowledge layers was consolidated in a pejorative conception that should be avoided at all costs. In fact, the authors emphasize the ‘answer’: “[...] With respect to the relations of power, social representations create ‘possibilities,’ or guide the capacities for action” (Negura et al., 2020, p.4). These routes of action that resulted from the social representations of work were evident in the easy, profitable, and corrupt practices that have determined part of Colombian society.

Afro-ibero-indigenous astuteness is fundamental in the social construction of the concept of work in Colombia and its survival through subsequent periods. This ability, according to Pierson (2000) and the path dependence approach, was able to transcend time and become a generalized idea about the various ways of working and operating in life, as chaotic circumstances consolidated through the drug trafficking era. Likewise, there are consequences of the social acceptance of the legality of certain trades and tasks, which gives rise to submerged economies that spread if there are no other sources of employment and varied options of subsistence different from those offered by highly profitable illicit businesses such as drug trafficking and armed fight on behalf of the people’s armies.

In relation to the sources of employment, the analysis requires other variables for a more elaborate understanding of labor market insertion. In this direction, the socio-historical context (Verd and Lopez-Andreu, 2012) represents a factor that influences insertion into the institutional labor market since it depends not only on the worker’s training, but also on the supply of jobs. In the case of the Colony, because it was a slave-owning society, there were practically no legal jobs available for Indians and blacks, nor was there any training that would make them suitable to fill them.

Nueva Granada was largely a “natural” economy, with a mining sector that generated much of the viceroyalty’s surplus. In the other economic activities, the tenants and sharecroppers of the haciendas, the indigenous tributaries and even the slaves, the artisans and the transporters who guided mule trains or carried the load on their own backs devoted most of their energy to achieving their goals of subsistence. (Kalmanovitz, 2017, p.289)

On the other hand, at the beginning of the Republic and in the context of a society devastated by the wars of independence, the confrontations between centralists and federalists (Melo, 2020), social chaos and anomie, there was no regular supply of jobs either, which led Indians, blacks and creoles to do any work.

The new State in the process of formation, marked by political anarchy and economic chaos (Kalmanovitz, 2017), did not represent an employment-generating option either since independence allowed the creoles to get rid of the Spanish tax burdens and did not sufficiently replace them with local and national taxes, therefore, a weak nation was created from the beginning (Kalmanovitz, 2017). Beyond agricultural and mining work, Colombia began to structure a moderately solid business sector around porcelain, tobacco, beer, flour, panela and textiles only until the beginning of the 20th century. Then, people with an incipient education started to be hired by the church in manual and operative trades that were required.

Thus, this blend of work conceptions resulted in what McKinlay and Potter (1987) conceive as giving meaning to experience constructively. This means that it is the experience that determines the way an individual thinks and responds to his or her experience. Furthermore, McKinlay and Potter (1987) add that this has two implications. On the one hand, the theory of social representations provides a principle demarcation of the boundaries of social groups. “If social representations determine the meaning, then all of those who share a particular social representation will agree in their understanding and evaluation of the world in some respect.” (McKinlay and Potter, 1987, p. 474). In other words, “what makes a group a group is exactly the shared representations of its members” (McKinlay and Potter, 1987, p. 474). On the other hand, McKinlay and Potter (1987) state that they allow people to feel familiar with a world that might seem strange and threatening.

From this perspective, the formation of Colombian society in the second half of the 20th century occurred as a process in which the set of political institutions, business organizations, social policies, and the labor market, developed jointly from the conceptions of illegal and highly profitable drug trafficking work, mutually reinforcing in a reciprocal process of adjustment and competitive selection (Pierson, 2000) in which there was transhumance towards emerging sources of illegal jobs that offered high remuneration. Additionally, sources of employment provided by the emerging guerrilla groups were created, many of them still survive; later, around the 1970s, the ideologically contrary offer of paramilitarism also arose.

Social Psychology and the constitution of submerged economies

All the aforementioned factors, in addition to contributing to a climate of chaos in which illegal work had more possibilities to develop than legal work, helped to create a system in which, due to the beliefs about work and the weakness of the State, fostered the formation of submerged economies and irregular armed groups that replaced the State. Mainly in its tasks of generating security, guarding private property and administering justice, since both the Indian and the black peoples wanted little to do with working for the invader who, as seen above, was an opportunistic, violent rogue (Kalmanovitz, 2001; Cabrales and Martínez, 2019). This established a perverse context in which illegality persisted and had consequences

reflected in the way some Colombian sectors are becoming increasingly uncertain in drug trafficking, to the extent that institutions fail and social, political and economic factors that contribute to the spread of crime in the region are taking shape (Bergman, 2021).

The constitution of submerged economies and drug trafficking can be explained from the theoretical approaches toward criminal acts, behaviors that can be justified by criminal psychology: "Crime can be easily defined as any activity publicly proscribed by the written laws of a society" (McGuire, 2004, p. 3). So, crime theories deal with community or locality level theories, and group and socialization influence theories that have a broad relationship with what we have been proposing about the social construction of work and what is legal or illegal in Colombian society. Özdemir and Öner-Özkan (2017) suggests that the perception of crime can change over time and from society to society.

Time and current conditions also shape the definition of a criminal act, and there is not a behavior which is always criminal everywhere, because crime is a social product and a socially constructed phenomenon. Therefore, society, culture, and zeitgeist decide which act is a crime. (p.345)

Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory (SLT) is also useful in explaining criminal behavior. Through observing others in critical contexts, people can learn this action. Family, friends, relatives, and the community can shape people's behavior. The social learning theory also tells us that a criminal context in the family or in a group of close friends influences an individual's behavior. Likewise, a boy or girl who lives in an environment of aggressiveness may find themselves initiated into criminal acts. Coping skills and some cognitive variables, including self-efficacy and outcome expectations, are learned by family members and those in other social groups. Similarly, regarding criminal behavior, Sutherland (2014) argues that:

1. Criminal behavior is learned in interaction with others persons in a process of communication (Sutherland, 2014, p.14). Just as individuals learn certain morals or values through communication within their family structure.
2. The principal part of criminal behavior learning occurs within intimate personal groups (Sutherland, 2014, p.14). In Colombia, for example, the Medellín Cartel recruited adolescent boys to be sicarios (hitmen) in the so-called communes (fabellae), they were individuals with a very low cultural capital, gang members whose only moral referents were their peers groups.
3. When criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes crime techniques, which are sometimes very complicated, sometimes very simple; (b) the specification of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes (Sutherland, 2014, p.14). The learning process is given through the field, the person learns skills or techniques needed to commit the crime by committing the crime, school is life. In addition, individuals also adapt their motives, impulses, rationalizations and personal attitudes to their tasks, taking increasing risks.

4. The specific direction of motives and drives is learned from definitions of the legal codes as favorable or unfavorable (Sutherland, 2014, p.14). Individuals develop their own beliefs, attitudes, and codes of ethics that encourage or discourage their actions.
5. A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of law (Sutherland, 2014, p.14). In Colombia, according to the moral perspective of the individual and their social environment, there are more benefits to operating outside the law than within the institutionality. Easy quick enrichment, as has been seen, is associated with risky but relatively easy tasks that bring immediate benefits. The behavior of an individual depends on the balance between the number of favorable versus non-favorable factors, which weigh more on deviant or unconventional behavior. So, the strongest influence, determined by the easy money outcome, determines whether the individual accepts the behavior.
6. Differential associations may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity (Sutherland, 2014, p.14). The exposure time, the contact and the permanence in gangs or irregular groups define the intensity of the risk that the individual is willing to assume (Inter-American Commission in Human Rights, 2015). As criminal behavior is learned, the process includes: techniques of committing the crime, the ability to lie, to convince themselves and their family that his criminal activities are not actually 'that' criminal. The own and specific construction of their motives, impulses, rationalizations and attitudes, which justify their actions. In the case of the indigenous people, the ability to lie was developed when they were forced to adore the unknown and inaccessible god of the Catholic religion, when even deep in their conciseness they continued to submit to their living gods, such as the lagoon and the sun.
7. The process of learning criminal behavior by association with criminal and anti-criminal patterns comprises all of the mechanisms involved in any other learning (Sutherland, 2014, p.14). Learning motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes are more important than learning techniques to engaging in criminal behavior because they produce willingness to engage in crime (IACHR, 2015). Many people in Colombia convince themselves that they are not criminals because their individual actions are not criminal, but their associations for crime are greater in frequency, duration, and intensity than their personal actions.
8. While criminal behavior is an expression of general needs and values, it is not explained by those needs and values, since non-criminal behavior is an expression of the same needs and values (Sutherland, 2014, p.14). In the Colombian case, the unmet needs, the social exclusion and the inequity of which the subject believes that he is a part, justify the criminal actions.

Criminal actions exceed legal actions to the point of becoming a natural act of the individual and to which his family and other institutions drag. This system gave rise to submerged economies in which a multiplicity of illegal trades work well as long as there is someone on the other side to facilitate things: the politician, the military, and the corrupt state employee who takes advantage of their 'fifteen minutes of fame' in the office to make a small fortune and quickly

get out of poverty. This coexistence with crime and the absence of institutionality generates individualities and a generalized blurring that does not allow us to visualize the consequences of individual criminal acts in the constitution of a generalized climate of insecurity.

It also shows an invisibility of the fine line between what is legal and what is illegal, in which the individual, when seeing the recurrent behavior in illegal activities of the other members of the social circle, incurs them, sometimes without knowing that he is committing a crime. Just as the war on terror has prepared us to the normalization of the crisis (Fisher, 2022), the circumstances of poverty and unemployment have created the context for the regularization of precarious, 'bullshit' jobs (Graeber, 2018) or illegal jobs, which at least give people the chance to survive, even at the cost of putting their lives at risk daily.

The arguments in this sense are reinforced, from the perspective of social psychology (McGuire, 2004) in the understanding that a large part of criminal behavior reveals. Those are constituted as criminogenic risk factors; theory turned into practice: the development of criminal behavior programs; a psychological perspective on some central concepts of criminology: retribution, deterrence and incapacitation; and the main practical applications of psychology in policing, prosecution, and sentencing.

Drug trafficking in the 70s: social representation of easy work

As previously mentioned, the impact of the socio-historical context (Verd and Lopez-Andreu, 2012) on labor market insertion also affects the construction of social representations of the nation. According to Uribe (2004) nations, as well as other social macro-subjects are first and foremost imagined communities, cultural artifacts that fulfill the fundamental task of creating a convincing and plausible representation of a social conglomerate (p.12). In Colombia, internal wars and the armed conflict have been present in most of our republican history as endless events that are connected to each other in a continuous cycle of recidivism. They do not allow the past to be something dead, immobile and distant and become a living presence and a configurator of repetitions, circularities or new directions and future orientations with their situations of risk, generalized danger and tragic events for very large sectors of the population (Uribe, 2004).

From this point of view, the generalized perspective prevails in the social construction of the nation that the past has been a succession of confrontations that do not end, that are never resolved and that are circularly reproduced until today. Besides, there is overwhelming evidence that crime rates and the formation of new armed groups, despite the signing of the peace treaty with the FARC-EP in 2016, do not cease (Avila, 2022). This idea of continuity, permanence and transcendence of the conflict is what manages to establish the difficult link between the past and the future through the present. It is the plot that unites moments and contingencies, giving the impression of permanence despite the profound transformations that have occurred

throughout history in all orders of social life, and it is also the reference that contributes to define the frameworks in which people remember, forget and imagine (Uribe, 2004). In this social representation of the country, in this context of perennial confrontation and continuous deficit of institutionality (Acemoglu, 2005), a tragic vision of a never-achieved nation predominates; and in this sense of chaos, impunity and violation of rights, the belief that anything goes, that any way of making a living above the law, will be forgiven and sometimes even rewarded, spreads.

As argued by Pierson (2000), path-dependent approach and the repeating conditions or contexts (Özdemir and Öner-Özkan, 2017) allow us to link different historical scenarios based on the contexts and conditions that are maintained. The formation of institutions occurs from a complex configuration that integrates different components that mix and last through time. The drug trafficking period in Colombia that began in the 1970s was the result, to a large extent, of the conception of work as a punishment, and of the idea of natives and blacks that support the invader was being carried out. This ended up consolidating quick and easy wealth as an intrinsic element in the cultural structure of part of the Colombian population.

A relationship between social representations of work, forged from crime and social psychology and the drug trafficking boom of the 1980s in Colombia, can be established due to the absence of the State, since the institutional deficit (Acemoglu, 2005) and the same coexistence with crime, generates a dilution between the borders of the legal or the illegal behavior. Currently, the corruption of the State and of its officials and politicians, has generated in some sectors of the population the exercise of ancestral astuteness as the way out of poverty through illicit businesses and the permanent creation of new criminal companies that adjust to the changes of society and the persecution of the authorities. Drug traffickers have come to play the role of the State and have responded to the demands of communities in matters of housing, public space, education and recreation, among others. This situation has legitimized their actions, by presenting them as people committed to regional development (Ovalle, 2010a, p. 85).

The absence of a strong figure of the State and non-compliance with laws (Bergman, 2021) are two factors that must combine to increase crime. This is the permanent condition that links the two historical scenarios and became a founding element of the submerged economies, since it went from being the result of the institutional deficit, to be a kind of illegal institution legitimized to some extent. The drug trafficker, in certain contexts, is not only an image identified by the social group, it is an objectified social category (Ovalle, 2010a, p. 101).

From a social psychology perspective, Torres et al. (2015) suggest in the article “Social psychology and post-conflict: Do we reform or have we revolutionized?” that this is how drug trafficking had a strong impact on culture as a process of moral erosion, since employment and education opportunities were very scarce, and that was when big gangsters showed up to offer young people the opportunity to meet their needs with illicit businesses.

Furthermore, as a result of said drug trafficking a conflict was consolidated and according to Galtung (1998), there have been two persisting factors in the genealogy of violence in Colombia. The first has linked the existence of life in a society to exogenous conditions, such as the control of territories by armed groups (related to what was previously proposed in relation to the absence of the State) and the support or lack of it by the inhabitants of the areas where their deployment has been a constant during the escalation of the conflict, which can be located in the 1980s with the increase in drug trafficking. This struggle for control of territories by armed groups and the failure of the State to recover them is the means of propagation of a series of social dynamics that refer to violence, no longer as an action, but as a natural state of everyday life (Cabrales, 2018).

Furthermore, according to Torres et al. (2015), the armed conflict reveals the empowerment that illegal armed groups began to have, since they had military capacity favored by financing practices such as kidnapping, extortion and forced contributions from drug trafficking. The other factor is the one that illustrates the reality of the territories where the armed conflict left victims, displaced people and, at the same time, polarization among the inhabitants of urban areas. The lack of suitable means of information about the conflict, the materialization of a single discourse that lack a sense of reconciliation and the educational gap, from elementary to higher education are the characterization of a nation that has failed to understand the perspectives and opportunities of leaving behind structural violence. (Cabrales, 2018).

From the violence originated in this period with the rise of drug trafficking in Colombia arose the so-called negative peace which, following what is proposed by Fisas (1998) and Galtung (1998), is the context where direct violence has been exhausted through processes of de-escalation and agreements between the parties, and in this persists the foundations of structural and cultural violence. Regarding the line of argument that allows linking elements with different historical contexts, these fractured processes that gave rise to the subsistence of structural and cultural violence have been present in the two moments joined by the path-dependence approach in the present document: the historical construction of work and its social representations in the period of drug trafficking in Colombia after the 1970s, determining the complexity degree of the violence.

Deviant globalization: institutional deficit and social construction of easy work

Concerning the above on the constructed notion of legality and the construction of hierarchies of knowledge that legitimize non-institutionalized practices as a means of subsistence in a hostile environment, it is important to refer to the so-called “deviant globalization” that characterizes part of the notion of social representation of labor and in the submerged economies in Colombia, and more particularly, refers to transnational crimes in which Colombian submerged industries play a significant role.

The common notion of globalization linked to the free market is positive. Globalization is conceived as a process of interconnection, mainly economic, that allows the exchange of goods and services without restrictions, allowing for greater ‘development’. However, there is a side to this globalization that has gone beyond the radars of institutionality, becoming a threat to state control and consolidate as an expression of the social representations of labor, and that is deviant globalization. Brewer and Miklaucic (2013) defines deviant globalization as:

[...] a portion of the global economy that meets the demand for goods and services illegal or considered repugnant in one place by using a supply from some other part of the world where morals are different or law enforcement is less effective. (p. 71)

As argued by several authors, including Brewer and Miklaucic (2013), deviant globalization “is thus an economic concept, but it is also a moral and legal one” (p. 72). About the social representations of labor, deviant globalization, whose expression in the culture of easy labor on the part of the Colombian population is very visible, has a particular characteristic, which is that it “grows at the intersection of ethical difference and regulatory and law enforcement inefficiencies” (Brewer and Miklaucic, 2013, p. 72). This is of utmost importance since this morality plays an important role in the construction of collective imaginaries linked to social psychology, as Ellemers (2017) argues:

[...] Some definitions [...] offer guidance in how I might determine what is right, just, or good. In the spirit of the philosopher John Rawls, such definitions mostly refer to general and ‘universal’ rules of conduct. (pp. 25-26)

Furthermore, “there are definitions that recommend that people determine the morality of their behavior by trying to imagine how others might evaluate it” (Ellemers, 2017, p. 26), which would support the importance of legitimizing certain submerged economies in Colombia and in other Latin-American countries since this strengthens ingenuity and innovation to take advantage of the institutional deficit.

According to Ovalle (2010b), there are two places where the deviant globalization and the influence and social power of transnational drug trafficking networks can be appreciated with particular clarity. The case of territorialized networks in the State of Baja California (Mexico) and in the Department of Valle del Cauca (Colombia). These territories are places in Latin America where the development of drug trafficking has become evident in a privileged way through the various social media like films, novels and books, which give an account of the way in which these territories have been fundamental scenarios for the development of transnational drug trafficking for more than three decades.

Conclusions

While organized crime in the United States and Europe has shown obvious signs of decline in the last 30 years, drug trafficking and other types of crime have grown at unprecedented levels in Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela and Colombia. Factors such as social inequality, migration, unemployment and poverty have generated social and political unrest, and have made public safety one of the main concerns of citizens (Dammert, 2012; Vilalta, 2012). In Colombia, despite the signing of the peace treaty with the FARC-EP, one of the oldest insurgent groups on the continent, crime has increased because it has become a profitable business and because weak states and security systems criminal justice systems are outdated and have not been able to meet the challenges posed by these new criminal enterprises (Ovalle, 2010b; Bergman, 2021).

The pejorative conception of work, developed from the social representations of Spaniards, blacks and indigenous people, apply in various historical periods, and influence the generalized construction of illegal ways of earning a living, under a framework of perception that allows explicitly or implicitly proceeding outside the law in submerged economies and drug trafficking. As Pierson (2000) and Tovar (2009) claim, it is possible that specific patterns of matter and time sequences are perpetuated under similar conditions for their reproduction. The consequences can be the result of relatively small or contingent events, particular courses of action that, once introduced, can be virtually impossible to reverse (Pierson, 2000). This has happened in Colombia in some spheres of society, where patterns of illegal behavior are repeated or prolonged in processes of violence and social inequality do not cease (Uribe, 2004).

Following the path-dependence approach, which supposes a return to history (Pierson, 2000), the perpetuation of illegal behavior patterns in some spheres of Colombian society occurs because the lucrative activity of trafficking and distribution of illegal drugs is a life project to the point that it is recognized by wide sectors of society as a job option (Ovalle, 2010b). These scenarios contributed to the generalization of the conception of an anomie and chaos climate that led to multiple illicit businesses creation. Thus, there was a permanent formation of submerged economies that have changed over time, according to the behavior patterns of the individuals who face the State policies against crime by accommodating the law from perceptions through popular sayings such as: *hecha la ley hecha la trampa* (when the law is enforced, its breaking is also conceived).

The imposition of religion and the adoption of the western concept of work, generated this need to engage in tricks to make the invader believe that they were working and had adopted the Catholic creed. This, called indigenous astuteness, that can be defined initially by Morales (1998) as a popular imaginary or a social representation that reiterates that national characteristic of a combination of creativity, cunning, prudence and hypocrisy, sufficient to make up for the deficiencies of underdevelopment manifested in precarious education,

poverty and state abandonment. It was fundamental in the social construction of the concept of work in Colombia and its survival through subsequent periods.

The extended and bloody periods of war in Colombia since the 19th century have resulted in the endemic weakness of the state (Uribe and López, 2006; Kalmanovitz, 2017). Additionally, sovereignty has been put on hold by the actions of various illegal armed groups. Since the mid-1970s, the dynamism of clandestine economies and the emergence and consolidation of drug trafficking have been present, constituent ingredients of crime, violence and new sources of work (Pécaut, 1987). Drug trafficking, whose strategy by the new bosses in recent years has been the internationalization and incorporation of other countries into the business (Dell, 2009; Jenner, 2011) has become a source of employment not only nationally but internationally. It has been evident in the insecurity and corridors of misery around the main Latin American cities, growing unemployment and the migration processes of thousands of Central Americans to the United States, among other indicators. In addition to this drug trafficking business, there are other illicit activities with transnational repercussions, and this is how the previously named deviant globalization, a phenomenon that has gained strength in recent academic discussions and considered pertinent to exemplify the result of a combination between the historical construction of the notion of work in Colombia, the social representations of work and the deficit of institutionality was constituted.

The violent past that marked the history of Colombia, together with the institutional deficit and the other factors mentioned, made illegality a way of life, a work option, almost a profession that gave rise to the most varied forms of crime. During the last three decades –time during which Latin American transnational drug trafficking networks have been expanding their market– there has been a process of social representation of the phenomenon that has resulted in the naturalization of these activities for broad social sectors (Ovalle, 2010a).

Therefore, the drug trafficker, his henchmen, his women and those who work for him directly and indirectly, in certain contexts, are not only an image identified by the social group, it is an objectified social category. The gathering of the elements mentioned above and a social psychology analysis allow to state that the current proliferation of the illegality and impunity circumstance, the corruption of politicians and of the State itself have generated in some sectors of the population the exercise of ancestral astuteness. These factors facilitate the possibility of surviving or emerging from poverty in the conduct of illicit business and the permanent creation of new criminal enterprises adjusted to the future of society and the persecution by the authorities. According by Morales (1998), Indigenous astuteness is also imagined as a potential of the oppressed Amerindian peoples at the time of the Conquest and the Colony that has been bequeathed to their mestizo descendants as a testimony of long-term resistance and justice. Consequently, it is still highly appreciated by today's mentalities, from various social sectors.

An outstanding characteristic of the current crime wave that characterizes the Latin America region is the growing dimension of criminal business towards multinational spheres. One of the driving factors behind crime has been social networks, narco soap operas, music and the media, which have popularized the customs of drug traffickers as a lifestyle full of luxuries and benefits within the framework of deviant globalization. According by Bergman (2021), patrimonial crime and in general all actions aimed at obtaining immediate profits have had exponential growth. The reason for this growth is social and economic changes in periods of greater money influx.

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