

What is Organized Crime?

Definitions of Organized Crime

(collected by Klaus von Lampe)

This is a collection of some 180 definitions of organized crime. Apart from these attempts to answer the question 'What is organized crime?' there are also a couple of comments on the problem of how to define organized crime. Not included are definitions of the term "organized crime group" that some implicitly treat as synonymous with the term "organized crime" (see e.g. the UN [Convention](#) against Transnational Organized Crime).

If you have come across a definition of organized crime that is not yet listed below, [please let me know](#). (Thanks to those who have already done so!)

If you are using this collection for writing a paper, a book etc., please let your readers know!

Suggested citation:

Klaus von Lampe, [Definitions of Organized Crime](#), www.organized-crime.de/organizedcrimedefinitions.htm - for the publication date see the date at <http://www.organized-crime.de/index.html>.

This webpage could previously be found at <http://people.freenet.de/kvlampe/OCDEF1.htm> and <http://www.organized-crime.de/OCDEF1.htm>.

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Abadinsky, Howard

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Organized crime is a nonideological enterprise involving a number of persons in close social interaction, organized on a hierarchical basis, with at least three levels/ranks, for the purpose of securing profit and power by engaging in illegal and legal activities. Positions in the hierarchy and positions involving functional specialization may be assigned on the basis of kinship or friendship, or rationally assigned according to skill. The positions are not dependent on the individuals occupying them at any particular time. Permanency is assumed by the members who strive to keep the enterprise integral and active in pursuit of its goals. It eschews competition and strives for monopoly on an industry or territorial basis. There is a willingness to use violence and/or bribery to achieve ends or to maintain discipline. Membership is restricted, although nonmembers may be involved on a contingency basis. There are explicit rules, oral or written, which are enforced by sanctions that include murder. (Abadinsky, 1990: 6)

Although there is no generally accepted definition of organized crime - indeed, the federal Organized Crime Control Act of 1970 fails to define organized crime (...) - a number of attributes have been identified by law enforcement agencies and researchers as indicative of the phenomenon. Offering these attributes has a practical dimension: the attributes provide a basis for determining if a particular group of criminals constitutes organized crime and, therefore, needs to be approached in a way different from the way one would approach terrorists or groups of conventional criminals. Organized crime:

1. Has no political goals
 2. Is hierarchical
 3. Has a limited or exclusive membership
 4. Constitutes a unique subculture
 5. Perpetuates itself
 6. Exhibits a willingness to use illegal violence
 7. Is monopolistic
 8. Is governed by explicit rules and regulations
- (Abadinsky, 2010: 3)

Albanese, Jay S.

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As Table 1-1 indicates, there is great consensus in the literature that organized crime functions as a continuing enterprise that rationally works to make a profit through illicit activities, and that it insures its existence through the use of threats or force and through corruption of public officials to maintain a degree of immunity from law enforcement. There also appears to be some consensus that organized crime tends to be restricted to those goods and services that are in great public demand, but happen to be illegal. (...)

As a result, it appears that a definition of organized crime, based on a consensus of writers of the last 15 years, would read as follows:

Organized crime is a continuing criminal enterprise that rationally works to profit from illicit activities that are in great public demand. Its continuing existence is maintained through the use of force, threats, and/or the corruption of public officials. (...)

(...) perhaps organized crime does not exist as an ideal type, but rather as a "degree" of criminal activity or as a point on the "spectrum of legitimacy". (Albanese, 1989: 4-5)

It appears that a definition of organized crime, based on a consensus of writers over the course of the past three decades, would read as follows: Organized crime is a continuing criminal enterprise that rationally works to profit from illicit activities; its continuing existence is maintained through the use of force, threats, monopoly control, and/or the corruption of public officials. (Albanese, 2000: 411)

Albini, Joseph L.

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It appears that the most primary distinguishing component of organized crime is found within the term itself, mainly, organization.

...Interaction is a key concept here: a mere aggregation of individuals performing a criminal act in the presence of one another would not, in itself, constitute an organized act.

Organization, then, is the basic distinguishing element between organized and other types of crime. (Albini, 1971: 35)

In a very broad sense, then, we can define organized crime as any criminal activity involving two or more individuals, specialized or nonspecialized, encompassing some form of social structure, with some form of leadership, utilizing certain modes of operation, in which the ultimate purpose

of the organization is found in the enterprises of the particular group.

This definition permits us to view organized crime on a vast continuum allowing for freedom of analyzing and defining a (38) given particular criminal group as an entity in itself possessing a variety of characteristics, as opposed to a rigid classification based upon certain specific attributes. Viewed from this wide perspective there are many forms which organized crime can take, with variations, of course, to be found within each form. (Albini, 1971: 37-38)

Rather than developing more complex systems of categorization, we suggest that the description of a criminal group be based upon the nature of a specific criminal act which it has committed at any given time, not on the basis of its possession of certain traits. Criminal groups are dynamic entities, not static ones. As such, they change with the nature of the criminal acts they commit. Only when this is recognized can we begin to appreciate the basic similarities as well as differences between criminal groups. (Albini, 1971: 49)

American Heritage Dictionary

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organized crime n. 1. Widespread criminal activities, such as prostitution, interstate theft, or illegal gambling, that occur within centrally controlled formal structure. 2. The people and the groups involved in such criminal activities. (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition, Boston/New York/London 1992)

Andersen and Taylor

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Organized crime is crime committed by structured groups typically involving the provision of illegal goods and services to others. (Andersen & Taylor, 2007: 168)

Anderson, James F.

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Criminal structures that are involved in the management and coordination of providing illegal goods and services that are desired by many people in society. (Anderson, 2015: 250)

Beirne and Messerschmidt

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The core of syndicated crime (commonly referred to as "organized crime") is the provision of illegal goods and services in a society that displays a continued and considerable demand for such goods and services. Syndicated crime has developed a structure that makes it possible to provide such goods and services on a regular basis. This structure can best be understood as a variety of criminal syndicates - associations of individuals such as businesspeople, police, politicians, and criminals- formed to conduct specific illegal enterprises for the purpose of making profit. These enterprises include, for example, illegal drug distribution, illegal prostitution, and such other illegal activities as money laundering and labor racketeering. However, the structure of a syndicate depends on its specific illegal activity. Thus, although criminal syndicates are highly organized, a syndicate engaged in the distribution of illegal drugs, for example, is structured differently than one engaged in illegal prostitution. (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 2006: 160)

Berg, Bruce L.

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A highly structured, disciplined, self-perpetuating association of people, usually bound by ethnic ties, who conspire to commit crimes for profit and use fear and corruption to protect their activities from criminal prosecution. (Berg, 2008: 392)

Best and Luckenbill

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(T)his section will examine organized crime in a narrow sense, referring to activities by members of deviant formal organizations in pursuit of the organizations' goals. (Best and Luckenbill, 1994: 58)

Block, Alan A.

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(O)rganized crime is both a social system and a social world. The system is composed of relationships binding professional criminals, politicians, law enforcers, and various entrepreneurs. (Block, 1983: vii)

In the Introduction I suggested that organized crime is part of a social system in which reciprocal services are performed by criminals, their clients and politicians. And I would argue that the Seabury investigations provide ample proof of this system, of these relationships. At the same time, this definition, if strictly followed, seems to preclude many of the organized conspiracies uncovered by Seabury and his staff. The definition demands three distinct entities functioning for

some illicit purpose. What, then, do we call all those conspiracies composed of politicians and their upper-world patrons and clients? Are they sufficiently different from conspiracies in which all three elements are present? Part of the problem lies in the need to explain what are clearly organized crimes in which the personnel do not fulfill all the criteria. One way to handle this is to hold that criminal justice agents and politicians involved in criminal conspiracies are in reality professional criminals in which case they hold two roles. But for many reasons that seems to be confusing. Another even less satisfactory way is to hold that the Seabury examples are forms of organizational deviance. But this only obscures the system of informal power in which these conspiracies are endemic. Much the most economical solution is to treat or term conspiracies lacking one of the three elements as organized criminality. These conspiracies are not only the ones mentioned above, but also those in which one is hard pressed to find the client. One example should suffice: the vice racket in the Magistrates' Courts which had as racketeers: lawyers, bondsmen, police, professional informers, Magistrates' and so on. By no stretch of the imagination could the women framed be called clients. They were victims, pure and simple. And that racket was an expression of organized criminality. (Block, 1983: 57)

Block and Chambliss

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Thus we suggest that organized crime is a term that refers to those illegal activities connected with the management and coordination of racketeering (organized extortion) and the vices - particularly illegal drugs, illegal gambling, usury, and prostitution. (Block and Chambliss, 1981: 12)

BusinessDictionary.com

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Ongoing conspiratorial enterprise engaged in illicit activities as a means of generating income (as black money). Structured like a business into a pyramid shaped hierarchy, it freely employs violence and bribery to maintain its operations, threats of grievous retribution (including murder) to maintain internal and external control, and thuggery and contribution to election campaigns to buy political patronage for immunity from exposure and prosecution. Its activities include credit card fraud, gun running, illegal gambling, insurance fraud, kidnapping for ransom, narcotics trade, pornography, prostitution, racketeering, smuggling, vehicle theft, etc. With the arrival of international terrorism (with which it often has symbiotic relationship) and internet, organized crime now covers practically every nation and segment of society, and uses extremely sophisticated methods and credible front-organizations (such as charities and high-tech firms) in movement of large amounts of money and weaponry. Called by names such as cartel, mafia, syndicate, and triad, these establishments do not tolerate competition and constantly fight for monopolization in their specialty (such as drug trade) or geographical region. They are distinguished from the common (unorganized) crimes by characteristics such as (1) non-random nature of criminal behavior, (2) coordinated activities of hundreds or thousands of operatives, (3) diversification of activity (production, supply, retail), (4) regional, national, or transnational scale of operations, (5) large volume of turnover (running into billions of dollars in some cases), (6) pursuit of both profit and power, and (7) usually an identifiable leadership. ([BusinessDictionary.com](#), last accessed 17 October 2012)

California Control of Profits of OC Act

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"Organized Crime" means crime which is of a conspiratorial nature and that is either of an organized nature and which seeks to supply illegal goods and services such as narcotics, prostitution, loan sharking, gambling, and pornography, or that, through planning and coordination of individual efforts, seeks to conduct the illegal activities of arson for profit, hijacking, insurance fraud, smuggling, operating vehicle theft rings, or systematically encumbering the assets of a business for the purpose of defrauding creditors. (California Control of Profits of Organized Crime Act 1982, Penal Code Part 1, Title 7, 21; 186)

California Commission on Organized Crime (1948)

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The operations of two or more persons who combine to obtain financial advantages or special privileges by such unlawful means as terrorism, fraud, corruption of public officers or by a combination of such methods. (First Interim Report of the Special Crime Study Commission on Organized Crime, Sacramento: California Board of Corrections, 1 March 1948; quoted in Woodiwiss, 2001: 241)

California Commission on Organized Crime (1953)

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Organized crime... is a technique of violence, intimidation and corruption which, in default of effective law enforcement, can be successfully applied, by those sufficiently unscrupulous, to any business or industry which produces large profits. The underlying motive ... is always to secure and hold a monopoly in some activity which will produce large profits. Sometimes the basic business is illegal... Sometimes the basic activity is legal and is a racket only because of the

violence and corruption with which the business has become permeated. (Special Crime Study Commission on Organized Crime, 1953: 11)

Chow, Daniel C.K. (2003)

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By 'organized crime,' this paper refers to a group of persons or entities acting in concert to engage in criminal conduct within an overall organizational structure and under the direction of an individual or group of individuals. (Chow, 2003: 473)

Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia (2003)

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(C)riminal activities organized and coordinated on a national scale, often with international connections. (Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 2003; retrieved from <http://www.answers.com/topic/organized-crime>)

Comptroller General

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'Organized Crime' refers to those self-perpetuating, structured and disciplined associations of individuals or groups, combined together for the purpose of obtaining monetary or commercial gains or profits, wholly or in part by illegal means, while protecting their activities through a pattern of graft and corruption. (U.S. Comptroller General, 1981: 10)

Conklin, John E.

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Organized crime is syndicated crime, the violation of the law on a large-scale basis by ongoing, tightly structured groups devoted to the pursuit of profit through criminal means. What distinguishes organized crime from other types of structured criminal activity are the durability and complexity of syndicates, which have some of the traits of formal organizations: a division of labor, a hierarchical authority structure, and coordination among various statuses. (Conklin, 2007: 315)

Organized crime is criminal activity by an enduring structure or organization developed and devoted primarily to the pursuit of profits through illegal means. (...) Organized crime has the characteristics of a formal organization: a division of labor, coordination of activities through rules and codes, and an allocation of tasks in order to achieve certain goals. The organization tries to preserve itself in the face of external and internal threats. (Conklin, 2010: 73)

Cressey, Donald R.

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The organized criminal, by definition, occupies a position in a social system, an "organization", which has been rationally designed to maximize profits by performing illegal services and providing legally forbidden products demanded by the members of the broader society in which he lives. (Cressey, 1969: 72)

The only definition of organized crime really suggested is "continuing criminal activity in concert", and this sounds like two or more homosexuals practicing their trade in Carnegie Hall. Together, the two criteria apply to members of check-passing rings as well as to Cosa Nostra bosses. (Cressey, 1969: 304)

The prior efforts of social scientists to define categories of crime in nonlegal terms are not very helpful in the task of precisely identifying the division of labor which is organized crime, for two reasons. First, one who would define organized crime precisely enough to outlaw the category of behavior itself must be concerned with formal and informal structure. It is the necessity for this concern that puts organized crime in the scholarly domain of systems analysts and other organizational specialists. Second, categories such as "white-collar crime" and "crime against property" can be defined without specific reference to the attitudes and values of the criminals involved, even if nice problems of "criminal intent" arise. This is not true of organized crime, where rules, agreements, and understandings forming the foundation of social structure appear among the individual participants as attitude...Whether a person is properly labeled an "organized criminal" depends in part on whether he exhibits the antilegal attitudes which accompany his adherence to the code of conduct...

The social category "organized crime" is being used as if it were a legal category, thus hindering both the understanding and control of a serious economic, political, and social problem...(311) Now we are faced with the task of outlawing a social category of behavior because it consists of more than the legal categories it started out to describe. (Cressey, 1969: 310-1)

It is helpful to specify, in a preliminary way, that an organized crime is any crime committed by a person occupying a position in an established division of labor designed for the commission of crime...any of a criminal's activities are coordinated with the activities of other criminals by means of rules...each organized criminal occupies a position in a set of positions which exist independently of the incumbents. Each has his criminal obligations, duties, and rights specified

for him. (Cressey, 1969: 313)

organized crime "is an established division of labor designated for the commission of crime" helps a little but not much. This definition does not differentiate between the division of labor making up small working groups of criminals, the division of labor making up the structure of small illicit businesses such as policy wheels, and the division of labor characterizing an illicit cartel and confederation like Cosa Nostra. Only the latter is organized crime in the traditional sense of the term, and it is the latter which must be controlled if we are to keep criminals from nullifying the democratic process. But the deficiency in definition must remain until much more is known about the structures of each of these kinds of criminal systems.

The Oyster Bay Conferences have identified a configuration of three positions in the criminal division of labor that might, upon further study, be found to be unique to the criminal organization in question...corrupter...corruptee...enforcer..

In one publication they named the following as the characteristics of the "most highly developed forms" of organized crime: (1) totalitarian organization; (2) immunity and protection from the law through professional advice or fear or corruption, or all, in order to insure continuance of their activities; (3) permanency and form; (4) activities which are highly profitable, relatively low in risk, and based on (315) human weakness; (5) use of fear against members of the organization, the victims, and, often, members of the public; (6) continued attempt to subvert legitimate gov; (7) insularity of leadership from criminal acts; and (8) rigid discipline in a hierarchy of ranks.

business venture...muscle...corrupt or have influence...Insulation...Discipline...public relations...way of life...

While some small working groups of criminals also possess these positions, such groups can operate without them for long periods of time. The business of bet-taking and selling illicit products and services cannot. The position of corrupter is as essential to an illicit business as the position of negotiator is to a labor union. (Cressey, 1969: 314-5)

We believe that only the illicit division of labor customarily called "organized crime" and now called "Cosa Nostra" contains a position to be occupied permanently or temporarily by persons whose duty it is to secure immunity from the law by bribing or otherwise illegally influencing public officials (corrupter), a position to be occupied permanently or temporarily by persons whose duty it is to be so influenced (corruptee), and a position to be occupied permanently or temporarily by persons whose duty it is to maintain organizational integration by making arrangements for penalizing, maiming, and killing members who do not conform to organizational "law" (enforcer). (Cressey, 1969: 316)

An organized crime is any crime committed by a person occupying, in an established division of labor, a position designed for the commission of crime, providing that such division of labor also includes at least one position for a corrupter, one position for a corruptee, and one position for an enforcer. (Cressey, 1969: 319)

The efforts to define organized crime in explicit legal terms which would satisfy this requirement have not, as indicated above, been a smashing success. It would appear wise to abandon this approach to the control of organized crime, 'professional crime', and 'dangerous offenders'. (Cressey, 1972: 89)

Demleitner, Nora V.

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Rather than perpetuating the myth of the invincible, many-tentacled monster of organized crime, this article employs a marketbased, economic definition of organized crime which views organized crime as a rational response to the demand for illicit goods and/or services. Therefore, this article uses the term "organized crime" to depict an organization of two or more individuals with a social structure, including some form of leadership. Its ultimate purpose is to provide goods and/or services that are illegal, yet for which there is a demand by certain segments of society. (Demleitner, 1994: 616)

Elliott, Mabel A.

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We are using organized crime at this point as a term to subsume the interlocking collusion between professional criminals to aid themselves in various ways. In particular we are referring to the silent covenants which professional criminals secure with law-enforcing and administrative government officials so as to protect themselves from arrest and punishment. (Elliott, 1952: 136)

Estrada Ireland and Rush

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A complex pattern of activity that includes the commission of statutorily defined offenses, in particular the provision of illegal goods and services, but also carefully planned and coordinated instances of offenses by fraud, theft, and extortion groups, which are uniquely characterized by the planned use of both legitimate and criminal professional expertise and the use, for criminal purposes or organizational features, of legitimate business, including availability of large capital resources, disciplined management, division of labor, and focus upon maximum profit; also, the persons engaged in such a pattern of activity. (Estrada Ireland & Rush, 2011: 331)

Falcone, David N.

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An illegal pattern of activity conducted by a consortium of people and/or organizations, acting in concert, to carry out fraud, theft, extortion, intimidation, and a host of other offenses in a syndicated fashion. (Falcone, 2005: 187)

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

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The FBI defines organized crime as any group having some manner of a formalized structure and whose primary objective is to obtain money through illegal activities. Such groups maintain their position through the use of actual or threatened violence, corrupt public officials, graft, or extortion, and generally have a significant impact on the people in their locales, region, or the country as a whole. (FBI [website - last viewed 20130702](#))

FIA International Research LTD.

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To better understand organized crime's dynamism - i.e., its vigorous ability to take advantage of new money-making opportunities - it's important to note that it's not a single, monolithic, pyramid-shaped structure.

Rather, in this report, the term organized crime refers to the compendium of organized crime groups and individuals whose expertise, infrastructure, influence and capabilities can combine to profitably control one or more illegal economic sectors in one or more jurisdictions.

Organized crime is known for its diversity, flexibility and capability to quickly take advantage of new opportunities. (FIA, 2001: 6)

The groups, individuals and entities that connect, coalesce and co-operate in a structured manner to dominate and profitably control one or more illegal sectors. (FIA, 2001: 10)

Finckenauer, James O.

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I hope that I have convinced you that a clear and focused definition of organized crime is important. It is important as a legal definition and for public policy purposes, but it is especially important for research purposes as well. After all, it is the fruits of the latter research that will inform the former definitions. Related to the general definition, critically important are the distinctions between key concepts such as organized crime and crimes that are organized, between organized crime and mafia, between criminal organizations and other types of criminal groups, and between organized crime and transnational crime.

So what is organized crime? Again, I would repeat that the difficulty lies with the word *organized*. The attributes of the criminal organizations that make the crimes they commit organized crime include criminal sophistication, structure, self-identification, and the authority of reputation, as well as their size and continuity. These criminal organizations exist largely to profit from providing illicit goods and services in public demand or providing legal goods and services in an illicit manner. But they may also penetrate the legitimate economy, or in the case of the mafia, assume quasi-governmental roles. However they choose to do it, and whatever they chose to do, their goal remains the same-to make money, as much as they can. Sometimes that can mean seeking political power in order to facilitate their greed, but the bottom line is the same.

The members of a criminal organization may comprise a crime family, a gang, a cartel, or a criminal network, but those labels are not important to the definition. These members may also share certain ethnic or racial identities; but that too is not essential to their being defined as a criminal organization engaged in organized crime. What is essential to the definition of organized crime is the ability to use, and the reputation for use of violence or the threat of violence to facilitate criminal activities, and in certain instances to gain or maintain monopoly control of particular criminal markets. Also essential is that organized crime employs corruption of public officials to assure immunity for its operations; and/or protect its criminal enterprises from competition. It is these that are the defining characteristics of organized crime and that best answer the question of just what organized crime is. (Finckenauer, 2005: 81-82)

Finckenauer and Voronin

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Organized crime is crime committed by criminal organizations whose existence has continuity over time and across crimes, and that use systematic violence and corruption to facilitate their criminal activities. These criminal organizations have varying capacities to inflict economic, physical, psychological, and societal harm. The greater their capacity to harm, the greater the danger they pose to society. (Finckenauer and Voronin, 2001: 2)

Gaines and Miller

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A conspiratorial relationship between any number of persons engaged in the market for illegal goods or services, such as illicit drugs or firearms. (Gaines and Miller, 2005: 9)

Gilbert, James N.

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In a basic sense, organized crime pertains to any group of suspects who have formed a highly organized, disciplined association engaged in criminal activities. Such groups may be small, but they typically involve a sizable number of individuals in the planning and execution of illegal acts. A true organized crime group requires a continuous commitment by its members, although there may be some nonmembers participating for short periods of time. A major factor that distinguishes organized crime members from other, more numerous criminals is their elaborate planning and lack of impulsiveness in committing crimes. (Gilbert, 2007: 418)

Godson, Roy

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Organized crime refers to individuals and groups with ongoing working relationships who make their living primarily through activities that one or more states deem illegal and criminal. Organized crime can take a variety of institutional or organizational forms. This includes tight vertical hierarchies with lifelong commitments, as well as looser, more ephemeral, nonhierarchical relationships. (Godson, 2003: 274)

Grennan and Britz

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Organized crime is a recognizable, monopolistic, self-perpetuating, hierarchical organization willing to use violence and the corruption of public officials to engage in both traditional vice-related activities and complex criminal enterprises, and it ensures its organizational longevity through ritualistic practices, rules and regulations, organizational tithing, and investment in legitimate businesses. (Grennan and Britz, 2006: 15)

Hagan, Frank E.

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Organized crime is used in the most generic sense to refer to group crimes and includes many criminal behavior systems as well as "illicit enterprises" that might more appropriately be labeled professional, occupational, corporate, or even conventional criminal behavior. A more specific criminological definition would refer to groups that (1) utilize violence or threats of violence, (2) provide illicit goods that are in public demand, and (3) assure immunity for their operators through corruption and enforcement. (Hagan, 2010: 300)

Hellman, Daryl A.

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The most useful way to view the problem of organized crime is in the context of illegal markets and illegal enterprises. Organized crime is a group of large-scale enterprises operating within illegal markets to maximize profits. (Hellman, 1980: 172)

Hess, Kären

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A basic definition of organized crime is a continuing criminal conspiracy seeking high profits with an organized structure that uses fear and corruption. (Hess, 2009: 87)

Homer, Frederic D.

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This book is a reorientation of the study of organized crime away from the popular myths, away from the treatment of organized crime as deviant, aberrant behavior, and toward the study of organized crime as an aspect of the American experience, rather than something divorced from it. Organized crime will be studied from the standpoint of individual and organizational behavior in much the same way a social scientist would study any other organization.

From this orientation comes a definition which highlights organized crime as a system of power and interaction, not as an invincible organization with mystical powers. (Homer, 1974: 4)

It would be preferable if the definition merely designated organized criminal groups and allowed us to generate our own series of hypotheses. This would permit the testing of hypotheses and the drawing of inferences about these groups and their activities. Instead, the definition draws conclusions as to how organized, monolithic, and distinctive the behavior of organized criminal groups is. These are researchable questions and analysis of them should not be precluded by the definition of organized crime. (Homer, 1974: 7)

Ianni, Francis A.J.

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Criminologists have usually used the term 'organised crime' to distinguish the professional from the amateur in crime and to indicate that the criminal activity involved is structured by cooperative association among a group of individuals. Thus, any gang or group of criminals organised

formally or informally to extort money, shoplift, steal automobiles or rob banks is part of organised crime regardless of its size or of whether it operates locally or nationally. In recent years, however, governmental commissions and agencies have used a different definition of organised crime, based on the notion of a nationwide conspiracy involving thousands of criminals, mostly Italian-American, organised to gain control over whole sectors of both legitimate and illegitimate enterprise in order to amass huge profits. In both cases the definitions focus on the criminals themselves and they differ mainly in terms of size and complexity of organisation (relatively small local groups as contrasted to a national syndicate) and the nature of the crimes involved (crimes in which there is a perpetrator and a victim and crimes in which illegal goods and services are supplied to those willing to pay for them). In my own work, I have preferred to focus not on the aggregation of individuals who join together to perform specific criminal acts or on particular types of crime. Rather, I have defined organised crime as an integral part of the American social system that brings together a public that demands certain goods and services that are defined as illegal, an organisation of individuals who produce or supply those goods and services, and corrupt public officials who protect such individuals for their own profit or gain.

It was towards the end of the Lupollo study that I became convinced that organised crime was a functional part of the American social system and should be viewed as one end of a continuum of business enterprises with legitimate business at the other end. But if this is so, why then is organised crime so universally condemned while it is so widespread and so patently tolerated by the public and protected by the authorities? It seemed obvious that this contradiction is a structural means of resolving some of the conflicts, inconsistencies and ambiguities that plague us because our desires and our morals are so often in opposition. Organised crime, then, could be more than just a way of life; it could be a viable and persistent institution within American society with its own symbols, its own beliefs, its own logic and its own means of transmitting these attributes systematically from one generation to the next. (Ianni, 1974: 14-5)

Ianni & Reuss-Ianni, 1972

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Organized crime is that part of the business system operative in the illicit segment of American life. (Ianni & Reuss-Ianni, 1972: 61)

Institute for Intergovernmental Research (IIR)

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"Organized crime" is defined as any organized group that has its leadership insulated from direct involvement in criminal acts and ensures organizational integrity in the event of a loss of leadership. (Institute for Intergovernmental Research, 1998: 33)

Internal Revenue Service

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Organized Crime refers to those self-perpetuating, structured, and disciplined associations of individuals, or groups, combined together for the purpose of obtaining monetary or commercial gains or profits, wholly or in part by illegal means, while protecting their activities through a pattern of graft and corruption. ([Internal Revenue Service Manual](#) 9.5.6.1.1 (07-29-1998))

IIT Research Institute/Chicago Crime Commission

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Organized crime consists of the participation of persons and groups of persons (organized either formally or informally) in transactions characterized by:

- (1) An intent to commit, or the actual commission of, substantive crimes;
- (2) A conspiracy to execute these crimes;
- (3) A persistence of this conspiracy through time (at least one year) or the intent that this conspiracy should persist through time;
- (4) The acquisition of substantial power or money, and the seeking of a high degree of political or economic security, as primary motivations.
- (5) An operational framework that seeks the preservation of institutions of politics, government, and society in their present form. (IIT Research Institute/Chicago Crime Commission 1971, 264)

Kefauver Committee

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The structure of organized crime today is far different from what it was many years ago. Its power for evil is infinitely greater. The unit of organized crime used to be an individual gang consisting of a number of hoodlums, whose activities were obviously predatory in character. Individual gangs tended to specialize in specific types of criminal activity such as payroll, or bank robbery, loot, or safe burglary, pocket picking, etc. These gangs normally confined their activities to particular areas of the country or particular communities. Occasionally their activities were aided and abetted by law-enforcement officials. The crooked sheriff who aids the outlaws is as much of a stock character as the fearless 'law man' who makes justice triumph.

New types of criminal gangs have emerged during prohibition. The huge profits earned in that era together with the development of twentieth century transportation and communication, made possible larger and much more powerful gangs, covering much greater territory. Organized crime

in the last 30 years has taken on new characteristics. The most dangerous criminal gangs today are not specialists in one type of predatory crime, but engage in many and varied forms of criminality. Criminal groups today are multipurpose in character engaging in any racket wherever there is money to be made. The modern gang, moreover, does not rely for its primary source of income on frankly predatory forms of crime such as robbery, burglary, or larceny. Instead the more dangerous criminal elements draw most of their revenues from various forms of gambling, the sale and distribution of narcotics, prostitution, various forms of business and labor racketeering, black-market practices, bootlegging into dry areas, etc.

The key to successful gang operation is monopoly of illicit enterprises or illegal operations, for monopoly guarantees huge profits. In cities that gangland has organized very well, the syndicate or the combination in control of the rackets decides which mobsters are to have what rackets. In cities which have not been well organized, the attempt by one mobster to take over the territory or racket from another mobster inevitably breeds trouble, for modern gangs and criminal syndicates rely on 'muscle' and murder to a far greater degree than formerly to eliminate competitors, compel cooperation from reluctant victims, silence informers, and to enforce gangland edicts. Modern crime syndicates and criminal gangs have copied some of the organizational methods found in modern business. They seek to expand their activities in many different fields and in many different geographic areas, wherever profits may be made. (U.S. Senate, 1951: 144-145)

Kelly, Robert J.

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...Do we adopt an operational definition of organized crime in which the meaning of the concept would always be closely associated with the procedures employed in investigating the phenomenon, and in which controversies over meanings would thereby be avoided and research progress accordingly enhanced? Or, on the contrary, is it more advantageous to allow a definition to emerge as one of the results and consequences of inquiry? Perhaps a clear and accurate definition of organized crime can neither be given nor constructed at the beginning of research; that in scientific procedures it is not always desirable to have exact definitions because they have a dampening effect on research by closing off other lines of inquiry. It is unrealistic, therefore, to insist that the term, "organized crime", be clear and precise at the beginning of the research process. A definition that is increasingly accurate and concrete will flow out of research through successive approximations and empirical confirmations. (Kelly 1986, 28 (Fn. 1))

Kenney and Finckenaer

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If we assume public demand to be the stimulus for the illicit entrepreneur, rational profit through illegal activities to be the economic objective of the illegal enterprise, and ethnic ties to result in restricted membership, we have identified three of our attributes of organized crime in this definition. This definition says nothing about the other characteristics of organized criminal groups, nor does it say anything about the use of violence or corruption. (Kenney/Finckenaer, 1995: 22-3)

Essential to the definition of organized crime is the use of violence or the threat of violence to facilitate criminal activities and to maintain monopoly control of markets. Also essential is that organized crime employs corruption of public officials to assure immunity for its operations. These factors define organized crime and it is that phenomenon we will focus on in the remainder of our book. (Kenney/Finckenaer, 1995: 29)

Our working definition of organized crime includes the following characteristics: a self-perpetuating, organized hierarchy that exists to profit from providing illicit goods and services, uses violence in carrying out its criminal activities, and corrupts public officials to immunize itself from law enforcement. (Kenney/Finckenaer 1995, 285)

Lasswell and McKenna

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non-ideological, concerted criminality of sufficient weight and scope of power to inhibit public control (Lasswell/McKenna 1972, 26)

Liddick, Don

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In developing a typology of organized crime, it may be useful to see it as a sub-category of organized criminality, a broad "kingdom" of relatively coordinated criminal activities (as opposed to crimes committed by individuals) that include the following:

- 1) terrorism (...)
- 2) organized crime— the provision of illegal goods and services, various forms of theft and fraud, and the restraint of trade in both licit and illicit market sectors, perpetuated by informal and changing networks of "upper-world" and "under-world" societal participants who are bound together in complex webs of patron-client relationships.
- 3) corporate crime (...) (Liddick 1999, 50)

Lindesmith, Alfred

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The term "organized crime" refers to crime that involves the co-operation of several different persons or groups for its successful execution. Organized crime is usually professional crime... In a broad sense, the entire underworld may be said to be organized. It is set apart from the rest of society. It has its own standards, attitudes, and public opinion, and an informal, though effective, means of communication known as the "grapevine."... Organized crime as it now exists in the United States requires the active and conscious co-operation of a number of elements of respectable society. It requires the passive co-operation of many other elements (Lindesmith 1941, 119).

Lupsha, Peter

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By organized crime we refer to those crimes involving ongoing criminal conspiracies and interactions over time, which therefore may be thought of as organized or syndicated. (Lupsha, 1981, 6)

Organized crime is an activity, by a group of individuals, who consciously develop task roles and specializations, patterns of interaction, statuses, and relationships, spheres of accountability and responsibilities; and who with continuity over time engage in acts legal and illegal usually involving (a) large amounts of capital, (b) buffers (nonmember associates), (c) the use of violence or the threat of violence (actual or perceived), (d) the corruption of public officials, their agents, or those in positions of responsibility and trust. This activity is goal oriented and develops sequentially over time. Its purpose is the accumulation of large sums of capital and influence, along with minimization of risk. Capital acquired (black untaxed monies) are in part processed (laundered) into legitimate sectors of the economy through the use of multiple fronts and buffers to the end of increased influence, power, capital and enhanced potential for criminal gain with increasingly minimized risk. (Lupsha, 1983:60-61)

My perspective is that organized crime is a process - an activity possessing certain attributes and characteristics. As such it cannot be identified with any single temporal starting point.

From this perspective the key conceptual attributes of organized crime are:

- Ongoing interaction by a group of individuals over time:
- Patterns in that interaction: role, status, and specialization.
- Patterns of corruption of public officials, their agents, and individuals in private positions of trust.
- The use or threat of use of violence.
- A lifetime careerist orientation among the participants:
- A view of criminal activity as instrumental, rather than an end in itself.
- Goal direction toward the long term accumulation of capital, influence, power, and untaxed wealth.
- Patterns of complex criminal activity involving long term planning, and multiple levels of execution and organization.
- Patterns of operation that are interjurisdictional, often international in scope.
- Use of fronts, buffers, and "legitimate" associates.
- Active attempts at the insulation of key members from risks of identification, involvement, arrest and prosecution.
- Maximization of profits through attempts at cartelization or monopolization of markets, enterprises and crime matrices. (Lupsha in: Kelly 1986, 33)

organized crime in the US (1) is not some random or episodic thing; but a patterned and structured activity; (2) (44) finds and exploits opportunities for illicit gain; and (3) operates across time regardless of individual changes in personnel or leadership. (Lupsha in: Kelly, 1986: 43-4)

Maltz, Michael (1976)

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An organized crime is a crime committed by two or more offenders who are or intend to remain associated for the purpose of committing crimes. (Maltz, 1976: 342)

Maltz, Michael (1990)

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Many definitions have been proposed for 'organized crime'. For the purposes of this discussion we will consider it to be the criminal and other unlawful activities of large, continuing, multi-enterprise organizations that were established primarily for criminal purposes, and that employ corruption and violence in their activities. (Maltz, 1990: 24)

McCulloch, William

[\(back to index\)](#)

Organized crime ...is a confederation of some 24 families consisting of up to 5,000 individuals. The families are organized along military lines and receive general guidance from a select group of family bosses called the commission. (Rep. William McCulloch in: U.S. House of Representatives, 1970: 78)

Michalowski, Raymond

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Organized Crime = any structurally coordinated and bureaucratically organized association of individuals that relies almost primarily upon illegal subgoals and means to facilitate the accumulation of capital. (Michalowski 1985, 368)

Missouri Task Force

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Organized crime has been defined as a self-perpetuating criminal conspiracy for power and profit, utilizing fear and corruption and seeking to obtain immunity from the law. (...)

While the organized crime syndicate is certainly the largest and best known organized criminal element, it is by no means the only one. There are local organizations throughout the nation that would certainly fall within the definition of organized crime. These groups, numerous and varied, may be based upon the ethnic or racial ties or be simply the result of a particular criminal endeavor. (Missouri Task Force on Organized Crime, 7-8)

National Advisory Committee

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Organized crime is not synonymous with the Mafia or la Cosa Nostra, the most experienced, diversified, and possibly best disciplined of the conspiratorial groups.

The Mafia image is a common stereotype of organized crime members. Although a number of families of La Cosa Nostra are an important component of organized crime operations, they do not enjoy a monopoly on underworld activities. Today, a variety of groups is engaged in organized criminal activity. (National Advisory Committee 1976, 8)

New Mexico's OC Commission

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When a criminal organization, because of its sophistication or size, eludes the control of local law enforcement, it has entered what may be considered the area of organized crime in New Mexico. This is the practical lower limit of the term; the upper limit is well known and includes the infamous Mafia and La Cosa Nostra, which operate on an international basis. (New Mexico's Governor's Organized Crime Prevention Commission 1973, 2-3)

Newton, Michael

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The work in hand defines organized crime as any significant criminal activity planned and carried out for profit by a cohesive group of conspirators. (Newton, 2011: 2)

Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act

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'Organized crime' means the unlawful activities of the members of a highly organized, disciplined association engaged in supplying illegal goods and services, including but not limited to gambling, prostitution, loan sharking, narcotics, labor racketeering, and other unlawful activities of members of such organizations. (Public Law 90-351, Title I, Part F (b) = Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act 1968)

Ortmeier, P.J.

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Organized crime is defined as any relatively permanent group of individuals that systematically engage in illegal activities with economic gain as its primary goal. It involves the coordination of numerous persons in the planning and execution of illegal acts or the pursuit of legitimate goals through unlawful means. Organized crime's existence is maintained through the use of threats, intimidation, force, monopoly control, and corruption. Revenues from illegal activities are used to develop legitimate businesses to use as covers for more illegal activity. (Ortmeier, 2013: 43)

Oyster Bay Conferences

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Organized crime is the product of a self-perpetuating criminal conspiracy to wring exorbitant profits from our society by any means - fair and foul, legal and illegal. Despite personnel changes, the conspiratorial entity continues. (Combating Organized Crime 1966, 19)

Poff, Richard

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It is something of an oversimplification, but broadly speaking, crime can be categorized in two major compartments: One, organized crime; and the other, disorganized crime. (Rep. Richard Poff in: U.S. House of Representatives 1970, 80)

Potter, Gary

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For purposes of this discussion, we shall define organized crime, following Block and Chambliss (1981), as the management and coordination of illegal enterprises connected with vice (gambling, prostitution, high-interest personal loans, pornography, and drug trafficking), and racketeering (labor and business extortion). (Potter 1994, 116)

President's Commission on Organized Crime, 1986

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Organized crime is an industry that is dependent upon effective coordination of its two components, the "criminal group" and the "buffer".

The criminal group (in its various manifestations, "cartel," "corporation," "family," "gumi," "triad," etc.) is a continuing, structured collectivity of defined members utilizing criminality, including violence, to gain and maintain profit and power. Thus, the six characteristics of the criminal group are continuity, structure, defined membership, criminality, violence, and power as its goal.

The buffer is the criminal group's protection from the criminal justice system. The buffer protects the criminal group from effective prosecution through the efforts of corrupt judges, attorneys, law enforcement officers, politicians, financial advisors, financial institutions, gaming establishments, and other businesses both in the United States and abroad.

In addition to the direct activities of organized crime, there are indirect or support activities that assist organized crime. Individuals that provide support may include those who are working for a particular criminal group while waiting for the opportunity to become members of the group.

(President's Commission on Organized Crime, 1986, Appendix A)

Reuter, Peter

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...this rather parsimonious definition of organized crime: gangs that have maintained a capacity for credible threats of violence over a long period of time. How long a period is obviously a matter of judgment. My own inclination is to stress the ability to handle a generational change of leadership, since that suggests that the gang itself has acquired a value independent of that associated with the reputation of its most prominent member. (Reuter 1994, 96)

Reuter and Rubinstein

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But despite strong differences about specifics, there is a consensus about the general characteristics of this social threat. Organized crime is viewed as a set of stable, hierarchically organized gangs which, through violence or its credible threat, have acquired monopoly control of certain major illegal markets. This control has produced enormous profits, which have been used to bribe public officials, thus further protecting the monopolies. These funds have also been invested in acquiring legitimate businesses in which the racketeers continue to use extortion and threats to minimize competition. (Reuter and Rubinstein 1978, 46)

Rhodes, Robert

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Organized crime consists of a series of illegal transactions between multiple offenders, some of whom employ specialized skills, over a continuous period of time, for purposes of economic advantage, and political power when necessary to gain economic advantage. Normally, but not always, techniques of bribery, intimidation, and violence are used and hegemony over services sought (Rhodes 1984, 4).

Rubin, Paul H.

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... what is called "organized crime" is essentially a criminal firm whose function is the selling of goods and services to other criminal firms. It is these secondary firms which actually deal with the public. We have identified three possible services which organized crime might provide to other crime: capital, bribery, and violence. (Rubin 1973, 162)

Ryan, Patrick J.

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Most people define organized crime as the activities of the Mafia, which they think of as some sort of mysterious, quasi-mystical confederation of Italians organized by families and dedicated to such pursuits as murder, extortion, bookmaking and gambling, and racketeering.

Organized crime once meant the Mafia, but today it is much more. Organized crime is large-scale criminal activity, operated by big organizations with complex hierarchies. Although the activities of organized crime remain fairly similar, the people involved have changed radically. No longer is organized crime the work of one ethnic group. No longer does organized crime operate more or less locally. Like legitimate big business, organized crime has gone international. (Ryan, 1995, 1)

Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department (Organized Crime Intelligence Bureau)

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Many people confuse the term "organized crime," with the criminal enterprise commonly known as "the Mafia." However, on a broader scale, organized crime simply refers to those criminals who organize their various illegal activities, as opposed to those who commit crimes on a random basis. Illegal enterprises and vice operations such as gambling, narcotics, fraud, public corruption, prostitution, pornography, murder for hire, unlawful labor union tactics, outlaw motorcycle gangs, terrorists, liquor law violators, and many other crimes may, depending upon the degree of organization, be included under the umbrella term, "organized crime." (Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department [website](#))

Salerno and Tompkins

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By definition, organized crime is a continuous conspiracy for profit, not a haphazard flouting of the law. (Salerno and Tompkins 1969, 111)

Schaefer and Lamm

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For our purposes, we will consider organized crime to be the work of a group that regulates relations between various criminal enterprises involved in smuggling and sale of drugs, prostitution, gambling, and other activities. (...) Organized crime is a secret, conspiratorial activity that generally evades law enforcement. (Schaefer and Lamm, 1992, 205)

Schelling, Thomas C.

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There is, I believe, a characteristic of *organized crime* that is consistent with all of these definitions and characterizations (even the one that treats *organized crime* as a proper noun) (...) The characteristic is *exclusivity*, or, to use a more focused term, *monopoly*. From all accounts, organized crime does not merely extend itself broadly, but brooks no competition. It seeks not merely influence, but exclusive influence. In the underworld its counterpart would be not just organized business, but monopoly. And we can apply to it some of the adjectives that are often associated with monopoly - ruthless, unscrupulous, greedy, exploitative, unprincipled. (...) It is when a gang of burglars begins to police their territory against the invasion of other gangs of burglars, and makes interloping burglars join up and share their loot or get out of town, and collectively negotiates with the police not only for their own security but to enlist the police in the war against rival burglar gangs or nonjoining mavericks, that we should, I believe, begin to identify the burglary gang as *organized crime*. (Schelling 1971, 73-4)

Sellin, Thorsten

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"organized crime" has come to be synonymous with economic enterprises organized for the purpose of conducting illegal activities and which, when they operate legitimate ventures, do so by illegal methods. They have arisen for the chief purpose of catering to our vices-gambling, drinking, sex, narcotics-which our laws do not tolerate, and they have found many other collateral ways of gaining illegitimate profits. (Sellin 1963, 13)

Shieh, Shawn

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... organized crime, broadly defined, ... coordinated illegal activity among a group of actors. (Shieh, 2005: 70)

Siegel, Larry

[\(back to index\)](#)

... the ongoing criminal enterprise groups whose ultimate purpose is personal economic gain through illegitimate means. (Siegel 1995, 376)

Smith, Dwight C.

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(H)ow should the problem of defining organized crime be approached? Very simply: by not looking for organized crime itself. As a contrived concept, at least in contemporary usage, it does not possess its own logic, but requires interpretation from a variety of viewpoints. The question is not: "What is organized crime?" Rather, the question is: "What insights may be obtained from history, economics, sociology, psychology-even philosophy and theology-that would facilitate efforts to understand why the phenomena we categorize as organized crime occur, and what forces trigger their occurrence?" (Smith, 1971: 63)

Viewed apart from traditional assumptions about lower-class crime, the events we have called organized crime become a sub-set of a more widespread economic problem. They represent, in virtually every instance, an extension of a legitimate market spectrum into areas normally

proscribed. Their separate strengths derive from the same fundamental considerations that govern entrepreneurship in the legitimate marketplace. The behavior patterns that have generally focused attention on criminality rather than entrepreneurship reflect the dynamics of the illicit marketplace... I mean by 'illicit enterprise' the extension of legitimate market activities into areas normally proscribed, for the pursuit of profit and in response to latent illicit demand. (Smith, 1978:164)

The primary issue remains: What theoretical base will provide the best approach to either white-collar or organized crime, or both?

The answer to be examined here is the concept that enterprise, not crime, is the governing characteristic of both phenomena, and that their criminal aspects are best understood when we recognize that enterprise takes place across a spectrum of legitimacy. (Smith, 1982:24)

A spectrum-based theory of enterprise enables us to see that organized crime and the crimes of business are the results of the process by which political (that is, value-based) constraints are placed on economic activity. (Smith, 1982: 33)

Swain, Tylor

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The definition of organized crime - A group of individuals or organization engaging in criminal activity for the purpose of procuring tangible, political, or ideological gain.

Many people see organized crime as the notorious mafias of New York or Los Angeles; this definition is correct but leaves out a very large aspect of the definition. The truth is that organized crime does exist in you town and city in the forms of gangs, corporate criminal organizations, cyber crime and even possibly ideological crime and terrorism. (Swain, 2009: 5)

Task Force on Organized Crime, 1967

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"ORGANIZED CRIME is a society that seeks to operate outside the control of the American people and their governments. It involves thousands of criminals, working within structures as complex as those of any large corporation, subject to laws more rigidly enforced than those of legitimate governments. Its actions are not impulsive but rather the result of intricate conspiracies, carried on over many years and aimed at gaining control over whole fields of activity in order to amass huge profits.

The core of organized crime activity is the supplying of illegal goods and services (...)

Today the core of organized crime in the United States consists of 24 groups operating as criminal cartels in large cities across the Nation. Their membership is exclusively men of Italian descent, they are in frequent communication with each other, and their smooth functioning is insured by a national body of overseers. To date, only the Federal Bureau of Investigation has been able to document fully the national scope of these groups, and FBI intelligence indicates that the organization as a whole has changed its name from Mafia to La Cosa Nostra. (Task Force Report 1967, 1, 6)

Tennessee Code Annotated

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For the purposes of this section, "organized crime" is defined as the unlawful activities of the members of an organized, disciplined association engaged in supplying illegal goods and services, including, but not limited to, gambling, prostitution, loan sharking, narcotics, labor racketeering, and other unlawful activities of members of such organizations. (Tennessee Code Annotated Title 38, Chapter 6)

Territo, Halsted and Bromley

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... organized crime is the more familiar expression for the illegal activities of syndicate criminals. Syndicated crime is a continuing and self-perpetuating conspiracy that relies heavily on fear and corruption. (Territo, Halsted, Bromley, 1992: 8)

U.S. Attorney General 1959

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Attorney General's Special Group on Organized Crime in their "definition of a crime syndicate" "...[For] purposes of discussion in this report, a crime syndicate is defined as a group having most of the following characteristics, although not necessarily all of them:

- 1 A substantial number of members.
- 2 A large gross volume of operations.
- 3 Interstate operations involving at least a substantial geographical part of the Nation.
- 4 Operations on several vertical levels, such as supplier, manufacturer, wholesaler and retailer; members separated by two or more levels of operation frequently not knowing the identity of each other.
- 5 Major beneficial interest and management divorced from operation, with top leadership

engaging primarily in crimes of conspiracy or of aiding and abetting.

6 Membership usually engaging in more than one kind of criminal activity.

7 Membership habitually engaging in similar criminal conduct, and relying on it as a primary source of income"

Report to the Attorney General, Feb. 10, 1959, Hearings Before Subcommittee No. 5 of the Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, ser. no. 16, 87th Cong. 1st Sess, 103 (1961) (Johnson, 1962: 401, Fn. 17)

U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General

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Organized crime is defined as activities carried out by groups with a formalized structure whose primary objective is to obtain money through illegal activities. (U.S. Department of Labor, 2001: 48)

U.S. House of Representatives

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Organized crime is a term of many meanings. It can be used to refer to the crimes committed by organized criminal groups—gambling, narcotics, loan-sharking, theft and fencing, and the like. It can also be used to refer to the criminal group that commit those crimes. Here, a distinction may be drawn between an organized crime enterprise that engages in providing illicit goods and services and an organized crime syndicate that regulates relations between individual enterprises—allocating territory, settling personal disputes, establishing gambling payoffs, etc. Syndicates, too, are of different types. They may be metropolitan, regional, national or international in scope; they may be limited to one field of endeavor—for example, narcotics— or they may cover a broad range of illicit activities. Often, but not always, the term organized crime refers to a particular organized crime syndicate, variously known as the Mafia or La Cosa Nostra, and it is in this sense that the committee has used the phrase. This organized crime syndicate was the principal target of the committee investigation. (Report of the Select Committee on Assassinations of the U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1979, vol. 1, pp. 159-160)

u-s-history.com

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Organized crime may be defined as systematically unlawful activity for profit on a city-wide, interstate, and even international scale. (www.u-s-history.com)

Vito and Maahs

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Criminal activity conducted by any group with some manner of formalized structure. (Vito and Maahs, 2012: 413)

Washington State, chapter 202, Laws of 1973, 1st Ex. Sess.

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(...) those activities which are conducted and carried on by members of an organized, disciplined association, engaged in supplying illegal goods and services and/or engaged in criminal activities in contravention of the laws of this state or of the United States. (§ 2, chapter 202, Laws of 1973, 1st Ex. Sess; RCW 43.43.852)

West's Encyclopedia of American Law (1998)

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Criminal activity carried out by an organized enterprise. (West's Encyclopedia of American Law, 1998; retrieved from <http://www.answers.com/topic/organized-crime>)

Williams, Phil

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Efforts to define organized crime are many and various. They range from simple lists of characteristics to more complex formulations that distinguish between necessary and sufficient conditions and ancillary features. This chapter takes organized crime very simply to be a continuation of business by criminal means. The implication is that we can expect to see in the criminal world the same kind of profit-seeking behavior—and the same kind of instruments and mechanisms—that we see in the world of legal business. (Williams, 2002, 68)

Organized crime can be understood as both entity and activity. The entities are criminal groups or enterprises which are increasingly transnational in scope and ambition. Organized crime can also be understood as a set of methodologies available to other actors - armed factions or insurgencies, terrorist networks, or rogue regimes. (Williams, Threats from Non-State Actors/Criminal Networks, www.un-globalsecurity.org)

Winslow and Zhang

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OC refers to a conspiratorial enterprise pursuing profit or power through provision of illegal goods and/or services, involving systematic use of force or threat of force. (Winslow and Zhang, 2008: 430)

Definitions of organized crime from other countries:

Australia: Briggs, Gavin

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Organised crime is a structure that includes two or more people whose purpose is to commit one or more serious crimes or offences for financial gain or material benefit. (Briggs 2010, 1)

Australia: Clark, Mark

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Organised crime consists of illegitimate loci of social power, from within a religious, ethnic, industrial or other minority class or group in a society, that have acquired and utilise the knowledge of coercion, compensation and persuasion in a systematic manner to perpetuate or protect their organisations and to gain advantage by acts of criminal victimisation in local, national and transnational environments.

The definition encapsulates the key elements of organised crime and provides a yardstick to identify what is or is not organised crime. Crime groups that do not fit the definition are probably more correctly identified as gangs. This does not imply that they cannot inflict considerable social damage on a community; it merely delineates their boundaries. The critical issue for gangs is whether they can mutate into organised crime in a manner similar to what occurred in Nazi Germany. (Clark 2005: 105)

Australia: O'Malley, Pat

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Organized crime is defined as "those illegal activities involving the management and coordination of racketeering and vice". The source of this definition would appear to be traditional definitions by politicians, police and bourgeois criminologists rather than Marxist theory. (O'Malley 1985, 83)

Australia: Queensland Crime Commission and Queensland Police Service

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The Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 1997, which governs the activities of QPS officers, defines organised crime as:

'an ongoing criminal enterprise to commit serious indictable offences in a systematic way involving a number of people and substantial planning and organisation.'

(...)

The Crime Commission Act characterises organised crime as criminal activity involving: 'indictable offences punishable upon conviction by a term of imprisonment of not less than seven years, two or more persons, substantial planning and organisation or systematic and continuing activity, and a purpose to obtain profit, gain, power or influence'. (Queensland Crime Commission and Queensland Police Service, 1999:7)

Australia: Queensland Crime and Misconduct Act

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organised crime means criminal activity that involves—

(a) indictable offences punishable on conviction by a term of imprisonment not less than 7 years; and

(b) 2 or more persons; and

(c) substantial planning and organisation or systematic and continuing activity; and

(d) a purpose to obtain profit, gain, power or influence. (Queensland Crime and Misconduct Act 2001; Part 8 Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Misconduct, Breaches of Discipline and Public Sector Ethics) Amendment Act 2009)

Australia: Victoria Police Organised Crime Squad (2005)

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Organised crime is defined as crime committed in an organised and systematic manner by a number of persons in an ongoing association or group whose primary motivation for association is to gain profit and/or influence. (Victoria Police Organised Crime Squad [website](#) - retr. 10 Jan. 2007)

Belgium: Black et al./Annual Report Organised Crime

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(...) there is little or no benefit in discussing the merits or otherwise of definitional nuances of organised criminal activity and this project will therefore use the criminological definition as set out in the Belgian Annual Report 1997-Organised Crime 1996, in which organised crime is

defined as:

1. The methodical perpetration of offences taht, each separately or collectively, have a considerable impact, for reasons of profit or power;
 2. By more than two persons acting together;
 3. For a prolonged or indefinite period of time;
 4. With a division of tasks, in which they
 - a. use commercial structures and/or;
 - b. make an appeal to violence and/or other means of intimidation and/or;
 - c. exert influence on politics, the media, public administration, the judicial or the business world.
- As has been noted elsewhere regarding the Bundeskriminalamt (BKA) definition, upon which the Belgian operational definition is based, such a standard sets wide and potentially unclear parameters within which organised criminal acitivity can be detected. Nonetheless, this same breadth of criminological definition is valuable as it provides enough scope to embrace possible and/or emerging trends rather than being excessively limited or constrained by highly specific attributes. (Black et al., 2000:3)

Brazil: Zaluar, Alba

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The concept of organised crime is entangled with the concept of Mafia and has been the object of an unfinished debate which started during the last century: the former referring to its organised or disorganised character, and the latter pointing to its condition of crime, work, or enterprise. In any case, there is no doubt that one is dealing with a set of activities spread in networks that have components of economic endeavour, that is, it needs repetitive activities, (though without the discipline, regularity and rights of regular work), a goal of which is profit (easier and higher the better at the wholesale networks), using variable methods and currencies for exchanges typical of underground relationships. (Zaluar, 2001: 377)

Canada: Beare, Margaret

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Organized crime is a process or method of committing crimes, not a distinct type of crime in itself. Organized crime is ongoing activity, involving a continuing criminal conspiracy, with a structure greater than any single member, with the potential for corruption and/or violence to facilitate the criminal process. (Beare, 1996: 14-15)

Canada: Desroches, Frederick

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Although there is no agreed upon definition of organized crime, in recent years a consensus seems to have emerged amongst criminologists that organized crime is a criminal conspiracy of several persons motivated for the purpose of economic enrichment. It primarily involves the production and distribution of illegal goods and services, and there exists the potential for corruption and/or violence to facilitate the criminal process. (Desroches, 2007: 831)

Canada: Nathanson Center

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The term "organized crime" most accurately refers to the process by, or the manner in which, crimes are committed. The process usually involves continuing criminal activity, conducted through a continuing criminal conspiracy, often utilizing corruption and/or violence. Effective strategies for addressing organized crime must take account of its variety. Some criminal operations are tightly interwoven into the fabric of the society in which they operate, and their impact hidden. Organized criminal activity within particular cultural groups may be difficult to detect without in-depth understanding of the culture. Corruption and influence peddling operations may be highly sophisticated and hidden from public view. Other criminal organizations, operating as outsiders, are more likely to rely on violence to facilitate their illegal operations. Since their violence more often erupts into the public domain, sometimes in a seemingly random manner, sometimes directed at competing criminal operations, they tend to be more visible as a public threat. (Nathanson Center [website](#))

Canada: Porteous, Samuel

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Some prefer to limit the concept of OC within the boundaries of a model organization with a specific type of organizational structure engaged in a fixed set of activities. This study takes a different approach. There is increasing evidence that some of the more familiar OC groups and many of the so-called "emerging" OC groups stubbornly refuse to confine their behaviour to any "standard" list of OC activities or to adhere to any "prescribed" organizational structure. This study sides with those who feel that OC, in order to reflect the reality of modern criminal behaviour, is best defined broadly. For the purpose of this study, therefore, the working definition of organized crime is:

economically motivated illicit activity undertaken by any group, association or other body consisting of two or more individuals, whether formally or informally organized, where the negative impact of said activity could be considered significant from an economic, social, violence generation, health and safety and/or environmental perspective.

(...)

The conclusion from the above should not be that organized crime is really not that organized: rather, it acknowledges that many OC groups tend not to have centrally controlled rigid organizational structures. An OC activity can be highly organized despite the fact that those engaged in the activity are acting in fluid groups and alliances.

(...) Recognizing economic or "white collar" crime as a significant OC activity acknowledges that organized criminal activity is not confined to traditional "Mafia" or visible and ethnic minorities. Organized crime encompasses any organized profit-motivated criminal activities that have a serious impact. (Porteous, 1998: 1-2, 10)

Canada: Schulte-Bockholt, Alfried

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Organized crime is identified here as a group generally operating under some form of concealment with a structure reflective of the cultural and social stipulations of the societies that generate it; and which has the primary objective to obtain access to wealth and power through the participation in economic activities prohibited by state law. Organized crime is a form of crude accumulation based on the use or threat of physical violence, which emerges - and has emerged - in different socioeconomic formations across time and place, and is generated by the specific conditions of that time and place. (Schulte-Bockholt, 2001: 238-239)

Canada: Government of Canada

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It is serious crime planned and carried out by a group of at least three people to benefit one or more members of the group. (www.organizedcrime.ca)

China: Organized and Serious Crimes Ordinance, Hong Kong (1994)

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"organized crime" means a Schedule 1 offence that-

- (a) is connected with the activities of a particular triad society;
 - (b) is related to the activities of 2 or more persons associated together solely or partly for the purpose of committing 2 or more acts, each of which is a Schedule 1 offence and involves substantial planning and organization; or
 - (c) is committed by 2 or more persons, involves substantial planning and organization and involves-
 - (i) loss of the life of any person, or a substantial risk of such a loss;
 - (ii) serious bodily or psychological harm to any person, or a substantial risk of such harm; or
 - (iii) serious loss of liberty of any person
- (Organized and Serious Crimes Ordinance, Hong Kong, [Section 2](#))

Croatia: Ministry of Interior

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Organized crime comprises systematically planned, prepared, share-of-work committed criminal acts, performed by the members associated in a criminal organization with permanent actions with the use of intimidation, violence or corruption regardless of state borders, with the view to obtain financial gain or social power. (Adopted on a seminar organized by the Ministry of Interior, Republic of Croatia, in Zagreb 11.-13.06.1997, with the participation of the Ministry of Justice, Attorney General's office, High Court, Ministry of Interior and representatives from the legal sciences. Submitted via e-mail by bspudic)

Czech Republic: Martin Cejp/IKSP

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Organised crime is the recurrent (systematic) perpetration of target-oriented, coordinated serious criminal activity (and activities supporting this activity), whose involved entities are criminal groups or organisations (mostly with a multi-level vertical organisational structure) and whose main aim is to achieve the maximum illegal profits while minimising risk. (Cejp, 2008: 37)

Egypt: Mohsen Mohamed El-Aboudy

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Organized crime is defined as crime practiced by an institutional body that comprises a large number of professional individuals who work within it in accordance with a work system that divides the work in very precise, complex, and secret ways, and which is governed by an extremely severe law, whose sanctions go up to and include murder or the perpetration of bodily harm on those who disobey it. The body plans the practice of its criminal activities, which may be transnational, with great precision, and these are usually characterized by violence, depend on the corruption of certain officials and leading statesmen, and aim to make huge profits. At the top of the body is enthroned a single chief to whom all owe absolute loyalty and blind obedience. The body often exists for many centuries, society co-existing with it and seeking its protection out of fear of its brutality. (El-Aboudy 2002)

France: Andre Bossard

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Organized crime is the most structured form of criminal associations. While it is difficult to give an

exact, complete definition of organized crime, its characteristic elements are listed below:

1. Permanence: Organized crime groups are conceived with a view of permanence, even in the case of the disparateness of the leader. As a matter of fact, they have continued for many years.
2. Structures: Organized crime groups have well-established structures frequently based on ancient local traditions. The Mafia, for instance, is based on the Roman "gens" and "clients". The Oriental groups (Triad, Yakusa), on Samurai or noble resistance to invaders. Motor gangs, on a common passion. The internal organization of the groups is divided so that members generally know only their immediate superior.
3. Strict hierarchy: The group is based on obedience, loyalty, faithfulness. Sometimes, the organization is similar to military hierarchy; sometimes, it has a traditional character. Discipline is very strong. Each "family" has a territory and fields of activity. There are attempts at "federation" of these groups or families (commission, assembly of "bosses"), but it often happens that they are engaged in real wars between themselves.
4. Secret: The "Law of Society" (Omerta) is very strongly enforced and punishment for transgression is death, executed without pity.

Thus, organized crime appears as a parallel society, living out of the legal community, having its own regulations, its own organization, hierarchy and strong discipline, and highly resolved to use all possible means to reach its goal, i.e., maximum profit. (Bossard, 1990: 110-111)

Germany: Bundeskriminalamt

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Organised crime is the planned commission of criminal offences determined by the pursuit of profit and power which, individually or as a whole, are of considerable importance and involve more than two persons, each with his/her own assigned tasks, who collaborate for a prolonged or indefinite period of time

- a) by using commercial or business-like structures,
- b) by using force or other means of intimidation or
- c) by exerting influence on politics, the media, public administration, judicial authorities or the business sector. (Bundeskriminalamt, 2004: 15)

[Link](#) to other German definitions (in German)

Germany: Klaus von Lampe

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...organized crime is what people so label. (von Lampe, 2001: 113)

Choosing the illegal cigarette market to study organised crime is premised on two assumptions:

1. that there is - at least potentially - a general understanding of organised crime in the sense of a cumulative body of knowledge, and 2., that the illegal cigarette market can in some way or other be considered a part of or a manifestation of organised crime so that examination of such a market can contribute to this body of knowledge.

These assumptions, of course, are not unique. They arise with any study that sails under the flag of organised crime research, and have to do with the difficulties of translating 'organised crime' from a heterogeneous socio-cultural and political construct into a scientific concept.

So far, attempts to overcome these difficulties have been primarily aimed at finding a generally accepted definition of organised crime. Not surprisingly, these efforts have proved futile as such a definition would require a thorough understanding of the wide range of potentially relevant phenomena and the interplay between them that is currently not available. It is even questionable whether a scientific definition is attainable at all (van Duyne et al., 2001).

Where 'organised crime' is not just used as a non-committal label, a certain degree of reciprocity of research has only been achieved by either taking mafia imagery as a common measuring rod or by reducing the concept of organised crime to partial aspects, namely illegal markets and illegal enterprises (Smith, 1994). The enterprise model allows valuable insights, not least when - as in our case - an illegal market is chosen as the object of study. However, against the background of the public and scientific debate it means that the scope of the concept of organised crime is arbitrarily narrowed down to exclude, for example, criminal structures not directly affected by market dynamics such as criminal fraternities and deviant subcultures and groups engaged in non-market crimes like fraud (von Lampe, 1999; Paoli, 2002).

In the absence of universally accepted defining criteria, it seems that the common ground of organised crime research has to be found not in a mutual understanding of the nature of organised crime but in an agreement on how eventually to reach such a mutual understanding. In other words, instead of engaging in circular debates over the nature of organised crime, a research program should be devised that in the end will allow one to come to such a mutual understanding or, alternatively, to a general agreement that the construct of organised crime has no counterpart in social reality and thus is obsolete as an analytical category. As I have argued elsewhere (von Lampe, 2002a), three notions should guide the study of organised crime:

- the field of study should be determined by the scope of the public and scientific debate on organised crime. Organised crime as a field of research, then, contains what people so label. This would include just about any kind of cooperation for the rational commission of illegal acts, and certainly the illegal cigarette market would fall within these parameters;
- within this broad framework there are a number of recurring issues that need to be carefully conceptualised - for example, the structural patterns of criminal cooperation and the

concentration of power in criminal milieux and illegal markets. Instead of indulging in circular debates on how to define organised crime, more efforts should be invested in defining these middle-range concepts.

- the aspects of the social universe that are subsumed under the umbrella concept of organised crime should not be treated as static. Whereas definitions of organised crime have a tendency frantically to focus on one specific constellation of these aspects, namely, complex criminal organisations using violence and corruption to attain control over illegal markets and legal institutions, it seems preferable to place the emphasis on the fluidity and diversity characterising collective criminal behaviour.

This entails exploring, in as many social and historical settings as possible, how the phenomena in question vary in time and space and in what combinations they appear. (von Lampe, 2003: 42-3)

Indeed, at first glance it seems logical to say that studying organised crime first of all requires clarity concerning the object of study (see e.g. Finckenauer 2005). However, I would argue that this is not true for a subject such as "organised crime" which is first and foremost a construct, a "notion vulgaire" in the Durkheimian sense (Durkheim 1973, 22-23), reflecting social reality as much as the emotions, prejudices and ideologies of those involved in the construction process. From a sociological perspective, such constructs cannot be accepted at face value. Rather, it is the duty of the social scientist to define and categorise the underlying phenomena and, through empirical observation, to explore the intricate links that exist that would justify placing all these diverse phenomena in one theoretical context. Accordingly, research on organised crime, at least in my understanding, does not have the notion of a coherent object of study as its starting point. On the contrary, the very purpose of the study of organised crime is to determine whether or not such a coherent phenomenon indeed exists. A definition of "organised crime", therefore, is a possible outcome rather than a precondition for the study of organised crime (Kelly 1986). What needs to be done first is to try to bring the multifaceted imagery associated with the term "organised crime" into a preliminary form of order: What are people referring to when they talk about organised crime? Which persons, what events, which situations, places and so forth? The second step is to examine the corresponding empirical manifestations to separate myth from reality and to develop an understanding of the dynamics and mechanisms at play. At the end of a long research process, we may be able to determine the aspects of the social universe which can meaningfully be subsumed under this one concept of "organised crime", and which aspects call for different concepts. (von Lampe, 2009: 165-166)

Great Britain: Caroline Chibelushi et al.

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We define organized crime as a (structured or not structured) group of two or more people existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes that are motivated by politics, religion, race, or financial gain (...). Organized crime can include terrorism, drug trafficking, fraud, gang robberies, and other group-oriented criminal activities. (Chibelushi et al., 2006: 156)

Great Britain: Mark Galeotti

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Organised crime is a continuing enterprise, apart from traditional and legal social structures, within which a number of persons work together under their own hierarchy to gain power and profit for their private gain, through illegal activities. (Galeotti, 2009: 6)

Great Britain: Stan Gilmour

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There is a huge and ever growing body of work that discusses the meaning of 'organized' in a criminal context. There is no need to add to this debate here, it is sufficient to say that with regard to serious crime, 'organized' refers to the complexity of the crime and the size and durability of the criminal group involved in the crimes. (Gilmour 2009, 669)

Great Britain: Home Office/NCIS (early 1990s)

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Organised crime constitutes any enterprise, or group of persons, engaged in continuing illegal activities which has as its primary purpose the generation of profits, irrespective of national boundaries. (Huber 2001, 216)

Great Britain: Mary Kaldor

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... organized crime (violence undertaken by privately organized groups for private purposes, usually financial gain)... (Kaldor, 2006: 2) [submitted by Daniel George, King's College London]

Great Britain: Gilbert Kelland

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Organized crime has been described as the product of self-perpetuating criminal conspiracies to

wring exorbitant profits from our society by any means - fair or foul, legal or illegal - and undoubtedly vast profits have been made from well-organized international ventures. It is by definition on a vastly different plane to the majority of crimes known to the police, and the problem is, how do you recognize it? (...) While the majority of crimes are poorly planned, frequently violent and generally not enormously financially rewarding, organized crime, committed by rational and intelligent individuals, is well planned and always aimed at an immense financial gain. (Kelland 1987, 355-356)

Great Britain: Stuart Kirby and Sue Penna

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Here, we characterise 'organised crime' as 'enterprise crime', a term that draws attention to the production and distribution of illegal goods and services (Naylor 1997), activities that require considerable skills in planning and organisation as well as extended networks of participants, and are organised in infinitely variable ways ... (Kirby & Penna, 2010: 195)

Great Britain: Michael Levi

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Maltz (1976) proposed that 'organised crime' was identifiable by means of a list of distinguishing features, of which four were considered essential characteristics: violence, corruption, continuity, and variety in types of crime engaged in. However, smart people who avoid using violence and trade very competently and profitably in only one product - for example, ecstasy or cannabis production - thus cannot be described as organised criminals, which would doubtless please them if they thereby received less police attention and/or lighter sentences. Neither could professional full-time fraudsters (...) be 'organised criminals'. In other words, one could sustain some distinction between people who make affluent livelihoods from crime - professional criminals - and those who do so according to Maltzist criteria - organised criminals. But it is far from certain whether this would satisfy what I regard as the true *social* definition of 'organised criminals': a set of people whom the police and other agencies of the State, regard or wish us to regard as 'really dangerous' to its essential integrity. (Levi 1998, 335)

Great Britain: Scottish Government (2009)

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For the purposes of this strategy, serious organised crime is used to mean crime which:

- involves more than one person,
- is organised, meaning that it involves control, planning and use of specialist resources,
- causes, or has the potential to cause, significant harm,
- involves benefit to the individual concerned, particularly financial gain.

(Scottish Government, 2009: 2)

Great Britain: Nick Tilley & Matt Hopkins (2008)

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For the purpose of the research reported here, organized crime was defined by fiat as, 'crime that involves three or more people who come together in committing criminal offences over a sustained period of time'. (Tilley & Hopkins, 2008: 445)

Great Britain: Woodiwiss, Michael

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(...) my understanding of the phrase 'organized crime' is literal and short - organized crime is systematic criminal activity for money or power. Organized crime, understood in this way, is as old as the first systems of law and government and as international as trade. Piracy, banditry, forgery, fraud, and trading in stolen or illegal goods and services are all ancient occupations that often involved the active participation of landowners, merchants, and government officials. More recently, corporate business interests, and public and private professionals, have also been actively involved in organized crime. While organized crime has never been exclusive to anyone race, ethnic group, class, profession, or gender, many studies have shown that those with power, influence, and respectability in local, regional, national, or international society have tended to organize crime more successfully and securely than those without. Myth and misrepresentation have, however, distorted this historical record. (Woodiwiss 2001: 3)

Greece: Nestor Courakis

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[Organized crime is] criminal activity systematically committed by an hierarchically structured team of criminals who do not hesitate to undermine State guidelines (such as those regarding corruption) and/or resort to violence in order to achieve their illegal aims. (Courakis 2001, 218)

India: Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act, 1999

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2. Definitions, (1)(e) "organised crime" means any continuing unlawful activity by an individual, singly or jointly, either as a member of an organised crime syndicate or on behalf of such

syndicate, by use of violence or threat of violence or intimidation or coercion, or other unlawful means, with the objective of gaining pecuniary benefits, or gaining undue economic or other advantage for himself or any person or promoting insurgency; (MAHARASHTRA CONTROL OF ORGANISED CRIME ACT, 1999 [MAHARASHTRA ACT NO 30- OF 1999] online available at: <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/document/actandordinances/maharashtra1999.htm>)

Ireland: Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform

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Organised crime is defined as an element of criminal activity carried out by criminal organisations that have as their main purpose the commission of one or more serious offences in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, financial or other material benefits.

Organised crime covers a wide range of activities, the most damaging of which are drug trafficking, illegal trafficking of people, and fraud. It also includes a wide range of crimes such as high-tech crime, counterfeiting, the use of firearms by criminals, serious robbery, organised vehicle crime, intellectual property theft and others. ([Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform](#), last visited 20100516)

Israel: Menachem Amir

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The following definition of organized crime is based on the following assumptions: firstly, that organized crime is an economic criminal organization uniting a group around its economic enterprises, enterprises that transform it into a 'firm', and secondly, such a firm is based on a 'social system' with rules that bind the members together (Ianni, 1976); thirdly and most importantly: organized crime is not the sum total of crime committed by organized criminal groups but a qualitatively different phenomenon. We distinguish between *organized criminality* and *organized crime*; the latter includes the former, but organized criminality does not necessarily evolve into an organized crime, although it can become a basis for organized crime. Having regard to these considerations, I suggest the following definition of the economic type of organized crime. The definition consists of a checklist of characteristics of an 'ideal type' that should be invoked when asking about what is called organized crime.

Organized crime is a continuous nonideological criminal and non-criminal enterprise created and operated by a group or network of groups in close social interaction, with some restrictions on recruitment and membership, bonded on the basis of ethnic, ecological, or common life experiences, specialized 'character' or operative considerations. These enterprises develop through stages of organization, using hierarchical power relations, division of labor, specialization and the social norms of prestige and achievements - 'Honor' (Boissevain, 1978). Their purposes are firstly to secure regular, immediate, continual, inconspicuous and if possible high profits, and secondly to exert, if possible, exclusive control over, and regulation of, markets for economic and political power. This is necessary for advancing, securing and controlling economic advantages, over particular, and if possible, multiple enterprises involving sometimes willing, but often coerced partners, victims, customers or competitors. The sources of organized crime income cover a wide range of activities, among them the following: extortionate enterprises; organizing existing criminal economic activities (vice rings); initiating such activities by financing, producing, supplying or protecting goods and services destined for black illegitimate markets created by normative and legal prohibitions, rationing policies or high tariffs; invited or forced brokerage and mediation for inaccessible services such as manpower, labour peace or power, money or "justice"; legitimately or forcibly supplying legal goods and services to legitimate markets or, through infiltration, directly or indirectly operating these markets and, finally, profiteering from the execution of common predatory offense such as robbery, highjacking, fraud and swindling. (Amir 1995, 88)

Italy: Adamoli et al.

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The legal and international definitions of 'organised crime' tend to converge, so that the term denotes a method of conducting criminal operations which is distinct from other forms of criminal behaviour. Its salient features are violence, corruption, ongoing criminal activity, and the precedence of the group over any single member. Organised criminal groups are characterised by their continuity over time regardless of the mortality of their members. They are not dependent on the continued participation of any single individual. (Adamoli et al. 1998, 9)

Italy: Vincenzo Ruggiero

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Organized crime (...) displays features of an industrial type, as it recruits both skilled and unskilled labour, like any other industry. It is the presence of these diverse figures holding varying degrees of professionalism and skills which should be regarded as a significant hallmark of organized crime. (...) (The analysis of organized crime can no longer focus exclusively on the variable 'professionalism'. The type of criminal organization prevailing in criminal economies displays a dual process whereby professionalism is fostered by non-professional activities and vice versa. (...) This process entails the disappearance of what could be termed 'crime in association'. This form of illegal activity implies that tasks are collectively planned, the proceeds shared and further activities collectively attempted. Organized crime, in turn, entails a vertical

structure, a low degree of cooperation among its members, or rather an abstract, 'Fordist' kind of cooperation among them. Planning and execution are here strictly separated. (Ruggiero 1996, 121)

Italy: Giuliano Turone

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... organized crime is any group of people committing systematically serious crimes having an economic aspect with a sort of a business organization, where costs, profits, money launderings, investments and reinvestments are programmed with an entrepreneurial approach, so that the group may acquire a favourable position within an illegal market and, through that, and through consequent reinvestments, within the legal economy itself. (Turone 2007, 48-49)

Italy: Federico Varese

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For some, 'mafia' is a phenomenon typical of Sicily and such a word should be used only in reference to the Sicilian Cosa Nostra. My view is that the mafia (with a lower case) is a species of a broader *genus*, organized crime, and various criminal organizations - including the American Cosa Nostra, the Japanese Yakuza, and the Hong Kong Triads - belong to it. First a few words on the genus, organized crime.

Evidently, by organized crime we do not mean simply 'crime that is organized'. Three burglars, who get together and plan a robbery, do not qualify as an organized criminal group (OCG). An OCG seeks 'to govern' the underworld, as argued by Thomas Schelling. Burglars may be in the underworld but do not seek to govern it. An OCG aspires to obtain a monopoly over the production and distribution of a certain commodity in the underworld. 'In the underworld', writes Schelling, 'its counterpart would not be just organised business, but monopoly.' Some kinds of crimes are organized in monopolistic fashion, and characterised by occasional gang wars and truces and market sharing arrangements. For instance, loan-sharking, gambling, and drug dealing are criminal businesses that lend themselves more than others to monopolization. We should expect to find OCGs in these specific sectors of the underworld. On the contrary, some illegal markets are difficult to monopolize and police. For instance, the sale of cigarettes to those below the legal age does not lend itself to monopoly. 'Nobody can keep a nineteen-years-old from buying a packet of cigarettes for a seventeen-year-old,' argues Schelling; 'the competition is everywhere'.

A mafia group is a particular type of organized crime that specializes in one particular commodity. Gambetta has identified protection as the specific commodity the mafia 'produces, promotes, and sells'. Mafia groups like drug syndicates are OCGs, but deal in different commodities: they sell and seek to monopolise the supply of *protection*, rather than drugs. In the abstract, a drug syndicate either internalizes protection or *buys* it from a mafia group. One may see this as a form of division of labour and even argue that an inevitable logic leads to a division between the production of goods and services (such as drugs and sexual favours), and the production of violent threats. (Varese 2001, 4-5)

Korea: Daepyo Jung (1999)

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Organized crime usually means a series of crimes committed by a criminal group, systematically structured by class, seeking endless profit through illegal activities. (Jung, 1999)

Mexico: Federal Law against Organized Crime (1996)

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When three or more persons agree to organize themselves or to be organized to carry out, in an ongoing or repeated way, actions which themselves or related to others, have as a goal or result, to commit one or more of the following crimes, they will be prosecuted for that very fact, as members of organized crime. (Artículo 2, Ley Federal contra la Delincuencia Organizada, 1996; English translation by Bailey and Chabat, 2001)

The Netherlands: Petrus van Duyne

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'Organized crime' is in many ways a strange concept: it is found in widely diverse contexts, being used as if it denotes a clear and well-defined phenomenon. Nothing is further from the truth. The concept of organized crime has constantly been redefined and contains all sorts of implicit ideologies and myths, ranging from the 'Mr Big' to the 'alien conspiracy theory'. Reviewing the literature on 'organized crime' one gets increasing doubts as to the scientific usefulness of the concept. As a matter of fact, it is difficult to relate the popular concepts and theories of 'organized crime' to the existing empirical evidence. This shows a less well-organized, very diversified landscape of organizing criminals. As Smith (1978; 1980), Reuter (1983), Weschke (1986) and Van Duyne (1990) have shown, the economic activities of these organizing criminals can better be described from the point of view of 'crime-enterprises' than from a conceptually unclear framework such as 'organized crime'. (van Duyne, 1996: 53)

The Netherlands: Fijnaut/Bovenkerk/Bruinsma/van de Bunt

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... our definition of organized crime can best be formulated as what ensues when groups primarily focused on illegal profits systematically commit crimes that adversely affect society and are capable of effectively shielding their activities, in particular by being willing to use physical violence or eliminate individuals by way of corruption. (Fijnaut et al., 1998: 26-7)

The Netherlands: A.W. Weenink, S. Huisman, F.J. van der Laan

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A new typology of types of criminal association has been developed for the CBA, and whilst trying to stay in keeping with everyday use of language and existing definitions, we did deviate from that rule, if necessary. We distinguish the following concepts: combination of suspects, criminal association, organised crime, banditry, corporate crime and the criminal network. The concepts combination of suspects and criminal network refer to basically simple forms of cooperation and are indicative of a lower limit. The concepts 'banditry' and organised crime' refer to types of combinations and networks that are distinguished on the basis of the type of offences involving offender groups; corporate crime refers to an offender type. The purpose of the typology below is to come to concepts that enable us to distinguish between forms of criminal association. Thus, we also hope it will allow us to say more about the presence of the different types of crime than just 'organised crime' in the common, yet somewhat vague meaning of the word; one of the considerations here is that crime from our area of attention is very much in motion.

(...)

Definition 3 Organised crime

The combinations of suspects that commit two or more offences on illegal markets that are punishable with 4 years of imprisonment or more are included in organised crime.

Illegal markets concern markets for:

- illegal goods: goods that are illegal as such; the production of, trade in and sometimes also possession of such goods are punishable offences; think of for example narcotic substances and forged brand cigarettes.
- illegal trade in legal goods; this concerns black markets for goods that involve evasion of taxes, duties or import duties and are traded unlawfully on black markets; think of legally produced cigarettes, alcoholic beverages and fuels.
- illegal provision of services; think of facilitation of illegal immigrants (human smuggling) and illegal employment in prostitution (human trafficking).

The definition contains the punishment requirement to ensure that those who commit rather harmless offences are not classed under organised crime.

If combinations of suspects are involved in activities that facilitate their own or other people's activities on illegal markets, then these combinations are also considered organised crime. The following two types of facilitating activities are at any rate included:

- facilitating financial services for the purpose of laundering the profits of activities on illegal markets;
- other facilitating activities, such as violent settlements of business disputes.

We note - perhaps unnecessarily - that 'individually' operating facilitators may therefore also be included in organised crime insofar as they are involved in trade or facilitation of trade on illegal markets in association with others. (Weenink et al., 2004: 32-33)

The Netherlands: Van Traa Commission

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There is talk of organized crime when groups of people who are primarily focused on illegal gains systematically commit crimes which have serious consequences for society and, are capable of successfully protecting their interests, in particular by being prepared to use violence or corruption to control or eliminate persons. (Jackson & Herbrink, 1996: 6)

Norway: Jens Christopher Andvig

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With *organized crime* I will mean a repetitive string of actions performed by several individuals wherein at least one action is criminal and at least one of the actions presuppose the use or threat of force in order to implement the action string. *Force* includes the active use (or threat of use) of instruments of violence to create bodily harm or to kill, and the ability to implement incarceration. The motivation for implementing the criminal string is normally economic profit. The *performers* of the string may embrace members who are *deliberately* involved in its implementation, the *members* of the organized crime organization, as well as the *outside* performers who may indirectly contribute to the implementation of the string without necessarily knowing the links and the outcome. Hence, the [13] string may link performers who are members of upper-world (van Duyne) as well as under-world organizations or both. If it is essential for its implementation that some of the actions take place in different countries, we define it as *international organized crime*. (Andvig, 2012, 12-13)

Poland: Proposal for UN Convention, 1996

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For the purpose of this Convention "organized crime" means group activities of three or more persons, with hierarchical links or personal relationships, which permit their leaders to earn

profits or control territories or markets, internal or foreign, by means of violence, intimidation or corruption, both in furtherance of criminal activity and to infiltrate the legitimate economy, in particular by:

- (a) Illicit traffic in narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances, and money-laundering, as defined in the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988;
- (b) Traffic in persons, as defined in the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others of 2 December 1949;
- (c) Counterfeiting currency, as defined in the International Convention for the Suppression of Counterfeiting Currency of 20 April 1929;
- (d) Illicit traffic in or stealing of cultural objects, as defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property of 14 November 1970 and the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects of 24 June 1995;
- (e) Stealing of nuclear material, its misuse or threats to misuse to harm the public, as defined by the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material of 3 March 1980;
- (f) Terrorist acts;
- (g) Illicit traffic in or stealing of arms and explosive materials or devices;
- (h) Illicit traffic in or stealing of motor vehicles;
- (i) Corruption of public officials.

2. For the purpose of the present Convention, "organized crime" includes commission of an act by a member of a group as part of the criminal activity of such organization. (United Nations, General Assembly, 1 October 1996, A/C.3/51/7, p. 3)

Poland: Emil Plywaczewski/official Polish definition

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Any diagnosis of organised crime [...] needs to be preceded by an adequate definition of the phenomenon.

In Poland, the need for such a definition became all the more urgent with the formation of the Agency for Combating Organised Crime. It was eventually agreed that the concept of organised crime should cover the activities of criminal groups set up out of desire for gain for the purpose of carrying out various offences-criminal or economic-which would entail the use of force, blackmail or corruption, and whose end result-as intended by the organisers-would be to bring unlawful gains into the legal economy. (Plywaczewski, 2000: 99)

Russia: Yakov Gilinskiy

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In the following discussion, organized crime is defined as the functioning of stable, hierarchical associations, engaged in crime as a form of business, and setting up a system of protection against public control by means of corruption. (Gilinskiy, 2006: 278)

Serbia: Criminal Procedure Code

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The term "organized crime" in this Code pertains to cases where there exists reasonable doubt that a crime for which four years of imprisonment is envisaged, or heavier sanctions, is a result of actions of three or more persons associated in a criminal organization, i.e. criminal group, with the aim of committing heavy crimes in order to acquire proceeds or power, and when, besides this, at least three of the following conditions have been met:

- 1.) that each member of the criminal organization, i.e. criminal group, had a previously determined, i.e., obviously determinable task or role;
- 2.) that the activity of the criminal organization was planned for an extensive or indefinite period of time;
- 3.) that the activities of the organization are based on implementing certain rules of inner control and discipline of members;
- 4.) that the activities of the organization are planned and implemented internationally;
- 5.) that the activities include applying violence or intimidation or that there is readiness to apply them;
- 6.) that economic or business structures are used in the activities;
- 7.) that money laundering or illicit proceeds are used;
- 8.) that there exists influence of the organization, or part of the organization, on political structures, the media, legislative, executive or judicial authorities or other important social or economic factors. (Article 21, Criminal Procedure Code Serbia; submitted by V. Bajovic)

Serbia: Đorđe Ignjatović

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Organized crime is a type of property crime, determined by the existence of a criminal organization which runs a permanent illegal business with the intention of maximizing profit, using violence to establish a monopoly over a certain territory and the corruption of authority representatives. (Ignjatović, 1998: 25)

Slovenia: Bojan Dobovsek, 2008

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The phenomenon of "organized crime" relates to secret, well established and long-lived, hierarchically organized and functionally differentiated groups of individuals, who have a criminal career (or vocation). The organizational structure is a criminal enterprise, established with the aims of gaining as much money as possible and strengthening and expanding its power. It is these characteristics, which divide organized crime from white-collar crime (and other forms of crime). Trying to distinguish between the actions of organized crime and the actions of its members is very questionable, because activity in accordance with a "mafia principle" is not limited only to mafias in a traditional or conventional sense. The damage stemming from legal organizational activities of organized crime groups is without doubt much bigger than that from mafia activities. (Dobovsek, 2008: 680)

Slovenia: Valencic & Mozetic, 2006

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... if we define organised crime as large-scale firms operating in illegal markets... (Valencic & Mozetic 2006: 130)

South Africa: Institute for Security Studies

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Organised crime is significant and planned criminal activity, which involves several persons acting jointly, or at least with a common purpose, to commit a crime or a series of crimes, motivated by the prospect of direct or indirect material benefit. The persons involved may be human beings or corporate bodies. (ISS [website](#))

South Africa: S. G. Lebeya (2007)

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Organised crime is any serious crime which is systematically and persistently committed on a continuous basis or determinate period by a consciously concerted organised criminal group of two or more persons or a criminal enterprise, in pursuit of an undue financial or other material benefit. (Lebeya, 2007: 17, 126)

Organised crime is any serious crime which is systematically and persistently committed on a continuous basis or determinate period by a consciously concerted organised criminal group of at least two persons, in pursuit of an undue financial or other material benefit. (Lebeya, 2012: 362, 365; 2014: 340-341)

South Africa: South African Police Service (1998)

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"Organised crime is the systematic commissioning of crimes motivated by a craving for profit or power". Within the parameter of this definition, a criminal group involved in organised crime needs to meet the following criteria:

1. The criminal group has to involve the collaboration of more than two people;
2. It has to be suspected of involvement in serious criminal offences;
3. It has to have been involved in such serious criminal activity for a prolonged or indefinite period;
4. It has to be motivated by the pursuit of profit and/or power;
5. It should simulate and/or employ commercial or businesslike structures;
6. By way of division of labour, group members should have their own appointed tasks;
7. It should employ some form of discipline and control (disciplinary sanctions);
8. It should be engaged in money-laundering;
9. It should use violence and other means suitable for the purposes of intimidation;
10. It should attempt to exert influence on politics, the media, public administration, judicial authorities or the economy (corruption).
11. Abuse of state/provincial, national and international borders.

Before a criminal group can be identified as an organised criminal organisation, at least 6 of the criteria need to be fulfilled, including the first four on the list. This definition caters for both criminal groups with exclusive identities and loosely-knit criminal coalitions. (South African Police Service, 1998)

Swaziland: Swaziland Police

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Any group of individuals whose primary activity involves violation of criminal laws to seek illegal profits and power, by engaging in racketeering activities, and when appropriate, engaging in intricate financial manipulations. The term "organised crime" consists of the following:

A group of people (criminals), more than one
Participating in unlawful activities
Seeking money and power
Forms a syndicate, group, cartel, racket, mafia etc
Money laundering (cit. in Gastrow, 2001, ch. 4)

Tanzania: Economic and Organised Crime Control Act

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Organised crime means any offence or non-criminal culpable conduct which is committed in combination or from whose nature, a presumption may be raised that its commission is evidence of existence of a criminal racket in respect of acts connected with, related to or capable of producing the offence in question. (Section 2(1) of the Economic And Organised Crime Control Act Of 1984: Chapter 200 of the Penal Code as revised edition 2002; submitted via e-mail by S.G. Lebeya)

Zambia: Zambian Police

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A structured group of three or more persons existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with the convention in order to obtain directly or indirectly a financial or any material benefit. (cit. in Gastrow, 2001, ch. 4)

Definitions of organized crime by international agencies and institutions

Council of Europe

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Organised crime means: the illegal activities carried out by structured groups of three or more persons existing for a prolonged period of time and having the aim of committing serious crimes through concerted action by using intimidation, violence, corruption or other means in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit. (Council of Europe, 2002, 6)

Interpol

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Any group having a corporate structure whose primary objective is to obtain money through illegal activities, often surviving on fear and corruption. (Paul Nesbitt, Head of Organized Crime Group, cit. in Bresler 1993, 319)

Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation (SARPCCO)

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Organised crime means the illegal activities carried out by an organised criminal group or groups of persons, however loosely or tightly organised, operating over a period of time and having the aim of committing serious crimes through concerted action by using intimidation, violence, corruption or other means in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit. (adopted by the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation (SARPCCO) at its 14th Annual General Meeting in 2009, reported by S.G. Lebeya)

United Nations

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"Organized crime" is understood to be the large-scale and complex criminal activity carried on by groups of persons, however loosely or tightly organized, for the enrichment of those participating and at the expense of the community and its members. It is frequently accomplished through ruthless disregard of any law, including offences against the person, and frequently in connexion with political corruption. (United Nations 1975, 8)

The term organized crime usually refers to large-scale and complex criminal activities carried out by tightly or loosely organized associations and aimed at the establishment, supply and exploitation of illegal markets at the expense of society. Such operations are generally carried out with a ruthless disregard of the law, and often involve offences against the person, including threats, intimidation and physical violence. (United Nations 1990, 5)

Others/co-authors from different countries

Belgium & Slovenia, agreement concerning police cooperation

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Organized crime means any offence committed by a "criminal organization", defined as a structured association of more than two persons, existing for a period of time, and acting in concert with the aim of committing offences punishable by deprivation of liberty or by a protective measure involving deprivation of liberty for at least four years or by a more serious penalty, whether such offences constitute an end in themselves or a means of securing patrimonial advantages and, in some cases, unduly influencing the functioning of public authorities. (United Nations Treaty Series Vol. 2269, 2004, I-40405, 39)

Encyclopaedia Britannica

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...complex of highly centralized enterprises set up for the purpose of engaging in illegal activities. (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica 1986, Vol. 8, 994)

Encyclopedia of Crime and Punishment

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Organized Crime can be broadly defined as two or more persons conspiring together on a continuous and secretive basis, with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit. (Schneider, 2002: 1112)

Giddens, Duneier & Appelbaum, Introduction to Sociology

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Organized crime refers to institutionalized forms of criminal activity, in which many of the characteristics of orthodox organizations appear but the activities engaged in are systematically illegal. (Giddens, Duneier & Appelbaum, 2005)

The Sage Dictionary of Criminology (Peter Gill)

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It may be defined as the ongoing activities of those collectively engaged in production, supply and financing for illegal markets in goods and services. (Gill, 2006, 280)

Ponsaers, Shapland & Williams, 2008

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Organised crime is itself a concept whose definition has always been problematic (Levi, 2008). For our purposes, we see it as where two or more people systematically offer services or manufacture goods in a manner or benefit activity which is prohibited by the criminal law of the nation state where at least part of that activity occurs[1]. In terms of the informal economy, these services may be an intrinsic part of the informal economic activity (for example, selling drugs, selling counterfeit goods, running a brothel or paying bribes to politicians), or they may be ancilliary services which are not in their nature illegal (informal banking, providing taxis for prostitutes, etc.). (Ponsaers et al., 2008: 647)

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