Cannabis under control:
cannabis social clubs as a regulated, non-profit model on the local level

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Introduction - context


2. Plea for critical evaluation of cannabis policy (november 2013)

3. Political reactions + reactions from umbrella organizations of treatment and prevention centres + reaction other academics

4. ‘Cannabis under control: how?’ (Decorte, De Grauwe & Tytgat, 2016)
“Cannabis under control: how?”

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Basic principles (starting points)

- Objectives: enhance control over production, availability, prices, distribution, use

- Regulation: what it is, and what it is not (legalization, decriminalisation of use, commercialisation, laissez-faire, a silver bullet,…)

- Relation between [social and health costs] and [regulatory models: who controls the market]
Spectrum of policy options

From: Transform (2013)
Options for regulating supply

Twelve Supply Alternatives to Status Quo Prohibition

- Prohibit and increase sanctions
- Allow adults to grow their own
- Retail sales only (Dutch model)
- Public authority (near monopoly)
- For-benefit companies
- Standard commercial model
- Prohibit and decrease sanctions
- Communal own-grow and distribution
- Government operates the supply chain
- Nonprofit organizations
- Very few monitored for-profit licensees
- Repeal-only of state prohibition

- Extreme options
- Commonly discussed options
- Middle-ground options

Lessons from the past + laboratory of ongoing experiments

- Regulatory frameworks for alcohol – tobacco – pharmaceutical drugs
- Commercialization
- The Dutch coffeeshop model
- Cannabis social club experiments in Spain, Belgium, Uruguay, elsewhere
- Decriminalization models across the globe
- Medicinal marihuana programmes
- Uruguay
- Colorado / Washington / Vermont / Oregon / California …
- Canada
Regulating cannabis: a difficult balancing act

- Take into account the current international legal context (interpretations of drug conventions vs. Positive human rights approach)

- Urgent implementation of an alternative policy vs. Over-hasty implemented policy

- Not too many restrictions, and not too few restrictions
A detailed, cautious and interventionist scenario, in 2 phases

Preparatory phase
- Elaboration scenario
- Preparatory research
- Education campaign

Phase 1
- Home cultivation for personal use
- Cannabis social clubs
- Medical cannabis distribution

Evaluation
- Effects on public health
- Tightening or loosening restrictions
- Create extra channels for production / distribution

Phase 2
Adapt model
But what is a cannabis social club?
Cannabis Social Clubs (CSCs)

What are CSCs?

- (Legal) associations of cannabis users
- Collective cultivation of cannabis, in a private space
- Non-profit
- Limited amounts, covering personal consumption by its (registered) members
- For adults
- For people who are cannabis users prior to membership
- For recreational and/or medical use
Cannabis Social Clubs (CSCs)

Different contexts and practices

- Spain: 400-600 CSCs
- Belgium: 5-10 CSCs
- Slovenia: ‘Cannabis Social Club Maribor’
- The Netherlands: ‘The Three of Life’ (Amsterdam), initiative by the city of Utrecht
- France: Fédération des CSC (CSCF) – ‘Les amis de CSCF’ (?)
- United Kingdom: UKCSC (working closely with NORML UK) (?)
- Switzerland: ‘Die Grüne Blume’ (medical CSC, 2006) (?)
- Italy: ‘laPiantiamo’ (?)

- Uruguay: part of the legal system
- Elsewhere in the world: New Zealand, Latin America, …
Cannabis Social Clubs (CSCs)

A SWOT-analysis

**Strengths**

- Not profit-driven
- Control over quality, potency and growing techniques
- No redistribution among non members (minor) and no drug tourism (cf. some Barcelona clubs)
- Only for adults: not available too easy and not leading to more consumption

**Weaknesses**

- Huge differences in house rules, structures and organization
- Unstable and fleeting nature of CSC's
- Democratic organizations: rights and decision-making capacity of the members
- Transparency
- Lack of professionalization
- Control over quality and potency
- Mixing up medical marijuana and recreational cannabis
- Morphing into marketing enterprises
## Cannabis Social Clubs (CSCs)

### A SWOT-analysis (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generating legal economic activities</td>
<td>Processes of criminalization (‘drug trafficking’, ‘promoting drug use’, ‘criminal organization’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generating tax revenues</td>
<td>Shadow clubs: fronts for dealers / criminal entrepreneurs</td>
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<td>Potential of weakening the black market</td>
<td>Systemic violence from criminal entrepreneurs: threats, theft and intimidation</td>
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<td>More democratic compared to multinational enterprises (cf. tobacco companies, pharmaceutical companies and multinational breweries)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitating detection and prevention of problematic use</td>
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</tbody>
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Cannabis Social Clubs (CSCs)

A SWOT-analysis (2)
Back to the detailed scenario
Details

- **Home cultivation:**
  - 6 plants

- **Social clubs:**
  - Registration procedure – max. 250 members – small non-profit organisations
  - No profit – no advertising
  - Membership criteria (age – Belgian residents only)
  - Production procedures (cultivation procedures) and requirement for growers
  - Cannabis products and derivates
  - Criteria for quality and potency
  - Criteria for packaging
  - Distribution procedure
  - Transparent administration and bookkeeping

- **Medical marihuana**
  - Expanding possibilities
  - Home cultivation for medical purposes
  - Strict separation of recreational and medical cannabis
  - Cannabis products of pharmaceutical quality
  - Prescription only – under medical supervision
  - Distribution via pharmacies only
Thank you!

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