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Getting Down to Cannabusiness: How to Proceed with Morocco's Cannabis Industry & the Resulting Economic and Social Impacts

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Getting Down to Cannabusiness:
*How to Proceed with Morocco's Cannabis Industry
& the Resulting Economic and Social Impacts*

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“...The police and government are playing a game of flag here. They say that it is [and] that it’s not okay so if you want to work in it you must do so secretly, but then people who have worked for years and years and years suddenly get arrested by the officers who had been turning a blind eye. The government doesn't do [anything] for this industry and doesn't change [anything].”

- Salma, a sister of cannabis farmers in Chefchaouen



Abstract:

Cannabis is one of Morocco's top industries, and Morocco is one of the world's top cannabis providers. However, the growth, sale, and consumption of cannabis is very much illegal under the current legislation. In 2016 a bill was proposed in parliament to partially legalize cannabis cultivation and was supported by both the Party of Authenticity and Modernity and the Istiqlal Party, though it ultimately failed centrally due to opposition from the Islamist Party. Within this study, I examine Morocco's current relationship with its cannabis industry and the three central potential paths from this point. The first is a continuation of the current ambiguity; the second to legalize; and the third is to fully enforce the current laws, ending in elimination of the industry - each of these paths would have immense impacts on Morocco, both economically and socially. I obtained my research through interviews with individuals in Chefchaouen (a city internationally known for its cannabis sale) and several government figures who had pushed for the recent bill proposing legalization.

Key Words:

Economics, Regional Stu: Middle East, Ethnobotany, Cannabis,

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Introduction:

After a proposed and ultimately tabled bill, decisions on cannabis in Morocco will remain inconclusive. The cannabis industry is one of great importance and profit in Morocco, particularly within the Northern Rif region. However, since the crop's introduction to the country in the 16th century, its role and legality have never been crystal clear. Through pardons, bribery, inhospitable lands, and increasing unemployment, the industry has survived, as have the industry's workers. However, mere survival for the approximate 760,000 Moroccans dependent on this industry is unacceptable (Blickman, 2017). It is my belief that a decision needs to be reached, and putting such a decision off any longer will only worsen the situation. Though the legalization proposed in 2016 did not pass, two of the three main political parties in Morocco are still very much for it, and it seems likely it will continue to be proposed in coming parliaments. Thus, it seems Morocco has three central choices - to legalize, to eliminate, or to allow the cannabis industry to continue as is.

For purposes of this study, I will be using pseudonyms for most of my interviewees with names pulled from the top five most common Moroccan names, both male and female. Also, though Morocco is mostly ranked in reference to their cannabis resin production, or hashish, kif is also produced and distributed. Within this paper, I have chosen to refer to the industry as a whole using the term cannabis. If hashish, resin, or kif are used I am referring to the subcategories. With Moroccan production, there are certain strands of hashish and kif which will be clarified when used.

Background:

The Rif region of Morocco has been financially dependent on the growing and selling of cannabis since the 1400's, as it's one of few crops able to flourish in the region's inhospitable climate. However, the drug has been strictly prohibited in Morocco since independence in 1956. Additionally, under the former King Hassan II, a pardon of sorts was placed on the town of Kitama stating that production is allowed solely within the agricultural stage - what this means for selling and distributing is unclear. It is currently prospected that the cannabis industry contributes 15-20% of Morocco's total GDP, making up about 80% of the country's informal sector. The elaborate underground system that has been set up both within Morocco and between Morocco and Spain (and through the rest of Europe) reaps immense financial benefits for all involved. If legalized, the industry could then be taxable, though these underground connections would then be cut off and the central, potentially sole, buyers of Moroccan hashish would come from pharmaceutical companies, willing to pay much less. However, there also exists a great discrepancy in the sharing of profit - it is believed that the growers receive a mere 20% of initial profits, while those who process and sell receive 80%.

Also relevant is a brief overview of Morocco's current political set up. There are three political parties relevant to the discussion of legalization - these are also the three major parties within parliament: the PJD (the central Islamist party), the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM), and the Istiqlal or Independence Party (nationalists). The PJD, or the Justice and Development Party, "is an Islamist conservative democrat party crucially supporting Moroccan monarchy. PJD disavows violence, terrorism and seeks to defend Morocco's Islamic identity through legislative means" (Organizations: Morocco: Justice and Development Party PJD, 2016).

As this party is based in Islam, and cannabis is considered haram, it adamantly opposes pushes for legalization. The PAM, or Authenticity and Modernity Party, was founded in 2008 to offer a perspective different from the PJD. Much of their efforts work towards human rights, and are also often discussed as a close ally for the king, a group to pull popularity from the PJD to better disperse power. Lastly, the Istiqlal party has played a dominant role since the initial post independence Moroccan government. It is a conservative monarchist party, and Morocco's oldest political party. In both the 2015 and 2016 elections (for the 2016 and 2017 calendar year), PJD was elected to most seats, followed by the PAM and then the Istiqlal. In 2015, PJD won 174 seats, PAM 132 seats, and Istiqlal 119 seats (Sadiqi, 2015). In 2016, things shifted slightly but had a similar outcome - PJD currently has 125 seats, PAM with 102 seats, and Istiqlal with 46 (El Amraoui, 2016).

Literature Review:

In an article posted by Moroccan World News, the "Maroc Cannabis 2016" movement was discussed, and its hopes to legalize the production of cannabis by the end of 2016, thus making it a taxable industry. As stated in Agora Vox, "Two bills were tabled by two opposition political parties: the Istiqlal party and the PAM (Authenticity and Modernity Party) to demand the legalization of the cultivation of cannabis for "therapeutic and industrial purposes and to solicit the Amnesty for the 48,000 farmers who live in semi-clandestine conditions in the north of the country" (Blickman, 2017). Obviously, the movement did not reach its goal. However, it was an important step in increasing the conversation. Perhaps most important to this conversation, though, is the history of the Rif region - both before, during and after colonization.

The rif region, or, more specifically, everything north of the Sebu River, was given to Spain as a protectorate by Britain and France, while the middle region of Morocco was given to France. Given the wealth of the two countries, and the wealth of the claimed land, great economic disparities were furthered until independence was acquired in 1956. After which began the Years of Lead, a period of gross state misconduct and crime, much of which was committed in the north (Rif, 1998). Given the mountainous terrain of the Rif region, and given Morocco's history with mountainous uprisings, the north was largely disregarded, mistreated, and undervalued as a part of Morocco. Additionally, the "French" part of Morocco contains the nation's main cities and capital, and as such a natural separation occurred through cultural differences introduced during colonization. In conclusion, the north was largely left to defend for itself - and to create what industries it could, given its impoverished situation and difficult landscape. One of the few crops that was able to grow was cannabis. The other industry was smuggling goods to and from Morocco and Spain. Given that both of these industries are illegal, a large portion of northerners also attempt to emigrate, either legally or illegally. If the production of marijuana were legalized, there is potential that northern individuals could socially benefit immensely.

In a statement released by Morocco's Ministry of Health in 2016, in support of the Morocco Cannabis 2016 bill, they stated "cannabis production is undoubtedly an income-generating activity. Legalizing its production and consumption will contribute to the evolution of Moroccan GDP by more than 4.5 points per year, to equal the global superpowers such as the US and Burkina Faso" (Krauska, 2016). The 2015 real GDP growth rates shows Morocco's growth rate at a 4.9, which would put Morocco at a whopping 9.4 growth rate if

marijuana were legalized (which would put Morocco tied for second greatest GDP growth according to 2015 statistics) (The World Bank: Morocco, 2017). However, the official numbers differ greatly from the prospected ones.

As stated by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, it is currently prospected that the buying and selling of Moroccan hashish is a \$40 billion dollar industry (U.S., U.S. State Department). Morocco is the top provider of the world's hashish (Cannabis: World Drug Report 2016). As aforementioned, the cannabis industry currently makes up 15-20% of the nation's GDP. Though it cannot be known exactly what the impact of legalization would be, the regulation of the growers, sellers, and buyers would eliminate nearly all of the industry's current actors, forcing the market to start anew through legal connections, mainly dealing with pharmaceutical companies. This would, again prospected, cut the market in half - thus contributing to 7-10% of Morocco's GDP - a significant fall.

Legalization is slowly and surely becoming yet another phenomenon of globalization. As stated in the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "In the past four years, four jurisdictions in the United States and Uruguay have passed laws to allow the production, distribution and sale of cannabis for nonmedical purposes (i.e. for recreational use), which is contrary to the spirit of the international drug control conventions" (Cannabis, 2016). This is in addition to those that have already established legal procedures, or at least decriminalization, for the cannabis industry. Colombia, Canada, Czech Republic, Uruguay, Spain, United States, Portugal, Netherlands, Switzerland and Romania make up the current list of countries with legal, or at least partially legal, marijuana use and distribution. Morocco's case, however, differs greatly from all of these. "Reports from Member States on source countries for cannabis resin

during the period 2009-2014 suggest that the world's largest producer of cannabis resin continues to be Morocco" - no other top producer has gone through legalization, and as such that transformation is an unknown process. Uruguay and United States are the two countries closely examined in the 2016 UNODC report, and though the U.S. is a producer with a past, almost all is consumed within the country. In Uruguay, "There was no prior regulation for the use of cannabis for medical purposes (although the possession of cannabis was not a criminal offense), nor was there significant illicit cannabis production". Morocco is different for a multitude of reasons - its lack of local consumption being one of them. "The subregion in which the largest amount of cannabis resin was seized in 2014 was again Western and Central Europe, accounting for 40 per cent of the global seizures of cannabis resin (Spain alone accounted for 26 per cent of the world total); 32 per cent of the world total was accounted for by countries in North Africa (mainly Morocco and Algeria) and 25 per cent was accounted for by countries in the Near and Middle East (mainly Pakistan, followed by the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan)". Morocco's 30-some percent alone is quite impressive, but Morocco is likely also responsible for much of Europe's 40%, as Morocco is the only large producer with access to / a relationship with Europe - "As in previous years, cannabis resin from Morocco was mainly smuggled to Europe and other countries in North Africa, while cannabis resin produced in Afghanistan continued to be smuggled to neighboring countries, particularly Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran".

Also relevant to the discussion is the unlikelihood of such legalization ever occurring, as another difference between Morocco and other countries working towards legalization is its status as an Islamic State. In Parliament, there are currently two central parties pushing adamantly for legalization, and another pushing adamantly against. For legalization is the

Authenticity and Modernity Party and the Istiqlal Party, who voted for a legalization bill proposed in 2016. Against is the Islamic Party, unwilling to even discuss the prospect due to the consumption of drugs being considered haram, or forbidden, under Islam. There is a movement at the moment, which started in 2007, to replace the hashish in the Rif region with alternative crops. The European Union is currently giving Morocco 50 million Euro annually to complete this task. However, the movement has thus far largely failed. The money in growing and selling other crops does not come close to the money in hashish, and it also does not supply all individuals further down the line with alternative work. Growers are the only one included in such a program, and it makes little financial sense for them to commit to it.

Morocco did not pass the bill for legalization, and as such no real decision has been reached on how to proceed. Though also factoring in social impacts, the main purpose of this study is to compare the economic impact of legalization, complete enforcement of current laws, or maintaining the complicated current state of illegal but acknowledged production/distribution. I have yet to come upon a study that fully explores Morocco's options, and emphasizes the importance of reaching and enforcing a decision. Tom Blickman of the Transnational Institute published a study "Cannabis and Morocco" in March of this year, which I will highlight throughout my paper. However, the purpose of the Transnational Institute's study is mainly to explain the industry's historical roots, and the impact that reducing cannabis would have on the region. If interested in further reading, I highly suggest his study for full historical context. The study that follows, however, takes the form of a comparative analysis - analyzing the economic and social impact of legalization, elimination, or continuation - focusing only on impacts on Morocco and its people, not pulling in international reactions as Blickman does.

Assumptions:

Before starting this study, I assumed legalization was the clear solution to Morocco's cannabis industry. I also assumed all growers, given the in discrepancies in wages, would also be for legalization. Sellers, due to their potential removal from the industry, would likely be against legalization and I anticipated the Rif region on the whole would be for legalization. However, I soon realized how wrong I was. The situation is far from simple, and as a foreigner coming in I felt I saw a clear solution. Morocco's position as a top-producing, Islamic state is one that cannot be oversimplified, and I did my best to avoid any generalizations in this study. However, that being said, given my limits on time and resources I was only able to interview a select number of individuals and the conclusions I draw are based off of these conversations and readings and in no means reflect beliefs of all Moroccans or all those involved in the industry - I merely hope to highlight a few perspectives and explain the potential paths as I have grown to understand them.

Methodology:

For this study, I lived in the old medina of Chefchaouen for two and half weeks as it's commonly referred to as the hub of Morocco's cannabis industry. I planned on interviewing two growers and two sellers during my time there - a goal that both my advisor and I found reasonable. I spent my first week getting to know the city and a few of its people, openly discussing my research with those who asked. When I told my friend Imane of my interview goals, she offered to call her friends working in the mountains. However, they did not feel safe talking with me even anonymously over the phone out of fear of being reported. Imane explained to me that recently quite a few sellers had been arrested after being interviewed by a reporter, and nobody was willing to risk exposure. I pursued other growers and sellers through another

friend with the same result. At this point, I had only a week left in Chefchaouen. I soon realized, however, most of the industry's workings were fairly common knowledge - my interviewee Hamza said about 70% of the people he knows in the region work in the industry, and all others agreed it was definitely the majority of their friends and family. I decided, rather than waste more time, to interview those I had met during my time in Chefchaouen. I was very aware of my being a foreigner asking sensitive questions in an ultimately very vulnerable population, and in the end felt grateful I was able to interview anyone at all, that my friends and acquaintances trusted me enough to openly discuss the situation, as well as their disgruntlement with the government's behavior and approaches.

After my time in Chefchaouen, I hoped to interview members of the relevant political parties - centrally the Party of Authenticity and Modernity (PAM) and the Istiqlal Party. Though many were dubious, I initially had great luck. Through a connection at a Center for Cross-Cultural Learning, I obtained the number of an Istiqlal Party member. After a bit of phone tag, he called and asked me to come to the Istiqlal headquarters. I went immediately, and was graciously welcomed. As I sat down and asked if it was okay I take notes, he clarified that this was not an interview - merely a meeting to put me in touch with others. He then called a higher-up Istiqlal Party member and two PAM members, asking if they were willing to meet with me. They all agreed. After receiving their information, I thanked Omar and left. I asked that he send me the official bill that had been tabled last year, and he agreed. He also said I should call him Monday to set up the Istiqlal interview. Monday came and I called, but he did not answer. I then called the PAM representative, who offered to meet with me that evening. After quite a bit of confusion, and several taxi rides later, we met at a coffee shop near the PAM headquarters and I

again found myself in not an interview, but a meeting. Al Haiba, the PAM representative, asked that I come into headquarters the following morning to receive an official presentation of the situation in the Rif and be given all relevant documents, including the bill. I called repeatedly the next day, all to no avail. That evening I received an apology from Al Haiba, though no word of rescheduling. I asked if perhaps the following day might work, and when that didn't earn a response, asked if I could just be sent said documents. He agreed. I also reached out to Omar from the Istiqlal Party again, and eventually made the same request. I was never sent any documents, though was given permission to use our brief conversations in my final paper.

I'm still not exactly sure what to make of these interactions. Perhaps they, too, felt unsafe discussing such sensitive matters with an outsider - but why then with the front? Perhaps they thought initially I was a reporter rather than a student, and upon realizing my lack of importance decided against wasting the energy and time. My inability to get a copy of the bill, though, I don't understand. It seems to me that such a document would be public property, and yet I have been unable to locate it. It also seems to me that with so many Moroccans being so affected by such legislation, more communication and transparency would exist. Regardless, I was ultimately immensely disappointed in my inability to conduct a full interview, official or unofficial, with a representative from either party.

The following are those I interviewed through the ISP period, the first four using pseudonyms:

Youssef: Male, 32, born and raised in Chefchaouen region, runs shop,

Hamza: Male, 24, born and raised in Chefchaouen, runs hostel

Salma: Female, 21, born and raised in Chefchaouen region, student, sister of cannabis farmers

Imane: Female, 22, born and raised in Chefchaouen, runs hostel

Al Haiba: Male, member of the Party of Authenticity and Modernity

Omar: Male, member of the Istiqlal Party

Analysis:

I will separate my findings into two central categories; economic and social impacts, and within those focus on the three central options for the cannabis industry; continuation, legalization, and elimination. As aforementioned, my findings are based on interviews and research and by no means cover all factors or results - merely my findings during my month long study.

Economic Analysis: Continuation

Morocco's economy has seen steady growth over the last fifty years, and was recently ranked the most competitive North African economy (Africa Competitiveness Report, 2017). Its labor force, last measured in 2016, is made up of 12.23 million individuals split up over three main categories - agriculture, industry, and services. As stated in the CIA World Factbook, agriculture consists of farming, fishing, and forestry. Industry consists mining, manufacturing, energy production, and construction. Services include government activities, communications, transportation, finance, and all other economic activities that do not produce material goods. By this definition, the cannabis industry contributes both to agriculture and industry, though its numbers normally contribute to Morocco's informal economy, industries outside of state control. The informal economy is difficult to study, as its positions are rarely taxed or recorded, but Morocco's is currently estimated around 50 billion dollars, and currently contributes to 43% of Morocco's official GDP (Mama & Othmane, 2016). Morocco's cannabis industry is estimated to make up the vast majority of the informal economy, and contributes between 30 and 40 billion dollars, meaning it alone makes up nearly 30% of the official GDP. The U.S. state department

states the industry is “potentially equivalent to as much as 23 percent of Morocco’s \$100 billion GDP once processed into hashish”, but regardless of the exact number, it is clearly a massive contributor.

This leads us to the first option - continuation. Provided the environmental factors remain constant, the industry would continue its impressive contribution under the guise of informal economy. On a smaller scale, however, the cannabis market is suffering. The industry, after its initial boom, has flooded with both growers and sellers causing the market value to plummet. With the supply increasing and the demand remaining constant, price fell and fell fast. In an interview with Salma, a 21-year-old student in Chefchaouen with two brothers currently working as growers, she described the current efforts to get out of the industry - the money in it is far from what it used to be, and the risk feels ever increasing. The kif and hashish now sold in the region is so cheap and available, it has lost nearly all value. Salma stated, based on her and her brothers’ knowledge of the industry, that a gram of Moroccan kif used to go for around 15 dirhams, and its current street price is a mere 2.5 dirhams. The Pakistan and Marijuana strains, newer to the region and more valuable, have fallen from 20 to 6 or 7 dirhams. This is an 84% and 68% decrease in value, respectively. Another interviewee, Youssef, 32, born and raised in the Rif region with majority of his friends and family working in the industry, gave similar prices for a then and now comparison. He also estimated that the height of the industry took place in the 1970’s and 80’s, confirmed by several authors, meaning that aforementioned fall in prices took place over the course of approximately 40 years. Assuming the regression was linear, that leaves us with a 2.1% and 1.7% annual loss in value. However, this decrease is not seen on the national scale, as the number of cannabis workers has curiously continued to increase, meaning the net

total continues to rise. However, if Salma's prediction is correct, and there's soon to be a general shift from the less and less lucrative yet increasingly risky business of cannabis, there is a chance this supply and demand will shift and higher prices will return. However, these small scale prices only make up for about 10% of the cannabis produced, for 90% of the product is exported to surrounding nations, centrally Spain from which it continues on through much of Europe (in 2003, it was estimated that 70% of Europe's hashish came from Morocco - a number that's safely assumed to have increased since as Morocco is now ranked the world's #1 supplier of cannabis) (Cannabis: World Drug Report, 2016). These transactions differ as they are international and wholesale, and knowledge on prices is largely unavailable. It is known, however, that about 180,000 tons of cannabis cross Spain's border every year, and the received payment makes up the vast majority of this 40 billion dollar industry.

So, the current industry is profitable for the nation, and will likely continue to be profitable. The European Union opposes Morocco's recent legalization legislation, potentially because of their reliance on these extensive underground connections. Additionally, to further complicate the matter, Morocco has been received mass sums of money (estimated at 50 million annually) for an alternate crop project, an effort to get cannabis farmers to switch to other crops. This has evidently included updating irrigation systems, fertilizer, education, yet out of all of my interactions while in Chefchaouen, not a single individual had even heard of such a movement, let alone know anyone who had participated. Movements like this have been going on since the 1990's without any noticeable decline in cannabis production. In an evaluation of the EU's development and poverty reduction programmes, one representative remarked that "The only

way to eradicate cannabis, is to convince the Europeans to smoke carrots”. While there’s demand, there will be supply (Blickman, 2017).

Economic Analysis: Legalization¹

The projected numbers for legalization are impressive - but it’s hard to know how accurately the current Cannabis Industry contributions are being measured. A representative of the Ministry of Health stated “legalizing its production and consumption will contribute to the Moroccan GDP by more than 4.5 percentage points per year” (Krauska, 2016). However, it’s unclear if that statistic is comparing no cannabis industry to a legalized one, or the current industry to a legalized one. The regulation and taxation would undoubtedly benefit Morocco’s economy and people, but perhaps the greatest benefit would be the surfacing of the industry. In my opinion, I feel much of the push for legalization comes from the Moroccan government yearning for validity. 20-30% of the GDP stemming from an illegal market is not a statistic often bragged about, and the desire to achieve international credibility and respect has heavily influenced the majority of King Mohammed VI’s reign. From my perspective, the legalization and regulation of such a major industry - despite the net GDP loss - could potentially bring in new international partnerships, thus expanding Morocco’s numerous, various industries.

Economic Analysis: Elimination

A complete elimination of the cannabis industry would leave Morocco’s economy and people in a rather dire situation. With 760,000 Moroccans dependent on the income cannabis provides, a replacement of the industry is necessary to prevent a soaring unemployment rates. The GDP would fall from 100.59 to 70.42 billion, a number we haven’t seen in the past decade.

¹ Exact projections were, unfortunately, unobtainable due to difficulties in interactions with aforementioned political parties.

The introduction of a new industry, however, could make up much of the loss as well as provide financial stability for the 48,000 growers currently receiving margins of what they deserve. What this new industry would provide, however, I am not in a position to say. The land in the Rif region is and always has been incapable of producing crops other than cannabis, and proposed solutions such as the European Union's alternate cultivation project will provide neither jobs nor significant GDP contribution. Both Morocco's government and its growers will not turn away from the cannabis industry until another more profitable alternative is thought of.

The need for this new industry was emphasized by all those I interviewed in Chefchaouen. They demanded factories and jobs, and if not that then at least some sort of welfare system to ensure those that have long suffered in the north do not again grow neglected. However, the issue is cyclical as the government does not (and assumedly cannot) currently provide welfare, so how could they after losing an industry as central as cannabis? To this question, I have no solution - though the situation demands one.

Social Analysis: Continuation

The inability to continue as is was unanimous from all of my interviews. The conditions of those working in the industry - primarily the growers - are inhumane and in need of immediate attention. As stated in the study's opening quote, "people who have worked years and years and years [in the industry] and then the cops came and they had to give everything they had to avoid prison — cops here if they find just small pieces in bag or pocket then you will go to prison". Bribery, blackmail, and threats from officials in the Rif region are plaguing growers and this "gray area" of acceptability is not working. In the interview with Youssef, he emphasized this

going on to say the current predicament is quickly headed towards open aggression and potential violence between the inhabitants of the Rif region and all government officials.

Furthermore, growers receive next to nothing for the product, all of the profit coming and remaining later down the line - it's projected the growers receive approximately 20% of profit, though in reality it seems to be much less, receiving an estimated 1 dirham per gram. One of my interviewees, Hamza, explained this as due to the greater risk sellers face with their international interactions. However, it is in fact those interactions that provide both security and wealth, leaving the growers to defend for themselves against the random crackdowns, which have repeatedly left growers and their families with nothing.

Social Analysis: Legalization

Socially, legalization seems to be the easy answer. Though profits would be lost, the market would be regulated and growers would at last receive their fair share. The threat of exposure and arrest would no longer loom over those 48,000 individuals, and those currently incarcerated would be free. It would cleanse the industry of its human rights violations, and allow it continue and prosper as the global phenomenon of legalization continues. Though it would cause an economic hit, the social benefits cannot be ignored. It would, however, cut all individuals from the industry apart from the farmers. Sellers and the elaborate underground connections that have been formed over centuries would be lost, and the north's already alarming unemployment would increase.

Both the Party of Authenticity and Modernity and the Istiqlal Party seem to believe the social good will outweigh the economic bad - though as aforementioned, it's unclear just how much either has analyzed the exact economic impact. In an interview with P.A.M. member Al

Haiba, he stated that PAM is talking about “issues about hashish, and [PAM’s] envisioning economic and humanity. [At the moment, there is] inhumane practicing, growing, selling and purchasing internationally”, then going on to state that the two local parties involved, growers and sellers, are not in the same situation, and it’s up to the government to provide assistance to those in the lesser position. By legalizing, the market and all its secrets is suddenly surfaced, again allowing full regulation and taxation. The system hasn’t been working without government interference, and things aren’t likely to change.

Social Analysis: Elimination

Much to my surprise, the vast majority of those interviewed in Chefchaouen called for a total elimination and replacement of the industry. In all of their minds, and in all reality, legalization seems incomprehensible for Morocco. Those working in the industry are not seeing the expected profit, and it’s no longer worth the risk. Back in the 70’s and 80’s, individuals were getting rich. But, as any economic boom, the market flooded and the financial gain is now negligible. Legally, Morocco has already eliminated the industry - but they continue to turn a blind eye as long as the contribution to their GDP remains and those in the region are compliant. The industry will not survive, and most do not feel it’s worth saving. Jobs are what are and always have been sought after - a chance to succeed. Salma, when asked what she would do if she were in charge of the future of the cannabis industry, stated that

I will search and do anything to make every person switch from hashish to a different industry, end hashish altogether. Most people now are suffering from it - getting tired from working in it and are losing money from cops and the people, losing energy.

Change would be welcome. Families are just trying to support themselves. The families

in the region all work - the small ones, the old ones, the big ones - from February to May to sell it in June and then they still don't get enough money to support themselves.

The cannabis industry perhaps once worked, but it isn't now and from my experience the entire region is exhausted of this never ending game of flag. Elimination is what the people want, but it seems unlikely and unreasonable to expect that Morocco could replace an entire industry.

Conclusion:

Morocco's cannabis industry has been a significant part of the country's economy and social makeup for centuries, but can no longer continue in the informal, underground manner it historically has. The people of the Rif region are growing understandably restless, and the inequalities within the industry will not persist without resistance, without the government implementing change. I walk away from this study without a clear solution - whether elimination or legalization, I do not know. Continuation, however, is not an answer. As parliament disputes, those 48,000 growers are living impoverished and threatened. The discrepancy in the desire for legalization between the people and the government surprised me - it seems the Party of Authenticity and Modernity and the Istiqlal Party rather save what they can of the current industry, rather than shut it down. But either way, jobs in the north are needed in a very real way - jobs that are not being supplied. Legalization would be great - supply a safe, steady income for many Moroccans. However, it would also remove all those further down the assembly line - all sellers and processors will be out of work - elimination, obviously, would put all out of work. This may appear to present continuation as the most sensible path regarding employment, but

now too jobs are needed and not available. Whatever Morocco's ultimate decision may be, employment opportunities must come out of it. From all of the young Moroccans I interviewed in the Chefchaouen region, all lamented about their lack of opportunities, that they should be deciding between real career options, not between unemployment and illegal employment. Salma, at the end of her interview, sighed and said "I want to leave Morocco. All people dream of leaving, because a successful life is not an option here". Those in the Rif region do not need to emigrate - and they should not have to choose between that and working in illegal industries. Whatever Morocco's decision in the end, jobs are a required result both for the economy and people of the Rif region.

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