Lebanon's green plans

Exploring the contribution of cannabis legalisation to sustainable rural development in Lebanon

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[1] Cannabis farmer in Lebanon's Beqaa
https://canadalegaloctober17.com/lebanons-cannabis-heartland-bekaa-hopes-for-legalization/

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Acknowledgements and notice

In the week of the thesis submission, a massive deadly explosion rocked the port of Beirut, devastating the lives and spirits of thousands. As I am still trying to comprehend the magnitude of the physical, emotional, and economic consequences, and as my initial disbelief is transforming into anger and grief, I have decided to leave this event out of the thesis report. I acknowledge the immense shift in priorities, and the overall instability that the country will most likely endure. However, the data collection, analysis and all the findings discussed in this report were finalised before the August 4 explosion.

Abstract

In April 2020, amid a serious financial crisis and the coronavirus pandemic, Lebanon legalised the production of cannabis for medicinal and industrial use, a first in the Arab World. This research reviews the legislation process and describes the differentiated sustainable development outcomes that this legalisation is expected to have on different affected groups.

The issue of drug production and use, specifically cannabis, is increasingly being assessed from a sustainable development perspective. Both agendas are slowly converging at the global level, and this research feeds into this discussion.

By conducting a desk study coupled with expert interviews and a narrative analysis of the legislation and the process of its passing, the research is divided into two phases. The first is dedicated to the sustainable development angle, and reviews lessons learned in key countries that made comparable reforms globally. The second focuses on the Lebanese context and lawmaking process to analyse the narrative that accompanies the legalisation.

The study finds two types of contradictions in the legalisation. First, a disconnect between what the legislation claims to target, and what it is actually expected to result in, and second, a disconnect between the top-down law-making priorities and the actual needs of the affected groups.

The research concludes that following a global trend in drug policy reform does not automatically mean positive developmental outcomes. On the contrary, this could be another move that reinforces existing power structures and social imbalances. At the local level, the research recommends the integration of this policy into a national sustainable development strategy and a national drug policy strategy rather than operating it in a separate realm.

Key words: Cannabis legalisation, sustainable rural development, drug policy, differentiated outcomes.

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1.   Introduction

1.1.   Background and problem definition

In April 2020, the Parliament of Lebanon passed a law that regulates the cultivation and trade of cannabis for medicinal and industrial purposes, a first in the Arab world. This research aims to explore the implications of this law on different players and understand the extent to which it contributes to the pressing local needs.

Cannabis is the most popular drug in the world (UNODC, 2019), but the plant has a broad range of utilities beyond its psychoactive effect, including in religion, medicine, and industry. Being a plant that does not require a rich soil quality, it can be grown on marginal lands and provide profitable returns to rural dwellers (UNDP, 2015), at least more so than legal cash crops. Unlike other drugs that are characteristically grown or produced in developing countries, cannabis cultivation has become present in all regions of the world (UNODC, 2019). Because of its psychoactive uses, it is classified as a Schedule IV drug in the 1961 *Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs*, which is the most restrictive category that also includes Heroin (UN, 1961). Indeed, the Convention describes drug addiction as "a serious evil for the individual […] fraught with social and economic danger" (p. 1), and this helped set the scene for drugs to be seen above all as a security threat, which justified the prohibitionist approach that has dominated the global drug policy agenda.

Drugs are now increasingly considered as a development issue with the recent focus on harm reduction strategies and public health-oriented interventions rather than prohibitionist ones that have repeatedly proven ineffective (Bromacher & Westerbarkei, 2019). This is especially true to for cannabis, as increasingly countries in the Global South have realised its importance to rural livelihoods (Bloomer, 2019) as well as public health (IDPC, 2018). In 2019, the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended the reclassification of cannabis under Schedule I in international treaties (Angell, 2019), recognising its health benefits. Member countries of the United Nations (UN)'s Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) are expected to vote on this reclassification in December of 2020. Now, global estimates expect the legal cannabis market to reach USD 66 billion by 2025 (Rivera, 2019).

Lebanon is undergoing a serious economic crisis with a deficit of foreign currency needed for stability, so the partial legalisation of cannabis is expected to attract investments and help rehabilitate the economy. This adds Lebanon to the list of countries that have relaxed their cannabis laws at varying degrees. In addition to the overall hopes of economic gains, the stated objectives in the law are concerned with achieving sustainable development and ensuring public health and safety. However, the problem is that there are some conditions in the law and policy-making process that are contradicting to these objectives, based on the

experiences of other countries, and based on global drugs and development policy recommendations.

Within the growing attention given to cannabis as a development issue, Gerwel (2018) highlights "the lack of poverty focused social scientific research on the potential of cannabis cultivation to promote inclusive growth compared to the wealth of natural science research on the impacts of cannabis" (p. 13). This is a gap that the study attempts to fill, as little to no research has been conducted about the potential contribution of cannabis legalisation to sustainable development in rural Lebanon. In broader terms, the research explores how a government in crisis sets a new policy responding to a consulting company's recommendations for economic gain, and the potential to make it benefit the local context that it affects.

The thesis starts by setting the theoretical foundations that guided the reasoning and analysis in the research (Chapter 2). In this section, approaches to drug policy and sustainable development are discussed, and key concepts are defined. Next, the research design and methodology are showcased in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents key impacts and patterns observed in countries that have undertaken comparable cannabis policy decisions. The local context in its social, economic and political specificities is introduced in Chapter 5. Then, the analysis of the law begins in Chapter 6 where the specific process and implications of the legislation passed in Lebanon are explored. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by answering the research questions and proposing recommendations and future research suggestions.

1.2.   Objective and research questions

The aim of the research is two-fold. First, it seeks to gather insights about the economic, social, environmental as well as political dimensions of legalising cannabis observed in countries that have undertaken this measure. Second, it discusses the specificities of the new Lebanese law in terms of context and conditions, and what opportunities and threats it can generate for the Baalbek-Hermel area. This will help advise policymakers and the Regulatory Commission to be formed about ways to make this law benefit the broader community and meet its sustainable development objective.

The research questions are as follows:

Main RQ – *To what extent can the partial legalisation of cannabis contribute to sustainable development for different players in Lebanon?*

SQ1 – What lessons can be learned from countries in the Global South that have implemented cannabis policy reforms?

SQ2 – What do the legalisation process and narrative in Lebanon reveal about the differentiated interests, priorities and expected outcomes?

SQ3 – How does the regulation of cannabis position to other pressing challenges in the country?

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Bridging the drugs and development discourses

Historically, the approach to control the 'world drug problem' has been through a supply-side prohibitionist stance with militarised interventions to stop all production activity. The entities holding drug policy discussions have traditionally operated in separate realms both at the national level through diplomacy and law enforcement institutions, and international level through specialised UN agencies that do not engage in dialogue across fields (Alimi, 2019). Decisions about restricting drug supply were taken without consideration to the livelihoods of the individuals producing them, as is visible in Article 22 of the 1961 *Convention*, stating:

"*A Party prohibiting cultivation of the opium poppy or the cannabis plant shall take appropriate measures **to seize any plants illicitly cultivated and to destroy them**, except for small quantities required by the Party for scientific or research purposes*" (UN, 1961, p. 12).

This punitive approach has justified decades of violence, loss of lands and livelihoods, and environmental damage, as for example the much-criticised US-led "War on Drugs". In 2008, in the yearly CND meetings held in Vienna, the UNODC executive director recognised the "unintended consequences" of the repressive drug policies. He mentioned inter alia the thriving black markets, the lowered access to healthcare caused by a disproportional funding in law enforcement as well as by the criminalisation of drug users, and the shifting of drug production activities to other locations also called the 'balloon effect' (IDPC, 2018). This is to say that recently, there is an acknowledgement that current criminalising drug control policy can have detrimental consequences on livelihoods, "sometimes more so than the drugs themselves" (Carrier & Klantschnig, 2016; p.185). This is reflected in the 2018 *International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) 'Shadow Report'* which concludes that the 2009 goals in the international Plan of Action were not reached, and "in many cases have resulted in

counterproductive policies" (p.7), and for this reason, member states should seek policies that align with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (IDPC, 2018).

The link between drug policy and development first appeared in the 1988 *UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances*, though still placing rural development in second place after repressive drug policies (Bromacher & Westerbarkei, 2019). The shared view is that problems of drug production and consumption undoubtedly reveal underlying socioeconomic development issues, and that drug policy should tackle these root problems in order to be truly effective (Bromacher & Westerbarkei, 2019). The discussion then increasingly started to include Alternative Development (AD) approaches, defined by the 1998 '*Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication of Illicit Drug Crops and on Alternative Development*' as:

"*A process to prevent and eliminate the illicit cultivation of plants containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances through* **specifically designed rural development measures in the context of sustained national economic growth and sustainable development efforts** *in countries taking action against drugs, recognizing the particular socio-cultural characteristics of the target communities and groups, within the framework of a comprehensive and permanent solution to the problem of illicit drugs*" (UNGA, 1998).

AD was initially conceived as a program for crop substitution, but then developed to become a more comprehensive approach. Although this stance is a clear improvement from the 1961 call for crop destruction, AD initiatives are criticised for still prioritising crop eradication, not generating significant success, and not tackling issues of power and politics for a meaningful social change (Buxton, 2015; IDPC, 2018; Bromacher & Westerbarkei, 2019). AD is therefore described by drug policy scholars as a "technically weak add-on to enforcement strategies" (Buxton, 2015, p. 15) that does not properly address the drug issue from a sustainable development perspective. Nevertheless, AD or some of its aspects was still adopted by several countries, recognising the importance of a socioeconomic approach to drug problems (Bromacher & Westerbarkei, 2019).

Building on these views, and in light of the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the conversation culminated in the months leading up to the 2016 UNGASS which had the potential to be a turning point in the drugs-development narrative. As experts have noticed that drug policies are "inconsistent or even contradictory to the global development agenda" (Bromacher & Westerbarkei, 2019, p. 94), increasingly drug and development policy practitioners and scholars have called for a convergence of the goals and interventions of the two agendas. Indeed, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development issued in 2015 was the first global development agenda that references illicit drug trafficking and use under some of its goals (Alimi, 2019). This is why the 2016 UNGASS presented a window of opportunity for policy actors to push for the integration of approaches. The Session's Outcome Document

also explicitly refers to the SDGs, which shows that the shift in narrative is gaining traction at the international level, as signatory states recognise:

"*We welcome the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and we note that **efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to effectively address the world drug problem are complementary and mutually reinforcing**.*" (UNODC, 2016).

The shift in discourse is nevertheless very recent, and apart from a scattered number of platforms favouring the bridging of the dialogue, there has been no considerable paradigm shift at the global level. Alimi (2019) notes that the challenge of this bridging lies in the fact that the SDGs themselves echo the old narrative of the "drug-free world" which undermines the complexity of the problem by focusing on the simplistic control of supply and demand. In addition, neither the 2030 Agenda nor the 2016 UNGASS document are legally binding, which means that countries are left to interpret and implement the agreements at their own will. This brings in the question of politics which will be further developed in the next sections.

2.2.   Evaluating drugs and development policy indicators

Recently, some scholars and drug policy practitioners have started questioning the persistence of AD and the traditional approaches to drug control despite no evidence of their success. One common argument is that the standards used to measure the impacts of drug policies, even though simplistic and misleading, largely ensure the steadiness of the approach (Buxton, 2015; Bewley-Taylor & Schneider, 2016; Alimi, 2019; UNDP, 2015); a phenomenon Bewley-Taylor (2016) refers to as the "metrics trap" (p.6).

Traditionally used metrics that assess the impacts of drug policies are generally related to law enforcement activities. These are, for example, the numbers of drug users, hectares of crops eradicated, numbers of laboratories destroyed, or drugs seized. Bewley-Taylor (2016) explains that although contested, these indicators are "politically attractive to governments and some international agencies" (p.3) because they help paint an image of an active and successful governing entity to the voters and tax-payers. In addition, they provide insight and an extent of certainty into the otherwise obscure illicit drug markets by shedding a light on trading routes, criminal organisations involved and trends of drug use. However, by providing an illusion of "success" of drug policy with increasing numbers reported, these policies and indicators strengthen the prevailing assumptions and priorities, leading to path dependency in the drug policy debate. This view is supported by Buxton (2015) who writes that the reporting system that is adopted to evaluate AD programs is an impediment to long-term development strategies. This is because evaluations are conducted through quarterly and yearly reporting, which pressures implementing parties to provide evidence of outputs, forcing haphazard interventions for the purpose of reporting results.

The table below illustrates some arguments made against the predominant metrics that have been subject of debate:

Type of indicators	Arguments against	Source
Drugs, crops and laboratories destroyed	**Imprecise** because the overall volume of drugs produced is unknown in the first place, so the volume of drugs destroyed means little in relative terms	(Bewley-Taylor & Schneider, 2016)
	Reductionist because it does not take into account human development indicators, or the complex role that illicit crops play in farmers' livelihoods and household decision-making	(Buxton, 2015)
	Counterproductive because it has resulted in armed conflicts and displacement, with a disproportionate impact on vulnerable communities including indigenous and ethnic minorities	(UNDP, 2015)
Numbers of drug users	**Misleading** because it does not distinguish between different types of drugs and user behaviours, and therefore it says nothing about the harms created by drug use or control practices	(Bewley-Taylor & Schneider, 2016)

Table 1 Contested "*Process*" Drug Policy Indicators

Practitioners who are in favour of a progressive, evidence and science-based reform to drug policy agree that these "*process* indicators" (Bewley-Taylor, 2016, p.4) do little to showcase the real *outcomes* created by current drug policy interventions. They could in fact be causing more harm than good and creating new forms of inequality that are often overlooked (Buxton, 2015).

Here also the discourses of drugs and development meet because development evaluation is also largely indicator-based, but this does not mean that adopting indicators that satisfy both agendas simultaneously is without challenges. Indeed, the definition of the concept of sustainable development is surely influenced by the person's "underlying worldview" (Giddings et al., 2002; Kemp & Martens, 2007), just as the development of drug policy metrics is value-laden and subjective (Bewley-Taylor, 2016). The next paragraph then defines the concept of SD in the interest of this research and explains the operational reasoning that the findings are based on.

2.3.   The concept of sustainable development

There have been multiple attempts to define and operationalise SD by scholars, and many agree that the concept itself is generic (Giddings et al., 2002; Kemp & Martens, 2007). Even the classic Brudtland commission's definition as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987) has been criticised for being ambiguous in an attempt to reach wide consent (Delli Paoli & Addeo, 2019; Giddings et al., 2002).

Since then, the general consensus is that for an activity or policy to be sustainable, it should be beneficial in the three categories or 'pillars': economically, socially, and environmentally, or the "people, planet, profit" model (Pope et al., 2004). The "nested view" (Figure 1) of the three-pillar model is adopted in this research. In this perspective, the economy is embedded into society, and both are within the boundaries of the environment, emphasising the interdependence of the three pillars that do not operate in separate realms (Giddings et al., 2002).
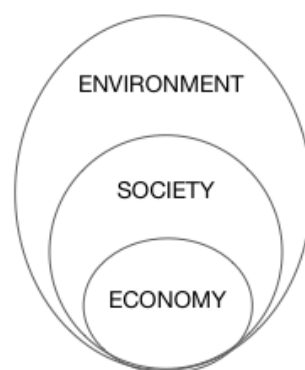
Figure 1 "Nested view" of SD's three-pillar model (author's own)

Other authors have opposed the over-simplification of the dynamics of human-nature interaction by adding other important pillars such as the cultural, political and spiritual dimensions (Griessler & Littig, 2005; Dahl, 2012). Additionally, some have denounced the way the model places the three pillars on an equal level, and by this, it does not adequately represent the prevalence and the inevitable trade-offs of the economy over the two other dimensions that exist in real life (Griessler & Littig, 2005).

Nevertheless, the separation of sustainability into economic, social and environmental pillars that are interdependent but balanced is still useful for the operational analysis of a policy. This is why the three-pillar model with its nested view is a basis that guides the study of the repercussions of legalising the cultivation of cannabis.

In parallel, the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set in 2015 to be achieved by 2030 are another intergovernmental attempt to practically define and reach SD. Delli Paoli & Addeo (2019) have classified each of the Goals into the three-pillar model based on the sectors targeted by the indicators of each goal. For example, the indicators of SDG2 (Zero hunger) are mainly concerned with food security or the way food is grown and produced, meaning the availability of farm land, plant or animal resources, so SDG2 is placed under the Environmental pillar. Their classification is presented in Figure 2, although it excludes SDGs 6 and 14.

Figure 2 Integration of SDGs into the three pillars (Delli Paoli & Addeo, 2019)

The 17 SDGs are not all relevant for the purpose of this research. Instead, in the last five years, there have been multiple propositions by international policy players and CSOs to leverage the efforts made by both the drugs and development agendas to develop metrics that value human rights, health, security and other environmental and socioeconomic outcomes over law enforcement (HPA, 2015; UNDP, 2015; IDPC, 2018; Riboulet-Zemouli et al., 2019). These contributions show in practice how the convergence of both discourses can be mutually beneficial, and how the targets and indicators of a certain policy reflects the priorities and desired outcomes that it acts upon.

 Riboulet-Zemouli et al. (2019)'s *Cannabis and Sustainable Development* report discusses recommendations for the implementation of cannabis policies in alignment with the relevant SDGs. It is a practical tool that will be used in the conceptualisation of *sustainable development* for the purpose of this research specifically. Based on this report, and on Delli Paoli & Addeo (2019)'s classification, Figure 3 presents how the three-pillar model including the SDGs that are relevant for this research are used in the study.
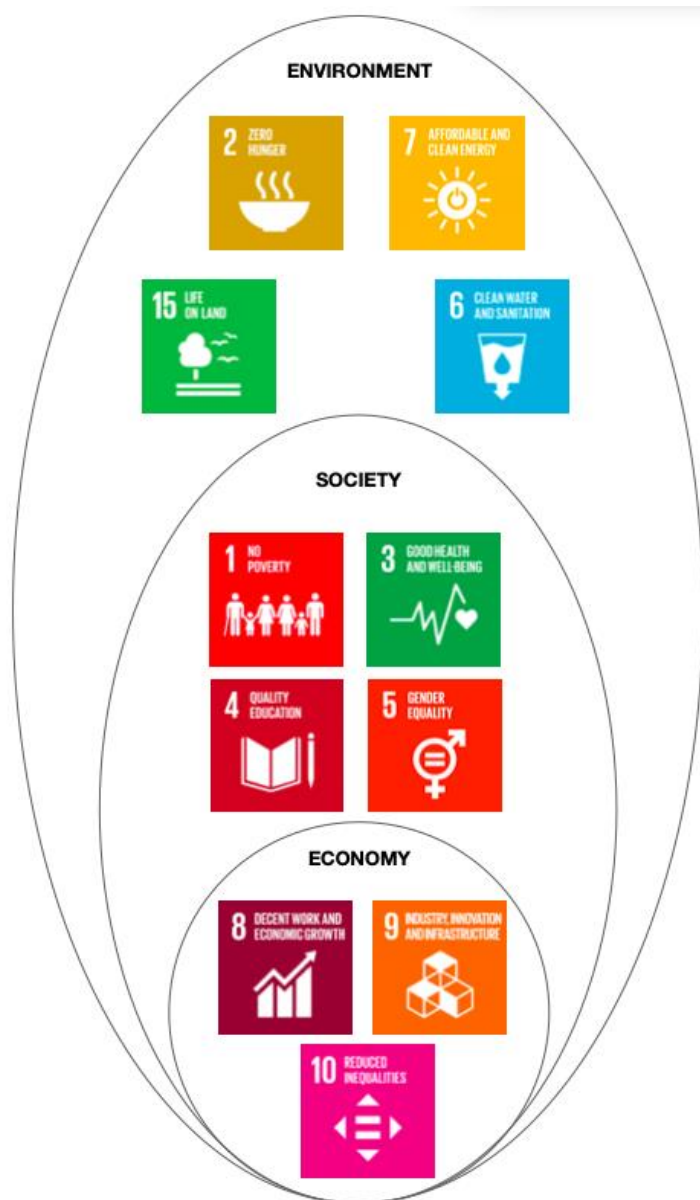
Figure 3 Integration of cannabis policy-related SDGs into the nested 3-pillar model (Author's own)

As this research is concerned with the making of a new law, SDGs 16 and 17, which are related to the politics and institutions that are in place, are not included in the three-pillar model. These goals are discussed separately as part of the reflection about the regulatory framework and governance system related to the legislation.

Further, the IDPC (2018) report builds upon the seven chapters of the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document and relates it to the SDGs in addition to propositions made by other CSOs and government entities. The proposed indicators are presented in Annex 1 where the relevant adaptations are explained. In Table 2 below, only one part of the table is presented, showing the first indicator of the first Goal, as an example of the outcome indicators that guide the analysis.

SDG	Original SDG target / indicator	Possible drug policy target/indicator & relevant paragraph in the UNGASS Outcome Document
1- No poverty	**Indicator 1.1.1:** Proportion of population below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural)	Proportion of people who use drugs below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural) (para 1.h)
		Proportion of population below the international poverty line in areas affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale, by sex, age (urban/rural) (para 3.b)
		Proportion of people living below the poverty line in communities affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale (para 3.b, 5.v, 7.b)
		Poverty level among families where illegal drug cultivation is the primary source of income (para 3.b, 5.v, 7.b)
		Poverty levels among people prosecuted/arrested for drug supply/trafficking offences (para 3.b, 5.v, 7.b)
		Comparison of poverty levels before and two years after sustainable development programmes have been implemented, in areas affected by illegal crop cultivation (para 7.b, 7.j)

Table 2 Proposed "Outcome" Drug and Development policy indicators (adapted from IDPC, 2018)

Alimi (2019) contends that the indicators used to measure policy impacts are themselves important "tools to modify the existing ideological structures of a problem and give account of the evolving realities of priorities" (p. 42). Departing from this view, the indicators proposed in the IDPC (2018) report are used as a basis for interpreting the motivations and expected outcomes of the Lebanese legislation. They will be measured against the content of the law and the narrative adopted by different players to assess their degree of convergence in terms of what it seeks to achieve and how.

2.4. Politics, power and new inequalities

The sections above have described the evolution of the global discussion about drug policy and development, however what is noticeably absent from the global debate is the country-specific politics and policymaking that play the biggest part in whether or not the international treaties are implemented. This is a key contribution of this research to the debate about drugs and development. In fact, as Alimi (2019) puts it, "if global norms and agendas may constitute incentives, [...] all actors [...] operate within the context of politics and any hope of progress rests with the political arena" (p.44).

Some authors have indeed approached the issue of cannabis legalisation through the theoretical perspectives of political economy (Halvaksz, 2007; Duvall, 2019), or political ecology (Bloomer, 2009; Aggarwal, 2013; Zurayk, 2013). Political economy is the study of the interrelationship between political institutions and economic systems (Aggarwal, 2013), and political ecology is the study of the relations between humans and the environment (Robbins, 2011). Both of these theoretical perspectives hold at their core the key concept of political power generating unequal gains to different groups. This is why they must be included in the research about legalising cannabis. This will add to the prominent literature about the power dynamics in issues such as land acquisition, ownership and access to resources.

Ultimately, this research is about the legalisation of a product that was previously illegal, for the sake of economic gains. It can be paralleled to the issue of formalisation of informal economic sectors, which has been a subject of debate in the development literature. Sepulveda & Syrett (2007, p.89) define 'informal' economic sectors as "*activities producing goods and services which can be 'legal' or 'illegal', can be based on 'monetary' and 'non-monetary transactions', which evade or avoid taxation and/or fail to comply with state regulations*". Formalisation is then a process in which governments, often in a top-down approach, take control over the resources used in order to steer the sector towards the production of public goods or economic growth (Putzel et al., 2015). In this process, the belief is that informal work is an unsustainable sector that generates unstable conditions and vulnerable livelihoods to those involved. It thus needs to be dealt with on a national level through state policies that put an end to such practices (Portes & Haller, 1996; Williams, 2005).

While the rationale and objectives of formalising an illegal sector appear to be logical and beneficial, some studies show that often there is a "*disconnect*" (Putzel et al., 2015, p. 455) between the top-down goals and formalisation process, and the local contexts and people who are directly affected by them. This concept is important to explore, as this will reflect the norms and values that different actors hold about the plant that was previously a crime, now expected to contribute to the country's economic rehabilitation. Going back to the previous

paragraph about the significance of the metrics used to evaluate a certain policy, this research supports the view that the choice of metrics is a political one in a country like Lebanon.

Therefore, this research will contemplate the policy-making process that went into passing the cannabis legislation. The governance structure and the different actors who were included or excluded from the law-making process will be an indicator for the priorities that this law hopes to achieve, and the potential inequalities created in the process.

3.   Research design and methodology

3.1.   Research strategy

The research adopts a qualitative approach. This is because the aim is to explore and understand a topic that is not widespread in its nature. The intended results are more of an in-depth analysis of a complex issue – rather than a large-scale survey which would give more superficial but numerous answers, i.e. the focus is on "depth" over "breadth" (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010, p.156).

The strategy of the research is divided into three phases. First, Phase 1 is used to explore insights into the policy-making, economic, social and environmental dimensions involved in cannabis legalisation in key countries across the globe. This is done by reviewing available evidence of challenges and opportunities faced by other countries in the Global South that have made similar legislation moves, such as Lesotho, Jamaica and Colombia. Then, the findings are coupled with interviews with Lebanese SD experts, and related to the case of the legalisation in Lebanon – from a SD perspective.

Next, Phase 2 is dedicated to understanding the local context of Lebanon and Baalbek-Hermel specifically, and the role that cannabis legalisation plays in it. Phase 2 sets the scene in terms of the local governance structure and cannabis-related history, activities and impacts. In addition, in this phase, the policymaking and decision process of the legalisation are assessed with a narrative analysis that reveals the actors involved and aspects prioritised. The input is mainly from legal experts, legislators who were involved in drafting the bill, and drug-policy related civil society organisations (CSOs) such as *Skoun NGO*, the *Legal Agenda*...

Finally, in Phase 3, the results of the previous phases are combined to draw conclusions about the prognosis of the outcomes expected from the regulation as well as to come up with recommendations for how policymakers can ensure the new law contributes to sustainable development in the Baalbeck-Hermel district, therefore responding to the main research question.

The research strategy is summarised in Figure 4.
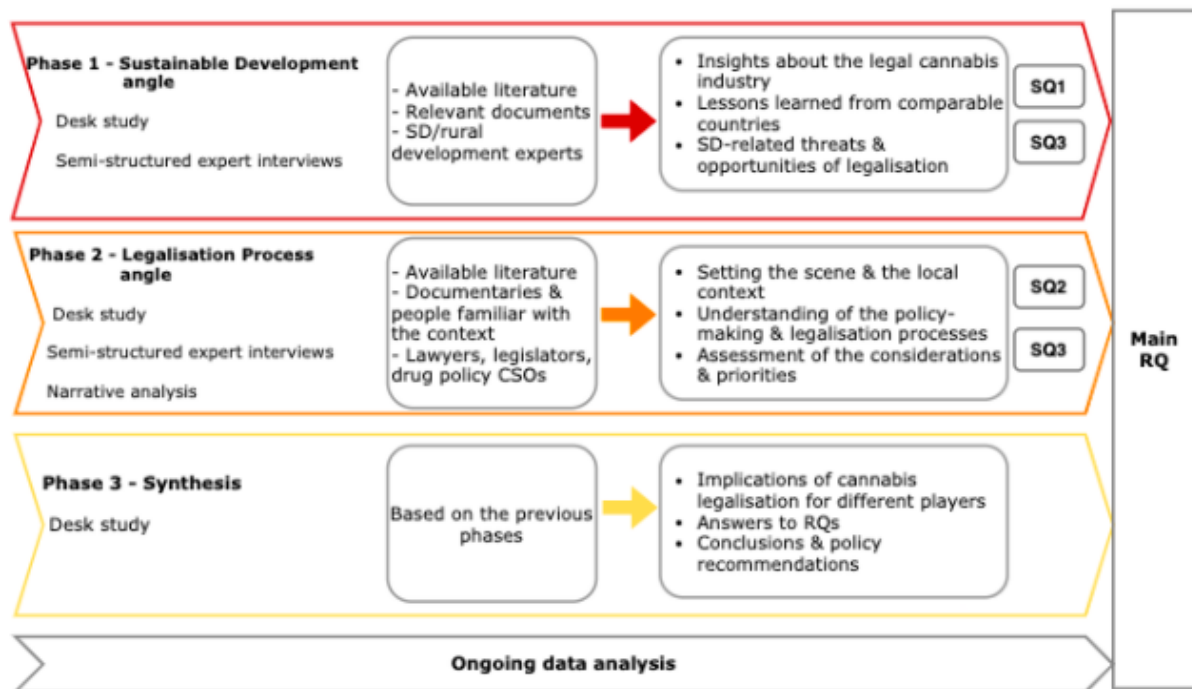
Figure 4 The research strategy (Author's own)

3.2.   Research methods

The research mainly relies on a desk study to review previously published studies and reports and gather available insights and relevant online reactions. In addition, interviews are conducted with legal experts and rural development experts to explore the Lebanese context in specific.

The data collection took place from April 2020 until the end of June 2020 for Phase 1 and 2. This process was complemented by a continued literature review and data analysis. The recommendations (Phase 3) and writing of the thesis report were done in July 2020.

3.2.1. Desk study

The desk study is divided into two parts: first, it consists of reviewing published reports, newspaper articles and journal articles by scholars, journalists, CSOs and practitioners in the drug policy and cannabis industry fields. This helps gather insights about experiences and lessons learned from countries that made comparable reforms. Second, the focus is shifted to Lebanon specifically with a continuous monitoring of the developing news and local reactions to the legislation. In addition, a podcast interview and a webinar are studied to understand the local context and the experts' opinions about the regulation. These are listed below:

Online medium	Title	Organiser	Link to source	Reference code
Podcast	أوهام تشريع الحشيشة في لبنان ("Delusions of hashish legalisation in Lebanon")	Legal Agenda	https://soundcloud.com/qanuni-podcast/so2-e22 (in Arabic)	POD
Webinar	Policy Implications of Legalizing Cannabis Cultivation in Lebanon	Lebanese American University	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbIkLMVsAz8 (in English)	WEB

Table 3 Podcast & webinar used in the study

3.2.2. Semi-structured interviews

With the exception of MPs Yaacoubian and Hankach, the interviews were conducted either online or by phone in keeping with the COVID-19-related safety measures. Interview guides were tailored to each respondent's relevant field of expertise; however, the questions were not restricted to the list, and follow-ups were also posed where applicable. These lists can be found in Annex 2. Before proceeding with the interviews, respondents were informed about the purpose and audience of the research, and they gave their consent to be mentioned and quoted in the report. The interviewees and their positions are listed in Tables 4 and 5 below:

Name of interviewee	Position
Alfredo Pascual	International Analyst – *Marijuana Business Daily*
Adib Nehmeh	Advisor in Development and Poverty
Kanj Hamade	Assistant Professor of Agricultural Economics & Rural Development – *Lebanese University*
Saada Allaw	Journalist and Hermel resident – *Legal Agenda*

Table 4 Interviews conducted in Phase 1

Name of interviewee	Position
Karim Nammour	Lawyer – *Legal Agenda*
Michel Moussa	Lebanese Member of Parliament, Head of the Human Rights Parliamentary Committee
Paula Yaacoubian	Lebanese Member of Parliament (at the time of legislation, interview and writing)
Elias Hankach	Lebanese Member of Parliament (at the time of legislation, interview and writing)
Dr. Mohamed Farran	Professor in the Faculty of Agriculture – *American University of Beirut*

Table 5 Interviews conducted in Phase 2

3.2.3. Narrative analysis

This research supports the view that words and language matter in the ways public policies are designed and conveyed (van den Brink & Metze, 2006). Therefore, an analysis of the content of Law 178/20 and the narrative accompanying it is conducted to understand the underlying goals and priorities that the lawmakers hope to achieve with the legislation.

As legal texts do not exist independently from the societies in which they are conceived (Hewitt, 2009), the analysis is not limited to the legal text, but also encompasses the opinions of the policymakers who voted with and against the law. For this purpose, the Lebanese policy-making system is introduced in the political background chapter (Chapter 5) and is further explored in the discussion about the narrative of the law (Chapter 6).

The analysed documents and conversations are the following:

Document / conversation	Source	Reference code
Law 178/20	Hard copy obtained (in Arabic)	M1 or Law 178
Televised episode of "It's About Time" show hosting Yassine Jaber (MP), Antoine Habchi (MP) & Hafez Mahmoud Al Mawla (Lawyer of the committee for the general amnesty and tribes and families)	https://www.mtv.com.lb/vod/en/video/207137 (time: 21:50 to 1:16:00)	M2
Article mentioning points of view of the parliamentary blocks	https://www.legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=6774&fbclid=IwAR2rpSykb5xHY0PzhEy2TOJIHl7kin8Ge6_GMM1wfgc_13Z6yo0C4Di1kS0	M3
Video interview of current cannabis farmers	https://www.facebook.com/278035695547539/videos/699461604178922	M4

Table 6 Material used in the narrative analysis

Since it is a highly subjective method, a clear demonstration and structuration of the approach are helpful in guiding the operationalisation of the analysis. This research therefore adopts a "structured approach" (Hewitt, 2009, p.10), adapted from the methodologies of Sharp & Richardson (2001) and Hajer (2006), both rooted in the Foucauldian theories of discourse, knowledge and power.

As the analysis is all about the meaning and weight of the words employed, the text was analysed in the original language it was written in, i.e. in Arabic. The text of the law that was issued in the Lebanese Official Gazette on June 4, 2020 (volume 23) was obtained and analysed using NVivo software. The codes and analysis were conducted in English in order to correspond to the language of this thesis. The different paragraphs of the law were coded based on the occurring themes. The final section, i.e. the Rationale and Objectives part was not included in the analysis as it is not part of the eight sections of the law but rather a justification for it. Lastly, a Word Frequency query was run on Nvivo to extract the most frequently used words, with 3-letter words being the minimum, and pronouns being assigned as *Stop Words* so that they are excluded from the count.

The framework below (Figure 5) represents the structure that the reasoning is based on. The term "text" is employed to mean the material listed in Table 6:

Environment	Society	Economy	Politics & Policymaking
•How does the text account for the environmental impacts? •Are the environmental costs / benefits mentioned? In what contexts?	•How does the text talk about particular actors (ex: farmers, patients, drug users...) •Which actors / target groups come forward? and which are left behind •What societal issues are emphasised in the text? Which are neglected (ex: public health, access to legal markets...) •Are the societal costs / benefits mentioned? In what contexts?	•Which economic aspects are emphasised in the text? Which are neglected? •Are the economic costs / benefits mentioned? In what contexts?	•Who are the policymakers, what institutions do they belong to? •What is their voiced opinion about the law?

Coding for Environmental themes

Coding for Social themes

Coding for Economic themes

In what way is the text selective?
What overall message does the text convey; to whom?

What environmental, social & economic outcomes are prioritised in this law based on the goals, target groups and background of the authors?
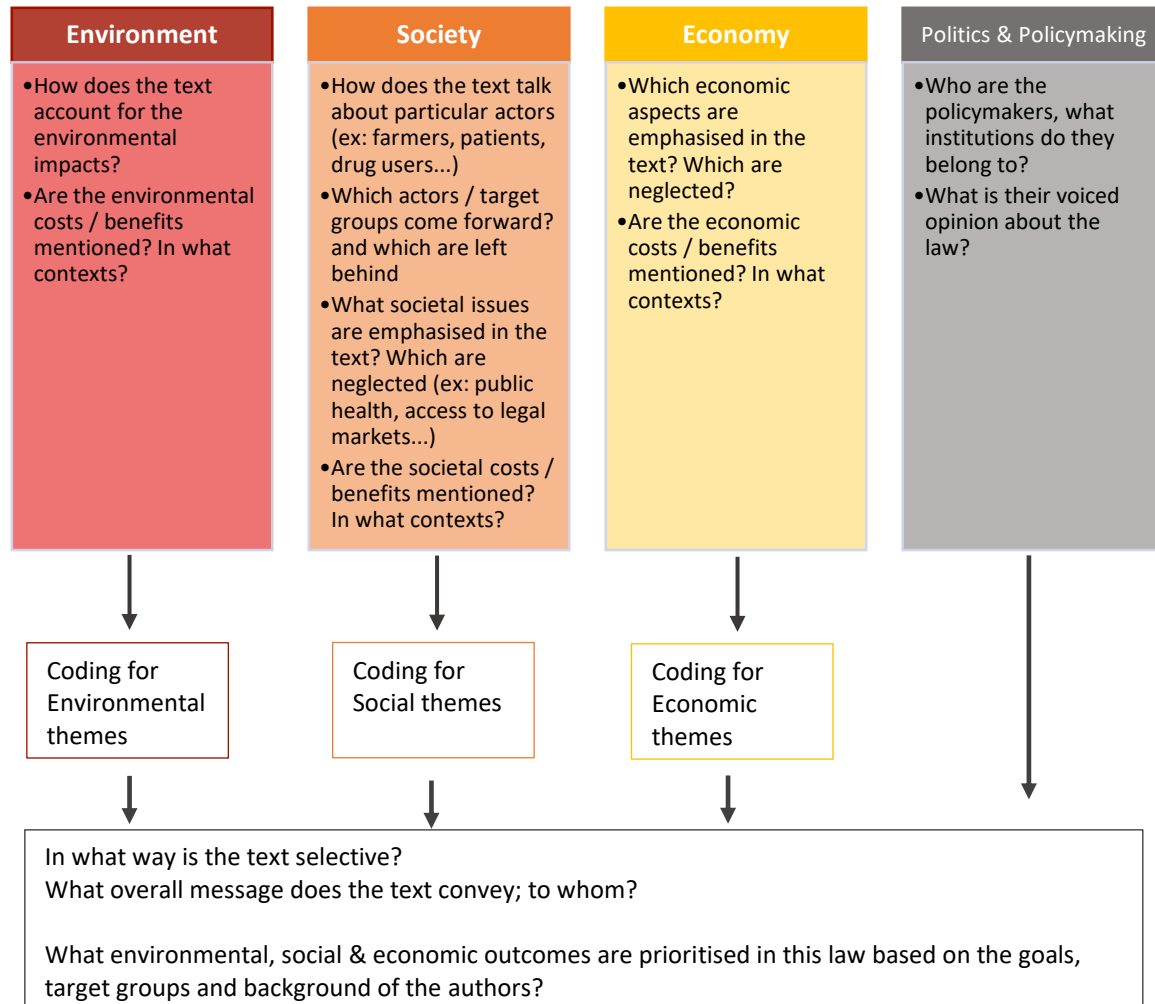
Figure 5 Operationalisation & strategy of the narrative analysis

3.3.   Limitations

The main limitations of this research are related to the safety restrictions imposed by the government in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. A proper research about sustainable development impacts would be much improved with field visits to gather the input of the main communities impacted. However, the research attempts to compensate for this hurdle by contacting people from all kinds of backgrounds as close to the field as possible, and by reading previous reports and watching documentaries shot in the field. This helps understand and present the reality of the area without having visited it.

Next, an important aspect to consider is that the research takes place in Lebanon amid a collapsing local situation in which the trust and legitimacy of the current ruling class is degrading. As the research relies on qualitative interviews that reflect the subjective opinions of the participants about a legislation, this could mean that their worldview is affected by their position towards the overall political and economic situation today. In order to avoid a biased representation, the research attempts to gather inputs from different sides of the spectrum, while remaining transparent and focused about the objectives of the study.

4. Lessons learned from other countries

In order to better understand the implications of the relaxation of cannabis laws on different players, this chapter reviews some of the ways this move has materialised in countries with comparable experiences. The research recognises the difficulty in replicating experiences across countries due to differing circumstances and inconclusive developmental evidence. It is important to acknowledge these challenges in order to interpret this chapter for what it attempts to explain. Certainly, the chapter does not intend to be an exhaustive list of developmental impacts observed with cannabis policy reforms, as this would be neither feasible nor accurate. Rather, it is intended to serve as a review of key patterns that will guide a more informed prognosis of the expected impacts of the Lebanese legislation in the chapters to come, based on available evidence. The focus will be limited to countries that were the first to make policy reforms, as they are the countries for which data was available and impacts are already being discussed.

First of all, this section presents a brief overview of the legal cannabis industry by explaining the diverse forms it takes and sectors it concerns. This will clarify the terms and concepts that will be used throughout the discussion.

The family of Cannabis plants called *Cannabaceae* is one of the oldest crop families in the world, and yet its botanical classification and types of strains are still in discussion. This is largely because its illegal status has restricted scientific research so far (Chouvy, 2019). For

the sake of this research, it is important to make one major distinction between two varieties based on their psychoactivity-inducing effect, and these are marijuana and hemp, both belonging to the *Cannabis Sativa L.* species. The distinction is explained in Table 7. The flowering plant contains over 500 chemical compounds, but the most prominent active ingredients are tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD) (Guido et al., 2020). THC is the main psychoactive substance, and its concentration is proportional to the potency of the plant, or the "high" that the user would feel, while CBD counteracts this effect. There are other, non-chemical ways to differentiate these two varieties including the morphology of the plants, however it is not a straightforward comparison, so these compounds or their ratio are more indicative (Fike, 2016).

	Marijuana	Hemp	Source
THC content (in dry weight)	0,3% to > 20%	< 0,3%	(Fike, 2016)
Plant morphology	More bushy	More robust and tall	(Fike, 2016)
Main uses	• Recreational • Medical	• Industrial: production of fibres, textiles, bioplastics, food products, cosmetics, paints, building material, etc. • Medical (CBD-derived medicines)	(Andre et al., 2016); (Aggarwal, 2013)

Table 7 Adopted distinction between marijuana and hemp (Author's own)

Discussion about liberalising cannabis policies is mostly associated with recreational and medicinal uses of the plant, which is the main focus of this chapter since in both instances, the psychoactive ingredient which is highly controlled is consumed by the public. However, given the close physical and chemical proximity of industrial hemp, its potential has also been untapped even though it does not have the psychoactive properties that were the cause for its prohibition. Therefore, the industrial hemp industry is also affected by a relaxation of cannabis policies, as increasingly countries are making the distinction between the two varieties.

4.1. Politics and policymaking

Policy decisions regarding cannabis legalisation can be perceived on a spectrum ranging from the complete prohibitionist model that criminalises the possession of cannabis and all activities related to it (as in most countries), to the relaxed model where growing, selling and using cannabis are legal (as in Uruguay, Canada, some US states). It is not a strict choice between two options, and there exists no single framework or model to apply across settings. The common types of options for cannabis legalisation are depicted in Figure 6.
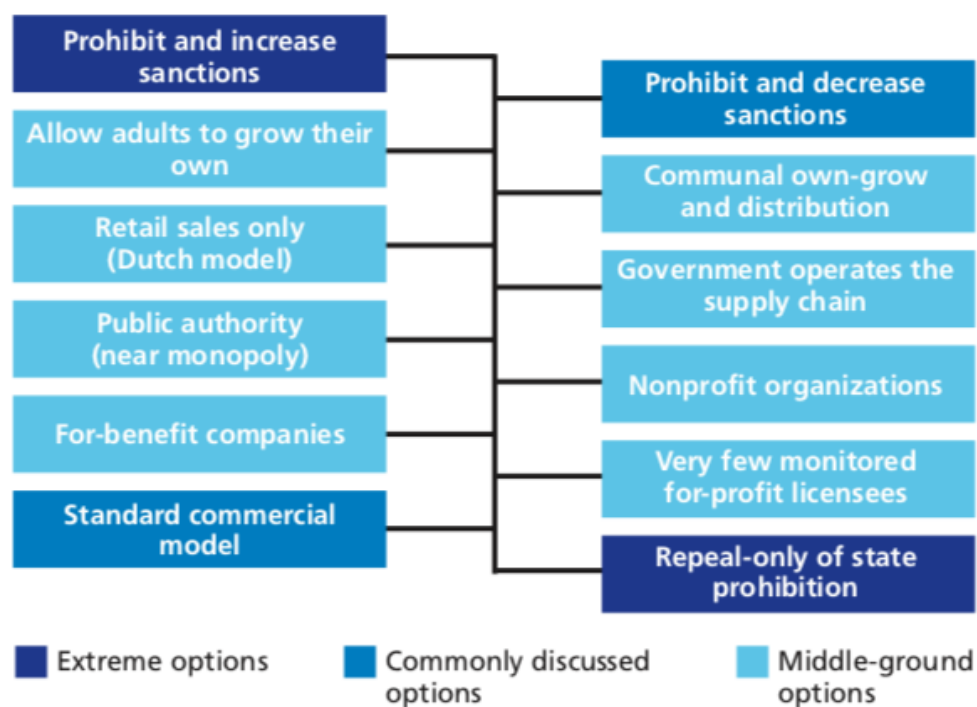
Figure 6 Common options for cannabis policy models (Caulkins et al., 2015)

Each one of these options determines a different type of legal body that can own and sell cannabis, the regulations they must adhere to, the types of products that can be sold, the price, as well as many other significant variables. Any variation of any of these variables can result in very different societal outcomes in terms of benefits and harms created (Hilal et al., 2018; Caulkins et al., 2015). Therefore, the discussion below should keep in mind the diversity of the types of legal models that can shape cannabis policies and the different repercussions they might have.

4.1.1. Motivations for policy reform

Just like there is a variation in the models that dictate cannabis policy implementation, there is also a variation in the motivations underlying these models. These motivations translated into the goals and objectives of the laws would guide the assessment of the impacts of these laws. Objectives for cannabis legalisation policies include reducing consumption, ensuring harm reduction and public health, controlling access and quality, raising taxes on the legal activity, eliminating black markets and arrests, etc. (Hilal et al., 2018).

For instance, Bloomer (2019) raises the question of the political factors that motivated the legalisation of medical cannabis in Lesotho in 2018, stating his doubt that it was for the vulnerable rural households' interest. He also calls for an examination of "the national and international stakeholders and decision-making behind partnerships" (p. 13). The author states that the criminalisation of drugs with the tacit approval of the government is closely linked to state endemic corruption. In fact, already in 2019 there were some allegations of companies obtaining licenses based on connections rather than merit, and the government now working to ensure better management (Vickers, 2019).

In Uruguay, the first country to legalise cannabis for all purposes in 2013, the issue was one of national security first, and public health second. The decision was founded in the securitisation of the drug problem, reminiscent of repressive approaches that have particularly targeted the South American continent. The law passed amid disapproval of citizens, as consistent surveys showed in the few years before and after the passing (Jordan, 2018).

Going back to the discussion about policy metrics (Chapter 2.3), these examples show the importance of being explicit about the real objectives that a cannabis policy reform aims to achieve. Following from the objectives, the indicators then would be chosen to guide the outcomes that the policy was conceived for.

4.1.2. The international dimension of national decisions

Assessing political factors involved in cannabis policy reforms is incomplete without a reflection on the international arena and how it influences national decisions. The influence can be both by creating a global landscape that is favourable for relaxed measures, or by constituting a barrier for countries with weaker positions wanting to relax their policies.

To illustrate, von Hoffmann (2016) contends that even though Uruguay is viewed as the first country to make such regulations, it was able to do so because the global landscape had already started to shift. Colorado and Washington States had already been showing their prospective legalisation plans, which weakened the USA's position as the defender of the

prohibitionist drug approaches. In fact, the author remarks that the USA had not shown strong opposition to Uruguay's move, unlike what it had been showing other South American countries observing cannabis legalisation.

In addition, Duval (2019) documents the case of several African countries including Malawi, Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo whose cannabis policies were only relaxed after lobbying from Global Northern companies.

Traditionally, countries that attempt to deviate from the regime are depicted as complicit "narcostates" (von Hoffmann, 2016) that face diplomatic backlash and even sanctions. Consequently, this has limited states' ability to experiment with more relaxed regulations.

One example is Jamaica, a small island developing state which "cannot afford to defy international treaties" (Klein & Hanson, 2020, p. 6), as it is dependent on international partnerships for a wide range of national issues such as military aid. The country wants to relax its cannabis policies while at the same time show compliance with international treaties to avoid tensions it cannot afford. It is therefore navigating through loopholes that would allow ensuring national interest while staying within the confines of international law (Klein & Hanson, 2020).

This shows that countries wishing to implement cannabis policy reforms, especially ones that are somehow dependent upon the international community, need to keep in compliance with the current regime in order to ensure national interest, sometimes in issues not even related to drugs. It also shows that this view has been slowly changing recently, in light of a shifting landscape, and an increasing number of countries attempting more relaxed policies.

4.1.3. Summary

The framework below reviews the politics and policymaking insights discussed in this section.
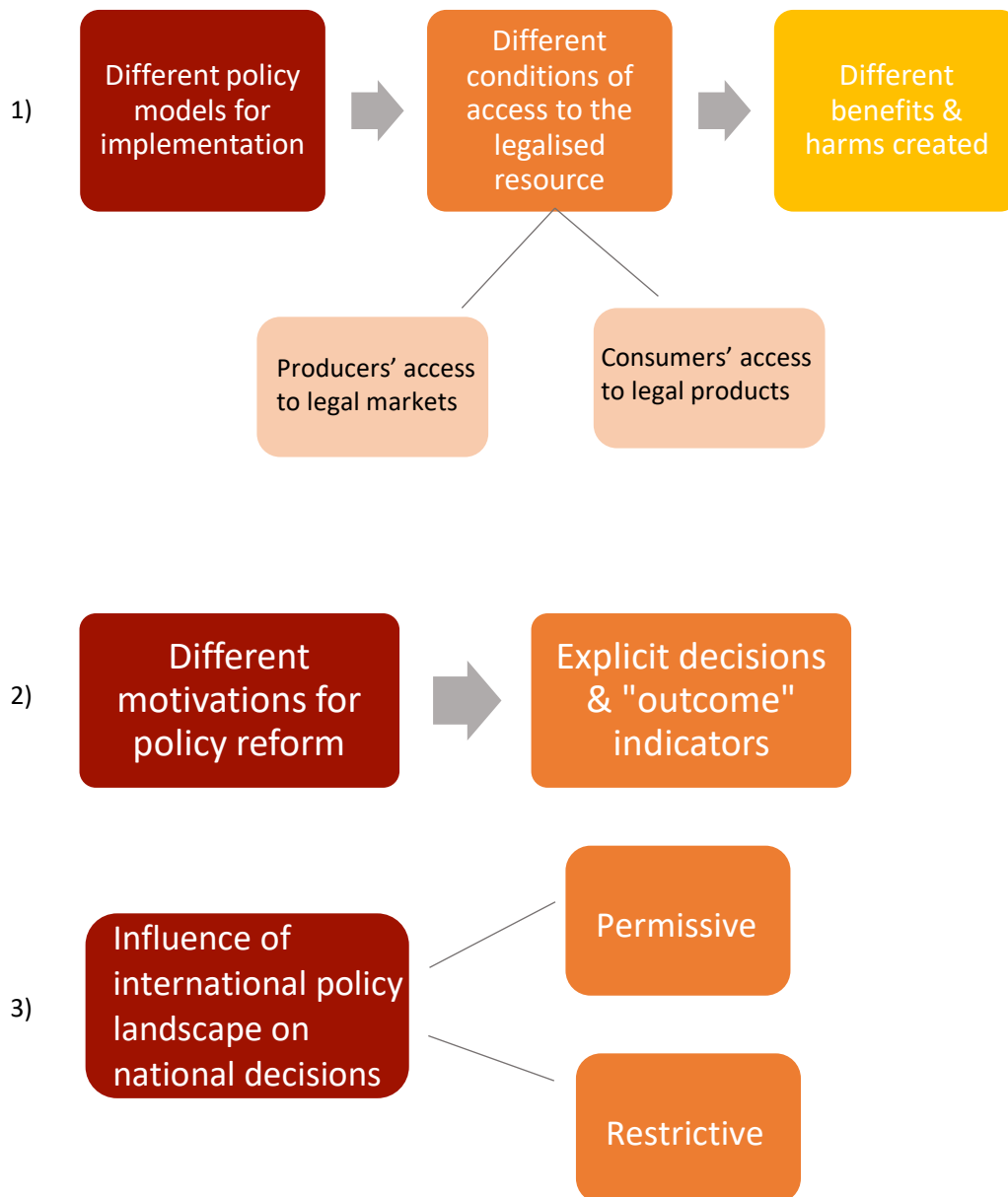
Figure 7 Insights about the politics and policymaking dimension of cannabis legalisation

4.2.   Insights about the economic dimension

The legal cannabis industry has been growing at a fast pace recently, in what some have termed a "green rush". As figure 8 shows, the largest share of the legal industry is held by medicinal cannabis products including the unprocessed flowers, or the plant derivatives which can take the form of extracts or molecule isolates, prescribed for a wide range of medical cases. The recreational cannabis (herbal or resin form) occupies the second largest share of the legal market, followed by industrial by-products which come third (Fortune Business Insights, 2019).
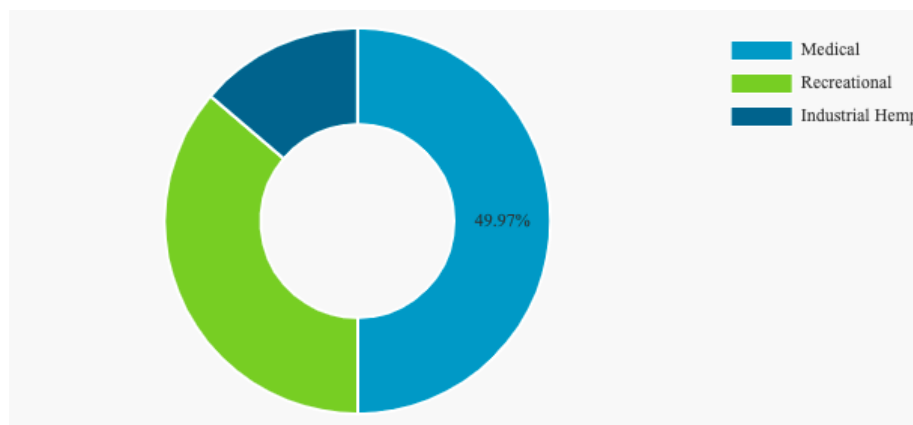
Figure 8 "Global Cannabis Market Share, By Application, 2018" (Fortune Business Insights, 2019)

Recognising this potential, countries are increasingly relaxing their cannabis policies in hopes of entering the race, which means new markets are opening up and attracting the attention of both existing incumbents and new ventures. Recently, however, there is a realisation that contradicts what has been the common belief, and it is that regulating cannabis will not immediately result in exponential economic growth (Pascual, 2020a).

In a recent report entitled *Cannabis in Latin America* advising prospective investments, Alfredo Pascual writes: "one of the few commonalities across the continent is that most countries that legalized medical marijuana still have nonexistent or dysfunctional markets—sometimes even years after their cannabis laws were approved" (Pascual, 2019, p.3). Pascual is one of the experts interviewed in this research, so the sections below include his input when cited.

4.2.1. The promise of foreign direct investments

The medicinal cannabis sector in particular has been a major source of Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) from developed economies in the Global North (mainly Canada and Germany) wanting to expand into newly legal markets in the South.

For instance, four years after the legalisation of medicinal cannabis, Colombia is witnessing a "booming industry" as reported in some news outlets (Mohanty, 2019; Delgado, 2020). In fact, the country has received over USD 400 million in FDIs in the cannabis industry that shows a lot of potential (Lamers & Pascual, 2019). This was aided by the attractive climate conditions, cheap and knowledgeable labour force, robust legal framework and industry revenue speculations which distinguished Colombia and gave it a head start compared to neighbouring countries (Rivera, 2019; Bocanegra, 2019).

Similarly, Lesotho has attracted major FDIs, mostly from global players of the Northern hemisphere (Lamers, 2018a; Lamers, 2018b; Prinsloo & Kew, 2019). Reports show that the new industry is promising in terms of economic gains, and *Prohibition Partners* states that "Africa's legal cannabis industry could be worth more than USD 7.1 billion annually by 2023" if key countries proceed with the legalisation (Prohibition Partners, 2019).

As explained by Pascual in the interview, the year of 2018 and early 2019 are described as an exuberance phase of investments in the legal medical cannabis sector. This is due to the fact that companies that were rewarded in the stock market at that time were those that could show their dominance over the largest territories on the map. Therefore, a lot of the international companies would acquire a license in new countries legalising the drug. This, along with forecasts of significant economic gains pitched for investors drove the push for FDIs at that phase. However, this does not mean that all companies that have acquired licenses are operational today.

4.2.2. Investors pulling back

"That trend is over now, it really doesn't matter that much anymore whether one more country legalises the production of medical cannabis for export. What matters now is where can cannabis be sold, that's the most important thing" (A. Pascual, personal communication, June 2, 2020).

By the end of 2019, investments in the medical cannabis sector were starting to witness a halt, partly caused by an absence of real results in terms of returns on investments, meaning the forecasted outcomes had not materialised at the expected time (Pascual, 2019).

This is evident in the case of *Canopy Growth*, Canadian cannabis giant, which downsized its operations across five countries in 2020 in an attempt to "improve efficiencies in its global operations", as cited in Lamers & Pascual (2020).

In Colombia, due to the complicated licensing process and tight regulations which caused significant unforeseen delays, the industry is now at risk of pushing the businesses to competitor countries such as Uruguay (Pascual, 2019; Bocanegra, 2019; Rivera, 2019), which completed a "record-breaking shipment" of unprocessed cannabis flower to Portugal in May of 2020 (Pascual, 2020b).

This is to show that the market is changing at a rapid pace, and liberalising cannabis policies alone is not enough to unleash a new source of economic gains from the medical marijuana market, even less so in foreign currency payments, as is further clarified in the next paragraph.

4.2.3. Exports mainly from industrialised countries

"All countries that [have] legalised [medical cannabis] (...) with [the] main or only purpose of generating exports, (...) have so far failed to create a sustainable industry" (A. Pascual, personal communication, June 2, 2020).

Another common misconception dominating the popular conversation about medicinal cannabis markets is that existing firms in Europe and North America will find it less costly to move their operations to less economically developed countries graced with more advantageous conditions. As Pascual notes, the lower cost of cultivation in these regions due to the warmer weather and cheap and knowledgeable workforce is offset by the strict and costly quality compliance procedures that matter much more in the final equation.

To illustrate, for cannabis to be sold in Germany, which is the major importer of medical marijuana products, it has to be compliant with the European Union-Good Manufacturing Practices (EU-GMP) standards. One of the most important conditions of compliance is the absence of microbiological contaminations which can only be ensured through specialised technological operations done in controlled indoor facilities. Therefore, for the comparison of production costs to be fair, the costs of these operations need to be included, and added to the costs of transport and additional expenses related to the cross-border trading. This would then show that the difference in production costs based solely on weather and land conditions is not as significant as initially thought.

The high compliance costs and strict regulations are largely the reason why cannabis exports, especially for high-THC products, happen mainly from industrialised countries, namely Canada, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (UK). Therefore, it is inaccurate to assume

that companies in mature medical cannabis markets would want to source their materials from newly emerging ones.

4.2.4. Thriving illicit market

In much of the countries where policies are conceived in a way that excludes small and medium cannabis farmers from the legalised markets, as will be further detailed in the next section, the illicit market is continuing to thrive.

In Leshtho for instance, since the legalisation only targets medicinal uses, the plant that was legalised is not the same as the plant that has been grown by rural communities (Duvall, 2019). Therefore, many farmers whose livelihoods depend on the plant still grow it illegally in order to make a living (BBC News, 2018), and the illegal market is valued at an order of magnitude higher than the legal market (Kede, 2019).

A similar outcome can be observed in Jamaica, where the legal market that was developed is considered too restrictive to contain the large amounts of cannabis already being cultivated illegally (Klein & Hanson, 2020). Meaning in this case, it was not only a matter of illicit farmers' financial or technical ability to participate in the legal market. More relevant here was the problem that the market itself could not absorb the available supply of harvest since it was only open for medical-grade plants.

4.2.5. COVID-19 repercussions on the industry

As economies and societies across the world are struggling to face the non-health related repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the legal marijuana industry has also been faced with this unprecedented challenge. The impacts are still developing at the time of writing, and there is conflicting evidence as to the exact outcome of this crisis on the industry.

The first, obvious observation that was reported in the early phases of the pandemic is that, while governments across the world were rushing to close down all non-essential activity, the legal cannabis industry saw a sharp increase in demand (Peters, 2020; Curren, 2020). This is because consumers of medical and recreational cannabis rushed to stock up on their needed supplies, in fear of a total closure of the retail points. However, in countries where selling cannabis is legal including Canada, some US states, and the Netherlands, businesses selling the drug legally were later deemed essential, in large part to prevent soaring illicit market sales (Curren, 2020). *Akerna*, a Colorado-based cannabis technology company, reports that cannabis sales on Wednesday April 15, 2020 accounted for "the biggest Wednesday in the history of legal cannabis" (Peters, 2020).

Some analysts, however, have noted that these early profits are not sustainable for the long-term survival of the sector (Peters, 2020). In fact, the marijuana industry, like all other global industries, has suffered from disrupted supply lines and shop closures (Barnes, 2020), but this industry was already considered volatile even before the pandemic (Peters, 2020). This explains the continued drop in stocks that the legal market is witnessing, and the retrenchment of workers for instance in one of Lesotho's cannabis giants (Mpaki, 2020).

In all cases, a certain outcome is that cannabis businesses are rushing to adapt to the evolving situation, and some reported changes are related to the product supply and payment mechanisms (Sacirbey, 2020). Hopeful market observers contend that the cannabis industry has always been compelled to overcome challenges on account of its nature, and that its ability to survive the coronavirus pandemic would be a great enhancement of its image and global position (Curren, 2020).

4.2.6. Summary

The framework below reviews the economic insights discussed in this section.
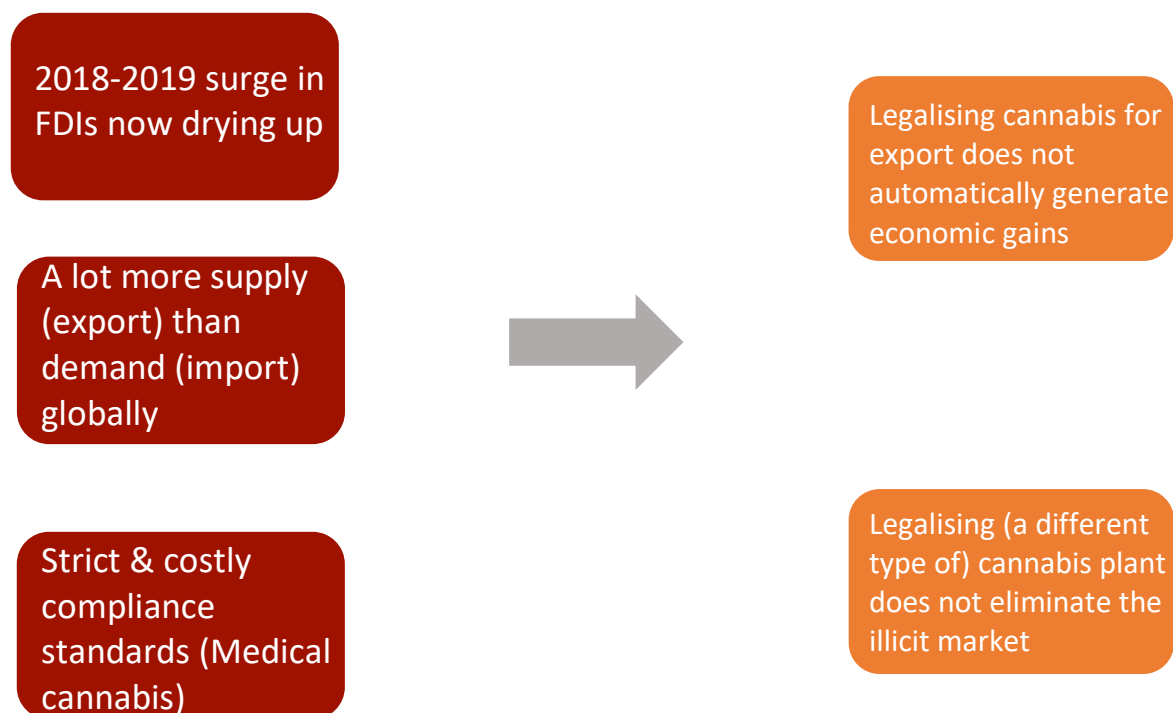
Figure 9 Insights about the economic dimension of cannabis legalisation

4.3.　Insights about the social dimension

The societal implications of liberalising cannabis policies have mostly been studied from a public health point of view, as in the potential changes in the consumption behaviours of the drug (Snitzman & Zolotov, 2014; Leung et al., 2018; Hall et al., 2019). In this research, the focus is more on questions of access to the newly legalised resource. This in the first part refers to the farmers who have always planted the crop illegally and their ability to access the legal markets; and second, to the ability of the local residents and patients to access the legal products.

Again, this question of distributive justice is tightly linked to the policy model that is chosen for the implementation of the reforms (Chapter 4.1). Consequently, this chapter reviews some new forms of inequalities that were created as a side-effect of relaxing cannabis policies.

4.3.1. Pharmaceutical standards and quality requirements

"Some companies even told me "I'd rather buy [crops produced by small farmers] and destroy it than having to make sure that it complies with quality requirements, that would be much more expensive for me", because the quality requirements are really hard to comply with for small farmers" (A. Pascual, personal communication, June 2, 2020).

One challenge preventing small and medium (SM) farmers from participating in the medical cannabis markets is the need to comply with the strict quality standards that must be met at each stage of the cultivation and production.

As explained by Rivera (2019), the problem is that Colombia allowed cultivating "cannabis and cannabinoids as active ingredients to be used in the pharmaceutical industry" (p. 18) while using cannabis for medical purposes (for example smoking it for pain relief) is still punished by law. This means that all legally produced cannabis must respond to pharmaceutical industry quality standards, so the plants traditionally grown by the farmers illegally are not adequate and cannot be marketed. In order to do so, crops need to be subjected to safety and efficacy testing that guarantee their medicinal quality. These timely tests and quality control procedures are beyond the budget and expertise of SM farmers and businesses, which is why they struggle to be included in the legal markets (Rivera, 2019).

As argued by Pascual, the solution is not simply a matter of ensuring the needed skills or funding to assist SM farmers in the production of standard-compliant raw materials, since even then, the manufacturing companies would have to inspect each farm for compliance. Therefore, it would be less costly for them to operate one large compliant farm that they control, rather than sample a multitude of sources.

This indicates that there is practically no place for SM farmers in the medical cannabis sector specifically. Any cannabis policy reform wanting to legalise medical uses of the plant without accounting for other uses should account for this challenge.

4.3.2. The cost of licenses

Another barrier preventing SM farmers and businesses or individuals from participating in the market is the relatively high cost of acquiring licenses to operate.

In Lesotho, the cost of acquiring a license to produce cannabis for medicinal purposes is approximately USD 30,000 to 35,000 which is too high for Basotho farmers whose participation can then only be through manual labour (Carrier & Klantschnig, 2016; Duvall, 2019; Motsoeli, 2018). Under this scheme, the large companies attempt to have a positive impact through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs or by employing local residents mainly for lower position jobs. Bloomer (2019) shares the view that this practice could show a "high risk of further wealth capture by national and international political and business elites" (p. 12).

Similarly, in Jamaica, the license fees were first announced in US Dollars, and the costs were too high for local SM farmers. However, according to Klein & Hanson (2020), some improvements to the initial conditions happened recently which facilitated the payment process for SM farmers by for example deferring the payments or lowering the costs.

4.3.3. Farmer ownership over their resources

One way the Colombian legislation tried to mitigate the problem of the exclusion of SM farmers from legal markets is by introducing a social component to the law. Among the social protection components that target SM farmers, the legislation specifies that 10% of the cannabis needed for any licensed entity to manufacture by-products should be sourced from SM growers (Rivera, 2019).

As previously noted, the strict standards mean that manufacturing companies would rather not inspect scattered sources of raw products, and this is why this provision has not worked well according to Pascual.

In addition, the legislation with its 10% sourcing quota does not support SM farmers who wish to obtain licenses and develop their own cannabis businesses since the financial and technical restrictions still apply (Rivera, 2019). Therefore, it does not allow farmers the autonomy over their own products, as it confines them to the duty of producing the types of plants that respond to the manufacturing company's standards.

4.3.4. Global disparities: North vs South

Duvall (2019) and Bloomer (2019) both make the parallel between FDIs in cannabis, and other government-supported global rushes on land for example for food, biofuels, or other industries. This also reveals that the question of cannabis reforms is one of access to land and natural resources.

Duvall (2019) specifically speaks of "canna-colonization" of African countries by Global Northern countries who control the African markets and legislations through self-serving investments, thereby depriving local communities from the legal access to the resources. In his view, "cannabis-centered 'development' is but a new facet of economic dependency, of wealth generation in the Global North through the extraction of wealth from Africa", or "accumulation through dispossession" (p. 2). He references the approach by *Medi Kingdom*, one of the main licensed producers in Lesotho, of employing international experts to transfer capacity to local workers, echoing modernisation theory. He also presents the example of a young Rastafarian from Lesotho who filed a court case opposing the prohibition of cannabis use for his religious customs (Duvall, 2019; Tefo, 2018) to illustrate how locals are losing access to the plant. The high cost of licenses is also another instance that further accentuates the global disparities since this cost is considered relatively low for the foreign investing companies compared to the local SM farmers.

This pattern is observed across many countries that are liberalising their cannabis policies in Africa including Malawi, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and the author attributes this phenomenon to neo-colonial trends of development.

4.3.5. Patient access to cannabis-based medicines

The discussion above suggests that the question of access to the legal cannabis markets then also applies to the demand side of the industry. Cannabis policy reforms should not only ensure the access of farmers to the legalised markets, but also the access of consumers, especially patients who use cannabis-based medicines.

In the *Cannabis in Latin America* report, Pasucal (2019) notes that the lack of health insurance coverage of cannabis-based medicines was restricting the markets in most countries on the continent. In contrast, in the Czech Republic, when the government issued a policy that allows insurance coverage of medical cannabis products in 2020, the sales of medicines soared and the market witnessed a significant growth (Pascual, 2020a).

Apart from widening the markets from an economic perspective by ensuring affordable consumption and therefore increasing demand, this move is also essential from a public health perspective.

4.3.6. Intellectual property and agricultural heritage

Although the illegal status of cannabis has restricted the potential of scientific research into its diverse taxonomic classifications, one certain thing is that the plant has evolved into a number of breeds originating in different settings across the globe (Chouvy, 2019). These are called *landraces*, and they are the locally adapted varieties of the plant that have evolved traditionally with the different uses and locations where they are harvested (Duvall, 2016). With the regulation of cannabis cultivation, the risk is that the tight control that is exerted would depreciate the indigenous knowledge and agricultural expertise that went into breeding these strains.

Duvall (2016) argues that African cannabis, even though highly genetically significant, is overlooked by mainstream agricultural institutions. The author makes the parallel between the commercial marijuana seed industry and seed improvement initiatives in Africa to contend that global drug-policy reform has historically devalued African cannabis. He highlights the importance of recognising Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) of indigenous races of the plant in order to preserve them, instead of having them privately controlled.

Similarly, in Jamaica, Klein & Hanson (2020) find that tight regulations have facilitated the domination of imported strains, which is threatening the traditional strains known as "Brand Jamaica". They recommend the establishment of "a national Ganja Seed Bank to conserve indigenous cannabis strains and protect the intellectual property of Jamaican growers" (p. 14).

This points to the need of recognising the importance of the agricultural heritage of cannabis strains in order to preserve the genetic diversity that is proper to the farming communities where they were domesticated.

4.3.7. Summary

The framework below reviews the societal insights discussed in this section.

Strict & costly compliance standards (Medical cannabis)	Thriving illicit market	No ownership & autonomy over own resources
Legalising a different type of cannabis plant → SM farmers excluded from legal markets		Global disparities, locals losing access to the resource
High cost of licenses	SM farmers employed for manual labour	Loss of genetic diversity & specialised landraces
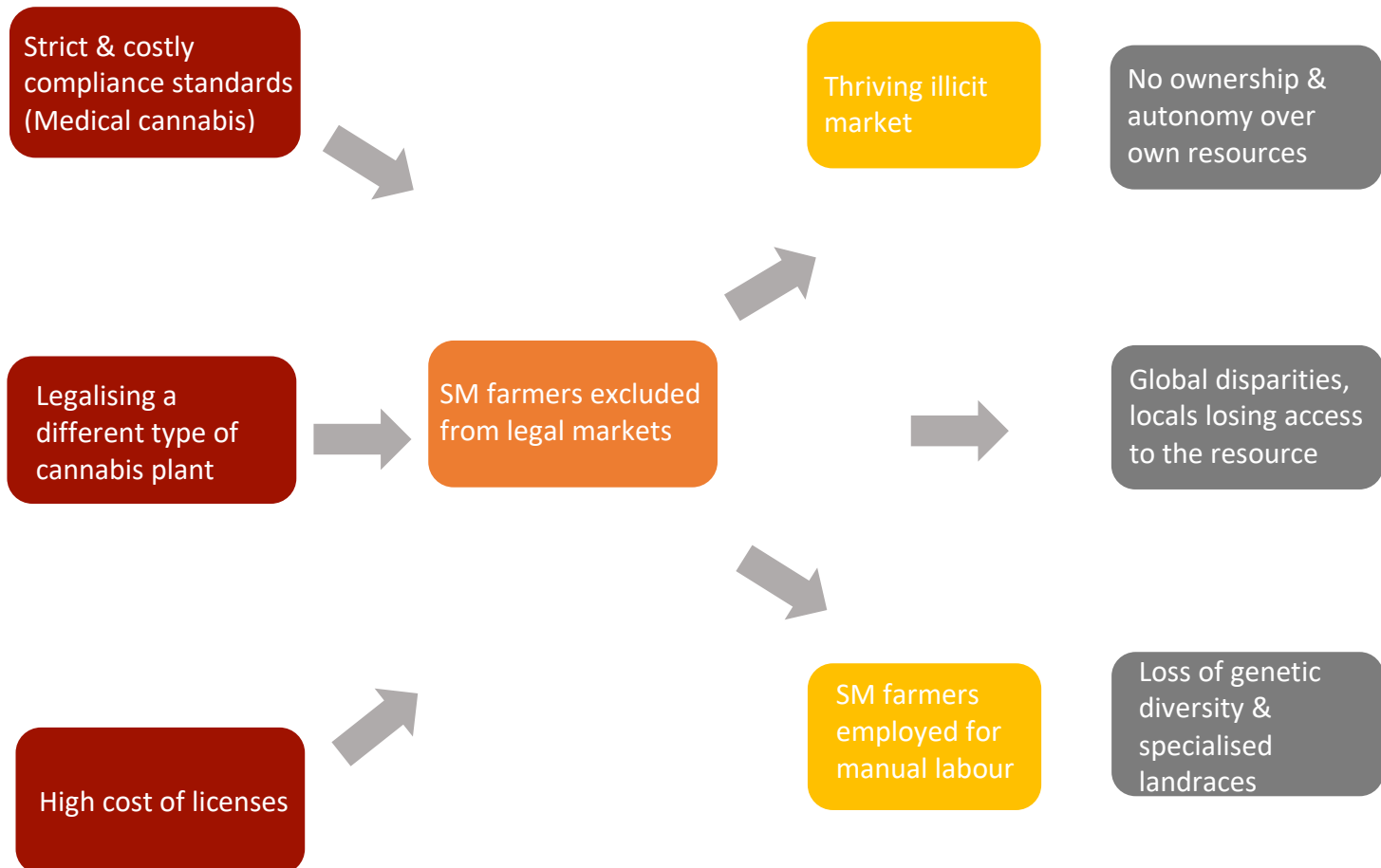
Figure 10 Insights about the social dimension of cannabis legalisation

4.4.   Insights about the environmental dimension

The environmental impacts of cannabis cultivation and relaxation policies have been strikingly absent from the global reform discussions. This is primarily because the actual impacts are not entirely known due to the illegal status of the plant which has caused the secrecy around its cultivation practices. Carah et al. (2015) argue that the trade-offs between cannabis cultivation and the ecosystem need to be "quantified and debated openly" (p. 827), just like they are for all other agricultural activities.

Generally, the belief is that legalising and regulating the cultivation of the crop would go a long way in uncovering these impacts and mitigating them. However, since the impacts are largely hidden, there is no accurate baseline for comparison of the environmental well-being before or after the policy reforms (Owley, 2018).

This paragraph reviews the discussion about the environmental implications of liberalising cannabis policies, starting with the recognised impacts of the illegal cultivation.

4.4.1. Negative environmental impacts of the illegal cannabis cultivation

Evidently, the environmental impacts of marijuana cultivation depend on whether the activity is taking place in an indoor facility or in an outdoor field, as well as on the type and location of the land where it is grown. Indoor cultivation is associated with heavy electricity use, which could have detrimental effects on the air and climate depending on the energy source, whereas outdoor growing mainly affects the water and land resources surrounding it.

For starters, as the crop needs significant amounts of water and nutrients, cases of water diversion from nearby surface water sources have been reported. This is especially dangerous in arid settings where the water source could be entirely depleted to feed the illegal crops, and the soil could be eroded (Bauer et al., 2015). In addition, the uncontrolled use of fertilisers and pesticides could leak into the nearby water source and end up in the irrigation water of food crops, thereby causing a public health risk far beyond the site of cultivation (Owley, 2018).

Further, deforestation risks are highly significant, especially in areas where the crop is planted in marginal mountainous areas far from the reach of law enforcement. This is observed in settings as diverse as Colombia, Jamaica (Armstead, 1992), Morocco (Bussmann, 1996) and California (Carah et al., 2015), and it is highly disruptive to the ecosystem and climate. The unregulated activity is therefore detrimental to forests and animal life as land clearing and wildlife poaching are both widely observed (Carah et al., 2015).

Lastly, one important environmental concern is not related to the agricultural activity itself, but to eradication efforts imposed by the historic prohibitionist policies, and that is the aerial spraying of illegal fields with harmful chemicals (HPA, 2015). These chemicals are destructive not only to the targeted crops, but also to the nearby water and food sources. Consequently, the health risks resulting from the eradication range from the pollution of the land and water sources thereby causing a food insecurity concern, to the inhalation or ingestion of carcinogenic chemicals by the affected populations (HPA, 2015).

4.4.2. Implications of regulating the cultivation

For many, the global trend of relaxing cannabis policies and regulating its cultivation presents an opportunity to govern the natural resources and environments affected by the activity. Indeed, cannabis cultivation could then be regulated just like any other crop, and clear guidelines could then be established and enforced.

Carah et al. (2015) mention for example introducing incentives and enforcement strategies for legal growers to comply with agricultural best management practices. The authors also touch upon the notion of certification and labelling that is a key tool in other industries.

In parallel, Owley (2018) highlights the issue of land conservation by reviewing regulatory tools such as zoning laws, farm subsidies, tax breaks and conservation easements. Building on examples in the US agricultural laws, the author contends that regulating cannabis cultivation makes it "less likely to be environmentally destructive" (p. 1675).

From a similar perspective, some authors mention positive environmental impacts of cannabis cultivation inherent to the plant itself. These are related to its agricultural characteristics including its "resistance to drought and pests, well-developed root system preventing soil erosion, lower water requirement with respect to other crops, e.g., cotton" (Andre et al., 2016, p.2). Evidence is also growing about the crop's soil remediation potential, meaning its capacity to absorb heavy metals and contaminants from the soil (Campbell et al., 2002; Hoseini et al., 2012; Ahmad et al., 2015). This is in addition to the environmentally sustainable products derived from industrial hemp that are significant replacements of their non plant-derived counterparts.

However, this discussion should keep in mind that, as previously noted, liberalising cannabis policies does not necessarily erase the illicit market and thus the unregulated cultivation and the environmental harms associated with it.

4.4.3. Summary

The framework below reviews the environmental insights discussed in this section.

Negative environmental impacts:
- Surface water diversion / depletion
- Soil erosion
- Fertiliser / Pesticide contamination
- Deforestation
- Loss of wildlife
- Aerial spraying with harmful chemicals

Control with laws & regulations

Intrinsic benefits of the cannabis plant

BUT: illicit market not abolished – so threats preside
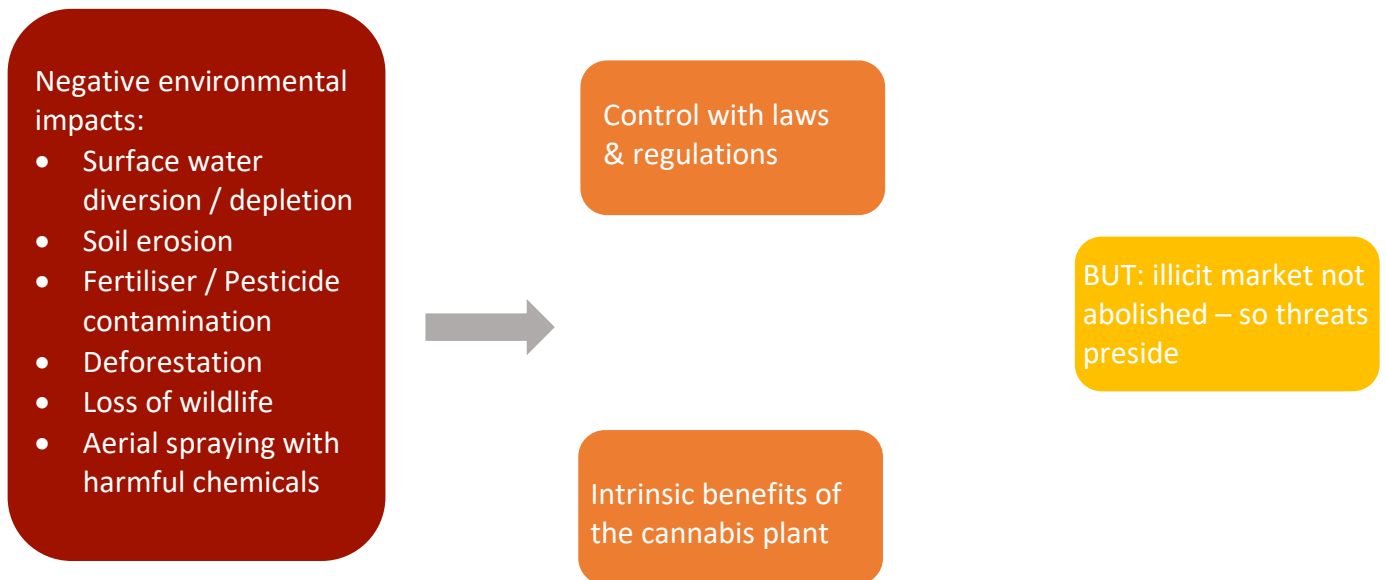
Figure 11 Insights about the environmental dimension of cannabis legalisation

5.   Research context

Lebanon is a 10,452 Km^2 country surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea to the West, Syria to the North and East, and (Occupied Palestine / "Israel") to the South (figure 12).
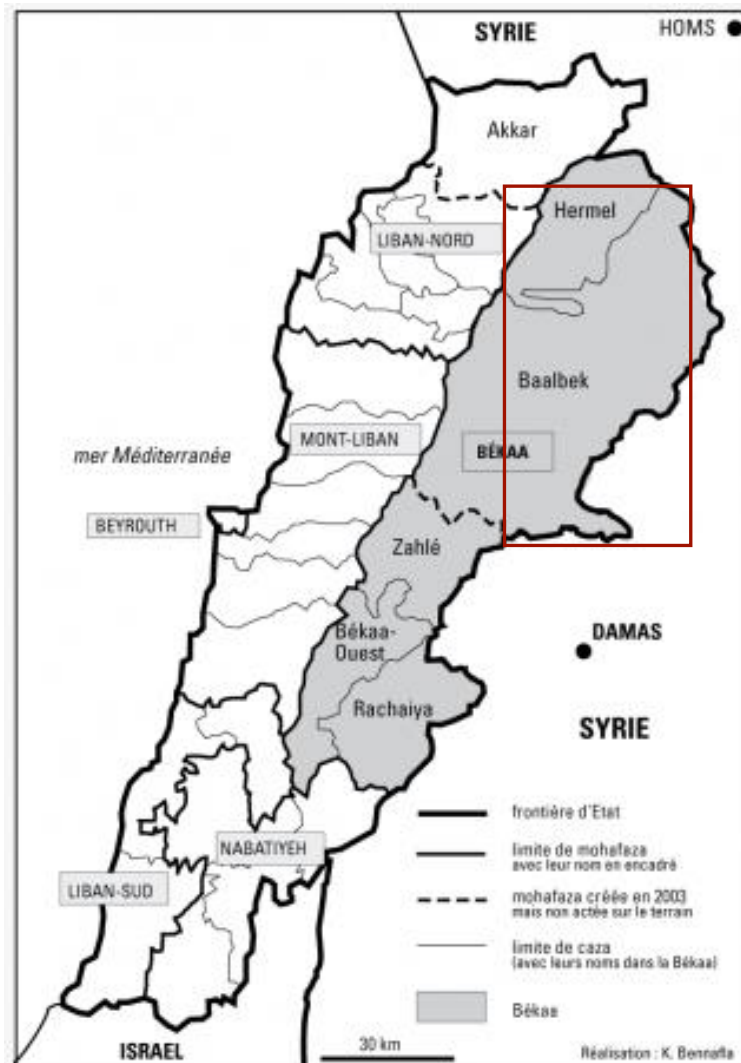
Figure 12 Map of Lebanon (Bennafla, 2006)

Like many countries in the region, it is characterised by chronic instability, including a destructive civil war that lasted from 1975 to 1991. Almost thirty years have passed since the hostilities ended, but their repercussions still shape the country's political, economic and social ways of being today. However, the circumstances that created the country as it is today debuted far before this war. This chapter presents a brief history of Lebanon's socioeconomic and political contexts with a special focus on rural areas, namely the Baalbek-Hermel governorate, and how the cannabis economy fits into it.

5.1.   Brief history of absent rural development policies

Under the occupation of the Ottoman empire (early 16th century until the end of World War 1), the agricultural sector of the area (not yet called 'Lebanon') was export-oriented, and it consisted of cotton, silk, wool, olive oil, soaps and artisanal products (Darwich, 2004; Hamade, n.d.). After the First World War ended, the country was created and named "Grand Liban" (Great Lebanon) in 1920 under French colonisation. The new country saw a sudden decline in agricultural exportation since the policy now relied on importing these products from European markets (Darwich, 2004). In addition, the French mandate did not see the emergence of a rural development narrative, and on the contrary it helped reinforce the existing feudal power structures that were based on land ownership (Hamade, n.d.; Owen, 1976). This resulted in a decline in the agricultural sector, and by extension in the rural areas.

After Lebanon's independence in 1943, the country was still relying on trade to achieve its food needs, unlike other neighbouring countries (Hamade, n.d.). The sector was characterised by minimal State intervention (Darwich, 2004) with the exception of the (short-lived) first efforts for rural development policies under president Fouad Chehab in the 1960s (Hamade, n.d.). All of these factors have contributed to the agricultural sector and rural areas not being seen as a priority, and rural inhabitants were already migrating towards cities where the main economic activity lies (Salam, 2003). Both internal and external migration increased considerably with the start of the Civil War in 1975.

After the end of the war in 1991, political decisions were primarily geared towards the country's economic rehabilitation with the focus on the capital Beirut, and to a lesser extent the Mount Lebanon area (Blanc, 2013; Makhoul & Harrison, 2002). The agricultural sector was not a main priority for support, so hydraulic, land and rural development policies were once again weak or inexistent (Blanc, 2013). This led to the accentuation of the disequilibrium across the territory, which can be described as having one center (Beirut), and all other areas including rural areas as less important peripheries (Bissat, 2002; Hamade et al., 2011), with the prioritisation of the services sector over agriculture and industry.

In 2005, the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) issued the "Schéma Directeur de l'Aménagement du Territoire Libanais" (SDATL) meaning the Lebanese Spacial Planning Master Plan, at the demand of the government. This was the first and only plan of the sorts to propose a vision for the entire territory based on its assets and challenges. It was intended to be a tool to guide policymakers and development interventions for a unified land use strategy. However, this plan never came to operation (A. Nehmeh, personal communication, May 26, 2020).

5.2.   Struggling post-war political economy

The post-war period was dedicated to responding to three fundamental goals: "immediate reconstruction, fiscal management and financial stability" (Dibeh, 2007). This was done with a heavy reliance on foreign assistance as well as internal financing, in addition to the then-stable banking sector attracting remittances from the Lebanese diaspora (Dibeh, 2007). Nevertheless, with the considerable government corruption coupled with a negative import-to-export ratio, sparse tax collection, and high government expenditure, Lebanon's accumulated internal and external debt persistently increased since the 1990s (Neaime, 2015). For the last thirty years, the country has been in a constant budget deficit (Neaime, 2015), and in 2020, the debt-to-GDP ratio is estimated at 180% (Ministry of Finance, 2020). To the point that, in an unprecedented move, Lebanon refrained from meeting the required foreign currency payments of debt due in March 2020 (MoF, 2020), and is now negotiating an aid package with the International Monetary Fund to bail the country out of the current situation and stabilise the descending devaluation of the Lebanese Pound. This is the declining economic context that is now welcoming the partial legalisation of cannabis as a productive economic sector to leverage.

5.3.   Fragmented territory and governance

Besides the fragmentation of the territory based on economic activity, post-1991 Lebanon saw the creation of a land consisting of "a mosaic of spaces [...] with imposed coexistence and superposition of several systems of power, decision-making, and legitimacy" (Hamade, n.d., p. 256). Confessional division of governance, as well as clientelism already existed then, but they were reinforced after the civil war (Hamzeh, 2001).

Administratively, the country consists of several levels of governance (Harb & Atallah, 2015) represented in Figure 13.
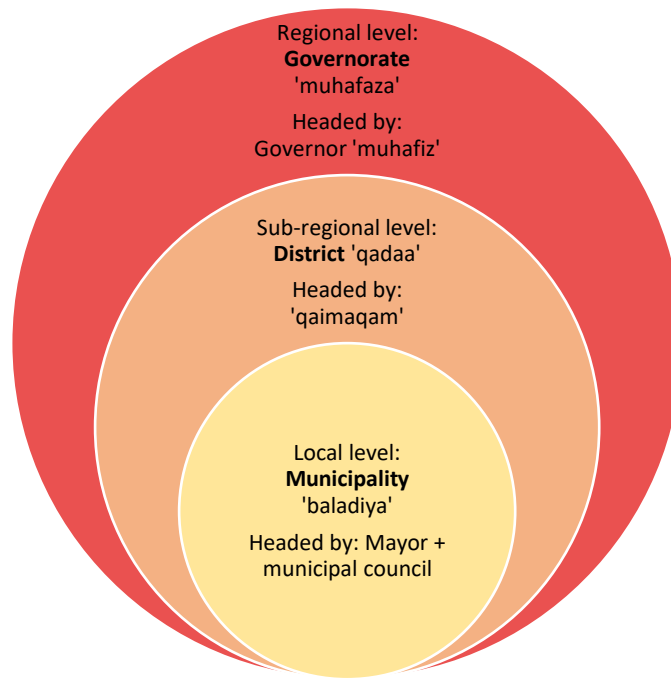
Figure 13 Levels of governance in Lebanon

In 1989, the *Taif Agreement* was signed as a peace accord to officially end the war from which no side emerged as a winner or loser. The Agreement dictated new sectarian-based power sharing procedures which served to ensure that all eighteen religious sects in Lebanon were equally represented. The president of the republic, now stripped of pre-war powers, is Christian Maronite, the prime minister is Muslim Sunni, and the speaker of the parliament is Muslim Shiite, and this division is extended to all 128 parliamentary seats based on the demography and religions of the districts they represent (Nagle & Clancy, 2019). In addition, the Agreement calls for administrative decentralisation as well as State centralisation at the same time. It augments the powers of governors and '*qaimaqams'* and increases the financial support to municipalities while emphasising the central authority of the unified State (Harb & Atallah, 2015).

Ultimately, the *Taif Agreement* "institutionalized the dynamics of sectarianization" that characterise the civil war (Nagle & Clancy, 2019). This point is important because it meant the transformation of Lebanon to an "*allotment state*" (Karam, 2012, p. 37) where the positions of state and public administrators were based on this system of confessional equity. This means that the sectarian political parties which emerged from the war and post-war periods control the authority of the districts and towns they represent. Consequently, each piece of this "mosaic" depends on its political leaders for basic services such as education, medical care, waste management, electricity and water supply..., (Hamade, n.d.; Karam, 2012, Nagle & Clancy, 2019) as well as broader development policies within the boundaries of the shared balanced power. This helps explain the paralysed decision-making structure (Bahout, 2016)

which does not know an integrated national rural development strategy (Hamade, n.d.), and in which every government decision should appeal to all political parties equally.

5.4. Baalbek-Hermel socio-economic and political background

Baalbek-Hermel is one of the eight governorates which forms almost a third of the Lebanese territory, and it has a relatively low population density with 451,600 residents over 3,009 Km^2 (OCHA, 2019). It is one of the poorest and most vulnerable areas in the country, and the main household income is from agriculture and related activities (FAO, 2013). The large part of the economic activity in the area is therefore informal, consisting of smuggling goods at the border with Syria, and the illicit drugs economy including cannabis, and more recently opium poppy and 'Captagon'.

With the start of the war in Syria in 2011, Lebanon welcomed an estimate of 1.5 million refugees, the highest in the world in terms of fraction of the total population (FAO, 2013). A very large number of these refugees settled in the Baalbek-Hermel region, which is why now 37% of the residents are non-Lebanese (UNHCR, 2015). The refugee crisis constituted an added burden on the already struggling area, and with it came an inflow of international support through scattered projects and initiatives (FAO, 2013; UNHCR, 2015).

Basic infrastructure and services are missing in the governorate, as a lot of the roads are not paved so only accessible by larger vehicles. Also, the large surface and low population density make it harder to establish central facilities, and the nearest hospital and university are in Zahle, major city of the Beqaa governorate at 100 kilometers away from the plane area.

The social structure of the governorate is divided into families and tribes. The tribe is a type of social belonging based on blood relations, and that places a primordial importance on familial solidarity (Darwich, 2004). In Baalbek-Hermel, tribes have informally obtained a certain degree of legal autonomy, and even owned weapons, which they have used against law enforcement officials. This structure reinforced the marginalisation of the governorate that is considered as a "lawless" land (Vice News, 2014; BBC News, 2017; Vice, 2019) far from the reach of government authorities. Beside tribal belonging, the social relations in Baalbek-Hermel are characterised by a combined solidarity between parties and religious movements, and solidarity based on political principles or social and economic interests (Sukkarieh, 2005).

The governorate is therefore one piece of the 'mosaic' that shapes the country, and it mainly consists of Muslim Shiite residents, with some Christian and Muslim Sunni minorities. Based on the demographics and parliamentary election results, the governorate is attributed to the two large Shiite political parties: 'Hezbollah' (party of God) presided by Hassan Nasrallah, and the 'Amal' (hope) movement presided by Nabih Berri, the speaker of the parliament since 1992.

The SDATL plan designates Baalbek as a heritage city ("ville patrimoniale"), and both Baalbek and Hermel as having an agricultural area of national interest (CDR, 2005). The governorate is locally known for its natural beauty, but Baalbek city is mainly associated with the Baalbek Greco-Roman archaeological site placed on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage list for its historical significance.

Figure 14 Temple of Bacchus, Baalbek (Zwegers, 2010)

The name of the area is also locally associated with the illegal cultivation of cannabis. A common misconception however, is that all farmers engaged in the cannabis economy are wealthy criminals. This is not the case, as even in this illicit economy, inequalities preside. There is indeed a distinction between the cannabis traffickers who are connected to national and international distribution networks and to political powers that provide unofficial protection, and the farmers at the lowest point of the value chain, who receive the least profit from the activity.

5.5.   History & legal status of cannabis in Lebanon

The cannabis plant has a long history in the Middle East, as it has been present for the last 12 centuries, under the influence of migration, occupation, trade and spiritual practices (Afsahi & Darwich, 2016). The UNODC has often placed Lebanon among the top cannabis-producing countries in the world, and the hybrid strain of Lebanese hashish is famous worldwide for its

specific quality. It can be encountered in European capitals that sell the "Red Lebanese" variety, owing the name to the dark red colour of the flower buds[2].

Figure 15 Cedar tree, Lebanese national emblem imprinted on a piece of cannabis resin (Yaliban, 2014)

The exact date of introduction of the plant to Lebanon is debated, but what is certain is that during the Ottoman occupation and until 1920, the marginalised and poor Baalbek-Hermel region, then part of the Great Syria territory, was cultivating it. At that time, familial tribes were in charge of collecting land rents from local residents to pay the occupying authorities. This helped them impose their authority over the residents. With the French mandate in 1920, this power was revoked, and cannabis was prohibited. Consequently, the clan chieftainship was the face of the opposition to this new system by maintaining cannabis cultivation and protecting the farmers who did too. This then helped the tribes maintain their territorial power, and this is where the relationship between cannabis and tribal chieftainship began (Afsahi & Darwich, 2016; Darwich, 2004), thus pushing the governorate further outside the grip of the law.

The French prohibition was not effective in eradicating the plant, and on the contrary the cultivation expanded in surface and importance with exportation to Egypt and Morocco. In the 1960s, the surface of land planted with cannabis had augmented by 30 times the size in the 1920s, so the State intervened by imposing a crop substitution plan. Sunflower seeds were distributed to cannabis farmers in 1966, and the following years saw a decline in cannabis plots at the favour of sunflower plots. The government did not follow through with the plan however, and in the mid-1970s it did not provide the needed seeds and fertilizers. Therefore,

[2] https://cannasos.com/strains/hybrid/red-lebanese

due to low revenues and extensive bureaucratic procedures, the farmers saw it more profitable to switch back to cannabis immediately (Darwich, 2004).

By that time, European and American demand for cannabis was growing, so they turned to imports from existing markets including the Middle East. With the Lebanese civil war (1975 – 1991), the local production of cannabis saw a spike in numbers (Darwich, 2004; Azhari, 2020) owing to the shift in priorities.

However, shortly after the end of the war, the law was once again tightened, crops were eradicated and new alternative crop programs were subsidised (1992 – 2000) (Hilal et al., 2018). This was made through pressures from the USA, and an agreement with the Syrian regime which was occupying the territory, as per Nehmeh. This caused a sharp decrease in the income of all the households who were depending on it, and additionally, some farmers were replacing cannabis plants with the cultivation of opium poppy which was more profitable (Darwich, 2004).

In 1998, Law 673/98 was passed to prohibit the cultivation, trade or possession of illicit drugs including cannabis. Some exceptions fall under this law, including special permits for scientific research, individual medical prescriptions, and users who resort to medical treatment or rehabilitation (Hilal et al., 2018). The enforcement of this law has always been a challenge given the widespread drug use among Lebanese, especially the youth (Hilal et al., 2018). However, law enforcement practices especially for cannabis use has always resorted to punishing young consumers and small dealers, while turning a blind eye to the major producers who are well-known. As Mteirek notes (POD), there are 8,000 drug-related arrests in Lebanon yearly, over 60% of whom related to minor cannabis offences.

Law enforcement officials used to make yearly raid attempts in cannabis farms in the Beqaa Valley, the last one being in 2012, but they are always met with armed farmers commanded by the tribe leaders to defend their lands, and casualties fall on both sides of the fight (Collard, 2015). With the start of the Syrian war in 2011, the priorities shifted to security matters, and the government then eased the cannabis cultivation control. Nowadays, cannabis fields can again be openly seen "on the sides of main roads and even close to army checkpoints" (Khoder, 2019) in Baalbek-Hermel.

Figure 16 "Lebanese drug lord" screenshot from documentary (BBC, 2017)

In 2018, the government hired global management consulting firm 'McKinsey & Company' in order to establish a plan to rehabilitate the country's struggling economy. One recommended initiative proposed by McKinsey in a 1200-page report was the legalisation of the growing and exportation of cannabis for medicinal purposes (McKinsey & Company, 2018). According to the former minister of economy, the industry could generate a yearly revenue of USD 1 Billion (Akoum, 2020), an amount the country desperately needs, for an investment it partially already has. This is why on April 21, 2020, the Lebanese parliament passed Law 178/20 that regulates the cultivation of the plant for medicinal and industrial purposes. Under this law, recreational use of cannabis is still criminalised, as is any activity undertaken without a legal license.

The timeline below was copied and adapted from the Rapid Response report submitted by the Knowledge to Policy centre at the American University of Beirut (AUB) (Hilal et al., 2018). It presents the major dates and events related to cannabis and the Lebanese law, as dicussed in this chapter.

x – 1920
Cannabis cultivated in Baalbek-Hermel (in Great Syria) under Ottoman occupation

1920 – 1943
Cannabis prohibited by French mandate, tribal chieftainship emerges as opposition

1943 – 1960s
Surface area planted with cannabis increased by 30 times the size in 1920s

1966 – 1971
First cannabis substitution program, lands of sunflower replaced cannabis fields

1975 – 1991
Cannabis market exploded due to Civil War

1992
Alternative crops proposed by the Lebanese government

1998
Narcotics Law (673/98) was issued banning cannabis cultivation and other narcotics

2000
Law 673/98 was amended, and Alternative crops program was halted due to financial issues

2011
The UNODC placed Lebanon within the world's top five sources of cannabis

2014
Legalisation of cannabis cultivation was on the table again and advocated by politicians

2017
Proposals to amend Law 673/98

2018
Drug users no longer prosecuted based on a binding legal circular

Lebanese Cannabis Centre was launched

Legalisation of cannabis cultivation seriously discussed

April 2020
Parliament passes Law 178/20 regulating cannabis cultivation for medicinal & industrial purposes
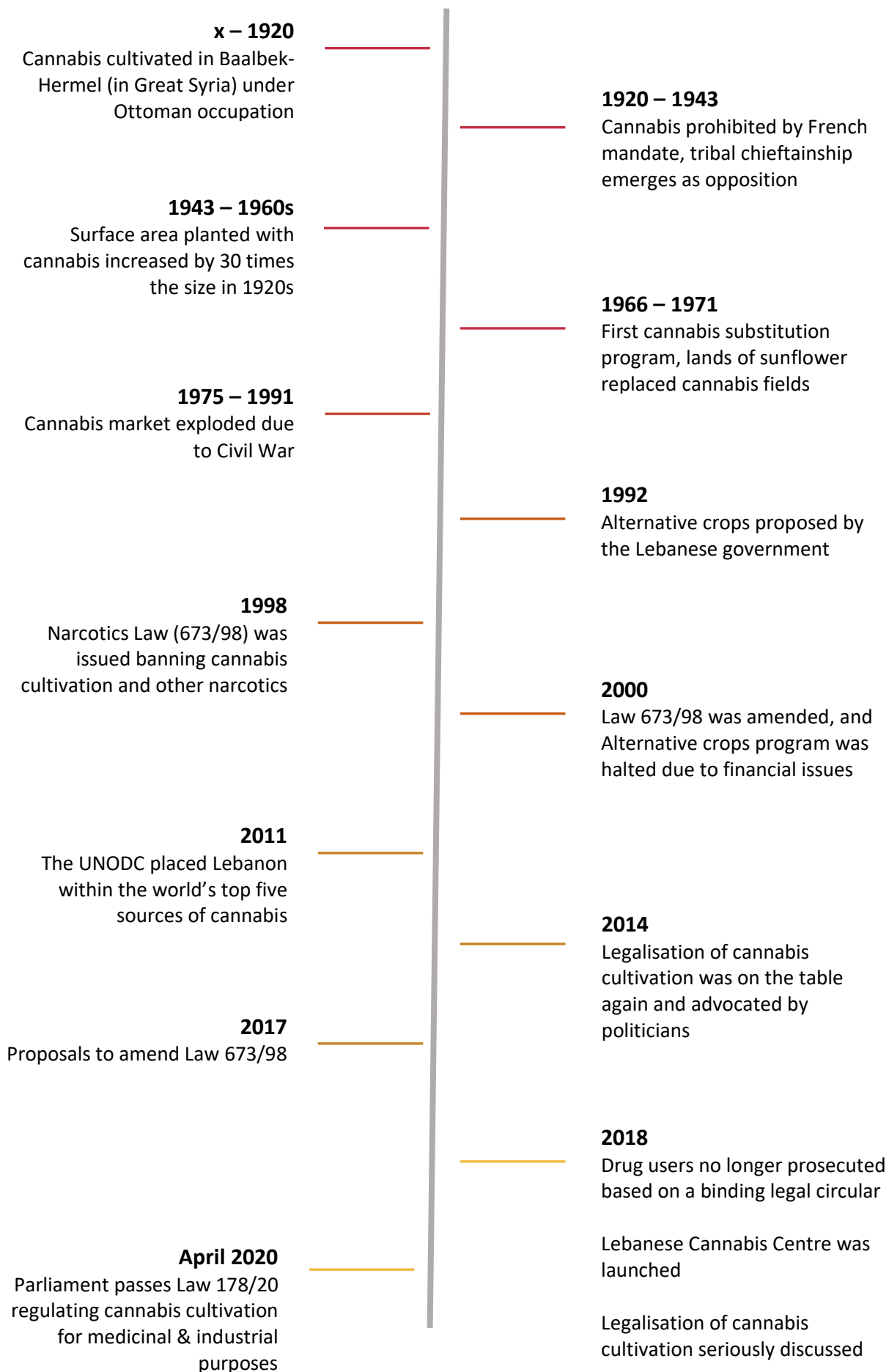
Figure 17 Timeline of the legal status of cannabis in Lebanon (Adapted from Hilal et al., 2018)

5.6.   Summary and relation to the law in question

This chapter has presented a brief overview about the societal, economic and political history of Lebanon in general and the Baalbek-Hermel governorate in particular. From the historic information presented, it becomes clear that to say the area has been negatively impacted by the illegal cultivation of cannabis, as the second objective of the law implies[3], is a misleading construction of the problem at hand. Therefore, a more accurate conclusion is formed in this chapter, and it is that the governorate, similar to all peripheral and rural areas in Lebanon, have been constantly overlooked from the development efforts of the central government since before the country's independence.

The national conversation surrounding this law is one of justice, as a common adjective that is used by the research interviewees and the local population to describe the Baalbek-Hermel area is "*mouharrama*", the Arabic word for *deprived*. The use of this word suggests that the government has always been denying the area its basic needs, and it shows a feeling of blame, meaning that the government owes the area access to these needs. This is why the research concurs that the cultivation of cannabis is more accurately described as a source of livelihoods to the families who are engaged with it, that evolved as a consequence to the absent development and rural policies in the area, rather than a problem that caused it.

The following chapters therefore explore whether partially legalising cannabis with Law 178/20 responds to the pressing challenges of the area, starting with an in-depth analysis of the legalisation process itself.

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[3] The objectives of Law 178 will be discussed later, but Objective 2 is repeated here: "*Achieving sustainable development in the areas negatively affected by the illicit cultivation of the cannabis plant and its haphazard use and giving the status of public interest (development activities and programs aimed at developing these areas)*".

6. The legislation and narrative accompanying it

6.1.   Law 178/20

6.1.1. The regulatory model of implementation

The policy model adopted to regulate the activity ranges between the "Public authority (near monopoly)" and the "Monitored for-profit licenses" on Caulkins et al. (2015)'s spectrum depicted in Figure 6 above. Basically, by way of this law, a new government entity called "the Regulatory Commission for the Cultivation of Cannabis for Medical and Industrial Purposes" (later referred to as the Authority) will be established. It is the entity in charge of monitoring the compliance and implementation of this law on all fronts[4] (Article 4).

The Commission has financial and administrative independence, and its organisational framework is explained in Annex 3.

6.1.2. The activities permitted by the law

The law entitled "Licensing the Cultivation of Cannabis Plants for Medical and Industrial Use" sets the processes and mechanisms through which cannabis can be planted, manufactured and distributed, along with the violations and related penalties.

The law essentially regulates the cultivation and manufacture of cannabis products for medicinal and industrial use, without decriminalising local consumption, therefore the consumable products are being regulated for exportation. In fact, as the Lebanese Narcotics Law (673/98) prohibits the use of cannabis, and the Cannabis Law (178/20) does not mention the users, then the consumption of cannabis, even for medicinal purposes, is still prohibited in Lebanon.

The types of licenses and other explanations about the law are found in Annex 3.

6.1.3. The question of the THC content allowed

"Practically, you are not legalising anything. You're not legalising the plant that is grown, you are substituting it with one whose seeds are imported [...], it's a delusion, you need the conditions that would have made the sunflower program work [for this plan to be sustainable]" (K. Hamade, personal communication, May 27, 2020).

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[4] The responsibilities of the Commission include determining the THC and CBD contents allowed, setting the geographic areas where the activities can take place, awarding licenses, monitoring and inspection for compliance with the law...

According to Kanj Hamade, this law is more properly described as a *crop substitution* rather than a *legalisation* move. Hamade was referring to the clause that limits the THC content in the allowed plants. In the draft bill, the maximum THC content allowed was 1%, which is much lower than the Lebanese cannabis THC content believed to be over 20%. In the final approved law, this condition was removed, and it now says the Commission is responsible of setting the allowed limit. Even though the limit was removed for now, law 178 still does not legalise the cannabis that is currently grown in Lebanon since any person wishing to legally grow the plant must obtain a license and is confined to the geographic area determined by the Commission.

This point was confirmed by M. Farran (personal communication, July 1, 2020) who explained that even though high-THC compounds are in demand for the medicinal sector, the legislators were not open to the idea of legalising high THC strains. For now, the inclination is to permit low-THC, high-CBD plants, and then increase the cap later if the market and studies prove the need.

In addition to issues of undermining the local knowledge and agricultural heritage and the exclusion of the current farmers as discussed in Chapter 4, this condition threatens the viability of the legal market as claimed by Hamade. In his view, the activities permitted by this law are similar to the crop substitution programs which were imposed by the government in the 60s and the 90s and which were not sustained. For the same reasons, legalising a different type of crop, especially without special considerations to current growers, would not be attractive enough for them to make the switch. More so today, and as a consequence of the devaluation of the Lebanese currency, the import of seeds to be made in a foreign currency would be even less feasible without proper support. Consequently, this ensures the survival of the illicit market as current growers have no incentive to import seeds to enter the legal market.

6.1.4. The implementation decrees as a "double-edged sword"

As with any other law, this legal document is the document needed to make the plant that was formally illegal, now legally planted and sourced for byproducts. It sets the broad lines in which to operate, however, the detailed mechanisms to implement the law are to be issued in the Implementation Decrees. These are to be established by the Council of Ministers within six months after the law was approved.

According to Karim Nammour, these implementation Decrees are "a double-edged sword", as he sees two potential problems in the matter. First, the law has a stronger judicial power and hierarchy, so it is much more difficult to change than the decrees. Decrees can be modified with different cabinets, and this is what makes them a political tool at the hands of the ministers to use to their advantage, rather than a matter of law. The second problem is

that if the Decrees are not issued in time, the law is practically cancelled since it cannot be applied. The decrees are needed for example to set the allowable limits of THC and CBD contents in the plants, to designate the Supervisin Commission members, etc. so of course, they are a precondition for the law to become functional.

6.2.   Politics and policymaking

6.2.1. Political background and narrative adopted by the lawmakers

The framework below summarises the positions of the main parties involved in the Baalbek-Hermel district and in the cannabis legalisation process. These views are drawn from the interviews conducted as well as the documents and materials analysed.

Hezbollah	Amal Movement	Lebanese Forces	"Independents" & Kataeb Party
Major share in the area (Duo)	Major share in the area (Duo)	Third major share in the area	No real share in the area
Covert financial interest in illicit market	Leder says Baalbek-Hermel should be happy their turn in development has come	Content with the law, "liberating the farmers"	Content with the law, economic opportunity for the country
Voted against the law stating "no feasibility study"	"Start planting cannabis tomrrow, what are you waiting for"		
BUT: did not scrutinise or appeal to the law			

Figure 18 Political background and narrative of lawmakers

6.2.2. Top-down policymaking and confusion about the law

Law 178 was approved in parliament as part of a three-day legislative session held in April 2020. The session took place amid heightening tensions in the country caused by the accelerating economic collapse and the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 60 bills were proposed on the agenda, most of which protesters found were not relevant to the pressing situation (Rose, 2020).

Although the way in which the session was held seemed rushed, the legalisation of cannabis was being explored for years preceding its approval. However, even with this, it was still perceived as a top-down policy that was born without proper planning and consideration. That is because, as Mteirek notes (WEB), Law 178 ignores attempts to conceive a national drug policy strategy, notably the amendment to the narcotics law proposed by *Skoun* in 2016 that calls for the decriminalisation of drug use. Mteirek contends that this proposed amendment should have been a precondition to be established before the introduction of a cannabis law.

Similarly, Allaw (POD) states that the legislation was not discussed in the public sphere and was issued in complete absence of farmers who learned about it along with the other citizens. This has led to a confusion among the cannabis farmers who were not consulted or even informed about the specificities of the law and what it exactly permits.

This is the environment in which the policy was conceived, and it is what made it seem detached from the reality. Further, the confusion around the law is not limited to the receiving side of the policymaking. In fact, the interviews reveal a confusion about the specifics of the law even among the legislators themselves. This is true for the two main themes inquired: the type of plant allowed, and the role of the Commission in marketing the harvest, as the answers show a discrepancy in what different legislators think the law stipulates.

6.3. The issues emphasised or neglected in the narrative

6.3.1. Rationale and stated objectives

The law concludes with a section stating the rationale behind proposing it, as well as its objectives. The lawmakers begin justifying the rationale behind Law 178 by stating that countries are increasingly moving in the direction of legalising and regulating cannabis due to its proven benefits, and that this law would allow Lebanon to follow this global trend. It would also generate a direly needed source of economic gain and job opportunities, open new doors in the agricultural, industrial and scientific fields, and help reach sustainable development especially in rural areas in Lebanon.

Under this rationale, the stated objectives are the following, in this order, as translated from the legal text:
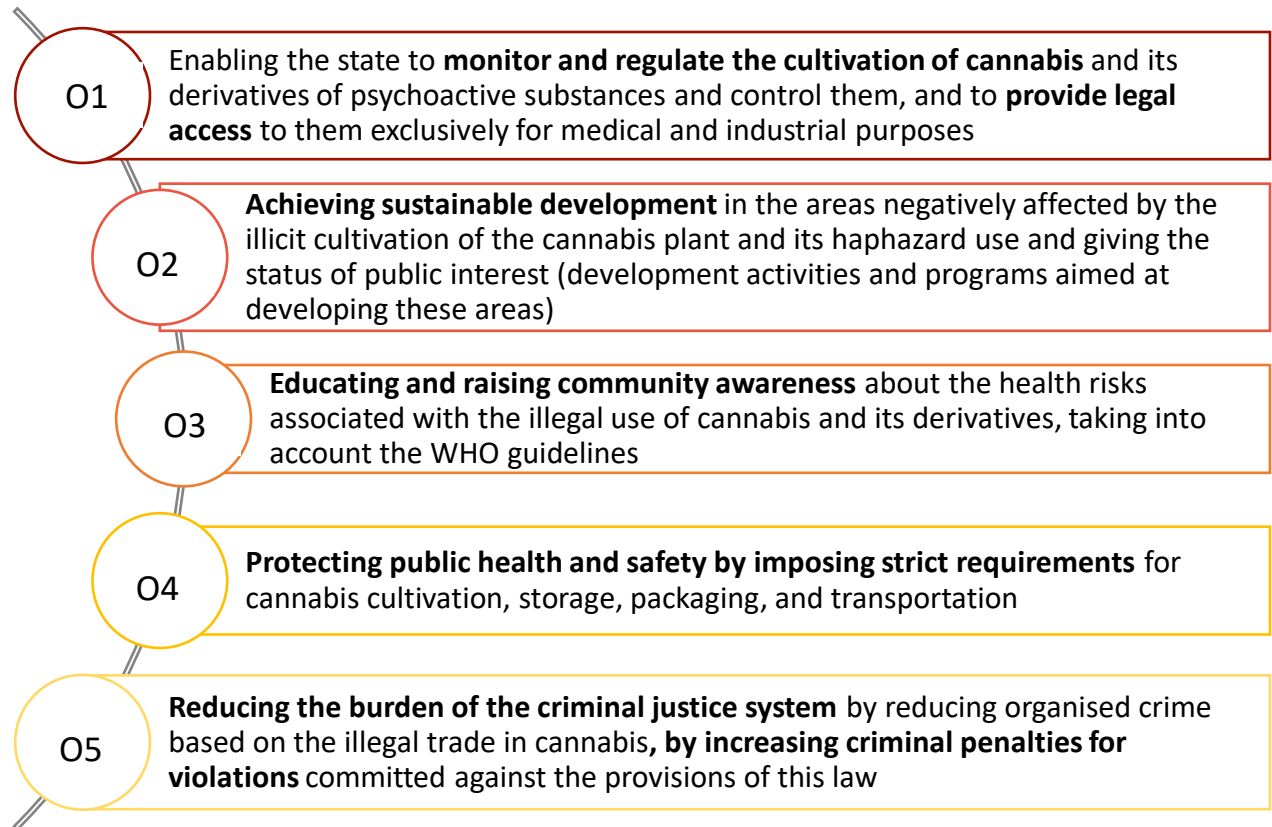
O1 — Enabling the state to **monitor and regulate the cultivation of cannabis** and its derivatives of psychoactive substances and control them, and to **provide legal access** to them exclusively for medical and industrial purposes

O2 — **Achieving sustainable development** in the areas negatively affected by the illicit cultivation of the cannabis plant and its haphazard use and giving the status of public interest (development activities and programs aimed at developing these areas)

O3 — **Educating and raising community awareness** about the health risks associated with the illegal use of cannabis and its derivatives, taking into account the WHO guidelines

O4 — **Protecting public health and safety by imposing strict requirements** for cannabis cultivation, storage, packaging, and transportation

O5 — **Reducing the burden of the criminal justice system** by reducing organised crime based on the illegal trade in cannabis, **by increasing criminal penalties for violations** committed against the provisions of this law

Figure 19 Stated objectives of Law 178 (Translated from Arabic by Author)

The theoretical chapter of this thesis (Chapter 2) has showcased the importance of the objectives and indicators of a certain policy in foreshadowing the outcomes that the policy could lead to. At first glance, the stated objectives of Law 178 seem to emanate from a societal concern. However, a closer examination allows for the uncovering of contradictions first within the objectives themselves, and second between the objectives and the actual content of the law.

For starters, the order and content of the objectives suggest that the law is in favour of a prohibitionist approach to drug policy. This is because hierarchically, the objective to control the illegal activity (O1) comes first, and then follow the objectives related to sustainable development (O2) and public health (O3, O4). Also, Objective 5 calls for a tightening of the law enforcement provisions against the violations of the law. This reflects that the law prioritises the punitive stance, and as discussed in Chapter 2, it is in direct conflict with the second objective about achieving sustainable development.

Next, Objective 3 is concerned with the health risks of the illegal use of cannabis and its derivatives. Technically, as previously noted, cannabis use is still prohibited in Lebanon under this law, even for medicinal purposes. This then includes the medical cannabis in the "illegal cannabis use". In addition, the first word used in the text is "*tathkif*", which is derived from the Arabic word for *culture*, so it is better translated into "cultivate" rather than "educate". This word has a paternal tone which suggests that the lawmakers (and the licenced entities) are in charge of improving the culture of the communities regarding cannabis risks.

Further, in regard to Objective 4, and while strict standards for operation are paramount to the cannabis industry, Chapter 4.3 of this thesis has demonstrated that these requirements are causing the exclusion of SM farmers from the legal markets. This again contradicts the sustainable development objective (O2) as important actors are neglected in this plan.

Finally, as O5 is to increase the criminal penalties on the violations, it is in contradiction with its own case of reducing the burden on the criminal justice system. Quite the opposite, Chapter 4.2.4. of this thesis has shown how the illicit market is not abolished by the introduction of any kind of cannabis permission, and therefore, the illicit Lebanese cannabis market is not expected to dissolve with the implementation of this law. This is why increasing penalties can be expected to increase the burden on the criminal justice system. This is also in opposition with O2, as approaches to drug control have demonstrated time and again that tightening the grip with drug supply and demand reduction methods does not result in sustainable development outcomes.

6.3.2. Law implementation and enforcement issues

Although the objectives of the law appear to be founded on societal concerns, the examination of the contents of the law independently from the objectives also reveals a discrepancy. The graph below shows the results of the Nvivo analysis of the themes tackled by Law 178.
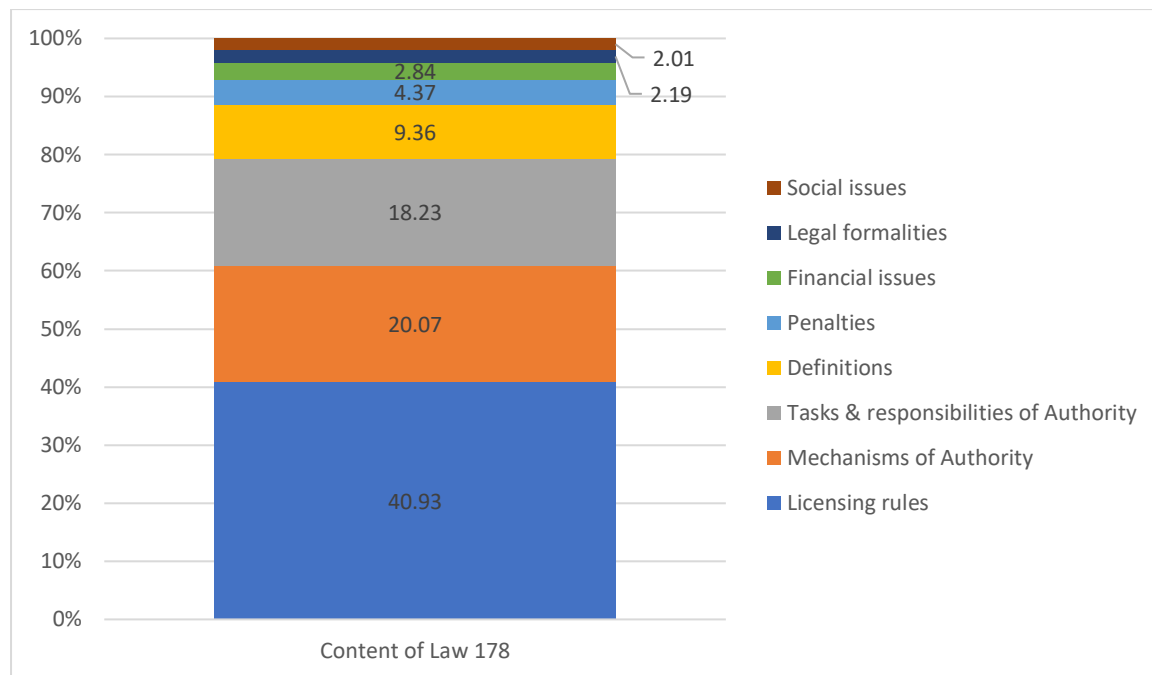

Figure 20 Contents of Law 178 by themes (Author's own)

As is visible in the graph, the themes that are assigned the largest weight in terms of occurrence in the law are related to the law implementation and enforcement procedures. Occupying 40.9% of the total content, the licensing rules come in the first position, which can be expected since the law is set out to determine what is allowed and how. It is initiating a new activity that was previously illegal, and this is why the mechanisms needed for this activity to function are occupying the largest share of the content. This also explains the large slots occupied by the operation mechanisms of the regulatory Commission (20%) as well as its tasks and responsibilities (18.2%).

However, the proportion dedicated to the societal concerns of the law (2%) is underwhelming, especially when measured against the stated objectives. What is also visibly absent from the law is an economic feasibility study that supports the claims that this new market would generate profits, and how these profits would be distributed. In addition, the environmental impacts are also absent. These observations are further discussed in the following chapters.

6.3.3. Economic issues

During the televised talk show (M2), MP Yassine Jaber reads two *Twitter* interventions: one by a former MP and large landowner in the Baalbek-Hermel district showing his support for the project and ensuring that "the Canadians are ready to buy all the harvest and build factories"; and the second by a professor who was writing about the forecasted growth in the CBD market. "Good, then we don't have to extract the petrol[5] now!" says the host, laughing. Similarly, all three MPs interviewed rely on the expected economic revenues and the importance of this law in allowing Lebanon to participate in the growing global market.

These instances reveal that an important purpose behind Law 178, or as Mteirek calls it, one major "unstated objective" (WEB) is the economic gains that it is expected to bring. It is clear that the legislators are hoping for a quick fix in a country that is collapsing economically and financially. However, with this objective, the law was not substantiated with an economic assessment that shows the feasibility and the costs and benefits that are expected. The lawmakers base their assumptions on the McKenzie study, but also on other studies since this project has been discussed before 2018, as per M. Moussa. Plus, they specifically refer to the fame and recognised quality of the Lebanese hybrid strain of cannabis, the expertise of the farmers and the adequate climatic conditions. However, these assumptions must be examined with caution, for two reasons:

The first one is that these studies were conducted before the retrenchment of the "exuberance period" that Pascual described (Chapter 4.2.2). By relying on studies made and possible interest shown over two years ago, there is a risk of ignoring the reality of the market today which might not look like it did then, especially following the coronavirus pandemic.

Second, and as previously explained, the plant that is legalised is not the famous Lebanese strain. Hamade sees that the real money and added value of Lebanon as a cannabis exporter is in the hybrid specialty strain that is currently traded for recreational purposes. The reputation of the Lebanese hashish in international markets is owed to this type of strain, and therefore legalising an alternative type of crop prevents the untapping of the potential of the available resource. In addition, Hamade points out that foreign investors would not be attracted to the new Lebanese market if based only on the climatic conditions, a point that echoes Alfredo Pascual's comments about the comparison of costs (Chapter 4.2.3). This is why, in his opinion, a better economic plan would have been to legalise the trade of the plants that are currently grown and for which the country is known, and develop a strategy around the industry which includes tourism and rural development.

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[5] During the same week of this interview, Lebanon was starting exploratory drilling operations for offshore gas.

6.3.4. Social issues

The social themes present in Law 178 mainly address public health concerns, specifically cannabis and drug use. They are reflected in two instances: first, in Article 4, one of the tasks assigned to the Commission is to propose measures to raise awareness on the harmful cannabis consumption at the national level. Second, Article 34 obliges the operational licensed companies to dedicate 0,5% of their net revenues for regular awareness campaigns, and 3% for the support of local CSOs working in the field of drugs and rehabilitation.

Assessed independently from the rest of the text, these two instances are in accordance with some of Riboulet-Zemouli et al. (2019)'s recommendations around SDG3 (Health & Well-being). In fact, they mention harm reduction strategies in addition to the rehabilitation of drug addicts and their reintegration into society, which is an approach that is distant from the prohibitionist stance adopted in the overall discourse.

Furthermore, the law fails to target issues of access to the legal plant. As is further discussed in other sections of this chapter, the law does not present mechanisms to guarantee the access of farmers to the legal markets or to the legalised natural resource, or the access of patients to cannabis-based medicines.

6.3.5. Environmental issues

Law 178 and the conversation accompanying it fail to address the environmental costs and benefits of legalising cannabis, an observation that is comparable to the global discussion about the subject. In fact, there is no direct mention of environmental or land use issues in the legislation, except for one possible instance. Article 4 lists examples of criteria that could be used to determine the adequate geographic locations where the operations would be permitted. The examples include "distance from residence area, soil conditions, amount and frequency of irrigation, proportion of land used for cultivation...". However, as the specific conditions are not mentioned, it is unclear whether the concern is for the environment, and what is considered harmful or not.

Therefore, and as Saghieh & Nammour (2020) note, one instance in which the Implementation Decrees of Law 178 could be used as a tool to reinforce the system of allocations and clientelism is through the designation of the geographic areas. Since the law does not determine clear criteria, the decision in the decrees can be made on the basis of political allocations, meaning the allowed areas would be decided depending on the political affiliation of the residents rather than land use specifications.

On another front, land use issues in agriculture are also related to food security, a problem that is increasing in urgency in Lebanon today. However, as explained by M. Farran in the

interview, Lebanon is heavily reliant on food imports, as its small surface area would not be sufficient to satisfy the local needs. Also, the land conditions where cannabis is traditionally grown are not suitable for planting staple foods like wheat for instance. This point is also confirmed by Carrier & Klantschnig (2016) who further argue that the income gained by selling the crops makes the families food secure. Moreover, Riboulet-Zemouli et al. (2019) state that cannabis seeds are a "valuable and healthy food resource (…) [that should be] considered as important agents in the fight against malnutrition" (p. 23).

6.4.   The actors included or undermined by the narrative

6.4.1. The regulatory commission

Running a Word Frequency query on Nvivo shows that the most widely used word in Law 178 is the Arabic word for "*The Commission*", as depicted in Figure 21.

Figure 21 Most frequent words in Law 178 (Author's own, made by NVivo 12)

In addition, when asked about what would guarantee that the cannabis market and related activities would not be subject to corruption, Yassine Jaber refers to the Regulatory Commission, while Antoine Habchi describes the long process and thought that went into designing the model of the policy, and setting the adequate conditions.

The Commission is in fact assigned a great deal of responsibility given its independence and role in the new activity. In contrast, lawyers and drug policy advocates warn against the reliance on this government body to regulate the activity:

"The judicial structure of the [Commission] is corrupt in terms of independence, immunity and financing. There's a flagrant conflict of interest in the financing structure. It has huge responsibility, huge authority, and huge potential for corruption" (K. Nammour, personal communication, May 22, 2020).

Before the law was approved in Parliament, two lawyers from the Legal Agenda, Nizar Saghieh and Karim Nammour had published their legal remarks on the draft bill proposed. A lot of the points they make are about how some technicalities of the bill are in conflict with the Lebanese Constitution, but more relevant here is the recurring impression that the bill largely leaves room for mismanagement and corruption. These remarks still hold true in the approved law. In fact, they specifically address Article 10 of the law that accounts for the budget of the Commission. To explain, the financing is partially provided by the fees of the licenses that the Commission itself awards. Meaning the money needed for the operations including the salaries of the members of the Commission depends on the licenses that they grant. This is where the conflict of interest manifests. Another budgeting source in Article 10 is from "aids, gifts, donations" made to the Commission, without specifying rules or boundaries for these donations, which might therefore covertly include bribes (Saghieh & Nammour, 2020).

The potential for corruption is serious in the context of Lebanon where government institutions are plagued with mismanagement and political allotments as discussed in Chapter 5. Knowing the local context, one could say that the board of directors being constituted of seven members (five ministry representatives and two specialists) could be a way to ensure an equal distribution of "seats" among the different parties, regardless of the role of the ministry in implementing this law. This could then be a demonstration of the system of confessional equity discussed in Chapter 5.

6.4.2. The farmers

The word "farmer" is mentioned once in the text, in Article 18 listing the entities and eligibility conditions to apply for licenses. It appears along with "land owners or renters" as an example of the Lebanese natural persons eligible to apply, so they are not even the main subject in the sentence or section. This in itself is an indication that the law is not concerned with how the previously criminalised farmers will be included in the new legal markets, but rather about the other themes that are given more weight.

This goes against the claims of the main lawmakers behind this bill who depict it as a solution for the dominance of drug traffickers over the cannabis supply chain at the expense of the farmers, as the two following quotes translated from the Legal Agenda article (M3) show.

Yassine Jaber: "[*The law] saves the average farmer from the clutches of the drug dealer, who reaps the profits and returns little to the farmers*".
Antoine Habchi: "*Let's celebrate the liberation of the society and farmers from the power of [drug] traffickers and promoters*".

The conflict between these claims and the actual law is not only represented by the absence of the farmers as actors in the text, but also by the provisions of the law. In fact, no special consideration is made for the current cannabis farmers to be included in the legal markets. Riboulet-Zemouli et al. (2019) recommend that cannabis policy reform should account for "training and assisting farmers in their transition to legal settings" (p.19), whereas this law does not exactly stipulate the mechanisms that would guarantee their inclusion. By not mentioning the farmers as a target group, it does not say *how* they would be liberated from the traffickers and actually benefit from the legalisation.

Moreover, two of the eligibility conditions for licensing application constitute a significant barrier for current farmers to be included in this law. The first one is the need to acquire certificates of Good Agricultural and Collection Practices (GACP) and Good Storage Practices (GSP) for cannabis plants. The technical, financial, and time-related difficulty implied in acquiring licenses was discussed in Chapter 4 where the exclusion of growers was found to be a result of such requirements. The second condition is that the person applying for the license should have a clean criminal record, meaning that they should not be convicted of a misdemeanor or felony, including crimes related to the Narcotics law 673. This, as Saghieh & Nammour (2020) write, is in direct conflict with the reality of the farmers and residents of Baalbek-Hermel where over 40,000 arrest warrants for such offences are issued and pending trials. This is why they note that the law should have included a clause allowing for a transition period with an amnesty for currently convicted growers, but what is proposed instead is explained in the next section.

This divide between what the lawmakers claim and what the law stipulates demonstrates the notion of "disconnect" (Putzel et al., 2015, p. 455) between top-down policies and the local contexts, as introduced in Chapter 2.4. It is even more flagrant when the opinions of the farmers are brought into the discussion.

6.4.3. The issue of the Amnesty bill

As the condition of the clean civil record practically excludes current farmers from participating in the legal markets, a separate general amnesty bill was proposed and discussed along with the cannabis legalisation bill. This bill is highly controversial, and it is still not approved by the parliament following two sessions held to discuss it in April 2020.

The reason for the controversy is not related to the cannabis farmers or drug traffickers, but to other groups of criminal offenders that the bill includes. To explain briefly, as a symptom of the allotment system of power-sharing in Lebanon, it was not possible to issue a specific amnesty to the people concerned with the cannabis law because it would mean pardoning only one part of the population – the Baalbek-Hermel residents, who are mainly attributed to Hezbollah and Amal parties. Instead, a general amnesty bill was proposed to include offenders from other categories of the "mosaic" in a way to maintain the balance of the system. The coronavirus pandemic and overpopulation of prisons were also cited as the reason for this bill. However, as additional groups of offenders[6] were included, the contestation against the amnesty increased, and the decision was then paralysed.

This is why in the weeks leading up to the parliamentary session in which the cannabis bill was approved, the conversation was predominantly about the general amnesty rather than the feasibility and impacts of partially legalising cannabis. This is also why no decision was taken about the amnesty condition, and therefore, to this date, Law 178 still criminalises current cannabis growers and exempts them from acquiring legal licenses.

6.4.4. The cannabis consumers

According to Mteirek (POD), among the yearly 8,000 drug-consumption related arrests in Lebanon, 60% are for smoking cannabis. Even though the narcotics law (163) dictates that the drug users should be referred to treatment before trial, a very small proportion of the arrests actually does. This means that the consumers of cannabis and their families are affected by a failed law that is not being fully applied. It also means that the prisons are being overflowed with minor offences that could be avoided by applying the law. Mteirek contends that since Objective 5 of Law 178 is to decrease the burden on the criminal justice system, one way to

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[6] The bill wanted to include for example environmental crimes, money laundering and embezzlement crimes, radical groups that fought against the Lebanese Army, etc., but it has been reviewed to exclude major offences.

do it is to approve the 2016 proposed bill for the decriminalisation of drug use (introduced in Chapter 6.2.2.). This way, the burden would be avoided, as would be the negative impact on the 8,000 families yearly.

Nevertheless, as the legality of the consumption of cannabis products is not tackled in the legislation, it means that the current rules of prohibition apply. According to MP Hankach and Dr. Farran, the goal is to eventually permit the use of cannabis-based medicines locally. However, to date, the legislation does not include the consumption of cannabis products in Lebanon.

6.5. Messages conveyed by the law & narrative

6.5.1. "*Cannabis*" versus "*hashish*"

A notable pattern in the discussion in the televised show (M2) is that the MPs Jaber and Habchi consistently refer to the plant by its official[7] Arabic name "قنب / *kennab*" (=cannabis), as occurs in the law. In contrast, the host and Nouh Zaiter, infamous alleged drug trafficker, call it by its common name "*hashish*" that is widely known and used in the Lebanese spoken language but is also associated with the criminalised recreational use and the related activities. This could suggest an attempt for the lawmakers to distance themselves from the common connotations of cannabis as a drug, and a desire to present it with a new light: an agricultural product with scientific and industrial potentials. The use of official language makes the distinction between these two categories clear and explicit.

Along the same line, in the Definitions section of the law (Article 2), the term "cannabis plant" is first and foremost defined as being a "controlled plant that has psychoactive properties". This also shows that the overall message is not that cannabis is now considered safe and beneficial. On the contrary, it is clearly still considered a subject of crime and danger, however this law would determine the legal conditions in which some people can make monetary profits from it.

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[7] In the Arabic language, the spoken language is different from the official, written one which is more formal but is never used when speaking, except for example by news anchors, or in formal speeches, etc. So, when speaking, it normally sounds odd to use written-language terms, as if one would be using a scientific nomenclature throughout the whole informal discussion.

6.5.2. Message to the farmers

"Who told you that as a Baalbek-Hermel resident, I want my son to grow up to be a cannabis farmer, and not a college graduate? You are legalising hashish before building universities for us to learn in. You are telling us: education does not suit you, hashish suits you, keep planting it" (S. Allaw, personal communication, May 21, 2020).

When asked by Allaw about their opinions on the new legislation in the Legal Agenda video (M4), some farmers pointed out that although the step is welcomed, it is not a pressing priority for the local communities. As told by Allaw in the phone interview, the Baalbek-Hermel legislators namely from the Amal movement are depicting this legislation as a promise for development for the area, thus "washing their hands" of the historic negligence they have always displayed. This is what they are opposing, as for them, a more relevant development plan would have been to provide access to basic services such as universities, hospitals and paved roads.

By opting for the legalisation of cannabis instead, the message is that the farmers and residents of Baalbek-Hermel will continue to be categorised as cannabis champions, as no other options were ever presented to them. This categorisation is popular and entertaining for the cannabis enthusiasts in Lebanon, but it is also dangerous. Indeed, it means that a population is marginalised and labelled as rebels. This same population should now be considered one of the forefront players in creating a productive economy. Therefore, in an opinion video shared by *Daraj*, social media news channel, Allaw is seen requesting an apology and compensation for the decades of criminalisation and injustice by the Lebanese authorities (Daraj Media, 2020).

6.5.3. Message to the consumers

"The law does mention the benefits of the plant, and yet it is still criminalised. What message is the legislator conveying then? – You will be arrested and prosecuted for using a substance that we now legally grow and sell" (S. Mteirek in WEB).

Legalising the cultivation and manufacture of a product without permitting its local use is perceived as hypocritical from the local authorities' part. As Mteirek contends, it shows that the lawmakers are more concerned with the prospective economic gains than with the lives of the people who have been negatively affected by the failed drug policies.

Therefore, the message that is conveyed by the narrative is that the cannabis consumers, whether patients or recreational users, are still considered criminals under the current law. However, this legislation states the conditions in which some people can make money out of

it. These people are also responsible of educating the rest of the citizens about the dangers of consuming this same substance.

6.6.   Summary and position towards other challenges

The discussion above has revealed that there are two main narratives that accompany the process of partially legalising cannabis in Lebanon. They are summarised in the figure below:

Narrative (Policymakers)	Counter-narrative (Farmers, CSOs)
• It is a new **productive economic sector** that will bring in much needed foreign currency to the national reserve • At the same time, it helps formalising a sector that was out of control, therefore **improving the livelihoods of the people** who participate in it	• The legislation was not conceived in a way as to achieve what it claims to target • Improving the livelihoods of the people would have been realised through an **integrated national strategy** also targeting **more urgent priorities**

Figure 22 Narrative accompanying the legislation (Author's own)

The legalisation process and the law itself were not created as part of a much-needed sustainable rural development strategy, or a national drug policy strategy. The specific examples and findings discussed in this section all fall into this observation, as the discussion refers back to the question of priorities and pressing challenges.

This is why two types of contradictions were found. First, a disconnect between what the legislation claims to target, and what it is actually expected to result in, and second, a disconnect between the top-down law-making priorities and the actual needs of the affected groups.

7. Conclusion

This research set out to explore the potential contribution of partially legalising cannabis to sustainable development in Lebanon, and the implications the move would have on different players.

Starting with a review about the global advancements in the drugs and development agendas, the study shows that these are increasingly converging, although still recently and in a shy manner. One obvious explanation for this is the attractiveness of the *process* indicators used to measure the success or failure of global drug policies. In contrast, what scholars and practitioners are advocating for is the use of *outcome* indicators that steer the focus towards the real impacts on the communities behind the reported numbers.

The stated objectives of the Lebanese legislation echo the *outcome* indicators that are rooted in societal and developmental concerns. However, the assessment of the legislation along with the process and narratives in which it was conceived has revealed a different reality.

First, the research shows that even with a move to partially legalise cannabis, the legislation still prioritises prohibition over development. Cannabis production and consumption are still criminalised in Lebanon, and on the contrary, penalties are increased for people who do not comply with the law. Second, the decision-making system did not include current farmers or drug policy CSOs, which helps explain the "disconnect" and differentiated priorities exhibited by both sides. Third, until the date of writing, the current growers are still criminalised and exempted from participating in the legal sector. This is both directly with the explicit exclusion of individuals holding arrest warrants, since no amnesty law was approved yet; and indirectly since the intent is to permit a plant that is different from the one currently grown, and whose seeds need to be imported. Finally, land use and environmental concerns are not mentioned in the law, and it is unclear whether they would be considered as part of the licensing conditions.

As the specific rules and conditions for licensing are still to be issued within the Implementation Decrees, the importance of this research rests in the overview assessment it has presented. Some policy recommendations can therefore be extracted from this research based on the lessons learned from comparable experiences, and on the reality of the different groups affected. They are summarised in the figure below.

Figure 23 Recommendations

Beyond the Lebanese legislation, the research has also led to interesting findings from a broader perspective. First, it has given prominence to the local political angle that is often overlooked by the development community. By scrutinising the process and content of a legislation, the study has revealed that following a global trend in drug policy reform does not automatically mean positive developmental outcomes. On the contrary, this could be another move that reinforces existing power structures and social imbalances. Additionally, the research has uncovered a mismatch in thinking patterns and worldviews between the lawmakers and the people affected by the laws. This mismatch is translated in a policy that does not necessarily respond to the people's pressing needs.

Finally, as existing cannabis policy reforms mature and as more countries proceed with similar moves in the future, some interesting research avenues will unveil. An interesting angle to tackle could be first the long-term development impacts of cannabis policy reforms, and second how different implementation models affect these impacts differently. Also, differentiated impacts per types of supply lines or industries permitted would also be an interesting angle to explore. These research avenues would also respond to the convergence of the drug policy and the development arenas in the future.

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Annex 1 - Proposed "Outcome" Drug and Development policy indicators (adapted from IDPC, 2018)

For the purpose of this research, only the indicators that are relevant to Cannabis are presented. Meaning the indicators related to injected drugs and drug users, addiction treatment, overdose and other non-Cannabis related indicators are omitted from the table. Also for the sake of clarity, the table groups the targets and indicators based on the relevant SDG, and not on the seven chapters of the UNGASS document as in the IDPC report.

SDG	Original SDG target / indicator	Possible drug policy target/indicator & relevant paragraph in the UNGASS Outcome Document
1- No poverty	**Indicator 1.1.1:** Proportion of population below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural)	Proportion of people who use drugs below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural) (para 1.h)
		Proportion of population below the international poverty line in areas affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale, by sex, age (urban/rural) (para 3.b)
		Proportion of people living below the poverty line in com- munities affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale (para 3.b, 5.v, 7.b)
		Poverty level among families where illegal drug cultivation is the primary source of income (para 3.b, 5.v, 7.b)
		Poverty levels among people prosecuted/arrested for drug supply/trafficking offences (para 3.b, 5.v, 7.b)
		Comparison of poverty levels before and two years after sustainable development programmes have been implemented, in areas affected by illegal crop cultivation (para 7.b, 7.j)
	Target 1.1: By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day	Number of people incarcerated for drug offences living below the poverty line and who are the sole care provider of children and other dependent relatives (para 4.d)
		By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for people living in areas affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day (para 3.b, 5.v, 7.b)
	Target 1.4: By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance	By 2030 ensure that all men and women, particularly the poor and the vulnerable in areas affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership, and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology, and financial services including microfinance (para 7.j)
		Increase/reduction in the number of people displaced from their land due to crop eradication activities and other drug law enforcement efforts (para 7.j)
	Indicator 1.4.2: Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land,	Percentage of women, men, indigenous peoples, and local communities in areas affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale with secure rights to land, property, and natural resources,

	with legally recognized documentation and who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and by type of tenure	measured by (i) percent- age with documented or recognised evidence of tenure, and (ii) percentage who perceive their rights are recognised and protected (para 7.j)
3- Health and wellbeing	**Target 3.5:** Strengthen prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol	Adoption of minimum quality standards for drug prevention and treatment, modelled on those developed by UNODC (para 1.h)
	Target 3.8 Achieve universal health coverage (UHC), including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health care services, and access to safe, effective, quality, and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all	Legislation or regulations to improve access to controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes (e.g. substances available, requirements to prescribe; requirements for patients to obtain prior permission or register to be eligible, for physicians to receive special licenses, for pharmacies to obtain prior licenses to dispense medicines, etc.) (para 2, 2.a)
		% of people suffering from moderate to severe or chronic pain receiving controlled medicines, by sex, age (para 2)
		% of medical and nursing schools providing palliative care and pain management training in their curriculum (para 2.e)
		Coverage of training for healthcare professionals on palliative care and the treatment of moderate to severe or chronic pain with controlled medicines (para 2.e)
4- Quality education	**Target 4.1:** By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes	By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes in areas affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale (para 7.h, 7.j)
	Indicator 4.3.1: Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex	Percentage of people having access to primary, secondary and higher education in areas affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale (para 7.h, 7.j)
5- Gender equality	**Indicator 5.1.1:** Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex	Legal framework adopted/in place to monitor and redress cases of discrimination against women and girls who use drugs (para 4.b)
	Indicator 5.2.2: Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence	Reported cases of sexual violence against women and girls who use drugs and female drug offenders (para 4.d)
	Target 5.A: Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of proper- ty, financial services,	Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources in areas affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale (para 7.j)

	inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws	
	Indicator 5.A.1: (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure	Proportion of total agricultural population in areas affected by illegal crop cultivation with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure (para 7.j)
	Indicator 5.A.2: Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control	Proportion of countries affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control (para 7.j)
	Target 5.C: Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels	Legislation, regulation or measure passed/reviewed to ensure a gender-sensitive approach to drug policies and programmes, including in the implementation of the Bangkok Rules (para 4.n)
6- Clean water & sanitation	**Target 6.6:** By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes	By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes, in areas affected by illegal crop cultivation (para 7.b, 7.i, 7.g)
		Proportion of countries with alternative development programmes having incorporated environmental protection components aiming to protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes (para 7.b, 7.i, 7.g)
8- Decent work & economic growth	**Indicator 8.6.1:** Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training	Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training in areas affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale (para 7.h, 7.j)
9- Industry, innovation & infrastructure	**Target 9.3:** Increase the access of small-scale industrial and other enterprises, in particular in developing countries, to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets	Proportion of the population in areas affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale having increased access to small-scale industrial and other enterprises and financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets (para 5.v, 7.b)
		Increase in access to licit markets for products derived from local cultivation, production and manufacture in areas affected by illegal crop cultivation (para 7.b)
10- Reduced inequalities	**Indicator 10.3.1:** Proportion of the population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed within the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law	Proportion/number of people who use drugs reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed within the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law, by sex, age (para 1.j)
		Reported cases of stigma and discrimination in accessing healthcare services, by sex, age (paras 1.k, 4.b, 4.d)

	Target 10.3: Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard	Legal and/or policy framework adopted/in place to monitor and redress cases of discrimination against people who use drugs and drug offenders (paras 4.b, 4.d, 4.g)
11- Sustainable cities & communities	**Target 11.1:** By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums	By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums in areas affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale (para 7.h, 7.j)
		Percentage of people having access to stable housing in communities affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale, by sex, age (7.h, 7.j)
13- Climate action	**Target 13.2:** Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning	Proportion of countries having integrated climate change measures into their drug policies, strategies and planning (para 7.b, 7.i, 7.g)
15- Life on land	**Indicator 15.3.1:** Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area	Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area in areas affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale (para 7.b, 7.i, 7.g)
16- Peace, justice & strong institutions	**Target 16.1:** Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere	Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates in areas affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale (para 3.a)
		Reported cases of violence against, and extrajudicial killings of, suspected drug offenders, by sex, age (para 4.o)
	Indicator 16.1.1: Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age	Numbers of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population in areas affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale, by sex and age (para 3.a)
	Indicator 16.1.3: Proportion of population subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence in the previous 12 months	Legislation, regulation or measure passed to eliminate acts of ill-treatment or punishment against drug offenders, by sex, age (para 4.c, 4.o)
		Incidence and prevalence of physical and psychological abuse, including by law enforcement officials, against (suspected) drug offenders, by sex, age (para 4.o)
	Target 16.2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children	Reported cases of abuse, exploitation, trafficking and violence by drug traffickers and organised crime organisations against children and youth involved in illegal drug activities, by sex (para 4.d, 4.f)
		Reported cases of abuse and violence by police and law enforcement officers against children and youth involved in illegal activities, by sex (para 4.d, 4.f)
	Target 16.3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all	Legislation, regulation or measure passed/reviewed to ensure more proportionate penalties and alternatives to incarceration for drug offences (para 4.l, 4.j)
		Legislation, regulation or measure passed to eliminate impunity (para 4.o)
		Reported cases of arbitrary detention, by sex, age (para 4.o)
		Proportion of victims of ill-treatment or punishment accused of drug offences who have received compensation and rehabilitation, by sex, age (para 4.c, 4.o)
		% of people accused of drug offences who received legal aid during trial (para 4.o)

	Indicator 16.3.2: Unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population	Proportion of drug offenders held in pre-trial detention, by sex, age (para 4.j)
	Target 16.5: Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms	Significantly reduce corruption and bribery in areas affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale (para 3.a)
		Increased number of financial investigations and confiscations in relation to the proceeds of drug-related organised crime (para 3.q, 3.r)
		Perception of public sector corruption (para 3.a)
		Number of investigations and prosecutions for drug-related corruption and/or money-laundering cases involving governments (para 3.f)
	Target 16.7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels	Legislation, regulation or measure passed/reviewed to ensure the involvement of affected communities in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of drug policies and programmes (para 4.b)
		Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making on drug policies, strategies and programmes at all levels (para 7.b)
		Proportion of countries having adopted mechanisms to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels in drug policies, strategies and programmes (para 7.b)
	Indicator 16.7.2: Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group	Proportion of population living in areas affected by illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking and sale who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group (para 7.b)
	Target 16.A: Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime	Level of information sharing through effective coordination mechanisms at national, regional, sub- regional and international levels on expertise and best practice in drug policy (para 6.c)
17- Partnerships for the goals	Target 17.6: Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism	Formal and informal mechanisms established to enhance North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation among member states on drug policy (para 6.b)

	Indicator 17.14.1: Number of countries with mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence of sustainable development	Legislation, policy and/or strategy adopted and implemented to enhance policy coherence between drug control and sustainable development (para 6.d)

Annex 2 - Interview guides for different respondents

1. **Alfredo Pascual**

A- <u>About the global market</u>

1. In general, who would you say is making the most profit in developing or economically poorer nations that are legalising medical cannabis?
   Is it the government through taxes? Is it incumbent (foreign) companies?
2. Are developing countries that are legalising the cultivation of medical / industrial cannabis being able to manufacture products and export them?
   Probe: strict requirements, no need in the market / no added value
3. When I think about the cannabis industry, before reading and doing all the research that I did, I usually think it's the foreign companies that invest and take resources from developing countries (for example in Africa – compared it to "canna-colonisation") and make the most profit – is this true in your opinion?
4. How would you describe the relationship between incumbent investing companies and local farmers? / what is the role of local cannabis farmers in the legal markets?
5. Are investing companies practicing CSR? Is it just green-washing or do you have examples of good positive impact?
6. Recently you wrote an article saying that large companies are pulling back from investing – why is that?
7. How has COVID-19 impacted the industry?

B- <u>About the Lebanese law</u>

8. In Lebanon the law states that the maximum THC content shouldn't exceed 1%. Do you know if this type of product is marketable internationally? Is it competitive?
9. Any experience of a country that legalised for export only, while still being criminalised at home?
10. Do you think it would have more competitive potential if it legalises recreational cannabis?

2. **Saada Allaw**

1. 1. How would you say Baalbeck-Hermel has been impacted by the illegal cultivation of cannabis?
   Probe: "mouhammache, mfa2ara, barrat el anoun, 48,000 matloubin"
2. Do you know if farmers were consulted in the decision about legalisation?
3. Who do you think the law benefits now?
4. I saw the video in which you were saying that legalising cannabis is not a priority and it's not enough for the BaalHerm residents. How do you think it could respond better to the needs of the district?
   Probe: Strategy, schools and hospitals

5. You said: "who says I want my son to become a cannabis farmer instead of a college graduate? This law says stay cannabis farmers forever" – do you think it's possible that this law brings money, and then development impact?...

3. Adib Nehmeh

A- <u>About the local context</u>

1. Starting with the 2nd objective of the legalisation law, the one I am researching, is it true to say that the illegal cultivation of cannabis has negatively affected the area? Or was it more like a consequence / only solution to the continuous neglect and failed policies?

   Probe: "mouhammache, mfa2ara, barrat el anoun, 48,000 matloubin"

2. I read your part in the Legal Agenda article (April 30, 2020) in which you stated that the market will be monopolised by one or two foreign companies, and that only a small part of farmers would be able to comply with standards and participate. Why do you think that is the case?

   Probe: because of the law itself, because of Wasta, because of land ownership...

3. In other countries such as Colombia, Jamaica... where they made this kind of law (for medicinal purposes only, so not the same plant), they saw that a lot of farmers remained in the illegal sector as it is more profitable. Do you think this will be the case? Do you think police would tighten the control once the law is enforced?

B- <u>About the implementation of the law</u>

4. Agricultural cooperatives are not very successful/powerful in Lebanon. Is this true? If yes, why do you think that is?

5. Does the fact that politics (ex. Hezbollah) plays a huge part in the governance system, and it is very polarised, prevent the social cohesion of farmers?

6. So do you see cannabis farmers organising in cooperatives to have more power in negotiations and ownership of their products?

7. (We saw that alternative development also did not work). So in theory, could legalising cannabis improve the lives of the farmers who plant it? If yes, how? Under what kind of model?

   Probe: legalise what is already planted and regulate it, do not legalise, alternative development, integrate in national strategy, cooperatives, quota for sourcing

4. Karim Nammour

A- <u>Law-making (before the law was passed)</u>

1. Can you describe briefly how this law came to be accepted? Who was involved in the decision-making?

   Probe: Civil society? Farmers / residents of B-H...? Doctors?

2. If you were included, what aspects do you think they were considering or prioritising?

B- <u>Questions about the law itself</u>

3. You said the law doesn't mention users even for medical reasons, but does this mean people will not be allowed to prescribe it and use it?
4. In Article 3, it says THC content <or= 1%, but in Article 4, it says the "hay'a nazima" determines the allowed content
5. Since they are legalising a different plant, does it mean that the drug law applies to all current cannabis farmers if they don't change all their crops?
   Then what's the purpose of the Amnesty law being discussed now?
6. In Article 4, it says the "hay'a nazima" determines geographic locations where cultivation is allowed, so it can be not only in Baalbeck-Hermel or areas where it's grown now, right?

C- <u>Implementation of the law</u>

7. The law passed, so what happens now? When does the Commission get chosen? And how do they decide the remaining conditions set by the law? (In the law it says the Implementation Decrees have to be issued within 6 months)
8. When this happens, does it then automatically become possible to apply for licenses?
9. In this type of governance where there is a committee represented by a multiple of ministries, do you think this would affect the time it needs to issue a license?
10. How do you see this law being applied? Do you think it will be well enforced? Do you think they would tighten the control over illegal farmers?

D- <u>Legal Agenda's remarks about the law</u>

11. I have read the remarks you wrote about the law before it was passed. Do you think they can be taken into consideration within the Implementation Decrees?
    Ex: remark about the conflict of interest for budgeting is serious, but how can we make sure they don't go through with it? Is there a legal way to do it?

5. **Kanj Hamade**

   A- <u>About agriculture & formalisation policy</u>

1. I read your article about the McKenzie report in which you say that policies should formalise the agricultural sector – because it is an informal sector? Why? And why is formalising better?
   Ex: smuggling / informal trade...
2. The informal sector plays a big role in the Lebanese economy, but it's considered unstable and with exploitative conditions. Do you know if it's true for the cannabis sector (working conditions), and is it still true in a country that is undergoing an economic collapse? (even the formal sector is unstable now?)
   What's the role of the informal sector in the Lebanese economy? And what impacts do you think legalising something illegal could have? What important aspects should be considered?
   Probe: Ownership, access to resources, human rights...

3. In the economic plan that is being discussed with the IMF now, it says "to reap the benefits of the legalised cannabis market". Because realistically the country needs US dollars. Can we say that in today's far from perfect conditions, knowing how things are and not going to change anytime soon, can we say that this could benefit farmers by providing a more stable income? For example from rent of lands... What would be a way to make this happen while still benefit small farmers?

B- About the illicit cannabis sector

4. Can you tell me anything about the cannabis supply chain? Relations between small farmers and traders?
5. Can you tell me about the environmental impacts of the sector: water and soil?
6. Do you think legalising cannabis would have repercussions on the agricultural sector and food security?
7. In other countries such as Colombia, Jamaica... where they made this kind of law (for medicinal purposes only, so not the same plant), they saw that a lot of farmers remained in the illegal sector as it is more profitable. Do you think this will be the case? Do you think police would tighten the control once the law is enforced?

C- About Law 178

8. I understand that your opinion is that legalising for recreational use would be a better option. Why is that?
9. Agricultural cooperatives are not very successful/powerful in Lebanon. Is this true? If yes, why do you think that is?
10. So do you see cannabis farmers organising in cooperatives to have more power in negotiations and ownership of their products?

6. **Questions for the MPs**

1. Were you in the committee?
2. Is the use of cannabis-based medicines in Lebanon considered in the law?
2. Why was the THC limit removed in the approved law? – what is the orientation for this condition? (low or high THC content)
3. Why was there no special amnesty clause within this law and not a separate law?
4. Are the expected economic gains based only on McKenzie? Or other plans / studies?
5. Is the orientation to focus on medicinal industry or hemp industry?
6. The plant that was legalised is not the same that is grown - so what would happen to the illicit sector?
7. How do you think this law could benefit the farmers and the Baalbek-Hermel area? Were there special considerations for current farmers?
8. Does the geographic area permitted only mean in the Bekaa or will other areas be included as well?

Annex 3 - Additional explanations of Law 178

The law entitled "Licensing the Cultivation of Cannabis Plants for Medical and Industrial Use" is divided into eight parts as summarised in the table below:

Part	Articles	Subject
1	1 to 3	General provisions and definitions of the terms used
2	4 to 13	Mechanisms for the designation of a Regulatory Commission to be formed and all aspects related to its operation (its responsibilities, budgeting, mandate, etc.)
3	14 to 26	Conditions for awarding, monitoring, canceling and renewing licenses
4	27 to 29	Broad conditions for importing and exporting materials and products
5	30	Appeals to the Commmission's decisions
6	31 to 33	Behavioural and administrative violations and the related penalties
7	34 to 35	Monetary and tax provisions
8	36 to 38	Concluding provisions and signatures of the President of the Republic & the Prime Minister

Table 1 Summary of the content of Law 178 (Author's own)

The law essentially sets the processes and mechanisms through which cannabis can be planted, manufactured and distributed. The types of licenses that can be issued (Article 17) are the following:

- License for Import of seeds and crops
- License for Establishment of cannabis nurseries
- License for Cultivation and harvest
- License for Manufacture
- License for Establishment of research centers & laboratories
- License for Export
- License for Transport and storage
- License for Sale and distribution
- License for Import of standard chemicals

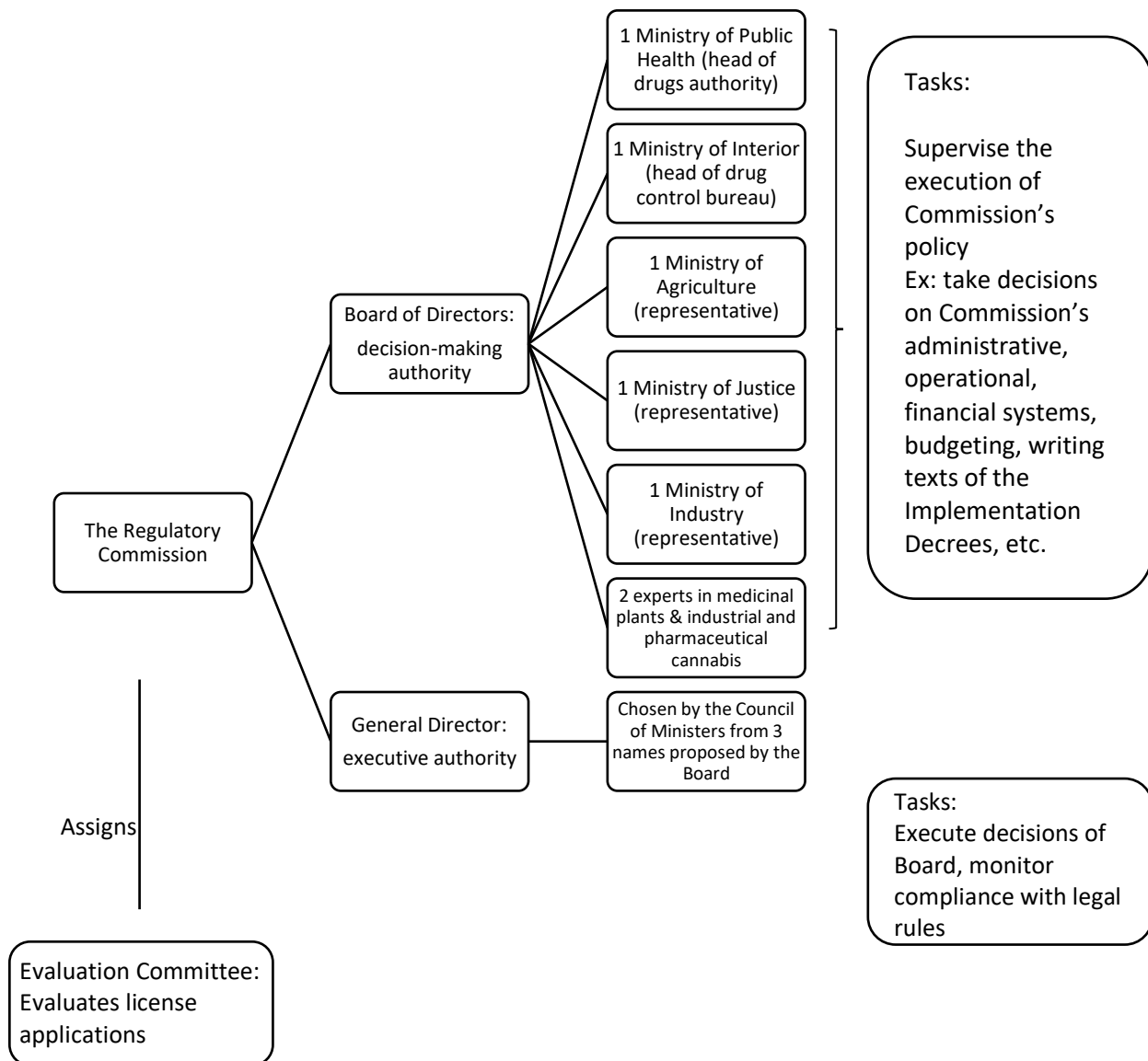Organisational framework of the Regulatory Commission:

Figure 1 Organisational framework of the Regulatory Commission (Author's own)