

THE ORGANISATION OF CRIME FOR PROFIT

CONDUCT LAW AND MEASUREMENT

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Petrus C. van Duyne, Almir Maljevic, Maarten van Dijck, Klaus von Lampe and James L. Newell (Eds.). Wolf Legal Publishers (WLP), 2006,

ISBN-10: 90-5850-

ISBN-13: 978-90-5850-

This volume contains a selection of the paper presented at the 7th Cross-border Crime Colloquium, held in October 2005 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The project was supported by Tilburg University (The Netherlands), Faculty of Criminal Justice Sciences, University of Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the CARDS Regional Police Project (Council of Europe).

The Cross-Border Crime Colloquium is an annual event since 1999. It brings together experts on international organised (economic) crime to discuss the latest developments in empirical research, legislation and law enforcement, with a special geographical focus on Western, Central, and Eastern Europe. The Colloquia aim at building bridges in three respects: between East and West Europe, between scholars and practitioners, and between old and young. The Cross-border Crime Colloquium, so far, has been organised eight times:

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Organised Crime is ... Findings from a cross-national review of literature¹

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Introduction

It has become commonplace to observe that there is no uniform understanding of organised crime, not to speak of a generally accepted definition (Levi, 1998; Finckenauer, 2005). At the same time, there is a tendency to reduce the diversity of views to two or three ‘currents’, ‘schools’ or ‘models’. This implies that a choice can be made between a small number of clearly delineable homogeneous conceptions of organised crime so that in the end the entire issue of organised crime, though disputed it may be, is not that complex after all. This chapter reports on a review of a sample of international literature (n=66) conducted with the aim of arriving at a meta-theoretical classification of existing approaches to delineate, conceptualise and assess organised crime. The review suggests that contrary to the notion of two or three competing models of organised crime there is a confusing multitude of concepts and conceptions. Accordingly, there may be many people who are convinced that they know organised crime when they see it. But they obviously see different things. We would like to argue that this is because the term ‘organised crime’ does not denote a clear and coherent phenomenon. Rather, myriad aspects of the social universe are lumped together in varying combinations within different frames of references depending on the

¹ Research for this chapter was conducted as part of the “Assessing Organised Crime” project, sponsored by the European Commission under the 6th Framework Programme (CIS8-CT-2004-501767).

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respective point of view of each observer; and it takes a cognitive and linguistic construct for these phenomena to be seen to be interrelated in the first place (Eisenberg and Ohder, 1990; von Lampe, 1999; 2001).

Classification of conceptions of organised crime: current approaches

With the ambition to capture the organised crime discourse in its breadth, mapping the spectrum covered by the literature, the review in varying degrees draws on previous approaches to classify conceptions of organised crime. These approaches are:

- typologies of models,
- typologies of definitional components, and
- meta-theoretical classification schemes.

These approaches have to be distinguished from attempts to develop typologies of organised criminal groups or typologies of manifestations of ‘organised crime’ (see *e.g.* Beare, 1996:49; Maltz, 1976:343).

A typology of organised crime ‘models’ or ‘paradigms’ has first been proposed by Albanese, who distinguished ‘hierarchical models’, ‘local, ethnic models’ and an ‘enterprise model’ of organised crime (Albanese, 1989; 1994). This typology, often simplified to a dichotomy of Mafia model vs. enterprise model, is helpful insofar as it provides a rough orientation. At the same time it is problematic because it stresses isolated features which are closely linked to specific historical manifestations of organised crime and specific texts (Cressey, 1969; Albin, 1971; Ianni and Reuss-Ianni, 1972; Smith, 1975) that are not representative of the wide range of conceptual literature in the United States in particular and the international literature in general. Other authors have proposed more refined and extended typologies (see *e.g.* Halstead, 1998; Williams and Godson, 2002), but the problem remains that because of the close link to specific manifestations of organised crime and a few selected texts, the pertinent literature is not adequately represented.

A different approach is to build a typology based on definitional components. Hagan, for example, conducted a content analysis of thirteen academic definitions of organised crime (12 from the U.S., one from the U.K.) and distinguished these with regard to the consideration or non-consideration of eleven characteristics, such as “non-ideological”, “organized hierarchy continuing” and “violence” (Hagan, 1983:53). While a list of definitional components appears to be more likely to apply to a broad range of texts than the basic perspectives on which typologies of ‘models’ have

come to rest, there are still substantial caveats. The main objection is linked to the fact that there are more conceptions of organised crime than formal definitions so that definitions are not necessarily representative of the discourse on organised crime. Formal definitions are not necessarily representative of the underlying notions of the texts where they are presented. Often, they appear to be mere window dressing, suggesting a conceptual certainty that is difficult to find and even trickier to define. This is an impression that was reinforced in the course of the analysis on which this chapter is based. Finally, definitions also tend to be restricted to a few aspects of the phenomena, ultimately resulting in the situation where underlying notions are only partially reflected.

A third approach is to develop meta-theoretical classification schemes. These schemes are designed to assess more or less the entire range of conceptual components contained in a large body of literature. These conceptual components are not viewed in the concrete context of their use but within an abstract system of basic dimensions. Aniskiewicz, for example, argued that “(m)uch of the theoretical and empirical work on organized crime can be categorized in terms of a micro/macro and a structure/process distinction” (Aniskiewicz, 1994:319). A more detailed categorization was proposed by von Lampe who reviewed the American literature on organised crime using a classification scheme that included structure, action, process and function as basic dimensions relating to four levels of analysis: individual, group, underworld, and legal-illegal nexus (von Lampe, 1999:165-166).

The meta-theoretical approach refines the idea of distinguishing definitional components and transfers it, beyond the realm of formal definitions, to the organised crime discourse as a whole. However, its successful utilisation depends on how comprehensive the defined dimensions are and how well they serve to systematize the literature.

The methodology adopted here generally follows the philosophy of the meta-theoretical approach. A sample of international literature on organised crime is analysed with a view to a diverse set of categories, assuming that these categories are likely to characterize variations in the conceptualisation of organised crime.

Methodology

The aim of this meta-theoretical classification is to obtain an understanding of the breadth, depth and diversity of approaches to conceptualise and, ultimately, assess organised crime. Preceding this task an inventory of literature

on organised crime has been produced which is continuously growing and currently comprises more than 3.000 entries.³

The sample of literature

Obviously, this large body of literature could not be included in the analysis. Instead it was necessary to draw a sample which is small enough to permit a thorough analysis and at the same time is sufficiently diverse to cover as much of the spectrum of conceptualisations as possible. To this end it was decided to select a sample of official, journalistic and academic literature from each of the five countries represented by the authors (Belgium, Estonia, the Netherlands, Germany and the UK) and a sample of international literature with a size of $n=12$ for each national sample (except for Estonia which does not have an organised crime literature as such) and for the international sample, respectively. The national samples were selected individually, the international literature sample, in contrast, collectively. The selection was guided by the intention to include diverse literature, including texts that have been influential in a political and/or scientific sense, texts that present original, non-mainstream, perspectives and texts that are based on original empirical data. Quality, in one way or the other, was not a criterion for selection.

A considerable number of the texts analyzed are not nominally about organised crime, but are concerned with specific activities or individuals that are otherwise labelled 'organised crime'. This approach is particularly important in the UK, where until the early 1990s 'organised crime' as a phenomenon was barely acknowledged.

Of course, with the applied selection method the samples are not representative in a statistical sense. However, they are more likely to be representative of the spectrum of organised crime literature than a random sample of the same size would be. This is because few texts contain an elaborate discussion on the concept of organised crime while the bulk of the literature appears to limit itself to the repetition of certain well-worn phrases. In the end, the following literature ($n=66$) has been included in the analysis.

³ See the Online Bibliography on Organised Crime at: www.assessingorganisedcrime.net.

Table 1: National and International Literature Samples

National sample Belgium
Beken, Tom Vander, Risky business: a risk-based methodology to measure organised crime, in <i>Crime, Law and Social Change</i> , 2004, 471-516
Beken, T. Vander, Cuyvers, L., Ruyver, Brice De, Hansens, J. and Black, C., Het meten van de kwetsbaarheid van de legale economische sectoren voor de georganiseerde criminaliteit (The assessment of the vulnerability of legal economic sectors for organised crime) Ghent, 2003. AND Beken, T. Vander, Cuyvers, L., Ruyver, Brice De, Hansens, J. and Defruytier M., case-study diamondsector, Ghent, 2004
Calster, Patrick Van: Criminele netwerken en het kleine-wereld-effect (Criminal networks and the 'small-world-effect'), <i>Tijdschrift voor Criminologie</i> , 44 (2), 2002, 141-149.
Camp, R. Van, Georganiseerde criminaliteit te veel rechtsstaat of te veel fouché? (Organised crime too much constitutional state or too much 'Fouché'), <i>Rechtskundig Weekblad</i> 1996-1997
Cesoni, Maria, Organisations de type mafieux: la restauration des droits comme politique de prevention, <i>Revue de droit pénal et de criminologie</i> , 79(3), 1999, 303-324
Coveliers, H. and Desmedt C., Parlementaire commissie van onderzoek naar de georganiseerde criminaliteit in België, eindverslag, 1998-1999. (Parliamentary Commission on Organised Crime in Belgium, final report)
Doraene, Jean-Pierre, Het begrip georganiseerde financiële criminaliteit (Financial Organised Crime), in: <i>De Accountant en de gerechtelijke overheid in de strijd tegen de georganiseerde financiële misdaad</i> , Brussels, 1995
Frans, Bruno, De Georganiseerde criminaliteit in België (Organised crime in Belgium), in: C. Fijnaut, Dirk Van Daele, Frank Verbruggen (eds.), <i>De uitdaging van de georganiseerde criminaliteit in België</i> , Leuven: University Press Leuven, 1998
Janssens, Stef, De beeldvorming rond georganiseerde misdaad (The image of organised crime), <i>De Orde van de Dag</i> , 2000, 55-63
Ponsaers, Paul, What is so organised about financial-economic crime? The Belgian case, <i>Crime, Law & Social Change</i> , 37(3), 2002, 191-201
Onsea, Inneke, De bestrijding van georganiseerde criminaliteit, (The fight against Organised Crime), Antwerp: Intersentia, 2003
Verbruggen, F., The general part of criminal law and organised crime: potential and limitations, in: C. Fijnaut, Dirk Van Daele, F.Verbruggen (eds.), <i>De uitdaging van de georganiseerde misdaad in België</i> , Leuven: University Press Leuven, 1998
National sample Estonia
Pihl, Jüri, Ettekanne kuritegevuse tungimise poliitikasse. (Report on crime proliferation to politics), Conference "Security Threats to Economy and Frim"

Pärnu, 24 May 2001
Rawlinson, Paddy, Bad Boys in the Baltics, in: A. Edwards, P. Gill (eds.), Transnational Organised Crime, London: Routledge, 2003, 131-142
Junninen, M., Aromaa, K., Crime Across the Border: Finish professional criminals taking advantage of Estonian crime opportunities, in: K. Aromaa (ed.), Eastern Crime: A Selection of Reports on Crime in the St. Petersburg Region and the Baltic Countries, 1993-1999, National Research Institute of legal Policy, Publication no. 168, 301-333
National sample Germany
Albrecht, Hans-Jörg, Organisierte Kriminalität: Theoretische Erklärungen und empirische Befunde (Organized crime: theoretical explanations and empirical findings), in: Deutsche Sektion der Internationalen Juristen-Kommission (ed.), Organisierte Kriminalität und Verfassungsstaat, Heidelberg, GER: C.F. Müller, 1998, 1-40
Beste, Hubertus, "Organisierte Kriminalität": soziale, politische und ökonomische Dimension ('Organized crime': social, political and economic dimension), Neue Kriminalpolitik, 7(3), 1995, 43-46
Boers, Klaus, Was ist O.K.? Streitfall Organisierte Kriminalität, Neue Kriminalpolitik, 7(3), 1995, 38-39
Bundeskriminalamt, Organised Crime Situation Report 2003 Federal Republic of Germany - Summary -, Wiesbaden, GER: Bundeskriminalamt, 2004
Bundesministerium des Innern, Bundesministerium der Justiz, Erster Periodischer Sicherheitsbericht (First periodic report on security), Berlin, GER: Bundesministerium des Innern, Bundesministerium der Justiz, 2001
Hamacher, Hans-Werner, Deutschland im Visier: Organisiertes Verbrechen (Germany in the sights of organized crime), Leipzig, GER: Militzke, 2000
Kerner, Hans-Jürgen, Organisierte Kriminalität: Realitäten und Konstruktionen (Organized crime: realities and constructions), Neue Kriminalpolitik, 7(3), 1995, 40-42
Kreutz, Henrik, Gesellschaftliche Anomie und Organisierte Kriminalität: ein reziprokes Verhältnis (Social anomy and organized crime: a reciprocal relationship), Angewandte Sozialforschung, 23(1-2), 2003, 7-26
Pütter, Norbert, Der OK-Komplex: Organisierte Kriminalität und ihre Folgen für die Polizei in Deutschland (The OC-complex: organized crime and its consequences for the police in Germany), Münster, GER: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 1998
Rebscher, Erich; Vahlenkamp, Werner, Organisierte Kriminalität in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Bestandsaufnahme, Entwicklungstendenzen und Bekämpfung aus der Sicht der Polizeipraxis (Organized crime in the Federal Republic of Germany: assessment, trends and countermeasures from the view of police practice), Wiesbaden, GER: Bundeskriminalamt, 1988
Sieber, Ulrich, Bögel, Marion, Logistik der Organisierten Kriminalität (Logistics of organized crime), Wiesbaden, GER: Bundeskriminalamt, 1993

Weigand, Herbert, Büchler, Heinz, OK-Ermittlungen in Baden-Württemberg (OC-investigations in Baden-Wurttemberg), <i>Kriminalistik</i> , 56(11), 2002, 661-668
National sample Netherlands
Bovenkerk, F. Hedendaags kwaad (Contemporary evil), Meulenhof, Amsterdam: 1992
Bunt, H.G. van de, De definitie van georganiseerde criminaliteit (The definition of organised crime), in: C. Fijnaut, F. Bovenkerk, G. Bruinsma en H. van de Bunt (eds.), <i>De georganiseerde criminaliteit in Nederland</i> , Gouda Quint, Arnhem: 1996, 27-36
Dienst Nationale Recherche Informatie Nationaal Dreigingsbeeld - zware of georganiseerde criminaliteit (National Threat Survey - serious or organised crime), KLPD - Dienst Nationale Recherche Informatie, Zoetermeer: 2004
Duyne, P.C. van, <i>Organized crime in Europe</i> , New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1996
Duyne, P.C. van, Medieval thinking and organized crime, in: Viano, Emilio; José Magallanes and Laurent Bridel (eds.), <i>Transnational organized crime : myth, power, and profit</i> , Durham, NC: Caroline Academic Press, 2003
Fijnaut, C.J.C.F., Bovenkerk, F., Bruinsma, G.J.N., Bunt, H.G. van de, <i>Eindrapport Georganiseerde Criminaliteit in Nederland (Final Report Organised Crime in the Netherlands)</i> , Den Haag: Sdu uitgevers, 1996
KLPD/DNR Noord en Oost-Nederland, Afdeling Oost-Europa/Informatie, <i>Criminaliteitsbeeldanalyse: Turkse georganiseerde criminaliteit in Nederland 2002-2003 (Crime Survey Analysis: Turkish organised crime in the Netherlands 2002-2003)</i> , Kernteam Noord en Oost-Nederland, Afdeling Oost-Europa/Informatie, Driebergen: 2004
KLPD/DNR Noord- en Oost-Nederland, Afdeling Oost-Europa/Informatie, <i>Misdaad zonder grenzen: Criminaliteitsbeeldanalyse Oost-Europa 2002-2003 (Crime without borders: Criminal Survey Analysis Eastern Europe 2002-2003)</i> , 2nd edition, Driebergen: Korps Landelijke Politiediensten, 2004
Landman, R.R.J., Leest, W.P.E. van der, Werf, J. van der, <i>Durch criminal investigations into organised crime in 2001</i> , Zoetemeer, NETH: National Police Agency, National Criminal Intelligence Division, 2002
Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Home Affairs, <i>Organized crime in the Netherlands: an outline of the threat and the plan to tackle it, translation of the Dutch report: Georganiseerde misdaad in Nederland: dreigingsbeeld en plan van aanpak</i> , Den Haag: Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Home Affairs, 1992
Schmid, A.P., <i>Smerige zaken: de opkomst van de onderwereld (Dirty business: The Threat of Organized Crime to 'Business as Usual')</i> , Rotterdam/Leiden: LISWO, 1992
Wilzing, J., De definitie van georganiseerde criminaliteit en de recherchepraktijk (The definition of organised crime and the investigation practice), in: C. Fijnaut, F. Bovenkerk, G. Bruinsma, H. van de Bunt (eds.), <i>De georganiseerde criminaliteit in Nederland</i> , Gouda Quint, Arnhem: 1996, 37- 46

WODC (Kleemans, E.R., E.A.I.M. van den Berg, H.G. van de Bunt), Georganiseerde criminaliteit in Nederland : rapportage op basis van de WODC-monitor (Organised crime in the Netherlands: report on basis of the WODC monitor), Den Haag: WODC, 1998
National sample UK
Barnes, T. et al., Cocky: the Rise and Fall of Curtis Warren Britain's Biggest Drug Baron, London: Milo Books, 2000
Dorn, N., Murji, K., South, S., Traffickers: drug markets and law enforcement, London: Routledge, 1992
Hobbs, Dick, Bad Business: Professional Crime in Modern Britain, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995
Hobbs, Dick, The Firm: Organizational Logic and the criminal Culture on a Shifting Terrain, <i>The British Journal of Criminology</i> , 41, 2001, 549-560
Hobbs, Dick, Organised Crime in the UK, in: C. Fijnaut, L. Paoli, (eds), <i>Organised Crime in Europe</i> , Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2004
Levi, Michael, Perspectives on `Organised Crime`: An Overview, <i>The Howard Journal</i> , 37(4), 1998, 335-345
Macintosh, Mary (1971), Changes in the Organisation of Thieving, in: S. Cohen (ed.), <i>Images of Deviance</i> , Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971
Mack, J.A., Kerner, H.J., <i>The Crime Industry</i> , Farnborough, Hants: Saxon House, 1975
NCIS UK, <i>Threat Assessment: The Threat from Serious and organised crime 2003</i> , London, 2004
Taylor, Ian (1999) <i>Crime in Context: A Critical Criminology of Market Society</i> , Cambridge: Polity Press (Emphasis of this classification is placed upon Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of this book)
UK Secretary of State for the Home Department, <i>One Step Ahead: A 21st Century Strategy to Defeat Organised Crime</i> , Cm 6167. HMSO: Norwich, 2004
International sample
Abadinsky, Howard, <i>Organized Crime</i> , 3rd, Nelson -Hall, Chicago: 1991
Adamoli, Sabrina; Di Nicola; Andrea; Savona, Ernesto U.; Zoffi, Paola, <i>Organised Crime Around the World</i> , Helsinki, Finland: HEUNI, 1998
Albanese, Jay, <i>Models of Organized Crime</i> , in Robert Kelly, Ko-Lin Chin, Rufus Schatzberg (eds.), <i>Handbook of Organized Crime in the United States</i> , London: Greenwood Press, 1994
Amir, Menachem, <i>Organized Crime in Israel</i> , in: S. Einstein, M. Amir (eds.), <i>Organized Crime: Uncertainties and Dilemmas</i> , Chicago, IL: Office of International Criminal Justice, 1999, 231-248
Block, A., <i>East Side-West Side: Organizing Organised Crime In New York, 1930-1950</i> , New York: Transaction Books, 1983

Cressey, Donald R., <i>Criminal Organization: Its Elementary Forms</i> . London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1972
Galeotti, Mark, <i>Turkish Organized Crime: Where State, Crime, and Rebellion Conspire</i> , <i>Transnational Organized Crime</i> , 1998, 4(1), 25-41
Halstead, Boronia, <i>The Use of Models in the Analysis of Organized Crime and Development of Policy</i> , <i>Transnational Organized Crime</i> , 1998, 4(1), 1-24
McIlwain, Jeffrey S., <i>Organized Crime: A social network approach</i> , <i>Crime, Law and Social Change</i> , 32, 1999, 301-323,
Paoli, Letizia, <i>The paradoxes of Organized Crime</i> , <i>Crime, Law and Social Change</i> , 2002, 51-97
Porteous, Samuel D., <i>Organized Crime Impact Study: Highlights, Public Works and Government Services of Canada</i> , 1998
Potter, Gary, <i>Criminal Organizations: Vice, Racketeering, and Politics in an American City</i> , Prospect Hights, IL: Waveland, 1994
Queensland Crime Commission and Queensland Police Service, <i>Project Krystal: A strategic Assessment of Organised Crime in Queensland</i> , 1999
Schulte-Bockholt, Alfried, <i>A Neo-Marxist Explanation of Organized Crime</i> , <i>Critical Criminology</i> , 10(3), 2001, 225-242
Williams, Phil; Godson, Roy, <i>Anticipating organized and transnational crime</i> , <i>Crime, Law and Social Change</i> , 37(4), 2002, 311-355

The framework for analysis

The texts were analysed using a template designed as the result of a general discussion on how conceptions of organised crime may vary. The discussion led to the identification of a set of formal, content and context factors. This set of factors was calibrated throughout the analysis process.⁴

The formal classification focused on whether or not a text contained a formal definition of organised crime. Furthermore, attention was directed to the empirical base of a text, specifically to the source type, aggregate level and context of generation of the data, provided an empirical base was discernible at all.

With a view to potential external influences on the conceptualisation, the texts were also analysed for the context of use (scientific, law enforcement etc.) and the frame of reference in terms of academic discipline.

The core issue of the conception of organised crime was addressed with a set of categories, beginning with the identification of basic or paradigmatic dimensions. This category acknowledges the fact that the basic understanding

⁴ The actual analysis was done with the help of an online and real-time accessible database. This allowed each member of the research team to directly observe the insertions made by the other researchers and therefore to provide direct feedback.

of organised crime may vary, depending on whether organised crime is primarily perceived in terms of activities, structures or systemic conditions (von Lampe, 2001).

If a text focuses on organised crime in terms of structure, it was further explored what type of collectivity (network, organization, market etc.) the author(s) referred to, and, in the case of group structures, what functions (economic, social, quasi-governmental etc.) were ascribed to these structures, and on what level (micro, macro) these structures were dealt with.

A second key category in the template refers to the types of crime associated with organised crime, regarding particular crime types and the not always easy to draw distinction between market and non-market crimes.

A number of categories are intended to capture the notions regarding where 'organised crime' is located in social and geographical space and in time. The category "geographical scope" refers to the degree to which 'organised crime' is perceived to be a local, national or international phenomenon. The category "instruments" pertains to notions about how 'organised crime', in whatever way it may be conceptualised, interacts with its environment, for example by means of corruption or violence. The category "consequences" is intended to capture statements on the more far reaching impact of 'organised crime'. Conversely, the category "causes" comprises notions about how the environment impacts upon 'organised crime'. Finally, the category "time dimension" refers to the dynamic processes that occur over time assumed to be inherent to or characteristic of 'organised crime'.

The analysis

The completion of the template required for the most part a hermeneutic content analysis which aimed at filtering from each text the understanding of the author(s) about what 'organised crime' is and how it fits into the immediate and wider social context. To extract these notions proved to be no simple task. First of all, not all texts contain a clearly formulated conception of 'organised crime', be it as a formal definition or as a less restrictive outline. More often, a conceptualisation of 'organised crime' is only implicitly made and – at times merely – take the form of vague associations. Secondly, in some cases it appeared difficult to distinguish between claims concerning organised crime as a concept, such as regarding essential, distinctive features of organised crime, and claims about the way organised crime, in the view of the author(s), manifests itself empirically, e.g. in a certain region or social context. For example, the discussion of organised crime along ethnic lines may be seen as reflective of the underlying notion

that ethnicity is an essential component of ‘organised crime’. However, at the same time it may be represented as ‘a matter of fact’, for example, that certain areas of crime in certain geographical areas are dominated by actors of specific ethnic backgrounds.

Thirdly, even where clear conceptual statements are discernible, it is not always obvious whether or not they reflect the view of the author(s), namely when definitions or conceptual statements by others are quoted. In such cases the general orientation of the text had to be taken into account.

All three aspects entail an interpretation of the text which inevitably is subjective. This raises the issue of inter-coder reliability, i.e. the question to what degree the analysis, which was conducted by five different researchers, is comparable. In the course of analysis it was decided that the subjective factor cannot be eliminated in such an endeavour. At the same time, mechanisms were installed which allowed an exchange of opinions during the analysis and after the completion of the analysis (see also footnote 2). These mechanisms included the use of an online-template which allowed reviewing the coding decisions of every researcher as soon as a template was completed. In addition, problems of interpretation encountered by an individual researcher were discussed collectively until an agreement was reached. Finally, one researcher monitored the coding decisions on the basis of a plausibility check and provided feedback to the individual researcher concerned. In most cases, however, the original coding decisions were not changed.

Results of the content analysis

Overview

The results of the content analysis have to be reviewed with several questions in mind: Do the defined categories have distinctive power? Do the categories have to be broken down further to highlight differences? Do certain patterns of conceptual components emerge?

The main finding of the content analysis is perhaps that the literature on organised crime appears to be more diverse than had been assumed beforehand, even considering the diversity inbuilt in the sampling method.

44 out of the 66 texts are of a scientific nature, the others fall in the categories of political, law enforcement or journalistic literature. Most texts (35) are in English, 18 in Dutch or Flemish, 11 in German, and one respectively in Estonian and French.

Only a small share of the literature in the sample (18) contained a formal definition of organised crime. Of the eighteen texts that provided an

organised crime definition all went beyond or even deviated from the formal definition. For example, in one case organised crime was defined in terms of the supply of illegal goods and services. Yet, at the same time various types of fraud, i.e. crime not involving the supply of illegal goods and services, were linked to ‘organised crime’. This underlines the importance of looking at the whole text and the explicit or implicit conceptualisations contained within them.

Basic dimensions

One issue that runs as a common thread through the conceptual debate on organised crime is whether the focal concern should be on “structures of activity or structures of association” (Cohen, 1977: 98; see also Kollmar, 1974; Maltz, 1976). Another recurring but not as dominant theme is to view organised crime not primarily in terms of activity or association but in terms of a social condition or a social system (Block, 1983; Potter, 1994). Finally, a theme that is prominent in media depictions of organised crime, the focus on individuals, also emerged in the analysed literature.

While these perspectives are not necessarily mutually exclusive, each view suggests a very specific understanding of organised crime, so that it appeared important to analyse the literature sample with a distinction of these basic dimensions in mind. However, as it turned out, almost all texts (59) focused on collectivities, although only 14 did so exclusively. In comparison, 36 texts conceptualised organised crime in terms of activities, but only 7 did so exclusively. Finally, the five texts which depicted ‘organised crime’ as a systemic condition at the same time also viewed ‘organised crime’ in terms of activities and/or structures. Interestingly, despite the focus on collectivities, in several texts (30) individuals appeared as a reference point for the discussion of organised crime.

While these broad categories of basic dimensions displayed little distinctive power –with the exception of the activity–structure dichotomy in a minority of cases– a more refined and more detailed analysis within each category reveals some clear variations across the sample.

Activity

It is noteworthy that despite the predominance of the focus on criminal structures, organised crime is often defined as being essentially an activity, described, for example, as the “systematic commission of crimes” (Frans, 1998; Dienst Nationale Recherche Informatie, 2004). Some authors explicitly state that organised crime should first and foremost be conceptualised in terms

of activity, namely because criminal structures were shaped by market forces and market activities (see Albanese, 1994; van Duyne, 2003; Porteous, 1998; Pütter, 1998).

Structure

As mentioned, 59 out of the 66 analyzed texts explicitly or implicitly link the concept of organised crime to criminal collectivities. If collectivities ('criminal networks', 'criminal groups', 'criminal organisations' etc.) are not included in formal definitions (see *e.g.* Fijnaut et al., 1996; Kreutz, 2003) or appear as components of explicit conceptualisations (see *e.g.* Calster, 2002), they at least serve as key reference points for the discussion of organised crime (see *e.g.* Adamoli et al., 1998).

System

The five texts which view organised crime *inter alia* as a systemic condition do so explicitly (Block, 1983; McIlwain, 1999; Potter, 1994) or implicitly (Albrecht, 1998; Bundesministerium des Innern and Bundesministerium der Justiz, 2001) with the underlying notion that the term 'organised crime' stands for a particular constellation between criminal, business and political spheres. Organised crime in this sense appears as "a social system" (Block, 1983: vii), "an integral part of the social, political and economic system" (Potter, 1994: 183), or as "a facet of the cultural, economic and social differentiation of modern societies" (Albrecht, 1998:39).

Individual

Some conceptualisations of organised crime contained in the sample include individuals as a reference point in one way or the other. Most notably, whereas commonly collectivities are regarded as the basic operating unit in the area of organised crime, in some instances individuals are placed in this role. Several of the analyzed publications emphasize the role of individuals as facilitators or as key figures, typically associated with the network notion of organised crime (see *e.g.* Dienst Nationale Recherche Informatie, 2004; WODC, 1998). In one case the "individual offender of organised crime" is described as someone who operates as an individual, although embedded in a network of connections that enables him to draw on others for assistance as the need arises (Rebscher and Vahlenkamp, 1988: 39-40). In a similar vein, another author in an historical study notes that "(t)he most efficient 'organised criminals' were the most individualistic, the least committed to particular structures" (Block, 1983: 256). More moderate and typically very

brief references to individuals include the mentioning of famous gangsters like Al Capone or the enumeration of personal characteristics and skills (clever, talent for cultivating relationships, unscrupulous and smart, business acumen) of “organised criminals”.

Collectivity types

The fact that most texts in the sample conceptualise organised crime in terms of collectivities does not imply that these conceptualisations are largely homogeneous. On the contrary, significant differences emerge with regard to the type of collectivity in terms of the level of integration into more or less cohesive units (networks vs. organisations) and in terms of the aggregate level (individual groups vs. underworld and illegal market structures). This differentiation is fuelled by the often imprecise use of key terms such as ‘network’ and ‘group’. Despite a large body of theoretical literature on these concepts, the words are often used in an intuitive (hence shallow) sense. Thus the notions of network and group, it appears, both encompass a wide variety of cooperation structures and even may overlap.

Networks

About three-quarters (43) of the texts which conceptualise organised crime in terms of collectivities do so with reference to networks. But of these 43 texts, only five do so exclusively without a simultaneous reference to “criminal groups”, “criminal organisations” or similar terms commonly applied to more cohesive, clear cut collectivities. However, it must be stressed that this distinction may not be uniformly shared and that the use of terms such as “criminal network” and “criminal organisation” are in fact regarded as synonyms.

This reservation notwithstanding, it can be noted that the concept of ‘network’ does not appear in the formal definitions of organised crime contained in the sample.⁵ Yet, networks are frequently a component in explicit conceptualisations of organised crime or serve as a reference point for discussions of ‘organised crime’ (see *e.g.* McIllwain, 1999).

⁵ A formal definition of criminal network is given in one text: “If at least three natural persons have formed at least two different suspect combinations [defined as: “If two or more persons are suspected of involvement in a crime, then these persons form a suspect combination in relation to that crime”], then these persons form a criminal network” (KLPD/DNR Noord- en Oost-Nederland, 2004: 35).

Organizations

50 out of the 59 texts in the sample that conceptualise organised crime in terms of collectivities refer to organisational units using terms like “criminal group” or “criminal organisations” which, if not stated otherwise, were interpreted to mean entities capable of coordinated, goal-oriented actions. Criminal organisations in this sense either appear in formal definitions or form a component of otherwise explicit conceptualisations, or they provide at least a key reference point in the way organised crime is addressed.

Market structure and underworld structure

Some conceptualisations of organised crime pertain not only to the micro level of particular networks or organizations, but to more comprehensive, overarching structures, namely illegal markets and what is commonly referred to as the “underworld”.

One text contained in the sample explicitly argued that attempts to monopolise illegal markets is a characteristic of ‘organised crime’ (Amir, 1999: 233). In other instances, the structure of illegal markets serves as a reference point for describing ‘organised crime’. One aspect in this context is market density, meaning the ratio between the actual and the potential number of suppliers in a market with regard to available resources (Potter, 1994; Rebscher and Vahlenkamp 1988). Another aspect is the degree of monopolisation in the slicing up of market shares. In this respect, differences of opinion become apparent as to whether monopolistic structures or rather fragmented structures are more characteristic of ‘organised crime’ (Adamoli et al., 1998; Williams and Godson, 2002).

Some texts also conceptualise organised crime in terms of macro structures independent from particular illegal markets, for example by alluding to the relationship between different criminal groups (Galeotti, 1998), or even by treating organised crime largely synonymous with the “underworld” (Pihl, 2001).

Functions

The various structures associated with organised crime are typically viewed as serving economic functions, in that their ascribed purpose is to supply illegal goods and services, or that their profit orientation or entrepreneurial nature is stressed. However, in some instances, non-economic functions, namely social and quasi-governmental utility are also attributed to criminal structures. The notion of social functions is reflected, for example, in statements about how criminal organizations cement patterns of social interaction and ensure

loyalty, referring primarily to fraternal criminal organizations like Chinese Triads or the Sicilian and American Mafia (see *e.g.* Adamoli, 1998; Paoli, 2002; Potter, 1994). Quasi-governmental functions, in contrast, are addressed, for example, in references to the protection services offered to illegal entrepreneurs by criminal groups or in references to the taxation of illegal activities imposed by criminal groups (see *e.g.* Wilzing, 1996). At times, criminal groups are seen to develop into para-governmental institutions when the state is weak (see *e.g.* Kerner, 1995).

Crime Types

A different light is cast on the conceptualisations of organised crime when one looks at the types of crime that are mentioned in the context of 'organised crime'. These crime types are typically listed as 'organised crime related', or due to specific crimes which are discussed to give an illustration of 'organised crime'. The content analysis produced a list of some 100 different offence types which were later grouped into more comprehensive categories. Table 2 shows the most frequently mentioned crime categories and gives for each the number of texts and the share of the overall sample (n=66).

Other crime categories that were mentioned only once or twice and are not listed in table 2 include: embezzlement, trade in body parts, trade in non-ferrous metals, illegal security services, arson, mobile banditry, skimming, trafficking, espionage, piracy, cattle-rustling, football hooliganism, terrorism, state organised crime, black market, and the recruitment of mercenaries.

Table 2: Crimes Mentioned in the Literature Sample

Type of Crime	n	%
Drugs	53	80,3
fraud: all	39	59,1
fraud: private funds (incl. credit card fraud, investment fraud, insurance fraud)	31	47,0
fraud: public funds (incl. health care fraud, VAT fraud, subsidy fraud)	24	36,4
Extortion (incl. racketeering, kidnapping)	29	43,9
Property crimes (incl. theft, burglary, robbery)	25	37,9
sex industry (incl. illegal prostitution, pimping, illegal pornography)	24	36,4
money laundering	23	34,8
cars (incl. theft, trafficking)	22	33,3
smuggling (incl. alcohol, cigarettes, fuel, gold, currency, gemstones)	22	33,3
human trafficking	21	31,8
Arms	18	27,3
Gambling	17	25,8
economic crime (excl. fraud, excl. money laundering, incl. illegal labour, price fixing)	16	24,2
environment (incl. poaching, illegal waste management)	16	24,2
alien smuggling	13	19,7
Counterfeiting	13	19,7
product piracy	9	13,6
Fencing	8	12,1
false documents/forgery	7	10,6
Forgery	4	6,1
loan sharking	4	6,1
Art/cultural property	3	4,5
Bootlegging	3	4,5
nuclear material	3	4,5
steroids/hormones	3	4,5

Not surprisingly, most texts mentioned drug trafficking (53 or 80,3 %). However, it is somewhat surprising, considering the common focus on illegal markets and the supply of illegal goods and services, that the most frequently mentioned crime types following drug trafficking are offences that fall in the broad category of predatory crimes, namely fraud (39 or 59,1 %), extortion (29 or 43,9 %) and property crimes (25 or 37,9 %).

Social scope

The analyzed texts vary according to the degree to which ‘organised crime’ is linked to certain sub-sets of the general population. The social scope of the conceptualisations was analysed with a view to three categories: ethnicity, socio-economic status, and gender.

Ethnicity

The way the subject of ethnicity is addressed ranges from no mentioning at all of the issue to treating ethnicity as a core aspect of ‘organised crime’. Most texts in the sample (47) contain references to the ethnic background of ‘organised criminals’. In some cases, ethnicity appears as a focal point of the discussion, typically by arranging the organised crime picture along ethnic lines (see *e.g.* Bundeskriminalamt, 2004). Other authors view ethnicity as a factor impacting on how crime is organised (Queensland Crime Commission and Queensland Police Service, 1999). Some note that criminal groups composed of foreigners are more tightly structured and more prone to violence (see *e.g.* Rebscher and Vahlenkamp, 1988). Some assume that nationality provides an informal network guaranteeing trust (see *e.g.* Halstead, 1998), or that language and cultural barriers serve as a defence mechanism (see *e.g.* Williams and Godson, 2002). In contrast, some authors argue that the role of ethnicity is overstated and that underlying ethnicity other social relations like kinship and the social proximity to source countries are at work (see *e.g.* WODC, 1998). From this perspective, the predominance of certain ethnic groups in certain areas of crime is explained as an “accidental competitive advantage” (Halstead, 1998:20).

Socio-economic status

The social status of ‘organised criminals’ is less often addressed than ethnicity, even though ethnicity often implies a lower or marginalised social status. It seems to be a widespread notion that organised crime is confined to the lower strata of society. Where it is not explicitly stated (see *e.g.* Bovenkerk, 1992), it is typically reflected in a dichotomy of underworld and upperworld. When, for example, the need of criminal groups to obtain professional expertise from lawyers and accountants is stressed (see *e.g.* Doraene, 1995), this implies that criminal groups are not composed of members of mainstream society themselves. On the other hand there are other authors who explicitly regard high-status actors – politicians and businessmen – as being part of ‘organised crime’ (see *e.g.* Albrecht, 1998; Van Duyne et al., 1990; Van Duyne, 1995).

Gender

The importance of gender for ‘organised crime’ is rarely discussed. Most texts seem to implicitly assume that ‘organised crime’ is primarily or exclusively a male phenomenon. Some authors, however, also discuss the role of women within particular organised criminal activities (see *e.g.* WODC, 1998).

Geographical scope

While the literature sample was largely selected with a view to national literature, most texts conceptualise organised crime as an international phenomenon. Only 9 texts address organised crime exclusively within a national or local context. 34 texts discuss organised crime with regard to particular countries but with a view to international ramifications. 23 texts treat organised crime as a global phenomenon.

Instruments

The category “instruments” pertains to notions about how ‘organised crime’, in whatever way it may be conceptualised, interacts with its environment. The texts in the sample were analyzed with a view to three sub-categories: corruption, violence and influence on the media. An open category for other instruments was also included in the template.

Corruption

Most texts in the sample (49) contain a reference to corruption. Some authors view corruption as a defining characteristic of ‘organised crime’ or organised criminal groups (see *e.g.* Amir, 1999; Wilzing, 1996), whilst others disagree and do not view corruption as a core feature (see *e.g.* Weigand and Büchler, 2002). When it comes to explaining the purpose of corruption, the answers given in the texts are quite diverse, ranging from the facilitation of crime and the immunization of law enforcement, to gaining influence and power in the public and private sphere. A number of authors specifically address the relationship between corrupter and corruptee. While the implicit notion seems to prevail that ‘organised criminals’ tend to assume the active role in corrupt ties, these explicit discussions see criminals and office holders more in partnerships of equals or the criminal component in a subordinate position (see *e.g.* Amir, 1999; Schulte-Bockholt, 2001).

Violence

Similar to the issue of corruption, most texts in the sample (51) contain a reference to violence. And while a number of authors view the use or threat of violence as a core characteristic of ‘organised crime’ (see e.g. Wilzing, 1996), others disagree and state that non-violence is more typical of ‘organised crime’ (Rebscher and Vahlenkamp, 1988). When it comes to explaining the purpose of violence, again the answers given in the analyzed texts differ, ranging from eliminating competition in market and territorial disputes, and enforcing internal discipline, to intimidating witnesses and gaining influence over legal institutions (see e.g. van de Bunt, 1996).

Influence on media

The influence on media is one of the optional components in the BKA-definition (Bundeskriminalamt, 2004). Despite the relative popularity of this definition in Germany and other countries, only some texts in the sample (9) address this issue, however without going into any detail.

Other instruments

Apart from corruption, violence and influence on the media, the use of a number of other instruments or methods were linked to ‘organised crime’, including shielding, counter observation, gaining support from influential people, careful planning, and the capability to adapt to changing conditions (see e.g. Hamacher, 2000; Landman *et al.*, 2002).

Consequences

While the category “instruments” is directed at notions about how ‘organised crime’, in whatever way it may be conceptualized, interacts with its immediate environment, the category “consequences” is intended to capture conceptualizations extending to more far reaching and longer-term impacts of ‘organised crime’. The literature in the sample was analyzed with a view to four distinct sub-categories: individual safety (13 times addressed), public order (18), political system (25), and economic and financial system (28). Open subcategories “general” (29) and “other” (8) were also included in the template.

Individual safety

Some texts in the sample (12) mentioned consequences of ‘organised crime’ for individual safety, most frequently in terms of negative effects of drug abuse (see *e.g.* Porteous, 1998). But overall it appears as if the consequences of ‘organised crime’ are primarily discussed in more systemic dimensions.

Economic and financial system

To the extent consequences of ‘organised crime’ are discussed at all, consequences for the financial and economic system are most frequently mentioned. 28 Texts fall into this category. However, there are some substantial differences. While a majority of texts addresses negative effects, such as the distortion of competition due to the use of illicit profits in legal business or the damage caused by product piracy (see *e.g.* Porteous, 1998), one author points to effects that may be viewed as positive, such as the creation of jobs and the provision of business capital (Potter, 1994).

Public order and political system

25 texts contained in the sample address consequences of ‘organised crime’ for the political system and four texts mention consequences for public order. Most often concerns are voiced that ‘organised crime’ has or can potentially undermine state authority and destabilise democracy (see *e.g.* Cesoni, 1999). Authors from Canada and the Netherlands also argue that crimes like human trafficking and drug smuggling might have negative effects on liberal immigration, drug, and prostitution policies and on the international reputation of these countries (KLPD/DNR Noord en Oost-Nederland, 2004; Porteous, 1998).

General consequences

Frequently, the assumed consequences of ‘organised crime’ are not spelled out. Rather, diffuse concerns about the infiltration of the legal spheres of society are raised or references are made to unspecified threats and dangers.

Causes

While the categories “instruments” and “consequences” refer to the question how ‘organised crime’ impacts on its environment, the category “causes” reversely comprises notions about how the environment impacts on

‘organised crime’. No *a priori* defined sub-categories were used for the analysis of this aspect.

Three broad lines of argument about the aetiology of ‘organised crime’ emerged in the analysis of the literature sample. First, there is the notion of ‘organised crime’ being the product of broad social forces of historic dimensions, like urbanization, technological advance, globalisation, the transition from soviet-type regimes to market economies, international migration, and social inequalities (see *e.g.* Adamoli et al., 1998). Second, there is the notion of ‘organised crime’ emerging from cultural conflicts, namely the restriction or prohibition of certain goods and services for which there is a sustained demand (see *e.g.* van Duyne, 1996; Hobbs, 2004). Third, there is the notion that ‘organised crime’ emerges and flourishes in the presence of weak and inefficient formal and informal systems of social control (see *e.g.* Beste, 1995).

Time dimension

To capture notions about the dynamic side of ‘organised crime’, the category ‘time dimension’ was included in the analysis. Many references to assumed general trends in the development of ‘organised crime’ could be identified in the literature sample, falling into different sub-classes, pertaining either to ‘organised crime’ as a whole or to particular aspects.

One identified notion is to view ‘organised crime’ as a process occurring over time (Potter, 1994; Rebscher and Vahlenkamp, 1998). More frequent are allegations about continuous upward trends, expressed, for example, in claims about the increasing complexity, internationalisation or professionalism of ‘organised crime’ (see *e.g.* Adamoli et al., 1998; Frans, 1998). Another aspect is the perceived evolution of criminal groups, for example from predatory to symbiotic (Schulte-Bockholt, 2001) or from hierarchies to networks (Galeotti, 1998). A contrary notion is to view ‘organised crime’ in terms of opposite or non-linear trends. One author, for example, analyzes ‘organised crime’ in the sequence of social crises and recovery phases, stating that ‘organised crime’ becomes problematic only in times of crisis (Kerner, 1995). Others emphasize the fluid nature of ‘organised crime’ over time, or, more generally, point to historic processes within which ‘organised crime’ develops (McIntosh, 1971; Hobbs, 1995; 2001).

Conclusion

The intended aim of the meta-theoretical classification has been to obtain an understanding of the breadth of approaches to conceptualise, study and assess organised crime. While diversity was one of the selection criteria for the analysed literature sample, the diversity exposed by the content analysis summarized above appears to go further.

In the content analysis, four basic approaches to the understanding of organised crime were identified, conceptualising organised crime either in terms of individuals, structures, activities or systemic conditions. However, these basic approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive. They appear in various combinations without a discernible pattern. Only 21 out of the 66 texts included in the sample rest exclusively on one basic approach: 14 conceptualise organised crime only in terms of structure, 7 only in terms of activity. Thus, these four basic dimensions provide for a grid to analyse individual texts that have organised crime as their object of study, rather than that they help in categorising the bulk of studies into a limited number of clusters.

Texts that conceptualise organised crime in terms of structure tend to focus on 'criminal groups' and 'criminal organisations' in the sense of entities capable of coordinated, goal-oriented action as opposed to 'criminal networks' in the sense of webs of ties between actors that are therefore able to cooperate in crime. However, five texts refer exclusively to networks as the intrinsic factor in the composition of 'organised crime'. At the same time, some texts also refer to 'criminal structures' in terms of illegal markets and notions of an 'underworld'. It must be stressed at this point that the significance of these observations is undermined by the rather 'loose' and imprecise use of the terms 'group' and 'network'.

At any rate, when one takes these basic notions as a starting point, there are no obvious patterns that link these essential concepts to other specific conceptual components, such as the types of crimes associated with organised crime, the social scope, instruments, consequences, or causes of 'organised crime'. Rather, it seems that the various conceptual categories that have been defined beforehand and refined during the analysis appear in rather arbitrary, unpredictable and even contradictory combinations. For example, widespread claims about the business nature of 'organised crime' are at odds with the fact that apart from drug trafficking, predatory crimes are most often associated with organised crime. As a result, it is not possible to develop a more complex typology of conceptualisations of 'organised crime' based on the content analysis.

Likewise, there are no obvious links between certain conceptions of organised crime and external factors that have been taken into consideration, namely the context of use of the texts, distinguishing law enforcement, political, academic and journalistic purposes. The only patterns that have become obvious are two country-specific peculiarities. Whereas the British literature in the sample tends towards a focus on individuals, there is a tendency among Belgian authors included in the sample to conceptualise organised crime in terms of activities.

The conclusions to be drawn from the analysis of different approaches to the conceptualisation of organised crime are twofold:

1. The breadth of international organised crime literature reflects a lack of a common theoretical understanding, allowing a confusing picture to emerge. Far from achieving a consensus on the concept of organised crime it seems that there is not even a general understanding of the differences that stand in the way of such an agreement. This is at odds with attempts to divide the literature into only two or three main currents.
2. If different concepts in the sense of comprehensively linked propositions about 'organised crime' are to be identified, namely to point out alternative avenues to assessing organised crime, this might have to be completed in a synthetic manner rather than by drawing on the existing literature. However, in the end conceptual clarity will only be derived from a concise appreciation of the phenomena under discussion in their own right. And this may well require breaking down the broad concept of organised crime to account for the diversity and complexity of social reality (Eisenberg and Ohder, 1990).

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