

## DIE AMERIKAS: FORSCHUNGSKOLLOQUIUM ZU DEN AMERIKAS AUS KULTURWISSENSCHAFTLICHER SICHT

Donnerstag, 16. Dezember 2021  
18 Uhr c.t.  
Zoom-Meeting

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### Why Is the Drug Trade Not Violent? Coca, Cocaine, and the Embedded Economy in the Chapare, Bolivia

Bolivia is a drug production and trafficking center and yet it exhibits far less drug related violence than other countries that form part of cocaine's commodity chain across Latin America. With reference to a case study from the Chapare, a coca-growing and drug processing zone in central Bolivia, this article considers why this is the case. Building from the literature on embedded economies and the 'subsistence ethic' of peasant communities, it shows how the drug trade is part of a local moral order that prioritizes kinship, reciprocal relations, and community well-being and in doing so restricts the possibilities for violence. In addition, the agricultural unions act as a parallel form of governance, providing a framework for enforcing illicit contracts and the peaceful resolution of disputes, and works to exclude the state and criminal actors. It is argued that illicit crop and drug production can be understood as a form of autonomous grassroots development. This article draws on more than three years of ethnographic fieldwork carried out between 2005 and 2019.

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