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Supporting Future Operations with Directed Research

Proceedings of the Conference ‘Disrupting Organised Crime: Developing the Evidence Base to Understand Effective Action’
Edited by Clare Ellis

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Disrupting Organised Crime
Developing the Evidence Base to Understand Effective Action


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Two additional presentations were given at the conference by Ash Smith, Rob Street and Derrick Norton of the Strategic Centre for Organised Crime, Home Office. We would like to acknowledge their contributions to the event.

Particular thanks are also extended to Charlie Edwards for his direction and guidance.
Foreword

Bryan Edwards

Of all the challenges facing the UK today, few are as demanding as those affecting its national security. Some threats to the UK and its citizens are modern variants of those that the country has faced for many years. Some are entirely new, while others, no doubt, have yet to be recognised, analysed and understood.

One feature of this large, complex and constantly evolving array of challenges is that few, if any, lend themselves to single-discipline solutions. With this in mind, the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) operates a Defence, Security and Resilience Futures Programme.

Challenge-led and agnostic with respect to academic discipline, the STFC’s aim is to identify and facilitate opportunities to engage relevant capabilities within the UK National Laboratories and university research groups with some of the highest priority and most demanding challenges in national security.

As part of this programme, the STFC is delighted to fund – and proud to collaborate closely with – RUSI in delivering a series of conferences on topical issues within this domain.

Each meeting is designed to explore the interface between academic research and government policy and operations. The aim is to stimulate debate on how a step change, rather than incremental change, in the protection of the UK could be achieved. The meetings are strategic in character, with contributions from a broad community drawn from universities, industry, government, and its agencies and partners.

These meetings engage with a deceptively simple question: what can academic research offer to allow government to enhance its capabilities in key areas so that it can either do significantly different things or do what it does now in significantly better ways?

Serious and organised crime is a case in point. So grave are the threats posed that in a recent policy speech the home secretary stated unambiguously that this was no longer purely a matter of policing and criminal justice, but one of national security.

With the exception of citizens forced to endure the immediate effects of serious and organised crime, academics who choose to study it and members of law enforcement and other organisations whose day-to-day
work brings them into contact with it, this phenomenon is regarded by many people as rather remote and not of immediate concern. However, the pernicious effects are all around us. People smuggling for various forms of exploitation, the illegal drugs trade, and other gang activities leave in their wake a catalogue of misery and human suffering. They erode communities and contribute to wider social malaise, including community tension, hate crime and radicalisation (which we explored in another event in this series).

Meanwhile, corruption undermines public confidence in institutions and the abuse of the financial sector threatens economic productivity and stability. The scale of the problem is not known precisely, but the activity of an estimated 36,000 individuals operating in some 5,300 organised-crime gangs is thought to cost the UK at least £24 billion per year. To put this cost into context, the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has estimated the value of the aerospace industry to the UK economy at £28 billion per year.

Of eleven new Bills announced in the 2014 Queen’s Speech, the Slavery Bill and the Serious Crime Bill are focused on aspects of this problem. These should be seen alongside the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy, published in 2013. This strategy co-ordinates the government’s response, bringing together the collective capabilities of all relevant departments and agencies. It lays out a set of objectives to lower serious and organised crime, and a central plank of the strategy is the notion of a relentless disruption of organised-crime networks. However, there are inherent challenges associated with implementing this strategy. For instance, without a basis for measurement, the government, National Crime Agency, Regional Organised Crime Units and police forces will continue to find it hard to plan optimal strategies to counter the challenge or evaluate and demonstrate their success and impact.

The one-day conference reported herein explored these aspects, including the scope and scale of organised crime in the UK, existing strategies and means of disrupting crime networks, and some academic research on analytical methods. Discussion groups addressed separate but related groups of questions, such as:

- What exactly is serious and organised crime, and how does it differ from all other forms of crime? Should we tag specific crimes as important in this regard, or is it possible to define serious and organised crime in terms of its characteristics? If so, what are the most appropriate characteristics?
- How do we measure its impact? Is one measure sufficient to meet the needs of all stakeholders and interested parties? What are the consequences for the type of data that need to be collected, by whom and with what frequency?
• Is there scope to employ predictive modelling to more effectively assist with planning?

Data (choice, collection, visualisation, analysis and interpretation) is a common thread in all these issues. While there are technical challenges, ethical, legal and other factors will no doubt be important and many of the factors identified in another conference in this series (‘Data for Security and Resilience: Challenges and Opportunities for the Next Generation of Policy Makers’) will have obvious resonance.

Thanks must go to the staff at the STFC and RUSI, whose extremely hard work made this event possible. However, the final word of appreciation and gratitude is reserved for all those who participated so enthusiastically, whether as speakers or as delegates.

Anyone wishing to know more about the STFC’s Defence, Security and Resilience Futures Programme in general or about these conferences in particular is invited to contact me at the e-mail address below.

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Introduction

Clare Ellis

Organised crime is a threat to national security. Indeed, the National Security Strategy has identified it as a tier two priority risk.\(^1\) Organised crime undermines the integrity of our financial system and threatens our economic prosperity; human trafficking challenges the security of our borders, while various forms of organised criminality directly facilitate terrorist activity.\(^2\) Organised crime is equally a serious concern for local policing. A previous conference in this series highlighted the ways in which extremism undermines community cohesion;\(^3\) organised crime has a similar impact, causing significant harm to the communities it touches.\(^4\)

The importance of tackling organised crime is clear, but without the means to analyse our impact, it is difficult to determine which policies, strategies or operational tactics are effective. The scale and complexity of this challenge is further amplified by the focus of the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy on ‘relentless disruption’, meaning that any metric must be able to measure the impact of a diverse range of tactics. Without this evidence base, how can we allocate increasingly scarce resources efficiently? These fundamental issues were the driving force behind this conference. The challenge is complex, but the era of Big Data analytics offers new opportunities that are worth exploring.

The Serious and Organised Crime Strategy 2013

The introduction of the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy in 2013 marked a significant evolution in the UK’s approach to tackling this threat.\(^5\) The strategy – with its focus on the notion of ‘relentless disruption’ – looks beyond the limited parameters of criminal prosecution, and recognises that in some cases other methods or other powers may be more successful in halting organised-crime activity and preventing further harm. Indeed, the strategy explicitly and repeatedly highlights this distinction, referring to prosecution and disruption as the twin aims of the Pursue strand.\(^6\)

In the papers that follow, there are case studies that illustrate the clear value of this approach; however, it also presents challenges. The resultant range of action that could be taken against organised crime is substantial. Objectively measuring impact has always been difficult, but the diversity of tactics only compounds the challenge. How can we establish a single metric that is applicable to such disparate tactics and allow direct comparison?

Opportunities in the Era of Big Data

A previous instalment of this series explored the potential value of Big Data analytics in matters of national security.\(^7\) The discussions highlighted a
number of challenges, such as the limited number of analysts with a detailed understanding of the algorithms which are essential for its use in new areas. Yet, the principal message was that there is considerable potential in this area. Complex quantitative analysis can now be performed on massive datasets. Moreover, Big Data analytics enable multiple sources of data to be combined. This capability is particularly significant in fields such as organised crime where complete datasets are rarely available and single metrics can offer only partial insights. However, we must not fall into the trap of complacency, believing the answer has been found – Big Data analytics are not a panacea.

As will be starkly underlined in the papers that follow, organised crime evolves continually and adapts to the environment around it. There will always be elements that remain unknown or partially obscured, but this conference demonstrated that academic research offers the means to reduce these unknowns. The application of techniques from statistical, spatial and network analysis can play a crucial role in developing the evidence base, measuring the impact of law-enforcement efforts to guide future resource allocation. Impact quantification may reveal that the vast sums spent on asset recovery are an inefficient use of resources, or that increased investment in parcel scanning is a justifiable outlay. It may be that targeting the leaders of an organised-crime group has a limited disruptive effect on the network, while removing the expertise of the group’s ‘middle managers’ severely hampers its ability to operate.

Without an empirical evidence base, we cannot answer such questions with confidence. Continued discussions between academia and practitioners are therefore vital to inform research undertaken by the former and to ensure the results are visible and trusted by the latter. The opportunities, which were so evident throughout the conference, must be pursued beyond the final page of this report: the scale of the threat demands it.

Clare Ellis is a Research Analyst within the National Security and Resilience Studies department at RUSI. Her research interests include counter-terrorism, organised crime, and security-sector reform in West Africa where she has previously conducted fieldwork. Prior to joining the institute she worked in the criminal justice sector, first within criminal defence and later within the police. Clare holds an MSc with Distinction in Countering Organised Crime and Terrorism from University College London, where her dissertation examined the spatial and temporal distribution of terrorism incidents with post-accord Northern Ireland. She has also studied at the University of Newcastle and the Université Lumière Lyon II, holding a Bachelor’s degree in Law with French.
Notes


5. *Ibid*.

6. The strategy is constructed around four pillars of activity which are defined as follows. **Pursue**: prosecuting and disrupting people engaged in serious and organised crime. **Prevent**: preventing people from engaging in serious and organised crime. **Protect**: increasing protection against serious and organised crime. **Prepare**: reducing the impact of this criminality where it takes place. See HM Government, *Serious and Organised Crime Strategy*.

Keynote Address: Priorities in a Period of Austerity

Mick Creedon

For too long, there has been a substantial gap in the fight against serious, complex and organised crime in understanding what the threat and risk look like. Following 9/11 and 7/7 – the terrorist outrages that rocked the world – the threat to the UK from terrorism was carefully and properly articulated. The police service and partner agencies gathered data and intelligence and started to map the threat. They were able to articulate to the government, to the Home Office and to the Treasury the nature of the threat, the extent of current capability and capacity to tackle it, and where there were gaps. The picture was startling, and it caused concern by illustrating the collective inability to manage the threat posed by individuals and groups. The result was clear action: the CONTEST strategy was developed and heavy investment and resourcing was provided.

This has not been mirrored for organised crime. We could not define it, we could not articulate the scale of the problem, nor could we even speak about the reality of the impact on communities. How many people are killed or maimed as a result of organised crime each week? What is the impact on the community in terms of corruption, harm, economic damage or any other of the myriad of ways organised crime affects the UK? Unless you can describe the problem, no one is going to listen.

This is not just a problem in relation to policy-makers and those responsible for leading law-enforcement agencies – it is also important to consider public expectations. In this ongoing period of austerity, there are conflicting demands and significant new and emerging threats that require policing resources. There are ‘volume crimes’ such as anti-social behaviour, burglary, violence or vehicle crime, where the public report the matters to the police, expect a response, and want to see visible policing as a deterrent and reassurance. At the same time, the public also wants to know that serious criminals are being investigated, their activities disrupted and the threat they represent reduced. This produces a dilemma, which is exacerbated by an inability to establish the extent of the threat clearly and decide how resources could be deployed effectively against it.

‘What Gets Counted Doesn’t Always Matter, and What Matters Doesn’t Always Get Counted’

When considering ‘performance management’ the last ten-to-fifteen years have been an unhealthy period for the police service, one which became totally dominated by top-down government targets. There included the Prime
Minister’s Delivery Unit, the Police Standards Unit, the Police Performance Assessment Framework, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary’s intrusive and unbalanced performance assessments along with many other reviews that produced ‘reds’ and ‘greens’, ‘best’ and ‘worst’, and erroneous league tables that simply misled the public. We have to now question why police leadership apparently rolled over and accepted, even embraced, this simplistic and brutal way of looking at performance, which never focused on serious issues such as child abuse, drug trafficking, gun crime, money laundering, extortion and corruption. In the very easy world of targets and league tables, simplistic leadership could disaggregate targets to an individual level and then hold people to account, while seemingly ignoring threats and risks, nor considering the impact on communities.

The police service is still fighting its way out of a decade dominated by targets and compliance and the stance of the current home secretary is to be applauded. In some areas and with some chief constables and police and crime commissioners, there remain league tables focusing on domestic violence rates, burglary rates or vehicle crime, while the most difficult issues are omitted. Measurement of police performance cannot be separated from its central purpose and mission – protecting vulnerable people, tackling offending, reducing harm and building safer communities. This includes tackling organised crime.

But the threat from organised crime is also poorly measured – and if we really need to understand harm to communities we need to look beyond the headline, recorded crime figures. If somebody steals a 50p packet of chewing gum, that is a crime and is recorded as such. If a disqualified driver drives through a pedestrian area at 50 miles per hour while under the influence of alcohol, without insurance and using their mobile phone, it is not a recorded crime. The latter example poses a greater risk to others but is not reflected in the national dataset and we need not even guess which the public would see as the most harmful!

In the UK, crime is perhaps best represented as an iceberg. The small visible section above the waterline represents the crimes that are reported to us; they are the incidents which are recorded in the national dataset and against which police performance is measured. But below the surface is the murky world in which much organised crime thrives; the threat is substantial and growing, but much is unreported and unknown.

One area potentially above the surface is the supply of illegal drugs, although this is largely because of the proactive work in all forces: as yet dealers, users and addicts do not tend to report their sales and purchases to the police. We know the world of drugs trafficking and local street dealing is a central activity to many organised-crime groups – this has been
consistently true for many years and is unlikely to change: the profit is too substantial and the ‘business’ is easy to enter. But even here, in arguably the most heavily investigated, best-resourced and best-understood aspect of organised crime, there is a substantial evidence gap concerning the impact of law-enforcement activity. There is plenty of evidence to show that if we interrupt the supply of illegal drugs to a town, almost immediately a new and sometimes more dangerous group will fill the void and reinstate the supply. We surely need a more informed debate to understand the best use of resources and how we deal with the drug problem in an effective and sustained manner.

If the supply of drugs sits above the surface, issues such as money laundering and the movement of criminal capital are slipping below the waterline. We make huge assumptions with regard to money laundering but the evidence base is poor. The repatriation of sterling cash from overseas is just one example. Annually this totals over £7 billion, but while we know what jurisdictions it comes back from, we do not understand the activity behind it. Most holiday-makers do not take sterling abroad as cash and exchange it on arrival for local currency. A significant amount of this repatriated sterling comes from criminal behaviour and has been laundered. The UK is an island with numerous exit points and porous borders. We haemorrhage money overseas, and our knowledge of its relationship to money laundering and organised-crime groups is a real gap.

There are other areas which sit far, far below the surface, around which the evidence base is extremely limited. There are growing indications that modern slavery is operating on a semi-industrial scale. In a recent example, a Slovakian individual returned to his home country, where he was refused benefits on the grounds that he was claiming in the UK. He had no knowledge of this. Living in the Midlands in a non-descript city, he had been working an average of twelve hours each day, living in a room with seven other people and receiving £1 per hour. Meanwhile, someone else was claiming benefits in his name and taking all the payments made by the legitimate business whose manager believed he was an agency worker. A family had been trafficking drug addicts and alcoholics into the country, forcing them to work in conditions of slavery for companies which believed they were employing genuine workers. So far, 250 victims have been identified, fifteen traffickers have been prosecuted and £4 million in criminal proceeds have been traced. This is happening frequently across the country, but how much is really understood about the world of modern slavery? How much do businesses really do to check the status of the employment agency when they understandably want hard-working staff at the lowest possible cost?
Further below the surface, at the base of the iceberg, are yet more examples of serious and organised crime, which are almost entirely undetected. Who would have thought that the food chain would be contaminated and corrupted by organised crime? The discovery that illegal horsemeat was on our supermarket shelves caused scandal, but this was a well-established practice of organised-crime groups. Who would have thought that we would be investigating an international cricket team for match-fixing in the UK? There is corruption in many forms of professional sport and at many levels, but there is an evidence gap concerning this form of criminality and the role of organised-crime groups.

Female genital mutilation is totally misunderstood and almost entirely unreported. Although evidence is seen by the health service, it is rarely investigated or recorded within police statistics. Several years ago the ‘dark web’ was almost entirely unknown among the general public, yet it was being widely exploited by organised criminals. Guns and Ammunition UK offers for sale original UK passports, weapons and illegal drugs, all of which can be purchased anonymously using digital currencies such as Bitcoin.

The threat from illegal activity, and particularly organised crime, is not accurately captured by crime statistics, which reflect only the tip of a vast iceberg, nor is our impact in tackling them captured by current police performance measures. Performance regimes that focus on visible and reported crime will inevitably have unintended consequences and one of them will be effectively incentivising police leaders to close a blind eye to the endemic problems of organised crime and deal with that which gets measured. As austerity bites further, the limited resources available to forces need to be carefully directed, but this cannot be accomplished without a clear understanding of the threats faced, their impact on communities and whether our methods are effective.

Organised-Crime Group Mapping
To improve understanding of the threat, organised-crime group mapping was developed several years ago by learning from work in the UK and overseas. This is not a new concept and the process has been repeatedly refined and is now used around the world. To create an effective map, intelligence is gathered from multiple agencies to develop a picture of groups operating within an area. It is not perfect, but the process and its results are very credible. Currently, all police forces in England and Wales, Police Scotland, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, HM Revenue & Customs and the National Crime Agency are committed, and the resulting threat picture is increasingly informed and directs operational activity. It is not a complete map and illustrates what we know – the unknown remains an issue. Even within the map of collective knowledge there are people who continue to evade detection. However, through this imperfect science
of mapping organised-crime groups, we have identified approximately 36,000 individuals within 5,300 groups. We know, broadly, where these groups are domiciled and what their main strand of criminality is. The main offending type is drugs, but when you look behind that, you will see coercion and violence, control and money laundering. We know that virtually all of these groups are entrepreneurial, opportunistic and driven by profit. Of those groups, we know that some save their profits as a perverse pension pot, while others live the high life, spending all that they accumulate – they ‘offend to spend’. It is therefore very difficult to launch asset-recovery attacks against the latter, but conversely it makes them extremely susceptible to financial investigation.

What else do we know about the groups? They are extremely resilient, they collaborate very effectively, they cross borders, and they cross commodities. They are business-driven, entrepreneurial. Some are familial while some are situational. Some are based on ethnic groups. They are fascinating, and we are learning more and more – this evidence base is growing.

The strategy of mapping and tackling organised crime is clear: you gather as much knowledge as possible, assess the risk of those individuals, and then ensure every single group is subject to some form of activity to counter that risk. The first two aspects are accomplished by this process of organised-crime group mapping, but the third continues to pose challenges. You cannot mount a covert, sustained attack on 5,300 groups and you cannot investigate and enforce your way out of 36,000 individuals; however, some form of activity is needed. It is therefore crucial to understand the impact of different disruption measures, so that limited resources can be marshalled effectively against the assessed risk of each group.

**How Academia Can Help**
Bridging the evidence gap will not be achieved by law enforcement alone: there is a substantial role to be played by academics and researchers, informing our work tackling serious and organised crime. The following questions capture the key issues discussed above:

- How can we measure the harm of organised crime?
- What is the impact of different disruption methods in relation to illegal drugs and other organised criminal activity?
- How can the impact of individual law-enforcement tactics be measured and directly compared?
- How can the impact of tactics from partner agencies be measured?

We face a substantial threat from serious and organised crime, which must be tackled with ever-decreasing budgets. Now, more than ever, it is vital that
resources are used effectively. Without academic support to understand and quantify the impact of our tactics, this will be extremely difficult.

*Mick Creedon is the Chief Constable of Derbyshire Constabulary. He started his career at Leicestershire at the age of twenty-two after graduating from the University of Manchester. He spent the majority of his service working as a detective and rose to head up the specialist crime department before moving to Derbyshire Constabulary in 2003 as Assistant Chief Constable (Operations). In 2006, he became the National Co-ordinator on Serious and Organised Crime for the Association of Chief Police Officers, where he held the rank of Deputy Chief Constable.*
I. Organised Crime as a Community of Practice

Dick Hobbs

In two decades, organised crime in the UK has moved from being a non-existent to a widely recognised problem. Organised crime is a relatively recent addition to the lexicon of British law enforcement. However, while the label of organised crime was not commonly used in the UK context until the 1990s, the early years of the twentieth century marked a number of moral panics related to problems associated with immigration, the corruption of indigenous sexuality, and various forms of vice, all suggesting a racial pathology that located certain ethnic groups as being culpable for the corruption and degradation of white society. A key driver of the construction of this demonology is the identification of collaborations featuring foreign criminality imposing itself on the UK and, as the twentieth century progressed, ‘alien conspiracy theory’ settled at the foundations of what was to become the UK’s policy on organised crime. 1 Confirming that, “somewhere”, “somebody” is pulling all the complicated strings to which the jumbled world dances; 2 a key feature of this demonology is that these transgressive, essentially alien activities were enabled by collaborations featuring some form of international reach. It was the prospect of foreign criminality imposing itself on the UK that formed the core of what was to evolve as the UK government’s policy on organised crime.

This paper outlines this evolution, providing vital context to the discussions which follow. To interpret the current government strategy, it is necessary to understand what is meant by ‘organised crime’ in the UK and how that understanding has developed. Without this foundation it will not be possible to develop appropriate methodologies for analysing such criminality or efforts to tackle it. This paper also offers a note of caution with regard to quantitative analysis: first, in relying on police data rather than independent collection; and second, in failing to recognise the inherently fluid and adaptive nature of the subject we are seeking to measure.

Early Organised-Crime Policy in the UK

Historically, the British police had responded to various forms of ‘serious’ crime by forming special squads to counter specific forms of local criminality such as vice and drugs. 3 Although the local accountability of individual constabularies was sacrosanct, the increasing mobility of criminals was eventually marked by the formation of regional crime squads in 1964. Formed in the aftermath of the 1962 Royal Commission, and rooted in a specialised local knowledge base, 4 the nine regional crime squads (reduced in 1994 to six) were reinforced by criminal intelligence branches in each of the regions, and operational ‘drug wings’ in the mid-1980s.
The rise in recreational drug use in the 1960s prompted British politicians to look to the US for inspiration. In 1985, the House of Commons’ all-party Home Affairs Committee issued a report that mimicked President Richard Nixon’s 1969 declaration of a ‘war on drugs’, claiming that drug use was the most serious peacetime threat to the well-being of the nation, and recommending a raft of American-inspired policies. Also in 1985, Prime Minister Thatcher repeated almost word for word a radio broadcast by US President Reagan, when she warned drug traffickers: ‘We are after you. The pursuit will be relentless. We shall make your life not worth living.’ American-inspired policies abounded, and the previously foreign concept of organised crime became common currency in the UK, especially in relation to any form of non-white acquisitive crime. ‘Black mafias’ in the shape of ‘Yardies’ featured in the tabloid press, creating the impression of organised crime as ‘a newly noticed kind of human behaviour’.

Inventing Organised Crime in Europe

You do not have organised crime (in the UK). We have it, we know what it is.

Italian academic at an organised-crime conference Aix en Provence, 1995

In 1987, the United Nations announced an international treaty against drug trafficking and in 1988, a G7 task force suggested international action against money laundering and the confiscation of drug-trade profits. In December of the same year, the G7 countries incorporated these proposals into the 1988 UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, which effectively internationalised American drug prohibition. Countries ignoring the convention risked the possibility of forgoing future advantages from co-operation, and by 2005, 173 countries had signed up to the convention.

The US led the way in identifying the transnational threat of organised crime, and by 1994 a conference of high-level American law-enforcement and intelligence-community personnel was able to assert, ‘Global organized crime is the world’s fastest growing business, with profits estimated at $1 trillion.’ In addition, the UN World Ministerial Conference on Organized Transnational Crime created a platform for the merging of interests between the US, the member states of the European Union and the internal politics of the UN itself. The UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) proceeded to drive the agenda, and in 2000 over 100 countries met in Sicily to sign up to the convention, which came into force in 2003 with a manifesto based on American anti-organised-crime policies.

Although there were discussions regarding organised crime within the Council of Europe and the European Parliament before the 1990s, these were not concerned with its extent or nature, and most importantly organised
crime was not regarded as a generic threat to stability. Before the 1990s, EU security had focused on internal concerns, and apart from Italy – and to a lesser extent Germany – European states considered themselves largely unaffected by organised crime. However, as the cessation of the Cold War opened up political and security space, organised crime became defined as a major internal threat. The notion of security was invoked to cope with the uncertainties of the demise of the Soviet bloc, and new threats such as organised crime were to be countered by non-military or soft security, as non-state actors were identified as the key threat to Western interests. Increased European co-operation was ingrained in the Maastricht Treaty, which established justice and home affairs as one of the EU’s ‘three pillars’. In 1997, the EU action plan against organised crime and a range of legislative tools and institutional arrangements followed European policing systems, merged, amalgamated and mutated, creating a security space in which the rag-bag of activities that constitute ‘organised crime’ were reconfigured and tailored to fit.

Developing the UK Policy
The UK formally embraced the notion of organised crime in 1993 at a conference at Bramshill Police College where the threat was described as featuring ‘some of the most brutal international criminals ever known’. By this time, the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) was already in its inaugural year as Britain’s first centralised policing acknowledgement of organised crime, which to date had been dealt with locally or regionally. NCIS was tasked with maintaining national indices on such disparate categories as counterfeit currency, drug trafficking, money laundering, football hooliganism, organised crime, paedophilia, kidnapping and extortion – a range of diverse criminal practices placed within an omnibus category, ‘fusing events with little “commonality” [thereby making] it easy to create a popular front’. NCIS was also tasked with the provision of strategic analyses on changing trends and patterns in organised and serious criminal activities. Early threat assessments confirmed its remit to prevent harm to the UK from external threats, and as a consequence concentrated on a roll call of usual suspects from a global central casting office.

NCIS was criticised for its lack of accountability, and the agency’s formation was marked by fierce in-fighting among law-enforcement agencies. There was considerable initial scepticism by the British political classes regarding NCIS; in particular, over the stress on its essentially foreign nature. Indeed, this committee placed an emphasis on ‘professional’, as opposed to ‘organised’ criminality, and the Association of Chief Police Officers referred to organised crime as ‘serious crimes committed by career criminals who network with each other across the UK, across Europe and internationally’, a definition effectively divested of the apocalyptic terminology favoured by the home secretary of the day.
In 1997, the Police Act formalised NCIS and created the National Crime Squad (NCS), which took over from the existing regional crime squads in England and Wales in April 1998, joining HM Customs and Excise and the police as strategic partners of NCIS. The NCIS International Liaison Unit was linked to the worldwide Drug Liaison Officer Network managed by HM Customs and Excise, and NCIS was also the contact point between UK forces and foreign police agencies through Europol and Interpol. In December 1996, Britain became the first member state of the European Union to ratify the Europol Convention, giving Europol legal status and enabling information exchange between law-enforcement agencies of member states. NCIS was also the co-ordinating authority for security-service activities in the prevention and detection of serious and organised crime. With the Cold War a fading memory, a number of MI5 personnel were seconded to NCIS in an intelligence gathering role, and MI6 diverted some of its resources to combating drug trafficking overseas.

In 1993, NCIS held a conference at Bramshill Police College, where the audience was told by a representative of the Metropolitan Police, ‘In five years’ time there is no doubt that the major threat confronting the inner cities of the United Kingdom will come from central, eastern European and Russian countries’, prompting a spate of ‘Russian mafia’ headlines. However, after Russia joined the G8 group in 1998, the threat suddenly declined to the extent that NCIS in its 2000 UK Threat Assessment was able to state, ‘Judging from current intelligence, the UK is not facing an “invasion” by a “red mafiya”’. As Gregory notes, both NCIS and the NCS were established before there were any plausible data collection on organised crime. His analysis of the Organised Crime Notification Scheme (OCNS) shows that drugs and money laundering constitute between them 87 per cent of organised criminal activity, with over 60 per cent of the core members of organised-crime groups being designated as ‘white European’. Of the 965 crime groups identified in 1999, 85 per cent were based in the UK with 30 per cent of these based in London. Gregory found that of those groups with known transnational bases, ‘14 (1.7%) were based outside the UK and of these, 11 were based in a European country.’ In addition, just over 40 per cent of organised-crime groups were active outside the UK and less than 8 per cent were active in at least three continents. Even given Gregory’s careful understanding of the statistical failings and the general methodological shortcomings related to these data, the global and transnational emphasis that dominates contemporary organised-crime discourse are difficult to justify in the light of these findings, particularly if we take into account the NCIS 2000 Threat Assessment, which notes that the vast majority of the 938 leading organised-crime groups were made up of ‘British Caucasian’ working-class criminals.
Nonetheless, by the late 1990s, less than a decade after the ‘discovery’ of organised crime in the UK, NCIS was able to quantify the problem in a far more actuarial manner, estimating the value of specific illegal activities, their monetary relation to the gross domestic product, the number of organised-crime-related murders, the number of organised-crime groups involved in drug trafficking and money laundering, and – crucially – the total number of organised-crime groups. For instance, during 1996–97, there were 156 individuals who satisfied the criteria for selection as a ‘core nominal’, with some 2,200 potential core nominals.

The obsession with metrics and mapping in relation to organised crime is dealt with in detail elsewhere; generally, metrics and mapping should be seen as attempts to impose order on an environment that is characterised by chaos and disorder. The metrics are based on police data and are indicators of the activity of the police, not of the criminals. I have the same respect for these metrics as I do for indicators of the efficiency and effectiveness of universities as portrayed by the metrics devised by university managers and their minions. However, from the perspective of practical politics, mapping can be a useful device as a means of impressing the problem of organised crime on new nodes of local political accountability.

A Matter of National Security
In the wake of the 2001 World Trade Center bombing, the Home Office formed the Organised Crime Strategy Group, which included membership of the security services. The Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001 and Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 finessed the problem of organised crime into a major securitised threat that justified actions ‘outside the normal bounds of political procedure’, seamlessly blending the ‘social deviant and the political marginal’. The ‘threat’ of organised crime was made explicit in a 2004 White Paper called One Step Ahead, which announced the creation of the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA). Concerns over accountability and the creation of a ‘British FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation]’ had by now virtually disappeared with the incremental ratcheting up of organised-crime rhetoric, including its association with terrorism, effectively ‘selling’ the idea of organised crime to the British nation. SOCA, which became operational in 2006, was a non-police agency combining the NCS, the investigative and intelligence work of Her Majesty’s Customs and Excise with regard to serious drug trafficking and the recovery of related criminal assets, and the Home Office’s responsibilities for organised immigration crime. With over 4,000 staff, and a budget in excess of £400 million, SOCA was headed by Sir Stephen Lander, an ex-director-general of MI5, thus confirming the view that organised crime and new regimes of soft security enabled ‘old Cold War experts (to) simply re-qualify and become the new soft security protagonists’. SOCA adopted a number of American-inspired approaches, including plea bargaining and ‘supergrasses’ in order to target the 130 ‘Mr
Bigs’ of UK crime. Criticism of the new agency was relentless, and SOCA was accused of inefficiency, a perceived lack of democratic oversight, and insulation from normative public scrutiny.

The year 2009 was marked by a flurry of official outpourings about organised crime in the UK. In April, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary reported that there were 2,800 criminal gangs active in the UK, of which 10 per cent had an international dimension. In June, a mapping exercise by the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency (SCDEA) reported that 367 organised-crime groups were making £2.6 billion a year. In May 2009, the 2008–09 SOCA Annual Report reported that ‘the number of organised criminals known to SOCA grew substantially to over 5,000’. Significantly, the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit’s report Extending Our Reach acknowledged both the local consequences of organised crime, and the importance of local agencies as part of strategies of enforcement, marking a partial shift back towards a more regional-orientated policing strategy. However, pragmatism had assured that many large urban forces were already operating squads dedicated to locally defined notions of organised-crime-related activity. For instance, the Metropolitan Police formed the Specialist Crime Directorate in 2002. The cloak of transnationality which was used to establish the threat of organised crime was being cut to fit local conditions.

Extending Our Reach was an attempt to recalibrate the organised-crime problem and placate those law-enforcement organisations whose staff felt increasingly excluded from the agendas set by SOCA. It formalised a multi-agency rhetoric and recommended that regional intelligence units be tasked with identifying organised-crime groups operating ‘below the radar’ of local police forces, suggesting that each policing region be required to dedicate a regional unit or taskforce to respond to serious organised crime. However, Extending Our Reach also marked a significant net-widening, embracing threats as diverse as the Taliban, Somali pirates and ‘delinquent youth gangs’, thus reducing still further the value of the term ‘organised crime’.

Fear of foreign attack or infiltration remains an ever-present ‘gold standard’ threat where, ‘global trends, technological developments and the increasing ease with which people, goods and ideas can move around the world, have all created opportunities for organised criminals to exploit’. The threat, as demonstrated by Extending Our Reach, had now become a national security issue, and in March 2008 the British government published The National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom, which announced a co-ordination of governmental efforts to improve national security, and identified ‘transnational organised crime’ as a ‘security challenge’. Via securitisation, the previously cumbersome category of organised crime has become an ‘existential threat, requiring emerging measures and justifying actions outside of the normal bounds of political procedure’. 


Played out particularly in drug, people and weapons markets, global crime does not supersede locality, and since the creation in 2013 of the National Crime Agency, and the subsequent formation of regional organised-crime units, the prospect of initiating a more nuanced approach to serious acquisitive crime has been considerably enhanced. In particular, this latter development is a welcome return to considering local sensitivities and placing a value on local knowledge, which it is hoped will partially reduce the mystique and exoticism of organised crime for police and public alike.

A Community of Practice
While the new government strategy therefore marks a positive development, it does not address the difficulties in measuring organised crime and, by extension, our impact against it. There remain substantial obstacles, not least the fluid nature of the markets and communities which drive such activity. Focusing on a foreign-based underworld, we have tended largely to disregard market forces and the impact of British society’s demands for illegal leisure, labour and consumer goods. This normalisation includes a willingness to engage in the provision of these goods and services, which encompasses all strands of society. Recent evidence on drug trafficking suggests that a wide range of individuals and groups are willing to respond to the opportunities offered by a post-industrial society that encourages entrepreneurial activities. This constitutes not a global underworld but a global ‘community of practice’ to which we all have access.

As for the evidence base, the ever-evolving entrepreneurial adaptations of this community of practice, and its ability to engage with emerging and established markets, reduce the effectiveness of mapping exercises and attempts to quantify the problem. Criminal collaborations generate chaotic sets of personal and commercial affiliations, featuring settled and transient relationships. Fluid and unpredictable interchanges between transactions and activities are not suitable for the socio-metric analysis generally favoured by police and police science. Interpreting data, the result of the actions of the police, as if they represent real criminal activity or criminal trends can give the impression of a stable, ‘mappable’ community, rather than a volatile, market-based series of fluid and mutating collaborations. Beyond the computer-generated network charts that are designed by the police to freeze frame and simplify complex interactions, there is a chaotic, emotional world of loyalty, distrust, wealth, debt, cold business calculation, fierce hedonism and impulsive risk-taking.

This is not an underworld with clear parameters. The lines between legal and illegal are too narrow; the definitions of organised crime are too malleable. Most importantly, illegal trading or ‘unlicensed capitalism’ has proved to be sufficiently alluring to ensure that the war against organised crime
will be long and ultimately unwinnable. Consequently, when politicians and practitioners claim that there are ‘no academic studies’ of this ever-fluctuating yet insidious realm, they are speaking in ignorance. We need to draw their attention to the existing massive archive of scholarship on drug and firearm markets, urban history, community studies, housing studies, entrepreneurship, work and employment, migration, violence, cyber-studies and much more. This could be the foundation for innovative explorations of how the contemporary community of practice operates, building vital understanding. Without this foundation, accurate measurement will remain elusive.

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Notes
8. Hencke, ‘MPs Urge Harsher Heroin Penalties’.


24. Evidence was as weak as it had been in the US during the 1960s, when an organised-crime threat was created by ‘the strong opinions of experienced police officers, public rumours, sensational incidents and, of course, electoral interests’. See C Fijnaut, ‘Researching Organised Crime’, in R Morgan (ed.), *Policing Organised Crime and Crime Prevention, Vol. 4* (Bristol: Bristol and Bath Centre for Criminal Justice, 1989), p. 69.

25. D Hobbs and C Dunnighan, ‘Organised Crime and the Organisation of Police Intelligence’, in P Carlen and R Morgan (eds), *Crime Unlimited, Post Modernity and Social Control* (London: Macmillan, 1999). During the early days of NCIS, I worked with Colin Dunnighan on a project to carry out a pilot for a ‘British organised crime survey’. The hostility to NCIS among the law-enforcement community featured in our unpublished report, which was ‘flung into the long grass’ by the home secretary. The report was subsequently leaked to the press, and a headline on the front page of the *Independent* on 11 October 1996 stated ‘Leak Reveals Contempt for British “FBI”’.


35. NCIS in its 2000 UK Threat Assessment.


42. Gachevska, ‘Building the New Europe’, p. 75.


44. Lander admitted that SOCA’s priorities would be partly based on the amount of space that newspapers afforded to different forms of organised crime. See Woodiwiss and Hobbs, ‘Organized Evil and the Atlantic Alliance’; J Bennetto, ‘Sir Stephen Lander: It’s certainly difficult to bring criminals to book. We have to think of new ways of skinning a cat’, Independent, 10 January 2005.


49. In its 2010 election manifesto, the Conservative Party confirmed that for SOCA to continue to exist, its role in countering transnational threats would be further emphasised: ‘Extremists, serious criminals and others find our borders far too easy to penetrate. That is why we will create a dedicated Border Police Force, as part of a refocused Serious Organised Crime Agency, to enhance national security, improve
immigration controls, and crack down on the trafficking of people, weapons and drugs.’

50. Ibid., p. 59.


II. The National Crime Agency: From Strategy to Operation

Chris Todd

The majority of the 36,000 individuals forming the 5,300 mapped organised-crime groups impacting the UK are bullies, lacking a moral compass and intent on making money by whatever means possible. But they work together to achieve their ends and they endeavour to avoid detection, often at extreme cost to others. They therefore present a substantial challenge.

The National Crime Agency (NCA) is responsible for implementing the government’s Serious and Organised Crime Strategy to tackle this threat, but no one agency or body can meet this challenge alone. The NCA must be prepared to think imaginatively, and work together with other government agencies and police forces across the country and around the world. Different cap badges or uniforms cannot be allowed to create barriers: this is a shared endeavour.

This paper will discuss the realisation of the government’s strategy, using case studies to illustrate the principles outlined. It will focus on the importance of measuring the overall impact of disruption strategy to evaluate the success of that implementation. The first section examines the central concept of ‘disruption’, looking beyond convictions and outlining what success means in practice. The second section focuses on the mechanisms used by the NCA to operationalise such principles. It includes discussion of the challenges faced in measuring the impact of interventions, which is vital if the most effective methods are to be identified.

Success in Combating Serious and Organised Crime
Traditionally, police detectives prided themselves on identifying the problematic recidivists in their area. They strived to gather sufficient evidence to secure conviction in their investigation, and to identify any other crimes the suspect had committed. However, while such an approach increased crime-detection rates and bolstered police statistics, it was of limited comfort to victims; they would have preferred their homes and cars to have remained safe from attack.

Sir Robert Peel, founder of the modern police force, was acutely aware of this simple truth. In 1829, he outlined the principles of law enforcement, stating that the ‘test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, and not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with them’. Vehicle crime may have looked rather different in the early nineteenth century – and serious and organised crime would certainly have taken a different form –
but this basic principle of policing remains valid. Communities want to go about their business unaffected by serious and organised crime.

Efforts to disrupt relentlessly such criminals will have been successful not if the government can publicise more convictions and lengthier sentences, but if communities feel safe in their homes; if they feel safe on their streets; if the borders remain secure; if the financial market, institutions and online economy remain stable; and if the confidence of business and investors in the UK remains high.

Securing convictions and substantial sentences for serious criminals is certainly part of that, but the real success lies in preventing those criminals from having any impact. And that must be achieved by means that are lawful, ethical and reasonably cost effective. The Serious and Organised Crime Strategy sets out how the NCA should go about that, but it is not the answer in itself.

Also key is the adoption of an appropriate culture. Peter Keen helped to transform British cycling and was recently quoted as saying ‘culture eats strategy for breakfast!’ He was not denigrating the importance of a clear strategy, rather stating that without the right culture, that strategy will never be implemented. The same can be said about tackling serious and organised crime. Investigators and detectives need to embrace a cultural shift; success can no longer be measured in convictions alone; successful disruption is complex and requires innovative and collaborative working across UK law enforcement.

Case Study: Project Gulf
Project Gulf offers an excellent example of disruption in practice. An organised-crime group had used intimidation to secure control of security contracts in Greater Manchester, threatening both legitimate competitors and those responsible for awarding contracts.

The police, UK Border Agency and the Department for Works and Pensions were able to identify a number of crimes for which they could gather clear evidence. Although these incidents were of a minor nature by comparison with the wider criminality of the group, they were sufficient to enable the Security Industry Agency to remove accreditation. This left the group’s security company unable to bid for public-funded contracts and it became unviable.

Project Gulf illustrates that successful disruption does not require criminal conviction; the criminal activity was halted and the negative impact on the community removed through innovative and collaborative working by a range of agencies.
Case Study: Multifaceted Disruption

Near Old Trafford football stadium a family-based organised-crime group operated a lucrative but illegal car park on match days, having threatened the landowner to gain his compliance.

The council and local police worked with the landowner to disrupt this activity, serving the gang with a notice to vacate and arresting members for fraud offences. Local policing was increased in anticipation of repercussions, a criminal anti-social behaviour order was obtained against the key members and, in order to prevent the group from returning, a legitimate car-parking contract was developed on behalf of a local charity. The actions of the group were disrupted and the charity benefited from £600,000 in its first season – money that would otherwise have been used as criminal capital.

Underlying Principles

In order to operationalise this sort of disruption across the country and against the spectrum of serious and organised crime, three constituents are required: an appreciation of the philosophy promoted by Peel; the right tools for the job; and the ability for agencies to determine the success of their methods.

First, an appreciation of the philosophy promoted by Peel is vital. Second, the pursuit of justice through the criminal courts is often part of having the right tools for the job, but a much broader range of partnership arrangements is also required. Each actor in this space needs to understand and draw on each other’s knowledge, experience, capability and, where legislation provides, unique powers. To this end: the NCA has developed the National Disruptions Manual; the Government Agency Intelligence Network has created the GAIN Directory; local authorities are developing toolkits specific to their local needs; police forces and other agencies have developed similar compendiums; and now a national project is under way to group these efforts for mutual benefit.

The third contributor to the triumvirate is the measurement of performance; it is vital that agencies can accurately determine the success of their methods, but this poses the greatest difficulty. How can a standard measure be applied across the whole spectrum of serious and organised crime, operating across the whole of the UK and often having an impact on the UK from beyond our borders?

While acknowledging the evident challenges, the NCA has developed a framework to implement the government’s strategy and operationalise the concept of ‘relentless disruption’.
From Principle to Practice: The Approach of the NCA

The Crime and Courts Act 2013 established the NCA and designated two core functions: the reduction of crime, and the collection of criminal intelligence. Strategic priorities are set by the home secretary, who has outlined the following necessary actions:

- Identify and disrupt serious and organised crime – the Pursue element of the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy
- Lead, support and co-ordinate activity under the other three elements of the strategy: Prevent, Protect and Prepare
- Develop the capability to fight serious and organised crime
- Build partnerships for the same means
- Lead the international effort.

In order to deliver in these areas, the NCA has developed an operating model. Each year the National Strategic Assessment is produced, combining intelligence from the agency and each strategic partner. This is used to develop a national control strategy, which prioritises where effort should be focused to reduce the threat.

This is further supported through eight national threat groups, all of which are overseen by strategic governance groups. These bring all agencies together to consider strategy collectively across the identified priority threat areas. The NCA and the rest of UK law enforcement then works with the National Intelligence Model to co-ordinate tasking at a national, regional and local level. Through these governance arrangements collaborative operations are devised and deployed against the threat.

Case Study: Operation E

Operation E concerned the supply of heroin across the UK. In addition to the suffering experienced by drug users and the families of those who become dependent, there were instances of violence between rival gangs in the supply chain that further impacted on communities.

The National Strategic Assessment and Control Strategy confirms that heroin supply is a national problem and priority threat for the NCA. It is furthermore a priority to protect UK borders from exploitation by organised-crime groups such as these. This approach has been endorsed by the Strategic Governance Group.

Dealing with the organised-crime group responsible for this supply chain is therefore a correct and justified use of NCA resources, particularly as they would be assessed as a high-priority group.
The crime group was led by an individual already serving a lengthy custodial sentence in the UK; however, he maintained control of the group’s activities, co-ordinating a supply chain from the borders of Afghanistan to the UK via Turkey and the Netherlands. He was also able to control a network of independent cells around the globe, each responsible for key aspects such as shipment, packaging, money collection and local supply.

The principal tactic adopted was therefore to pursue those crime groups being supplied by the wider group in the UK and overseas, using targeted prosecutions to disrupt the network’s capability. The group’s financial collection network was also targeted to reduce its ability to fund future activity.

There was nothing to be gained from prosecuting the central subject given his existing sentence; however, it was vital a means was found to halt his continuing criminality. The NCA therefore worked with the National Offender Management Service and the prison to control him and his ability to communicate and co-ordinate activity.

UK communities were therefore protected from the further supply of heroin by this group. Communities overseas in the Netherlands were protected from the violence this group had been responsible for, which had included fatal shootings.

This is an example of the strategy and governance arrangements being used effectively on a global scale, to protect people in local communities.

But did the NCA get it right? This is where the third element of the triumvirate is vital – the need to measure performance and the impact of alternative tactics accurately. Within the model currently used by the NCA, the threat is examined according to criminality, intent and capability. This may be done in relation to an individual, a crime group or an enabler such as a specific programme of malware.

The NCA then creates input in relation to the threat, using tactics such as surveillance or behavioural science assessment. This should provide the basis for an output which disrupts criminal activity, such as cash seizure or convictions.

Finally, there is an assessment of the overall impact these disruptive events had in relation to the original threat and the extent to which it has now been reduced. This is assessed against a standardised scale, and may be deemed as major, moderate, minor or none. This assessment is carried out monthly so that the use of resources can be continually monitored and management can determine if they are being used effectively.
Conclusion
No one agency or body can tackle serious and organised crime at every level, at all times, or on their own. This must be viewed as a shared endeavour. Law enforcement will be successful if serious and organised crime is relentlessly disrupted so that it no longer represents a threat to the communities and interests of the UK.

To achieve this it is vital to look beyond convictions, to assess the threat posed by organised-crime groups and to develop appropriate tools to intervene. However, the most effective methods can only be identified through a consistent and accurate means of measuring impact and performance. It is through such measurement that policy-makers can determine when tactics breed success. The NCA has developed a model to assist in this task, but equally recognises the complexity of the issue and the need for that model to develop as the agency seeks continual improvement in this vital battleground.

Chris Todd represented the Organised Crime Command, National Crime Agency at the July 2014 conference. As well as coordinating the response to the threat posed by serious and organised crime in the East Midlands ACPO region, he leads the Command’s response to the Pursue element of the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy, and the Pursue Delivery Group within the National Drugs Threat Group.

Educated at the University of Birmingham, Chris switched from Civil Engineering to law enforcement in 1990. Initially serving in the Royal Hong Kong Police, he specialised in anti-narcotics enforcement before returning to the UK.
III. Effective and Efficient Disruption: Measuring the Impact of Specific Tactics

Colin Stott

Organised crime remains invisible to many, yet the impact of the offending manifests itself across communities at a local level and is a threat to national security. This can be in the open market of Class A drugs, in firearm use, through prostitution or racketeering. The impact is visible, but the organised network behind it is not.

In other cases, the impact and perpetrators can both be obscured. These are classified as ‘emerging’ criminalities and include cyber-fraud, modern slavery and child sexual exploitation. Such a classification is a greater reflection of law-enforcement experience than the criminality itself – the evidence base may be emerging but in many cases the criminality is well established and the threat substantial.

Examining the invisible network of actors committing such criminality reveals considerable variations. Their objectives, and therefore criminal activity, can vary widely depending on their specific motivations. This is perhaps best illustrated by comparing those groups which are involved in drug supply as opposed to those involved in organised football violence or paedophilia. These differences may also affect the impact of tactics employed against them, with some methods more effective against one type of criminality than another. There is no silver bullet in tackling organised criminality. Despite their differences, their intent to offend and to evade capture is analogous. Previous case history demonstrates that offenders evolve, undertaking research to ensure that they can continue their criminality by reducing the risk of being caught.

The UK government’s strategy focuses on the relentless disruption of organised crime, emphasising that this extends beyond the criminal justice system, including other outcomes to disrupt the networks and their offending. The task confronting those charged with delivering the strategy is to be effective and efficient at achieving this objective, but there are substantial challenges in ensuring such efficiency when the evidence base on which to base decisions is limited.

The importance of, and difficulties in, measuring overall impact against organised crime has already been discussed in this report. However, there is a further element to the research gap. At an operational level it is extremely difficult to identify the most effective means of disruption – and therefore allocate resources efficiently – without a clear evidence base. There are no metrics that allow disruption tactics to be directly compared.
This paper will focus on the operational requirements of impact measurement. The first section outlines the intelligence and planning that precedes any action against an organised-crime group, therefore providing the context to this discussion. The second section considers the different disruption tactics which may then be employed by law enforcement under the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy. The final section illustrates the limited utility of evaluation tools for quantifying the impact of such tactics.

**Assessing the Threats**
The ability to understand the threat of organised crime to a consistent nationwide standard has been delivered through organised-crime group mapping. This assessment process uses information and intelligence to scrutinise the capability and intent of any organised-crime group. The result is a hierarchical threat model of organised crime in any force area or region. Once aggregated, data feeds into the National Crime Agency and provides a national assessment of threat and risk.

At an operational level, this hierarchical assessment offers a relatively straightforward means of prioritising resources to reduce or remove those risks, though there is a challenge for those charged with mitigating the threat: to establish what type of resources are used, what skill set is needed and what tactics are to be deployed.

Allocating resources is the preserve of the tasking and co-ordinating group within each law-enforcement team. This is a group of appropriately skilled and empowered individuals who can allocate the necessary resources against prioritised threats. Their role is well defined and nationally recognised since the introduction of the National Intelligence Model during the late 1990s.

**Mitigating the Threats**
The aim of the new organised-crime strategy is to substantially reduce the level of serious and organised crime affecting the UK and its interests. The strategy aims to deliver this through the four key areas of Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare. However, measuring the effects of disruption has not fully matured, and gaps exist in evidence-based research that can support tasking and co-ordinating groups to allocate appropriate resources under these strands. For example, if the ‘four Ps’ of this strategy were used to tackle low-level crimes such as vehicle theft or street robbery, then much evidence is available to inform decisions at a tactical level. High-profile policing, intelligence-led activity and integrated offender management are all effective methods of detecting or deterring individual offenders from committing crime. Academic and activity-based studies are available to aid decision-makers in allocating appropriate resources in these instances.
The experience of senior investigators informs their work under the Pursue strand when seeking to prosecute an offender involved in organised crime, but beyond this there is little to guide them in disrupting such activity. Very little research appears to have been undertaken to identify which methods are the most effective in tackling organised criminality. While it is accepted that a criminal justice outcome can disrupt a group, it is also recognised that prosecution is not always the most appropriate method of doing so. Yet it is frequently the only option considered, because of its position as the traditional focus of law enforcement and an area which is well understood. Assessment tools would help to identify sustainable, effective and efficient methods for disrupting organised crime under each strand of the strategy.

**Measuring Success**
Currently the measurement of success relies on an assessment of the extent to which the organised-crime group has been ‘damaged’. This level of impact is assessed in accordance with how much their ability to commit crime has been hampered. Primarily, this rests on an assessment of intelligence following any ‘policing activity’ to identify how the group’s intent and capability have been affected. This disruption is currently measured on a scale ranging from ‘very significant’ to ‘negative’.

The definitions used for disruption are as follows:

- Very significant – long-term elimination of the threat posed by the network
- Major – long-term significant reduction in, or short-term elimination of, the threat posed by this network
- Moderate – long-term minor or short-term significant reduction in the threat posed by the network
- Minor – long-term minimal or short-term minor reduction in the threat posed by the network
- Negligible – short-term minimal reduction in the threat posed by the network
- No – the threat remains the same
- Negative – counterproductive as the capability remains and intelligence sources are lost, because the individual is replaced by a more competent criminal, or capability is immediately restored with an increase in intent.

This system enables assessment against a consistent scale, but it is intended to measure the overall impact of intervention activity against a group. It does not distinguish the effect of specific tactics. A gap exists in our understanding of which disruption tactics are operationally effective against different organised-crime types. The range of tactical options to disrupt offending is considerable and increasing as new legislation is introduced. The tactics used by organised
crime to avoid detection also improve with every successful police operation, as criminals evolve to frustrate investigations. The effect of a disruption technique is therefore not permanent, and should be revaluated periodically.

At present, the relative effects of disruption techniques are assessed qualitatively and informally, based mainly on experience. Imprisonment of the most significant members of a group is traditionally considered the most effective disruption technique, especially where it is combined with the confiscation of any criminally derived assets. However, operational activity to achieve these goals can take months of intense work, and assets cannot always be traced. While alternative disruption methods exist, they are not considered reliable at achieving effective and sustainable disruption, and therefore are not always deployed. This is potentially a cultural issue within the police rather than a genuine reflection of impact. Research is needed to assess the success of the range of tactics so that better-informed tactical decisions can be made. This will aid in developing the knowledge of the investigators, and provide valuable information to those charged with allocating resources and developing the skillset of teams for the future.

Conclusion
To conclude, the fight against organised crime needs an effective and efficient way of assessing disruption. Although methods are being developed, these are too focused on the overall impact of law-enforcement and partner agency activity. Such measures are indisputably important, but there is a further aspect to this discussion. At an operational level it is vital that the impact of specific methods can be measured and tactics compared. Without such distinctions it will not be possible to establish which methods of disruption are effective in relation to specific crime types or organised-crime groups, therefore limiting the ability to direct resources efficiently.

Research is therefore needed to thoroughly assess and evaluate specific tactics in disruption so that better-informed decisions can be made in the future. Policing may not be best placed to undertake evaluated research on disruption methodology because of its culture, capacity and capability, yet research is unquestionably needed.

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IV. Recognising the Range of Disruption: An HMRC Case Study in Tackling Missing Trader Intra-Community Fraud

Joanne Cheetham

In developing any methodology to measure impact against organised crime, it is important to recognise the types of disruptive activity that can be employed by a variety of actors. As previously highlighted in this report, the task of tackling serious and organised crime does not fall to the National Crime Agency alone. While that agency has lead responsibility for implementing the government strategy, that strategy equally highlights the importance of partner agencies. What is more, at its centre is the notion of ‘relentless disruption’ – action which extends beyond traditional criminal prosecution, emphasising the value of using a range of tactics to disrupt and prevent criminal activity.

This paper offers a case study in illustration. The first section outlines missing trader intra-community (MTIC) fraud, an organised criminal attack on the Value Added Tax (VAT) system, which forms the basis of this discussion. HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) is the lead agency for tackling fiscal fraud. The second section delineates the methods used by HMRC to disrupt this form of organised criminal activity, highlighting the multifaceted approach taken and the various tactics employed. Finally, in the third section there is a discussion of the current methods used to measure the effect of such activity.

MTIC Fraud

MTIC fraud is an organised criminal attack on the VAT system, an issue which affects countries across the EU. Its simplest form is acquisition fraud, in which a company is established in the UK and applies for a UK VAT registration number. This allows the company to acquire goods or services from another EU member state free of VAT. Regulation provides that the tax instead becomes due when the goods are subsequently sold to a third party. However, in MTIC acquisition fraud, the trader defaults or goes missing without payment of the VAT due. The goods are usually sold through a series of companies before eventually reaching a final consumer in the UK without monies ever being paid to HMRC.

A more complex variation is MTIC carousel fraud. Here, goods and services circulate in high volumes through contrived supply chains, with an unpaid VAT liability and a corresponding VAT repayment claim being created at each turn of the carousel. In this variant, the activity may be a ‘paper’ fraud where the goods do not actually exist; the profit derives from the fraudulent tax
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repayment claims generated by the carousels. Alternatively, the fraudulent transactions may be used to reduce the net tax liability of a business.

Those engaged in this activity are increasingly trying to insert large, genuine businesses into MTIC supply chains. The inclusion of such businesses is valuable to MTIC fraudsters as the tax affairs of a large business are generally on such a scale that it makes it more difficult for HMRC to identify the fraud.

Initially confined to mobile phones and computer chips, the fraud has since mutated to cover various commodities and services including:

- Small electrical goods (including computer peripherals, computer games and televisions, but not large white goods such as fridges and freezers)
- Metals (predominantly copper but also nickel, silver, platinum and rare earth metals)
- Alcohol (beer, wines and spirits)
- Soft drinks, including bottled water and energy drinks
- Fast-moving consumer goods such as soap, shampoo and razor blades
- Carbon credits
- Gas and power
- Electronic communication services (Voice over Internet Protocol – VoIP – and mobile phone call minutes).

Comprehensive Disruption
In order to combat MTIC fraud, HMRC employs a range of tactics intended to disrupt or prevent the criminal activity at each stage:

- Create a hostile operating environment for organised-crime groups
- Detect and directly disrupt attempts in progress
- Use civil powers to investigate suspect supply chains and recover illicit funds
- Use available criminal powers to prosecute fraudulent traders.

First, steps are taken to create a hostile operating environment for organised-crime groups, including reviewing HMRC systems and processes to identify any vulnerabilities or entry points for criminal activity. These can then be ‘designed out’ to prevent attack, and legislative solutions can be used where appropriate. The intention is to make it easy for the honest majority to comply, while frustrating those who seek to evade payment or to commit fraud.

Engagement with legitimate companies is key. HMRC writes to large businesses operating in at-risk sectors, educating them about the threat and advising on measures they can take to protect their business. These include
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carrying out thorough due diligence and completing risk assessments when accepting new customers or suppliers. Through such activity, businesses can protect against criminal exploitation and help HMRC to frustrate organised-crime groups.

Due diligence procedures are crucial in securing supply chains against MTIC risks. While businesses often consider commercial supply-chain risks, HMRC encourages them also to mitigate tax risks such as MTIC fraud. The incentive to do so is the potential consequent financial and reputational damage if they are found to be part of a supply chain tainted by fraud.

Similarly, education is provided to banks and financial institutions in relation to associated money-laundering risks. This information can then be used by banks to review their risk-management systems as appropriate, and if possible frustrate the efforts of organised criminals to launder funds obtained through MTIC fraud. This is an important part of HMRC’s comprehensive approach to disruption.

HMRC also works closely with government departments, law-enforcement agencies and appropriate overseas fiscal authorities. This work includes undertaking multilateral audit activity of international MTIC supply chains, exchanging information and intelligence through appropriate legal gateways, and sharing good practice. Such steps ensure that efforts to create a hostile environment are comprehensive within the UK, and extended across the EU and internationally wherever possible.

Second, steps are taken to detect and directly disrupt attempts in progress. Traders considered as high risk are regularly monitored in order to unravel suspect supply chains and identify early opportunities for intervention. This monitoring also allows HMRC to identify any genuine businesses at risk of being caught up in fraudulent supply chains and to provide tailored education to that business as appropriate – further frustrating the efforts of the fraudulent traders.

Third, civil powers are used to investigate suspect supply chains and recover illicit funds. Finally, HMRC uses the full range of available criminal powers to prosecute fraudulent traders where appropriate, both for the fraud itself and for any associated money-laundering activity. This can also be accompanied by criminal-asset forfeiture, providing a deterrent and potentially frustrating further criminal activity.

Following success in reducing MTIC fraud, this comprehensive approach is being extended into other areas of HMRC’s work combating organised crime, including alcohol fraud. The delivery of the co-ordinated approach to organised crime is supported by the HMRC Organised Crime National Co-ordination...
Unit, which co-ordinates activity across HMRC and with other agencies and regulatory bodies as appropriate.

**Measuring Success**
HMRC’s success in tackling MTIC fraud is ultimately measured by analysing the tax gap. In 2005–06, when this form of fraud was at its height in the UK, the relevant tax gap was assessed as being between £3 billion and £4 billion per annum. In 2011–12 (the latest figures available), that gap had been reduced to between £0.5 billion and £1 billion.¹ The work outlined above is preventing the re-growth of this criminality to previous levels and reducing the ability of organised-crime groups to commit further fraud.

However, as previously discussed in this report, there is a limitation here as this is a measure of overall success rather than the impact of specific measures. Beneath the published tax-gap measure, HMRC therefore also uses various internal measures to monitor and evaluate its success in tackling such fraud. Where civil or criminal recovery powers are used, the yield is noted. Following intervention activity, the amount of revenue loss that has been prevented is assessed and recorded. Similarly, where traders alter their behaviour and become tax compliant following HMRC intervention, an amount is calculated to represent the future revenue that will now be collected. This is also done in relation to indirect impact through deterrence – it may be that a trader alters their activity as a result of HMRC’s intervention against an associate. Finally, HMRC uses diverse indicators to assess the capacity of an identified organised-crime group to commit fraud. If this capacity level is found to have been reduced following activity, the level of reduction is taken as a measure of impact.

**Conclusion**
The principal intention of this case study is to illustrate the range of disruption methods employed by a number of agencies. In developing methodology to measure impact against organised crime, it is important to recognise this diversity, as HMRC has done.

*Joanne Cheetham is the Organised Crime National Co-ordinator in HMRC Criminal Investigation.*

**Notes**
V. A Global Issue with a Local Footprint: Measuring Harm to Direct Resources

Michael Skidmore

Organised crime is often discussed in terms of national figures; yet, its impact is most keenly felt at the local level by communities enduring the direct harm it causes. Moreover, there are acknowledged limitations in the collection of data that are amplified when collated at the national level. A more accurate and comprehensive measurement can be undertaken by shifting the focus to communities and smaller geographic areas.

The Police Foundation and Perpetuity Research have therefore undertaken a two-year research project in order to improve the understanding of the impact that organised crime has at this level and to assess the effectiveness of how the threat is tackled. The research has been endorsed by the Association of Chief Police Officers, the National Crime Agency, the Home Office and, more recently, the National Trading Standards board. The research will focus on organised crime in the Avon and Somerset and West Midlands police force areas.

The paucity of robust information and knowledge about the scale and nature of organised crime is due in part to high levels of under-reporting, shortcomings in the police and other agency data for capturing organised crime, and the relative absence of data from victimisation surveys. In particular, little is known about the effect organised crime has on vulnerable people and local communities. In the current financial climate marked by austerity measures, it is important to ensure that resources are targeted at those crimes that cause the greatest harm. It is widely accepted, including by the government, that a better assessment of the nature, scale and impact of organised crime is urgently needed, particularly with regard to those crimes that are growing in prominence, such as fraud and sexual exploitation of children.

The research described in this paper seeks to establish what value can be added by approaching such assessment at the local level and by focusing on the harm of organised crime as the metric for evaluation. It is hoped that this project will contribute to a better empirical understanding of the actual and perceived scale, nature and impact of organised crime on local communities, and by extension the effect of initiatives to address it.

Assessing Harms
There are clearly challenges in developing a single measure of harm. Crime has a disparate nature, and the experience of being a victim of mass-
marketing fraud will be very different to the experience of being a victim of child sexual exploitation. Moreover, there is an element of subjectivity to victimisation; victims are likely to experience the same crimes differently. Other aspects to consider include the cumulative harm caused by multiple offences over time, the intangible and indirect consequence organised crime can have on the wider community, and the capability and capacity of the police and other authorities to respond. There are also practical difficulties to consider, as the available data is often partial and fragmented.

A basket of measures will therefore be developed which incorporates both quantitative and qualitative information. The intention is to draw upon a range of separate data sources to produce a rich picture of harm that is greater than the sum of its parts. It will therefore attempt to both measure the scale and impact of organised-crime activity and to identify and classify the different groups that experience harm (for example, individuals or businesses) and the degree to which these groups are differentially victimised.

Developing a Methodology
The research will incorporate a range of methodological techniques which will allow organised crime to be viewed from different perspectives. Quantitative assessments of the scale of victimisation and harm will be completed using incidents reported to bodies such as the police, Trading Standards, Victim Support, Community Safety Partnerships and Citizens Advice Bureau. This will be augmented by qualitative data collected from case records and interviews with the police, partner agencies, and community and business representatives. The reports will be comprehensively analysed and any information that indicates a link to organised crime will be collated. The information collected will feed into an estimate of the scale of organised-crime activity within the community.

The insights gained will be further supplemented through interviews with victims, providing details of the harm caused. This will inform the development of a tool for the measurement of the scale and nature of the harm caused by each aspect of organised crime. Using this information, the research team will also develop profiles of each crime type to examine specific vulnerabilities within the community. The indirect impact of organised crime on local communities will also be analysed by considering factors such as feelings of safety or property values. Finally, interviews with offenders will be sought in order to investigate the principal drivers behind their activity and explore what factors facilitate the commission of relevant offences.

Drawing on such disparate sources will enhance the understanding of the nature of organised crime and its impact on victims and communities. Within this broader framework, research teams in each police force will approach the
project from contrasting perspectives. In Avon and Somerset, the research will focus on victims and community members affected by organised crime, while in the West Midlands, the emphasis will be on offenders and their impact within a community.

The research in Avon and Somerset will focus on individual crimes, which will enable the team to extend their analysis beyond mapped organised-crime groups and known offenders. It will focus on the victims of two specific types of organised criminality: fraud and the illegal sex trade (which will include elements of child sexual exploitation and trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation). Focusing on such distinct examples of organised crime provides a broad scope while examining areas that present unique challenges in terms of developing the evidence base. Fraud incorporates an array of criminality, ranging from doorstep offences to sophisticated tax avoidance schemes. Information is dispersed across a number of agencies, including the police, Trading Standards, Citizens Advice Bureau and Action Fraud. Drawing on these multiple datasets will enable the construction of a more comprehensive picture of the scale of victimisation in relation to this form of organised-crime activity. Inclusion of illegal sex trade in the study captures an element of organised crime that is often hidden and under-reported. Therefore, in addition to measuring the known impact of such crimes, the evidence gathered will inform the development of indicators to estimate its total scale.

Research in the West Midlands will focus on four specific communities, examining the backgrounds, characteristics and impact of organised-crime group members who live or operate within their geographic boundaries. The initial scoping phase has already been completed and has informed the selection of the study area, identifying these four communities which represent a broad spectrum of activity linked to organised crime. The scope will include offenders linked to organised-crime group mapping on police systems, in addition to other relevant individuals identified by local police and other agencies. The analysis will draw on evidence from police intelligence and recording systems, other agency datasets, case-file reviews, and interviews with practitioners, community representatives and offenders in the area. Mirroring the victim profiles described above, this evidence will inform the construction of organised-crime group profiles. Factors to be analysed include the scope, nature and locations of their criminality, in addition to group structures, backgrounds and the drivers underlying their activity.

Finally, the research in both force areas will incorporate an assessment of the capacity and capability of the police and partner agencies to identify, assess and tackle organised crime to reduce such harms.
Conclusion
Alongside victim typologies and reports outlining the insights gained, it is hoped that the research described will produce a statistical measure of the harm caused by organised crime at the local level, enabling direct comparisons and assessments of the effect of disruption activity.

Measuring organised crime and assessing the measures to counter it will continue to present challenges. However, it is hoped that this research will test the feasibility of combining different metrics in order to overcome the inherent inconsistencies in the data available. It is further hoped that it will demonstrate the value of using measures at the local level: organised crime may be a global issue, but it has a distinct local footprint which should surely be the starting point for any accurate assessment.

Michael Skidmore joined the Police Foundation in May 2014 and is one of the lead researchers on a current project looking at organised crime and its impact on local communities. He previously worked as a researcher in government for six years, most recently in Home Office Science as part of the organised-crime research team. He has been involved in research profiling organised-crime offenders and in particular, the publication ‘Understanding Criminal Careers in Organised Crime’. Michael also worked at HM Inspectorate of Prisons where he was involved in a number of national projects looking at the provision of alcohol treatment services and the treatment of remand prisoners in custody.
VI. Targeting Disruption: How Can Geographic Modelling Improve Our Understanding of Drivers in Serious and Organised Crime?

Robert Haining

Some fifteen years ago, police forces responsible for the major conurbations in England and Wales argued that the police funding formula failed to recognise the existence of areas with particularly difficult and expensive policing challenges. These so-called high-intensity crime areas (HIAs) were characterised first by the type of crime found within them – often drug-related and violent, sometimes involving the use of firearms; and second, by a resident population who were afraid or unwilling to co-operate with the police. It was claimed that such areas were difficult and more expensive to police, as officers needed extra training (for example, in the use of firearms), extra back-up (such as double crewing) and specialist equipment (for surveillance). Due to the lack of co-operation of, and fear among, residents, investigations often took longer than those in other areas and special protection needed to be provided to witnesses.

The work carried out by a small group of academics in the departments of geography, law and town and regional planning at the University of Sheffield to assess certain aspects of this claim holds lessons that may be relevant in analysing the geography of organised crime within England and Wales. Within a defined area, geographic modelling has the potential to inform understanding of the drivers behind organised crime, therefore facilitating measurement of impact directly against those factors. This would further enhance the ability to target resources efficiently.

This paper sketches certain key aspects of the work that was carried out together with some follow-up work undertaken by some of the same academics with co-operation from South Yorkshire Police. We conclude by speculating on the opportunities and challenges offered by this work to the study of organised crime.

The Case Study: Modelling High-Intensity Crime Areas

The premise of the original study was to ask a small sample of police forces to identify on detailed (1:2,500 up to 1:10,000 scale) street plans the locations of their HIAs. City centres were excluded because serious crime in these areas tends to be of a different type and to reflect the presence of highly transient groups. Officers with a close working knowledge of the areas drew the boundaries. These maps were then transferred to a digital base map using the ArcView Geographical Information System (GIS). The spatial database in the GIS was used to integrate data on the boundaries of the...
HIAs with socioeconomic data recorded by enumeration district (ED) in the 2001 census. Making this link was vital in order to examine the HIA maps, thereby gaining a better understanding of the types of places where HIAs were found. The end point of this phase of work was to classify each ED within the three conurbations as either within an HIA (score 1) or not (score 0), thus creating a binary map. The three sample conurbations – Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Northumbria – were used to develop the model. (Figure 1, showing the location of HIAs in these conurbations against the backdrop of their basic command units – BCUs – is available on the RUSI website, at http://goo.gl/oShF9h.)

The following independent variables were used as predictors in the model, some selected because they already appeared in the police funding formula, but all chosen because the census provided small area (ED level) data. They fell into four categories, which were believed to span the main dimensions underlying area criminality:

- Variables providing a measure of police-force workload: population density; percentage of households living in non-owner occupied housing; percentage of people living in overcrowded conditions
- Variables providing a measure of public-order management: percentage of young males (aged 16–24) unemployed; a composite index containing variables measuring individual and household characteristics
- Variables providing a measure of community change: population turnover
- The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) index of local deprivation.

The variable to be modelled (the dependent variable) is binary – whether any ED is an HIA (1) or not (0). For this reason, a logistic regression model was used. The best-fitting model was identified for each of the three sample conurbations taken separately, and the best-fitting model for the aggregated data.

One of the challenges confronting the statistical analyst working with spatial data is whether the unexplained variation in the model is spatially auto-correlated – that model residuals are not independent. Spatial auto-correlation in the residuals violates one of the assumptions of regression, thereby undermining inference based on the model. In practical terms, the presence of such dependence indicates that there is unexplained structure in the data and it is sometimes possible to resolve this by including additional variables or fitting a different type of model. This problem was encountered in this modelling and led to the inclusion of spatially weighted averages of some of the independent variables. EDs are not isolated entities and the
characteristics of one district may well have implications for events in nearby or even adjacent districts.

The diagnostic work on the logistic regression model included exploring how spatially weighted averages of certain of the independent (or predictor) variables might improve model fit. Table 1 provides a summary of the best-fitting model for the aggregate sample data – the statistically significant independent variables at the 5 per cent level and their parameter estimates. The prefix ‘W_’ denotes a variable which is a spatially weighted average of the independent variable after the underscore. The spatial weighting is based on taking an average of the score in an ED and its immediately adjacent neighbours. ‘Terrace’ is the proportion of households living in terrace accommodation. The index of deprivation is the previously mentioned DETR index. ‘Turnover’ is the percentage of the population living at a different address the year before the census. Table 1 also reports the misclassification matrix, which provides a measure of how well the model fits the data.

**Table 1:** Summary of the national model based on aggregating the three sample police force areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Correctly</th>
<th>Incorrectly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Index of Deprivation</td>
<td>0.2351</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W_Depriv</td>
<td>0.1447</td>
<td>% HIA EDs classified: 52.9%</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrace</td>
<td>0.0102</td>
<td>% Non HIA EDs classified: 79.9%</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W_Terrace</td>
<td>0.0056</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover</td>
<td>0.0229</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-2.3465</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Note: The signs of the coefficient are as might be expected. For example, as population turnover increases in an ED, the probability of that ED being in an HIA increases._

The misclassification matrix for the final model can also be mapped and the correspondence between model predictions and the police’s definitions compared visually (internal validity). Figure 2 (also available on the RUSI website, at http://goo.gl/oShF9h) shows this for part of Greater Manchester. It is interesting to compare model predictions with police-defined HIAs from sample police forces whose data had not been used in the construction of the model (external validity). Data from Slough in the Thames Valley, Tottenham, Kentish Town and Kilburn in London (part of the Metropolitan Police Service)
were used for this purpose. The reader interested in following up all, or any aspect, of this work should see Craglia et al.⁵

Research of this type raises many issues. Although the operational knowledge and accumulated experience of police officers can be a strength when gathering data, it must equally be recognised that perceptions can be distorted by attitudes towards population groups or because of specific incidents. Police officers from different forces might have very different views on what constitutes a ‘difficult-to-police’ area. In the case above, the context for the research (the police funding formula) would probably have an influence on how officers responded to the request to specify their HIAs.

In a piece of follow-up research, but using the map of HIA areas provided by Sheffield police for the original project (the police-defined map), some of the researchers undertook a comparison of this map with what was revealed by Sheffield’s recorded crime database for 1995 (the empirically defined map). This was the period closest to when the police-defined areas were identified for which we could obtain data. The principal aim mirrored the initial project but used logistic regression to go beyond visual comparison of the two maps. This enabled researchers to characterise the differences between the two maps by the underlying socioeconomic and demographic composition of the EDs.

The empirically defined map was based on individual-level geocoded offence and offender data aggregated to the ED level. ED areas were rank ordered by their number of resident offenders and by the number of violent offences (drug-related offences, robbery, incidents with firearms or knives, aggravated bodily harm). The two sets of scores were overlaid and the forty EDs with the highest scores on both criteria were defined as the empirically defined HIAs. ⁶ The top forty EDs were taken because this number corresponded with the number of police-defined EDs.

Figure 3 (available on the RUSI website, at http://goo.gl/oShF9h) shows the two HIA maps. It is noticeable that the empirically defined HIA map is much more geographically fragmented than the police-defined map. Note also that the large police-defined HIA in the north east of BCU-K does not appear at all in the empirically defined map, while there is a cluster of EDs in the south of the empirically defined map coloured red that was not flagged by the police.

The same independent variables were used in the modelling work on these data as described above but with the addition of some Sheffield City Council data (for example, data on housing turnover, income support, educational attainment and location of neighbourhood facilities). Also added were two indexes of ethnic heterogeneity and socioeconomic heterogeneity.
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that measure the degree of ethnic diversity and socioeconomic diversity respectively at the ED level.

Table 2 shows the results of the model fitting for the empirically defined and police-defined HIA maps. Table 3 reports the results obtained from combining these two sources of information on the location of HIAs in Sheffield. These models are discussed in detail in Haining and Law7 and variants of these models as well as their implications are discussed in greater detail in Craglia et al.8

Table 2: Summary of the Sheffield models for the two HIA maps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Posterior means with credible intervals of parameters/Final models</th>
<th>Police-defined HIA</th>
<th>Empirically defined HIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Index of ethnic heterogeneity (β1, CI : 2.5%, 97.5%)</td>
<td>0.236 (0.147, 0.349)</td>
<td>0.019 (0.005, 0.034)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No car/van (β2, CI : 2.5%, 97.5%)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.034 (0.005, 0.066)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover (β3, CI : 2.5%, 97.5%)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.109 (0.049, 0.175)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone parent (β4, CI : 2.5%, 97.5%)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.113 (0.056, 0.169)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamma (β5, CI : 2.5%, 97.5%)</td>
<td>0.985 (0.940, 1)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final (parsimonious) model</td>
<td>Model (2)</td>
<td>Model (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The fitted models were logistic regression models with spatial random effects from the class of Bayesian Hierarchical Models (see Haining and Law 2007 for details). Credible intervals are the equivalent of confidence intervals in Bayesian modelling and the parameter estimates reported here are the means of the posterior densities of the parameters. Gamma is the parameter of the spatial random effects term in the model and is only ‘significant’ in the case of modelling the police defined HIAs.

NA means the independent variable was excluded from the final model as not significant (credible interval overlaps 0.0). The signs of the coefficients are all as might be expected. For example, in model (1) for the empirically defined HIA map, as population turnover increases in an ED the probability of that ED being part of an HIA increases.
Table 3: Summary of the Sheffield model based on combining the two sources of information (police-defined and empirically defined) on the location of HIAs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Posterior means with credible intervals of parameters/Final models</th>
<th>Police and empirically defined HIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Index of ethnic heterogeneity ((\beta_1), CI : 2.5%, 97.5%)</td>
<td>0.050 (0.039, 0.062)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No car/van ((\beta_2), CI : 2.5%, 97.5%)</td>
<td>0.026 (0.004, 0.047)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover ((\beta_3), CI : 2.5%, 97.5%)</td>
<td>0.047 (0.005, 0.089)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone parent ((\beta_4), CI : 2.5%, 97.5%)</td>
<td>0.074 (0.028, 0.120)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamma ((\beta_5), CI : 2.5%, 97.5%)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final (parsimonious) model</td>
<td>Model (1) with repeated measurements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A repeated measurements model was fitted from the class of Bayesian Hierarchical Models.

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of geographic modelling is to analyse the characteristics behind the map. This provides a greater understanding of their significance as contributing factors to outcomes of interest – in this case the occurrence of particular types of crime. Characteristics may refer to the resident population as well as the transient population, and to the physical characteristics of natural and built areas. Within the limitations of available data, statistical modelling enhances geographic analysis, adding an element of quantitative scrutiny which complements – or in some cases challenges – other forms of knowledge and understanding.

Data limitations should not be underestimated. The limitations of police data and sources such as the census – so crucial for adding depth and context – must be considered when interpreting results. There is not the space to discuss these issues here but the interested reader might refer to Haining’s Spatial Data Analysis.9

What is the relevance of this form of research to organised crime? Crime has a geography: offenders, their victims and those charged with tackling the problem are all tied to locations – organised crime is no exception in this regard. The case study described above illustrates existing techniques...
which could be valuable when applied to understanding organised crime and our impact in countering it. Geographic modelling, supported by statistical analysis, would illuminate the relative significance of demographic and physical factors to levels of organised crime within a defined area. Understanding such drivers would facilitate directed disruption against them. What is more, through providing metrics for their measurement, it would also offer a means of quantifying the impact of such directed interventions.

The Serious and Organised Crime Strategy emphasises the need to strengthen the response to organised crime at the local level, where substantial social and economic damage can be inflicted on communities. If this agenda is pursued, statistical modelling to understand the drivers at a local level, and the impact of interventions against them, ought not to be far behind.¹⁰

Robert Haining is Professor of Human Geography at the University of Cambridge. He has longstanding research interests in the statistical analysis of geographical data including data modelling. His areas of applied interest have included economic geography and the geography of health. He worked in collaboration with colleagues at the University of Sheffield on evaluating the impact of air pollution on health status using small area statistics. In recent years he has had the opportunity to work on the analysis of crime data in collaboration with various police forces in England and Wales and with Home office funding. Most recently, he and colleagues have worked on the development of new methods for evaluating the effectiveness of small area targeted police interventions. The work was applied to the ‘no cold calling’ zones set up by Cambridgeshire Constabulary as part of an effort to assess their effectiveness in reducing crime.

Notes

1. These academics (see the relevant references cited later in this paper) were only concerned with establishing the social and economic characteristics of HIAs, not with establishing whether such areas actually created higher costs for the police service. That work was carried out by a consultancy firm. Paul Wiles and Andrew Costello interviewed senior police officers to obtain the HIA maps.

2. This work predated the use of census output areas that were introduced in the 2001 Census. The police hand-drawn HIA boundaries rarely, if ever, corresponded with ED boundaries and the interested reader can read about how this was handled in M Craglia, R Haining and P Signoretta, ‘Modelling High Intensity Crime Areas in English Cities’, Urban Studies (Vol. 38, No. 11, 2001), pp. 1921–41.

3. For a fuller discussion of the predictor (independent) variables, see ibid.
4. There are many other ways of constructing spatial averages of variables. Depending on the numerical properties of the variable care may need to be taken in calculating an average.

5. Craglia, Haining and Signoretta, ‘Modelling High Intensity Crime Areas in English Cities’.

6. Details of this methodology can be found in M Craglia, R Haining and P Signoretta, ‘Modelling High Intensity Crime Areas: Comparing Police Perceptions with Offence/Offender Data in Sheffield’, Environment and Planning A (Vol. 37, No. 3, 2005), pp. 503–24. The two criteria were important because HIAs are defined by both the type of crime and the level of resident criminality.


VII. Disrupting Organised-Crime Networks: An Evidence-Based Approach to Establishing Effective Interventions

Barak Ariel

How do we know whether initiatives to disrupt organised crime are effective? To date, the evidence base which might provide an answer to this question is distinctly unsubstantial, and a rather limited scientific rigour underpins most studied or applied interventions. Given the tremendous and grave consequences of serious and organised crime within the UK and beyond, the limited science behind assessments of what works, what does not and what is promising should be a source of concern. While other areas of policing science have concentrated efforts by practitioners and academics alike to enhance the evidence on effective strategies, research on organised crime is hampered in major ways. Not having the necessary evidence limits our ability to answer important questions. Is our investment focused in the right areas? Should our resources be better diverted to other channels? Are law-enforcement agencies able to make a difference, and if so to what extent, on whom and under what circumstances? We simply do not know.

This paper will briefly discuss causality and the (eminent) need to conduct experiments in this area. Experiments are considered essential to evaluation research, and are at the heart of evidence-based policing founded on effectiveness. Experiments can provide a direct approach to answering questions about efficiency and effectiveness, or assessments of the cost-to-benefit ratio of methods that deal with organised crime and criminal networks. The paper will then present a crude ‘cookbook’ for future evaluations, based on a relatively established prototype of experimental research in criminology, promulgated by leaders of the evidence-based policing movement worldwide. It is hoped that this will inform upcoming evaluations of interventions.

What is Causal Inference and Why is it Missing from Current Research on Organised Crime?

In order to address this problem more fully, it is first important to lay out what the ‘best evidence’ approach in prevention science brings to organised-crime research and network analysis. The existing research is heavily informed by observational and diagnostic models of research. Such studies, albeit incredibly important for our understanding of criminal networks and organised crime, are by definition descriptive, not causal. They can certainly provide prediction and forecasting models, but they are not meant to move beyond that into prevention. Being able to predict an event does not mean we are able to prevent it.
Indeed, ‘what works’ depends largely on good evidence about prevention, and good evidence in science relies on the ability to infer causality, but it is not at all easy to show and many confuse casual effects with correlations. Correlations are merely observations, in which we show that a particular event is associated with another event. Correlation is a necessary but insufficient condition to prove causality. In order to show that an event caused another event, we require two more conditions: that the event (for example, the intervention) came before the outcome, and – more importantly – that no other event has caused the outcome. These three conditions – association, temporal sequence and the ability to eliminate rival explanations – make up causality. Without them, we are left with only observations, which are an insufficient foundation on which to establish policy.

How do we achieve causality in practice? The most reliable methodology for good evidence in prevention science is the use of randomised controlled trials (RCTs), which are generally recognised as ‘the gold standard’ of evaluation research. In organised-crime research, they are significantly underused. Broadly speaking, an RCT can explore causal effects between independent and dependent variables, while ruling out alternative explanations to this causal link. Given their strengths, these studies produce strong estimates of the treatment effect. RCTs provide the necessary conditions to secure high levels of internal validity through the process of random assignment. Random assignment of cases into different study conditions achieves baseline equality between the study groups. When the groups are the same, any outcome differences observed between the groups can likely be attributed to the effects of the administered treatments, not any other feature.

There is wide consensus in the scientific community that this experimental methodology is superior to all other research designs aimed at ‘proving’ causality, yet this type of methodology is rarely encountered in research on organised crime and criminal networks more broadly. The immediate significance of this lack of a robust methodology is that we simply do not know if the interventions we put in place against organised crime are effective. Practitioners, nevertheless, continue to claim there is a causal link between the intervention they have instigated to deal with organised crime and subsequent reductions or changes in crime patterns. Indeed, it is not uncommon to read success stories following ‘major interventions’ established to eradicate serious or organised crime. However, these are observations of trends which are – as outlined – highly susceptible to alternative explanations. Accurate causal models can only be achieved when proper tests are used, using the research design described above.

What Can Be Done? A Model for Future Research
Not everything can and should be put through experimental research. For instance, it is challenging to defend experimentations with low-frequency
events or high-impact events. For example, covert operations are not likely
to be a good fit for experimentation, mainly because there are so few taking
place that one could not randomly assign enough cases to one type of new
intervention versus another. The same is likely to be the case for special
operations using deadly force, or for suppression techniques against highly
active organised criminal group members. For example, arrests and criminal
prosecution are unlikely to be the subject of experimentation, although there
is emerging, convincing evidence that desistance from crime is more likely to
be achieved through diversions from prosecution. Nevertheless, many areas
of anti-organised-crime group experimental research are feasible, possible
and urgently await testing. Interestingly, many of the potential future RCTs
are in the area of prevention, where there may be more ‘room’ for piloting
new initiatives and putting existing schemes under rigorous trials to better
understand whether they work, and to what extent.

A research model based on the experimental method is likely to incorporate
eight elements, as laid out below. This crude ‘cookbook’ for any field trials
that seek to find out ‘what works’ recognises that the more precise question
is: ‘Does [it] work compared to controlled conditions, with what magnitude
and on whom?’ By framing the research agenda this way, a more granular
answer can address the following issues, which will be elaborated below
with a hypothetical example:

- What is the precise hypothesis that the experiment seeks to
  investigate? The variations in treatment, outcomes and sub-groups
  of populations that the programme is expected to measure must be
  sufficiently precise that they may be measured
- What does the organisational framework look like? For example, who
  will be delivering the intervention; will it be delivered in-house, or
  through dual or multi-agency partnerships?
- What is the unit of analysis? Will the Prevent strategy deal with the
  entire organised-crime group, specific members or both? What are the
  exact eligibility criteria required for participation in the evaluation?
  For instance, minors might be excluded, or first-time offenders, or
  offenders who are already under some form of tight supervision and
  treatment. ‘Grasses’, or informants, might also be excluded. How are
  cases recruited into the treatment? Would all known offenders on
  a particular date be included in the study, or would they enrol in a
  trickle-flow process? What is the follow-up for measuring the effect
  of the preventative intervention?
- How is random assignment managed? This is one of the most
  important aspects of the evaluation process, without which causal
  estimates of the strategy are unlikely to carry the necessary rigour
- What are the treatment and comparison elements? Similarly, having
  a clearly identified intervention with observable objectives is as
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essential as having a clearly defined control group that resembles the treatment group as closely as possible, but is not exposed to the Prevent intervention under investigation.

• How are the treatments measured and managed? Reflecting on the hypothesis of the study, how is dosage delivered homogeneously and consistently to all participants in the experiment? The more variations in treatment delivery, the more ‘statistical noise’ the study may generate.

• Beyond the measurement of treatment delivery, how are outcomes being measured? Understanding what measures of ‘success’ to collect is important right from the start, as not all crime outcomes are created equal; recidivism is a broad term and there are many ways of assessing the results of the study, ranging from official statistics through self-reported crime and victimisation to observations and qualitative assessments.

• Finally, what is the analysis plan for the experiment? It is important to choose the statistical model that best answers the research question, depending on the distribution of the sample and the data. Again, not all statistics are created equal and there may be some tests that are more appropriate than others. It is essential to supplement significance tests with effect size analyses and cost–benefit analyses.

Formal vs Virtual vs Informal vs Prevent Interventions against Low-Medium Risk OCG Offenders

In order to put some content around the eight points laid out above, a hypothetical protocol for an experiment on the effect of a Prevent study is described below. Assume for the sake of this example that a major police force is keen to test Prevent strategy on a cohort of organised-crime group offenders who are characterised as being of low-to-medium risk. Risk is contextualised here as the likelihood of entering or strengthening their criminal links to organised groups. The project is meant to last for twelve months, with a follow-up of twenty-four months in order to assess the effectiveness of the intervention.

The broad strategic objective underpinning this evaluation research is that of measuring the effectiveness of three types of engagements for offender management:

• Led by police officers, in which focused deterrence and a ‘carrot’ (reward) approach are delivered through face-to-face sessions.

• Led by police officers, but conducted mostly virtually with minimal face-to-face sessions and an emphasis on social-media nudges.

• Led by private-sector volunteers, with an emphasis on mentoring.
All three treatments are compared with control conditions, in which similar offenders are randomly assigned to no-treatment conditions, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions. Broadly speaking, the police-led face-to-face intervention includes a constable as a case manager, who can both deter with his or her powers of arrests and fast-track treatments, as needed. The private-sector volunteers are case managers who provide mentoring, with the capacity to fast track treatments in order to help the offender desist from crime. In between, the virtual approach assumed that the same ‘messages’ of deterrence and offers to help offenders desist can be given through social media and electronic means. This design can help answer a crucial research question – who is best equipped to prevent organised-crime group offending and to promote desistance, and through which means? In the process of evaluation, network analysis of the effect of the intervention must be incorporated in order to assess the direct impact on not only organised-crime group offenders, but also the entire framework.

**Research Hypotheses**

Empirical questions would be: what is the exact treatment (within the remit of the Prevent strand of the UK Serious and Organised Crime Strategy\(^\text{(10)}\)) which will be used against members of organised-crime group, what is the necessary dosage and on whom does it work? The hypothesis should be open to the possibility that the treatment is no more effective than no-treatment, or even backfires. Then we can at best hypothesise that ‘Prevent treatment causes changes in criminal behaviour, compared with control conditions’. Under this prism, it important to ask whether the means of delivering the intervention makes a difference – if similar results can be achieved without face-to-face interaction, then the implications for costs can be tremendous, as a virtual or social-media approach is exceedingly cheaper than one involving face-to-face interaction.

In order to complicate the story further, one must look beyond formal, state-led activities and look at informal, volunteer-led interventions against organised and serious crime. There is an interest in this area of research from a cost–benefit perspective and a theoretical perspective. Which social institutions are in a better position to aid people in desisting from crime: formal or informal social control mechanisms?

**Organisational Framework**

A comprehensive plan to deal with organised crime and gangs requires inter-agency and multipartner involvement. Merging therapeutic and rehabilitative treatments with criminal justice interventions appears to be a necessary, albeit costly, condition to help organised-crime group members desist from crime, and could include formal and informal social control mechanisms and involve the state, third parties and, whenever possible, family members. There is a need for three major pillars to support this inter-
agency framework: a case manager, an academic or research institution, and a field manager. First, a case manager can bring everything together in order to best support the offender in changing his or her behaviour. This person needs direct access to a range of agencies best equipped to provide bespoke assistance, for example in relation to housing, drug treatment, debt management or anger issues. The case manager should be the direct point of contact for the offender within this holistic framework.

Second, in order to assess the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the interventions – especially given the comparison between state-managed case workers and volunteer case workers – an academic or research institution should be involved. It is vital to invite the researcher to be involved in the early stages of planning the experiment. In addition to providing expertise in the area of data collection and control over treatment administration, the researcher can also conduct the random assignment. This implies that a data-sharing agreement is required, because the researcher will need access to data relating to offenders and organised groups, and updates regarding the treatments.

Third, a field manager can supervise the integrity of treatment delivery, which is essential to the success of a large-scale project of this nature.\textsuperscript{11} It is key that the research manager has the capacity to access sensitive data and preferably have professional ‘know-how’ of the parties involved in Prevent, and of the systems in place. Someone well versed in evidence-based policing, experimental research and network analysis would be able to undertake this management role.\textsuperscript{12}

**Units of Analysis and Eligibility**

The primary applied dataset for serious and organised crime in England and Wales is the National Organised Crime Group Mapping (OCGM) Tracker. The OCGM is continuously updated by all police forces, the National Crime Agency and Her Majesty’s Revenue & Customs (HMRC). It contains a significant amount of information on individuals and groups believed to be actively involved in organised crime, and each are classified according to the risk they pose. The resulting dataset gives the most accurate available picture of the nature and extent of serious organised crime in the UK.

A major concern around the Tracker is its external validity. Individuals placed on the Tracker are on the list ‘for life’, as the police are reluctant to take risks by removing possible offenders. This creates a major false-positive problem, especially if some offenders desist from crime or move to other jurisdictions. The Tracker must be cleaned up before the experiment is conducted. Local police units and the central investigation department must work closely, preferably overseen by the research manager, in order to review the Tracker and bring it up to speed with contemporary updates.
After cleaning up the dataset, it is necessary to measure the risk posed by each offender using advanced statistics, most likely random forest regression forecasting. These models are particularly sensitive to Big Data and look at all possible combinations of the variables collected on each offender. They were found to be instructive in earlier risk assessment and forecasting research and should be considered in the area of organised-crime group offenders as well.\textsuperscript{13}

Presuming the tracker is clean, a cohort of organised-crime group members should be selected as the sampling frame; the more homogeneous the sample, the better. For instance, a study that focuses on what are commonly referred to as low-risk organised-crime group offenders would be a good place to start, because more serious offenders who pose substantial risk are likely be targeted via the Pursue strand of the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy and therefore would be susceptible to ‘cross treatment contamination’.\textsuperscript{14} While some contamination can be expected in field experiments, the more eminent the threat the less likely that the researcher is able to single out the expected effect of the treatment under investigation. Groups deemed by their OCGM grading to be operating at the lowest mapped risk level within serious and organised crime also provide the greatest opportunity for a successful delivery of the Prevent strategic objectives by raising awareness, deterring further criminal activity and preventing individuals from being drawn into different criminal enterprises.

Note that while there may be other variables affecting the treatment outcomes, their average effect should be roughly the same on the treatment group and the control group of the experiment, given the random allocation of cases described earlier. The four conditions – three treatments and control\textsuperscript{15} – are comparable as in ‘like with like’, to the extent that in all groups some other existing interventions or characteristics can be in place for some offenders, and the effect of these existing interventions is evenly distributed between the four arms of the experiment. When the sample size is sufficient, the interfering effect of other factors is likely to be balanced.

Finally, it is worth investigating the treatment effect on the entire organised-crime group networks. Treatments do not exist in a vacuum in real-life conditions, and there is likely to be a ‘network effect’ or ‘vicarious effect’ when the interventions are applied. After all, organised-crime group members or soon-to-be members interact with one another, and it is unlikely that a ‘meaningful’ visit by a case worker will go unnoticed by the other members of the organisation. These meetings will have some effect on the no-treatment members as well, which can potentially affect their involvement in crime and delinquency. In order to measure this effect, network analysis is required, not only to establish who is an active member of which group, but also to track a possible network effect on these other members. This analysis requires
meticulous tracing of the groups and their members, and timely updating of the OCGM Tracker.

**Random Assignment into Treatment and Control Groups**

It is important that a random assignment sequence is developed by a researcher, in which each eligible offender has an equal chance of being included in Treatment A, Treatment B, Treatment C or control conditions. The procedure can easily be performed with common statistics software, which in this experiment would be likely to include pseudo-random allocation. The total number of cases would be evenly distributed in all groups (for example, if there are 8,000 offenders than 2,000 offenders will be included in each of the four groups). As previously noted, a block-random assignment procedure is a better fit, in which the blocking criterion is the risk posed by the offenders, informed by the random forest models described earlier. The models can determine the blocks, and then within each of the blocks the random allocation of cases would be made. Note that the random allocation must be conducted by a research entity that is not the treatment provider, in order to increase the perceived integrity of the study and to refute potential allegations of selection bias.

**Offender Management**

*Formal (Police-led) Face-to-Face Treatment*

Prevent activity within policing currently takes place in various guises, such as local offender management and partnership work with charities. This offender management scheme is not that dissimilar from the now-popular integrated offender management programmes that exist countrywide, in which a deterrent approach and a rehabilitative approach are assigned simultaneously via a police officer case manager. This type of intervention essentially implies that a police officer manages organised-crime group members by providing two historically clashing interventions. On the one hand there is a Sword of Damocles deterrent, whereby any misbehaviour is dealt with by a traditional criminal justice intervention such as arrest, caution or prosecution. This is a classic police role. On the other hand, the officer also provides fast-tracking for the offender to seek rehabilitative interventions, such as drug treatment, counselling, housing support or any pathway which may help the offender to desist from crime. The intervention is likely to be provided by a third party.

*Operationalisation:* The tactics used to engage with offenders should be determined individually. While the literature does point out clear pathways of desistance – such as housing support, drugs and alcohol treatment, debt or anger management – each offender is exposed to only one or a few of the ‘blockers’ that are recognised precursors to or facilitators of recidivism. Therefore, case managers from within the Prevent strand are likely to
tailor a bespoke preventative suit for each offender. Notwithstanding this individualistic approach, consistent elements of the treatment still exist. First, all organised-crime group members that are part of the Prevent treatment should have a case manager assigned to them, and there must be face-to-face engagement between the case manager and the offender. The meetings, which must be meticulously recorded, should include at least an initial detailed home visit of approximately one hour and at least quarterly follow-up home visits to reinforce the message. These meetings are crucial because they include a detailed explanation to the offender about the Prevent intentions and highlight Serious and Organised Crime Unit activity. The message must be swift and clear: the offender is notified that while he or she is now actively being watched with an intention to intervene strongly where necessary, there is also a fair balance with providing support to help in the desist process. When possible, family members should be involved in the engagement, given their known role in aiding people to desist.

**Informal (Volunteer-led) Face-to-Face Intervention**
The UK government is under pressure to cut back on expenditure by up to 25 per cent in England and Wales, during this period of austerity. Therefore, it is likely that any intervention that reduces the costs but achieves similar (or better) results would be preferred over the rather costly integrated offender management model described above. Should a reputable charity that can deal with organised-crime group members and potentially reduce their involvement in serious crime be able to provide similar results, there will likely be an organisational and institutional appetite to outsource prevention. Equally importantly, it may be that the volunteer sector can provide more effective results. These are fundamentally empirical questions that can be answered through experimentation.

**Operationalisation:** Unlike the police case managers who must also perform a deterrence role, private-sector case managers can focus on rehabilitative assistance along with informal social control deterrence. Volunteer case workers cannot make an arrest in a case of non-compliance with the treatment plan, although they are in a position to alert the police to the misconduct. In practice, such treatment is envisaged to include close supervision and guidance in the form of mentoring. Volunteer treatment providers are often ex-convicts or experienced and retired officers who have been involved historically, in some capacity, with organised crime and are therefore able to identify with the offender. Thus, one-on-one meetings, direct supervision and the capacity to fast-track state-sponsored aid characterise this arm of the experiment.

**Formal (Police-led) Virtual Treatment**
Virtual intervention is similar to the first police-led intervention, except no communications with the offender are conducted face to face, beyond one
initial contact. The purpose of this treatment is to ascertain whether similar or better results can be achieved through social media – via text messages, Facebook, Twitter or any other electronic means. The engagement is much cheaper, as mass messages can be sent to individuals on the basis of nudges; the theory behind this is that young people respond to these social-media outlets better than to face-to-face intervention. As importantly, deterrent messages and offers to provide rehabilitation support can potentially be delivered as efficiently through these channels.

**Operationalisation:** Following an initial face-to-face meeting in order to establish rapport, like that described earlier, contact information over the various social-media platforms is captured by the case manager. Then periodic messages are sent to participants over the course of the twelve-month trial bearing both deterrent and persuasive nudges in an attempt to inform them of the various ways the police can prevent their entry into organised crime.

**Control Group**
This comparison group should not be targeted with any of the aforementioned treatments. No directed engagement from the Serious Organised Crime Unit or the selected charity should be provided. However, some control participants will potentially go through treatments of some sorts, including arrest, drug treatment, therapy or assistance from family members and friends. This should be expected, as field experiments do not normally include clean no-treatment groups, as succinctly laid out by the Chief Scientific Adviser to the Home Office:¹⁸

Attributing impact to a particular intervention or policy is the key challenge for any intervention. In the Prevent space this is especially problematic due to the difficulties with establishing control groups, because of the risk in doing so and the small numbers in the population.

**Tracking the Application of Treatments and Control Conditions**
One of the biggest problems in applied criminal justice research is the ability to tell what resources are applied, when, where and with what dosage. The problem of dosage, which appears heavily in other evidence-based professions such as health, engineering or psychology, is largely missing from law-enforcement scholastic work.¹⁹ In law enforcement, we still do not know how much is not enough and how much is too much; and this is the case for the management of prolific or dangerous offenders, too. Enhancing our knowledge base in this area requires meticulous, timely record-keeping. This should be achieved with the aid of technology and third-party observers, rather than relying on the treatment providers, who have a vested interest in being ‘creative’, for various reasons. This is why a research manager is of the utmost importance to any successful research project. Unbiased measures of the application of treatments in experimental and control conditions
are not a requirement for the science of policing and social control theory; however, if we wish to move to a cost–benefit, evidence-based position on the particular treatment under investigation, a research manager has a crucial role in achieving this standard of research.

In this experiment, meticulous record-keeping is essential, given the massive policy implications of the study. All arms must at least measure the following five families of variables:

- The number of personal meetings each case manager has with each offender, including time, date, length, place, who was present (for example, family and friends) and meeting outcomes, using quantifiable measures
- The number of visits or interactions of any sort (including virtual and face to face) with ‘pathway providers’ such as housing support officers, drug-treatment officers, psychological therapists or staff from any other form of therapeutic condition. Any research project that seeks to investigate rehabilitation programmes is likely to pay particular attention to whether or not offenders have made it to meetings and what their dosage is
- Communications made to the offenders through virtual means, including the number of contacts, and the number of times the participant has entered the website or account, or used Twitter and so on, and for how long
- Any arrests, summons, formal and informal cautions, drug tests and so on that the offender has accumulated during the experiment and in the follow-up period, with dates, hours and other information that appears in these outputs systematically recorded
- Any descriptive but rich account of who the treatment providers are, such as their gender, age, professional background, experience and so on, becomes important information when assessing the generalisability of the outcomes and deciphering the mechanisms of the causal link between the treatment(s) and the outcome(s).

**Measuring Outcomes**

A multitude of outcomes can be used to measure an outcome, but we should focus on three. Importantly, there is also a need to collect these variables at baseline in order to control for these measures before implementing the treatments.

The first and perhaps most important family of outcome variables are criminal justice recidivism outcomes – arrests, convictions, cautions, prosecutions, charges, intelligence reports and so on. These outcomes are considered to be objective, independent of the experiment and the treatment under investigation, and crucially are more likely to be revered
by policy-makers than ‘softer’, self-reported, survey-based results. Arrests are normally considered more highly than other measures, as they are ‘unfiltered’, compared with outcomes that require legal or pseudo-legal decisions. It is crucial to observe these official outcomes, while separating arrests from new criminal events and violations of treatment conditions. It is also important to translate the crude measures of arrests into a severity or crime harm index, which takes into account variations in risk levels. This moves away from a situation where offenders with invariably different criminal behaviour are measured as the same, as the nominal measurement of crime counts cannot decipher risk and dangerousness.

The second type of outcomes is the same as the first category of official statistics ‘against’ the offenders in the treatment and control conditions, but expanded to the entire organised-crime group. This outcome will be useful when assessing the vicarious deterrence effect described earlier, whereby an intervention also has an effect on an offender who is not part of the experiment, but has been affected by the activities taken in relation to an associate. In order to measure this effect, the social network of the offenders concerned must be clear to the research team, including ‘proven’ links between the ‘nodes’ of the complex network.

Finally, more ‘positive’ outcomes should be measured as well. These are somewhat ignored in policing research, but can add important value to assigning ‘success’ or ‘failure’ to different programmes. For example, arrests records are often binary in nature and do not tell us much about changes in perceptions and the take-up of treatments, and these are of particular interest.

Analysis Plan

Given the relative complexity of what constitutes a meaningful analytical plan for this or similar experiments, this topic will only be discussed broadly and the professional literature should be consulted. First, the analysis must incorporate effect size analyses, which go beyond statistical significance testing. While the latter are in a position to answer whether any result was found through chance (are ‘reliable’), the former provide a measure of the magnitude of any difference between the groups. In many ways, effect size analyses provide a more meaningful result, because the focus is placed on the impact of any effect, rather than on the replicability of the finding in similar settings of future research.

Second, it is necessary to have a sufficient sample size. Clearly, to run any analysis on a limited sample is to jeopardise the generalisability of the findings: first, small samples are more susceptible to the effect of extreme cases (outliers); second, small studies also pose a problem when locating small effects. Imagine a study with a small number of organised-crime group offenders; if the intervention is very strong and can carry substantial, life-
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changing implications for the offender, a small sample would be adequate. This would be the case for a study on deporting offenders to other countries, or on placing them under individual, direct supervision with the constant, physical presence of a mentor. Clearly, these interventions are life-changing and there is no need to have more than a handful of cases to prove a concept. However, these interventions are rare, costly and unlikely to be used for low–medium-risk offenders. On the other hand, a hypothetical study such as the one laid out here is likely to have a small-to-medium effect on low–medium risk offenders. It would therefore require a larger pool of offenders for analysis; the treatment will ‘work’ on some offenders and it will not ‘work’ on others, but on average it is expected that the treatment works ‘better’ than control conditions. Striking the right balance between sample size and treatment capacity, in order to deliver an evenly spread and ‘meaningful’ Prevent intervention, is complex, requiring advanced analyses on the statistical power of the test and its design.

Finally, in order to define the ‘ripple effect’ of the intervention – as described above – it is necessary to conduct a network analysis between the group members. Careful planning and information is needed for this analysis, but it may prove very fruitful: since group members interact with one another, there should be a vicarious deterrence treatment effect – without applying any treatment to other members of the group. In order to show this, social-network analysis is required,\textsuperscript{23} which would assess the ‘nodes’ (offenders) and how they are associated with other offenders (links). The strength of the links requires analysis of how ‘much’ of an association there is between the different nodes. This should be based on intelligence records, since these data are more likely to appear in these databases than in official crime statistics (for example, co-arrests).

Concluding Remarks

The ‘cookbook’ presented above is by no means exhaustive and each experimental project should be carefully designed to meet the bespoke characteristics of the environment in which the study is conducted. However, some key attributes are likely to emerge in any measurement of Prevent interventions into organised criminal groups. For instance, reliable and accurate data are of paramount significance, as without this vital component the integrity and validity of the study would be highly suspect. Researchers and practitioners alike should also be incredibly sensitive to the differences between observational (correlational) versus causal studies (experiments), and place a great deal more emphasis on the latter in determining the value of the findings for policy purposes. Whether or not a study is able to rule out alternative explanations from the assessed intervention is critical if we are keen to start using evidence-based approaches in common practice. The dismantling of criminal networks and serious- and organised-crime groups, in particular, should be no exception.
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Notes


Discussion Groups

During the afternoon, the conference broke up into focused discussion groups, the outcomes of which are presented over the following pages.

Discussions were without attribution. The information presented here seeks to represent the discussions that took place; there is not always robust academic referencing to support the views offered, but it has been assumed that if comments made by individual delegates were not credible, they would have been rejected by the other members of that group during the discussions. Views presented are therefore assumed to be broadly supported by the majority of those present.

There was, inevitably, some crossover of subject matter and topic discussion between the groups, and where this occurred, comments have been amalgamated under one heading to avoid repetition.
Discussion Group 1: What is, or Should be, Considered ‘Organised Crime’?

Chair: Calum Jeffray

Key issues for discussion:

- Political and legal definitions of organised crime are becoming increasingly broad – how does this impact on those developing and enforcing policy?
- Should we identify specific crimes to create a clear and unambiguous definition, or identify key characteristics to enable the definition to encompass future organised-crime threats we have not yet anticipated?
- What are the implications with regard to data – what would we need to collect in order to understand levels of organised crime or to detect the emergence of a new threat?

The group comprised individuals from law enforcement, academia and agencies who are confronted with the effects of organised crime. The focus of the discussion was whether a clear and unambiguous definition of organised crime is needed, and if so what form it should take.

HM Government’s Serious Organised Crime Strategy 2013

Discussion initially focused on HM Government’s Serious and Organised Crime Strategy. Although there is no definition of organised crime in UK law, the strategy outlines the criminality it is intended to combat (see Box 1).

Box 1: HM Government’s Serious and Organised Crime Strategy 2013, paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6

For the purposes of this strategy, organised crime is serious crime planned, coordinated and conducted by people working together on a continuing basis. Their motivation is often, but not always, financial gain.

Organised crime is characterised by violence or the threat of violence and by the use of bribery and corruption: organised criminals very often depend on the assistance of corrupt, complicit or negligent professionals, notably lawyers, accountants and bankers. Organised crime also uses sophisticated technology to conduct operations, maintain security and evade justice.

The group discussed whether this could offer a foundation for a definition which would be of practical use for policy-makers, law enforcement or those
performing research. The consensus among the group was that the resulting definition would be too broad and unmanageable. It was noted that in its current form it would allow a large proportion of criminality to be considered ‘organised’. The threshold for inclusion was considered to be too low, which would present substantial difficulties for any researcher attempting to establish an evidence base.

As a comparator, the UK legal definition for terrorism was discussed, and it was agreed that it offered a strong example. It was particularly noted that the definition has accommodated an evolving threat, therefore offering an appropriate example for defining the adaptive nature of organised crime.

**Impact and Importance**
The group agreed that a clear and unambiguous definition was a fundamental requirement for rigorous research, which can inform policy or police operations. The focus of the conference was the measurement of impact against organised crime, and it was highlighted that this is not possible without an agreed definition of what constitutes the criminality being tackled.

It was suggested, however, that even if this obstacle were to be overcome, it would remain too difficult to gather and analyse real-time data, limiting the operational impact. It was acknowledged that while the methodology has yet to be tested and refined in relation to organised crime, Big Data analytics has made such analysis possible. The principal obstacle is therefore not capability but access to data; substantial cultural and procedural issues exist which can limit access to organised-crime data and intelligence. As an alternative, it was highlighted that Big Data analytics equally provides the means to use multiple data sources, which would enable researchers to look to sources beyond law enforcement; once again, a clear definition is crucial to underpin any such work.

It was additionally noted that a definition is important for policy-makers and practitioners, as it facilitates the prioritisation of threats and the allocation of resources. Without a clear definition, it can be more difficult to determine who is primarily responsible for tackling an issue – the example discussed was money laundering, which arguably fails to receive due attention.

**Method of Definition**
It was agreed that any definition should be codified in legislation, establishing clear boundaries for organised-crime activity in a similar manner to terrorism legislation. While it was accepted that a comprehensive list of relevant offences would be useful, the obstacles to establishing such an inventory were deemed too substantial. There are certain offences that would fall into a grey area, treated as organised criminality under some
circumstances but not others. The list would also require frequent revision so that it continued to reflect the evolving threat of organised crime.

The group therefore instead focused on characteristics rather than specific activities. It deemed the role of a group or network conducting the criminality an essential element of the definition, and the serious nature of the activity was also important. However, the group considered that many of the characteristics of organised crime which are usually cited were problematic; the motivation of ‘financial gain’ does not always apply, while even the term ‘organised’ in relation to crime can be misleading, as the activity can have a chaotic nature.

**Emerging Threats**

Despite such challenges, it was noted that a definition based on characteristics would best facilitate the identification of emerging forms of organised criminality. Establishing clearly identified key traits of organised crime would enable data to be collected where they were met, in part or in whole, by criminal activity. Further analysis could then determine whether the threshold for organised crime has been met – namely, whether the criminality exhibits a sufficient number of key characteristics. Spatial and statistical analysis could add further value, indicating where resources were most needed to address the emerging threat.

**Suggested Research Topics**

- Establish defining characteristics of organised crime, using the definition of terrorism codified in UK legislation as a guide
- Determine how data collected in relation to these individual key characteristics can be used to identify emerging forms of organised criminality.
Discussion Group 2: How Should We Evaluate the Impact of Policies Against Serious and Organised Crime?

Chair: Sasha Jesperson

Key issues for discussion:

- How should we measure ‘disruption’ to determine the success of interventions and overall policy?
- Evaluation requires objective evidence, and a scale against which progress can be measured. What are the ideal metrics and what data would we need to collect?
- Are all metrics equally relevant to different law-enforcement agencies, government departments and the local community?
- Are all metrics equally relevant in relation to all types of organised crime?

This session focused on the theme of measuring effectiveness and performance. The group very quickly reached a consensus that care needed to be taken to distinguish these two elements; although often discussed together, they are different concepts. Performance measures how well a task has been completed while effectiveness considers whether the task had the desired impact. It is the latter which is of principal interest.

Fundamental Considerations
Organisations are traditionally accused of ‘marking their own homework’; it is therefore necessary to dispel the scepticism surrounding this field. It was agreed that the subjective elements of current impact assessments need to be reduced or removed where possible. An objective measure would allow tactics to be compared directly to establish which is a more effective use of resources; this is much more difficult with a subjective assessment. At present, there is an argument that the stated effect of policies is largely anecdotal.

Although the mathematics and algorithms behind datasets may be complex, the results and the logic underlying them need to remain as simple as possible. If practitioners and policy-makers cannot quickly grasp what the figures represent and at least the principle on which they have been reached, there is a danger that they will not be trusted. Experience within law enforcement shows that credibility is key: crime analysis was given little credence when introduced, with many experienced officers preferring to trust their instincts rather than any study of crime. It is clear that research is needed in this area and could have significant value, but if it is not accepted
by practitioners then it will have no impact and existing methodology will continue to be used.

The group then discussed the issues that any researcher would need to address at the outset. First, it is necessary to define what organised crime is before attempting to measure the impact of attempts to disrupt it. The group did not consider this issue in any greater detail as its members were aware that another discussion group had been asked to focus on this question; however, it was agreed that this was a crucial element in any measurement methodology. Second, any research design must establish causation, not just correlation. Third, the group agreed that individual measurement techniques may be required for specific crime types. For example, it would be difficult to establish a single quantitative metric which could measure impact against an organised fraud scam and a child exploitation ring. However, although different metrics may be required for types of organised crime, within each crime type there would be consistency to allow the impact and relative cost–benefit ratio of disruption tactics to be compared.

The example offered was 27,000 investigative hours, which resulted in four individuals being sentenced to six years’ imprisonment. Was this an efficient use of resources? Did it substantially disrupt organised criminality? An objective measurement of the disruptive impact which could be directly compared to other methodologies would inform future resource allocation.

It also needs to be remembered that disrupting organised crime does not only fall to law enforcement; wherever possible, the use of a consistent metric within crime types should be maintained for each active agency. It is important not only for individual agencies to know which of their tactics is the most efficient, but also for government to know who can have the greatest impact. Within each crime type it is vital that impact can be measured objectively and cost–benefit ratios compared, regardless of which agency is taking disruptive action.

The group also discussed possible data sources, noting that other agencies such as health and education may also be able to provide useful data. This should be explored.

The Economics of Disrupting Organised Crime
It was agreed that any methodology would seek to answer two fundamental questions: how effective is this method in disrupting organised crime, and – considering the resources it requires and the impact it has achieved – is it worth it? The examples discussed related to the financing of organised crime – the underlying principle being that if you deprive criminals of financial backing, you will frustrate them operationally and disrupt their activity. There are two prominent means of achieving this: preventing or disrupting money
Serious and Organised Crime

Laundering, and recovering the proceeds of crime. First, the current system to prevent or disrupt money laundering is based on ensuring banks and other financial institutions comply with strict regulations; it is cumbersome and very expensive. We do not currently know whether such a costly endeavour is having a sufficient impact on organised crime. Second, substantial resources are required to recover the proceeds of crime, but we cannot currently state with confidence whether this is an efficient use of assets. It may be that an alternative means of disrupting organised crime has a far greater impact for an equivalent, or lower, outlay.

It was suggested that the limitations in our understanding extend further, to the role of organised crime within the UK economy. The Office for National Statistics now includes activity such as prostitution and illegal drug use in calculations of UK gross domestic product, but the role of such criminality within the economy remains opaque. Any action to disrupt may therefore have further, as yet unknown, consequences.

Although financial gain is often the principal motivation for organised crime, it was noted that that profits are not always monetary; they can also be social, reputational or ideological. In identifying metrics to measure disruptive impact, we should therefore be careful not to focus only on the financial.

Understanding Organised-Crime Networks

It was suggested that the most consistent element of organised crime, the underlying networks, may be an appropriate focus for measuring impact – how has the network been affected by disruptive action? This may produce a consistent metric for use across multiple crime types. It would require two stages: first an initial analysis of the network, then a secondary examination following intervention. In considering potential data for such analysis, it was noted that there is some promising research to be pursued in relation to Big Data analytics. It offers substantial potential for combining multiple sources of information to produce more complete network analysis, mapping relationships through diverse sources such as mobile-phone data and financial transactions.

The importance of using social-network analysis to assess impact against the wider group was highlighted in an earlier paper, but it is also important as a means of assessing displacement. The impact in reducing organised crime is diminished if the activity of individuals within a network is simply displaced from one crime type to another. Research into the versatility of organised-crime groups would also be useful in this regard.
Suggested Research Topics

- Establish objective metrics for comparing different disruptive techniques within a specific crime type. A basket of measures is likely to be needed across organised crime; however, it may be possible to identify single metrics to assess impact against specific crimes.
- Determine whether a single metric for impact can be established through focusing on the networks underlying organised crime. Big Data analytics and social-network analysis may assist.
- Assess the effectiveness of the financial-services industry’s current compliance system in disrupting money laundering.
- Assess the effectiveness of current methods in seizing the proceeds of crime. This is an expensive activity that is pursued by all police forces. It may be that other forms of disrupting organised crime have a greater impact or make more efficient use of resources.
- Find out how versatile organised-crime groups are. We need to measure the extent of displacement within any impact assessment, as a tactic or policy that only alters the criminality rather than truly disrupting it is of more limited value.
Discussion Group 3: Supporting Future Operations with Directed Research

Chair: Clare Ellis

Rapporteur: Philippa Morrell

Key issues for discussion:

• What information would be of greatest value to law-enforcement agencies for the purposes of aiding policy formulation, strategic planning and operational execution?
• How might predictive modelling or other quantitative methods be employed to facilitate these activities and help to direct resource allocation?
• What would law-enforcement practitioners identify as the highest priorities for the development of these analytical tools and techniques?

The discussion group brought individuals from academia together with law-enforcement practitioners to explore the ways in which directed research could support policy formation and strategic planning for future operations. The remit of the group was to look beyond measuring the impact of disruptive action. Such research is vital in providing a strong evidence base to indicate which tactics will be effective in specific situations. However, the question posed to this group was whether techniques such as predictive modelling could offer further guidance, indicating which areas are vulnerable to organised criminality so that resources may be targeted efficiently.

Understanding Organised Crime

The group began by considering what areas of research would be of most use to law enforcement and policy-makers in relation to organised crime. It was suggested that an understanding of the motivation and methodology of organised-crime groups would be most valuable for those in law enforcement when guiding the allocation of resources. The ‘Hollywood’ picture of a ‘Big Boss’ controlling a group is not the reality; groups are more accurately described as loosely organised networks. Trying to target the most senior figures is therefore not cost-effective as they frequently change and can be replaced, but by understanding their motivations and methodologies it would be possible instead to identify vulnerabilities for targeted activity.

However, the question was raised whether we need extensive research to achieve such understanding. It was suggested that there already exists a substantial body of evidence, some the result of research by the academic community, but much of it conducted by the Home Office. After further
discussion it was recommended that meta-analysis could be undertaken to assess where gaps remain and therefore target further academic work.

**Potentials for Predictive Modelling**

The group turned to the question of predictive modelling: would the application of such techniques produce potentially valuable results? It was suggested that being able to model organised-crime groups over time would be a very useful tool to direct scarce resources.

The group considered whether sufficient data could be gathered to enable such analysis. It was agreed that existing data needed to be more accessible. A note of caution was expressed with regard to reliance on the data held by law enforcement; as raised in previous papers, it is perhaps a greater reflection of police activity than the underlying criminality. It was noted that there were numerous other sources of information which could be harnessed. Moreover, the development of Big Data analytics and the extensive computing power now available permit multiple data sources to be combined in innovative ways. This could potentially allow the limitations in individual datasets to be overcome.

It was suggested that the application of such techniques could first be investigated by examining a specific facet of organised crime, such as the smuggling of counterfeit goods, tobacco or alcohol. This would allow modelling techniques to be tested before applying them to broader questions such as the level of organised crime within a defined geographic area.

With regard to such broader questions, it was suggested that understanding the scale of the criminal economy, its dynamics and how it operates would be very useful as a foundation for predicting its development. The information required for such analysis was unlikely to be held by law enforcement. Much of it would need to be specifically gathered as primary research by the academic community or a research institute, though it was noted that the type of information obtained would not necessarily produce data that could support the quantitative analysis of predictive modelling; it may largely be of a qualitative nature.

A further issue discussed was the acceptance of crime, or the support for specific forms of criminal activity. It was observed that in some communities the criminal economy offered services that the community desired, for example the supply of illicit cigarettes or counterfeit clothing; in other words, there is an element of supply and demand which should not be overlooked. In order to model criminal economies, it was also deemed necessary to understand how these chaotic groups of individuals come together. It was noted again that there are existing data which may be employed. For
example, one study gathered information from interviews with imprisoned drug traffickers where techniques for recruitment and distribution had been explained in detail.

The group discussed alternatives such as the measurement of harm within a community. Establishing a definition for harm had proven to be extremely difficult for earlier organisations. What were the metrics of harm? Among those previously examined are the economic losses, levels of violence and other measures of impact on a community. From a tactical or operational aspect these are difficult to measure accurately.

The group therefore proposed that vulnerabilities could be the focus of analysis, considering economies, industries or even people. The research would consider how and where these different groups are vulnerable to infiltration by organised crime. This would facilitate predictive modelling to assess, for example, which industries were likely to become vulnerable to attack, enabling resources to be targeted.

Concluding Discussions
The group considered that a cultural change is required if policy is to become research-driven and informed by a strong evidence base. This needs to originate from government. Currently, there are too many silos where data or research exist but are not shared. The UK has not yet emulated European colleagues by bringing about a closer relationship between academia and law enforcement, so opportunities are being missed.

Suggested Research Topics

- Undertake meta-analysis of existing organised-crime research to identify where gaps in the literature remain
- Investigate the use of Big Data analytics to combine multiple datasets. In a field where complete data are difficult to obtain, this may allow limitations to be overcome and offer valuable insights
- Explore the application of predictive modelling to a specific aspect of organised crime, for example, illicit trades such as counterfeit products, illicit tobacco or alcohol
- Investigate the vulnerabilities of specific industries in order to provide a basis for predictive modelling.
DISRUPTING ORGANISED CRIME
Developing the Evidence Base to Understand Effective Action
Edited by Clare Ellis

Foreword
Bryan Edwards

Introduction
Clare Ellis

Keynote Address: Priorities in a Period of Austerity
Mick Creedon

I. Organised Crime as a Community of Practice
Dick Hobbs

II. The National Crime Agency: From Strategy to Operation
Chris Todd

III. Effective and Efficient Disruption: Measuring the Impact of Specific Tactics
Colin Stott

IV. Recognising the Range of Disruption: An HMRC Case Study in Tackling Missing Trader Intra-Community Fraud
Joanne Cheetham

V. A Global Issue with a Local Footprint: Measuring Harm to Direct Resources
Michael Skidmore

VI. Targeting Disruption: How Can Geographic Modelling Improve Our Understanding of Drivers in Serious Organised Crime?
Robert Haining

VII. Disrupting Organised-Crime Networks: An Evidence-Based Approach to Establishing Effective Interventions
Barak Ariel

Discussion Groups
What is, or Should be, Considered ‘Organised Crime’?
How Should We Evaluate the Impact of Policies against Serious Organised Crime?
Supporting Future Operations with Directed Research

Proceedings of the Conference ‘Disrupting Organised Crime: Developing the Evidence Base to Understand Effective Action’

Edited by Clare Ellis