

Chapter V: Organised Crime meets research — introduction

Hans-Gerd Jaschke

From a political and a policing point of view, organised crime is a dark spillover-effect of globalisation. The collapse of the cold-war-confrontation between East and West after 1990, the beginning of a new world order and disappearing borders in Europe after the Schengen agreement have intensified international cooperation of criminal groups in many fields. New possibilities of developments in communication technology and quick communication all over the world are offering new perspectives in the main fields of organised crime, such as trafficking of drugs and human beings, piracy of products and money laundering. Improving cross-border policing is a main answer to the threats of transnationally operating criminal groups. However, what can be assumed on the research and knowledge level, what do we know about 'organised crime' and the operating groups behind it?

The opening contribution of this section scrutinises organised crime research from a general point of view. **Hans-Jörg Albrecht** points out that the understanding of 'organised crime' has moved from the 'Sicilian style' towards meaning a network of structures. It is diverse, complex, less organised and less hierarchical. Most of the research is initiated by the police and driven by topics around the organised crime phenomena. Little research interest can be identified in the field of policing organised crime. Regarding the whole area Albrecht highlights the 'lack of empirical research on organised crime'. The use of intelligence and cross-border police cooperation are strategic answers to modern organised crime. With regard to EU resolutions highlighting that monitoring telecommunications may help in investigating organised

crime cases, the political dimension appears quite clearly as a growing tension between freedom and security.

László Salgó, at the time of the conference in Traiskirchen Assistant Director of Europol, gives an introduction to the Europol 'Organised Crime Threat Assessment' (OCTA), a continuous report about the development of organised crime in the EU, produced from 2006 to 2011. He gives information about the history of OCTA, the sources of the data collection and the environment of intelligence-led policing. As Albrecht had emphasised before, Salgó reports that criminal markets and regions are focused on by OCTA. Thirdly, operating groups, their typology and their possible clusters are part of the OCTA report. By combining different factors, such as destination markets, criminal group types, migration processes and others, OCTA identifies five 'criminal hubs' in the EU: North-West, North-East, South-West, South and South-East. Each of them is related to specific criminal flows from other parts of the world, from South America, Asia and Russia. Trends in 2008 showed that organised crime groups were 'transnational, multi-ethnic and poly-crime' and 'increasing their influence in the economic, social and politic environments'. Salgó draws a picture of organised crime that confirms existing studies of the phenomena but asks once again for further research strategies.

'The OCTA is only the first step on a long journey' - **Michael Levi** argues in his comment. He questions the 'threat assessment' as a procedure as well as both terms: 'Threats to whom and what and from where?' And:

'How do we really prioritise threats?' There is a need for more clarification for the other term 'assessment'. What activities are covered by an 'assessment'? Thus, Levi's meritorious approach leads to raising questions to be discussed both now and in the future.

It is not only a problem of terminology; we also have to start organised crime research by accepting an uncertain world. **Tom Vander Beken** is in favour of the application of scenario techniques which might anticipate plausible futures. He argues that the mainstream of organised crime assessment is directed towards risk-calculation models, which are based on uncertain quantitative frameworks. Possible risks or threats cannot be measured by data calculation only; other factors are part of the game. 'It is argued', he continues, 'that scenario exercises in which uncertain elements are accepted contain promising possibilities for crime assessments to address and prepare for multiple futures.'

Didier Bigo, James Sheptycki and **Han Jaffel** pick up again the term and the meaning of 'organised crime'. Following their approach, it seems to be impossible to give an exact definition, because it has meant different things over time. There is a historical dimension but also a geopolitical dimension: South American, European and Russian historical developments have created different forms. Sometimes and somewhere organised crime is more or less 'disorganised', deregulated and connected with local frameworks. With regard to the organisation structures the authors distinguish — following von Lampe — five main ideal types:

- criminal networks with, firstly, 'no social support structure in the milieu of operation';
- those 'rooted in marginalised subcultures';
- those 'rooted in mainstream society';
- those with links 'in power elites';
- 'criminal alliances between underworld and upper world or mafia-like organisations'.

Thus, the authors offer a very different and complex picture of what organised crime means today. Their contribution presents some suggestions for building future organised crime threat assessments.

SOCTA (the serious and organised crime threat assessment) is developed and operated by Europol. The follow-up to OCTA starts in 2013 and will finish in 2017. **Tamara Schotte** summarises, at the end of the section, brief information about SOCTA. The programme is in line with the organised crime situation reports (OCSR), the first Europol reports from 1994, when Europol was still the Europol Drugs Unit, the organised crime reports (OCR) from 2002 and OCTA from 2006 up to 2011. SOCTA will be 'a forward-looking document, with a primary focus on future developments in criminal threats'. Schotte emphasises the separation between the SOCTA methods of analysis and scientific research: the SOCTA approach is 'to facilitate effective interventions', moreover there is 'the need for speed, secrecy and professional trust'. The final ideas of the section may generate new discussions about scientific research and intelligence-led policing data collections.