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Scotland's Drug Criminality: Organised Crime Group (s) and Illegal Governance

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ABSTRACT

Organised crime has been on the rise in the past decade. Little more than a decade ago, Scotland had been home to more street gangs than London, with Glasgow alone comprising of around 170 youth gangs. However, more recent trends suggest a shift towards organised criminal activity. The majority of OCGs are involved in the illegal drugs trade, in addition to fraudulent businesses and other such activities in an effort to legitimise or conceal illegal financial capital from rivals and police. This process has resulted in a steady decline of generalised violence. Although, simultaneously an increase in high profiled incidents such as shootings and gangland assassinations. Drawing upon data gathered in the field the authors support this view and argue that while a number of factors effect divergent trends, illegal governance undoubtedly is present in criminogenic space thus impacting upon gang organisation and behaviour. OCGs look to impose control over physical territory via occasional incidents in order to achieve a psychological grip which ensures maximum control over the populations within.

BACKGROUND

According to official statistics in 2018 recorded drug deaths in Scotland are now the highest per capita in the EU: heroin and "street valium" are often involved (Scottish government, 2019). Organised crime groups (OCGs) utilise illegal governance, we argue, in a Machiavellian fashion, as strategic criminal policy to retain and project power over private and illicit goods. Drugs are one of these goods and provide income for these illegal actors. Their adoption of violence capital differentiates them, but not in terms of financial motivation, from this type of political economy governance enacted during privatisation programmes (Biais and Perotti, 2002). Machiavellian principles are deemed applicable to modern business enterprises including leadership in an era of competitive fragmentation amidst a global logic as business rivals the power of some state actors and seeks to undermine the impediments of the legally recognised market mechanism (Buttery and Richter, 2003).

In 2010, infamous gangland enforcer Kevin 'Gerbil' Carroll was assassinated at an Asda supermarket car park in Glasgow. While sitting in a friend's car, two masked assailants approached on either side of the vehicle before unleashing a barrage of bullets (Findlay, 2012). This was deemed to be a revenge attack for a series of tit-for-tat incidents which had eventually accumulated in a triple shooting at a garage in the North of Glasgow, 2006, in which one man died and two others were rushed to hospital for life saving treatment (Findlay, 2012). More recently, in 2019, former Edinburgh gangster and Trainspotting 2 actor Bradley Welsh was shot dead, a bullet to his head, outside his home in Scotland's capital city Edinburgh. The assassination has also been linked to the same gangland feud as that of Gerbil years earlier despite also being over 50 miles away at the other side of the country (BBC, 2019a).

Both these incidents, along with the majority of similar assassinations and attempted assassinations are the result of a drug related feud which occurred between two OCGs on a Glasgow housing estate in 2001. Then, incidents were based locally, as was either OCG, yet along with the illegal-governance that both impose and the growth of the illegal drugs trade, ultimately the feud now shapes much of Scotland's criminal landscape across the West, Central Belt, and East of the country as other OCG find themselves aligned to one or the other, in pacts and counter pacts (Findlay, 2012; McKay, 2006).

The killings of Gerbil and Welsh each illustrate the use of lethal weapon violence and a context of serious organised crime linked with drug markets. These killings remind us that the market mechanism is not the ultimate arbiter of the allocation of 'dirty money'. The Scottish Government (2019: 36) points out that "there is a lack of social science evidence on [serious organised crime]". It is estimated that 213 Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) groups are active in Scotland, comprising of 4,033 individuals, 65% of whom operate from the west of Scotland. The Scottish Government likewise estimates that organised crime costs the economy over £2 billion per year, with resulting illegal drug usage costing a further £3.5 billion per year. Our article is a contribution to filling that lacuna regarding social scientific insight. Becoming a professional criminal within the drugs world requires forms of apprenticeship. Multi-tasking and expertise in transportation are exemplary of this learning curve into organised crime. The financial capital accrued illegally aids the development of businesses that themselves generate income. That entrepreneurial trajectory does not indicate criminal desistance, nor shedding of previous criminal ties. These issues are explored in our article's initial theme. Criminal worlds are dynamic. Their actors and organisation are increasingly impacted by the affordances of internet technology. Roles are disaggregated. Illegal governance occurs over a range of domains.

The presence of networks lubricates drug movement into the street: typically, in areas of multiple deprivation (Fraser et al, 2018; Scottish Government, 2019). Critical to these dynamics is money. The actor's decision-making requires funding before enactment, and sometimes ties with previous associates must be severed as a pre-condition for fresh transactions. These issues are examined under our second theme. This realm of the criminal world is inherently dangerous. Social capital is provisional and conditional. Sudden conflict between competing actors can emerge rapidly. Rituals of bloody conflict rather than progress criminal dealing are symbolic of emotional cleansing allowing the venting of tensions and face saving. Grudge and desire for retribution colours public presence or the vanishing of criminals as some move elsewhere to evade retribution. In our third theme we interrogate these issues. In our final theme we interrogate forms of threat used in illegal governance.

Organised Crime in Scotland

The Scottish Government (2019) defines organised crime as criminal activity involving more than one person, is organised, entails a level of control, planning and

specialist resources and potentially cause significant harm to others and financial gain to some. OCGs are distributed across Scotland, but they are concentrated in the west. Often OCGs are interconnected with some overlaps existing in complex networks. Access to criminal networks through family or gang associations leads to some becoming members. At the core of organised crime are trusted social ties without which such networks could not function. Some organised crime is highly fluid and adjusted accordingly to arising opportunities. Drug supply and distribution are key primary activities. Secondary activities based again on this Governmental research review synthesis include violence, corruption and money laundering. OCGs are often hierarchical and structured. Violence is sometimes used to encourage co-operation between groups or install governance over others.

Terrorist and OCGs co-operate throughout the world, but within Scotland, ties of criminal with political violence remain limited (Gallagher, 2014). Gallagher (2014) suggests specialist services, passports or other forged documents are areas of co-operative endeavour. Besides this expertise pooling access to corrupt officials, smuggling networks and arms and people trafficking are additional points of their co-operation. Outside Scotland pipe bombs developed by Irish terrorists have been supplied to drug gangs in Europe. That kind of co-operation emerges through the west of Scotland's historic ties with loyalist and republican dissidents based in Northern Ireland in terms of weapons and drug exports. The issue of trust between members of these two differently legitimated groups is overcome in so far as shared critical experiences, often through incarceration, is key context where social capital is developed. Despite such ties harmonious relations are always provisional and pragmatic. Gallagher (2014) describes the preparedness of an OCG to share their knowledge of a terrorist plan if it results in tangible benefit to the best interests of the OCG. That interest is most likely to be financial as most organised criminal individuals are unemployed and reside in areas of deprivation (Fraser et al, 2018).

Fraser et al (2018) Scottish Government commissioned research was underpinned by qualitative interviews. It focussed upon the social cost of organised crime in Scotland. Poverty and inequality were uncovered as key drivers of crime especially in communities harbouring criminal traditions. Drug dealing and theft were two of the routine aspects of organised crime as perceived by residents of the areas affected. Drug and addiction intensified the vulnerabilities of those affected. Fear and violence inhibited the capacity of the authorities to eradicate organised crime coupled with limited trust in the police. Fear and violence were part of the fabric of everyday life and inhibited the community from sharing their knowledge of organised crime for fear of reprisals. Individuals were found to exercise coercive control of the agency of some individuals whilst others with difficulty gaining legal employment perceived joining organised crime as an alternative career opportunity, gaining a sense of belonging and respect in the process. Based on results of Fraser et al (2018) organised criminal roots are highly indigenous and intertwined with poverty. Trends in organised crime have not fallen unlike common crime in many European countries suggesting they represent different dynamics and origins (Dijk, 2007: 45).

Criminologists describe organised crime, according to Dijk (2007) as criminal activities for material benefit that engage in extreme violence, corruption of public officials, penetrative of the legitimate economy and it undermines the integrity of political institutions (Finlay, 2019). Extortion practices typical of the Mafia are one of the commonest types of organised crime and it hampers overseas investments. Organised crime thrives in countries where the rule of law is less assured and where corruption erodes trust in public office holders. That the rule of criminal law is impacted by its high standard of proof has led to the authorities developing a civil law process involving asset recovery (Collins and King, 2013).

The targeting of financial assets of criminals and their public shaming has in certain cases in Scotland proven effective in disrupting criminality (Collins and King, 2013). This recent approach to tackling serious crime focusses especially upon anti-money laundering measures, and the UK Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. The latter's burden of proof is reduced compared with criminal law's standard, nor is it required to establish individual guilt before assets are confiscated. Scholars argue this approach conveys to a community crime does not pay and it can disrupt the financing of further crime. The goal is to create a hostile environment for crime; recovered assets are used to help repair damage to communities affected by criminality. Although asset recovery's general impact on extirpating criminality is unknown the issue about why crime may be recalcitrant to this approach is something which this article contributes to illuminating in contextual depth. An appreciation of McLean's *Evolving Gang Model* indicates conceptual dimensions of deeply embedded criminality whose origins and growth help us to understand the challenges an asset recovery model faces in trying to meet its ambitions. The highly flexible nature of some organised crime makes it difficult to separate off lower level criminality from more sophisticated and organised forms of crime.

The Scottish government and Police Scotland identify a general decline in crime in the west of Scotland and more widely in Scotland in tandem with OCG activity rising (BBC 2019b). The drop in general violent criminality is notable in the West of Scotland where, at one time, youth gang and knife related violence was the highest in Europe. Reasons for the crime drop in Scotland remain the subject of debate (Matthews and Minton, 2018). Nowadays this Scottish region has now become home to the highest levels of OCG activity and organised crime. To better understand these phenomena McLean's evolving gang model (2017) is useful: the account it gives is one where a criminal trajectory and gang organisation coalesce as a means to organise criminal gang business, from youth gangs (at one end of the spectrum) to OCGs (at the other end of the spectrum). This complexity indicates that the sources of resistance to law enforcement approach as in terms of asset recovery because these criminals may possess little financial capital. However, collectively their combined impact matters to the growth of this criminal business as a whole.

Figure 1: McLean's (2017) Evolving Gang Model

As seen from McLean's model core members of Young Street Gangs (YSG), an umbrella terms for youth gangs, as youth's mature they are more likely to progress along and beyond the gang continuum culminating in the OCG "enterprise" phase. The thrust of this orientation activity is towards participation in crime privileges monetary profit. As this process continues, some of these individuals' bond together into Young Criminal Gangs (YCGs), generally seen to operate the middle group between YSGs and OCGs. Akin to the trust enhancing feature of incarceration mentioned earlier the bonds established through these gangs facilitate the emergence of OCGs. As YCGs become more advanced and reputable in a localised criminal underworld some either become OCGs in their own right or will be incorporated into existing OCGs active in their area or sphere of influence. As well as controlling product, and illegal transactions in the area, OCGs will control who progresses up this criminal hierarchy. Illegal governance is underpinned by an associated recruitment capital. It is the overall issue of illegal governance which this article aim's to empirically foreground.

METHODOLOGY

The findings presented in the article are derived from qualitative studies between 2012-2019, exploring gang organization as a means for gang business, and weapon and drug distribution in Scotland. The adoption of a constructivist paradigm reflects the aim of gaining access to the social world of the sample. That sample consisted of 55 male former offenders, 10 female ex-offenders, 10 practitioners and 3 community members affected by crime. All offenders had taken part in organised crime, aged between 16-45, and white Caucasian and indigenous to the west of Scotland. A combination of purposeful and opportunity sampling was used to recruit. The typical face-to-face interview lasted for about 60 minutes. A proportion of interviews were conducted using mobile devices and apps such as Whatsapp Messenger, Viber and other IT devices. Interview topics varied and discussed a range of aspect affiliated with serious and organised criminal activity. Interview transcripts were thematically analysed. Ethical approval to the researchers was granted by the employing university.

FINDINGS

The majority of OCG members interviewed were involved in the illegal supply of drugs, at wholesale level and through importation of illegal substances into Scotland. In this way organised crime has an international dimension. The majority of the activity interviewee's discussed, is the illegal drugs trade. The key themes emerging from our qualitative analysis of the dataset were 'Becoming a Professional', 'Imposing Illegal-governance', and 'Sectioning Law-breakers'.

Becoming a 'Professional'

In accordance with McLean's (2017) evolving gang model, not all dealers are part of a group, yet as drug dealing becomes more sophisticated and complex, along with a need for greater degrees of capital input and resources to draw upon, more often than not this requires group-partnership interaction. Solo dealers do exist, although more often than not, this is at the lower end of the street drug supply hierarchy (McLean, 2017; McLean, Densley and Deuchar, 2017). Likewise, according to the model it is YCGs that are more likely to advance towards professionalization or organised crime orientation. Overtime, and with experience, YCGs will become more adept at undertaking some crimes, whilst dropping others. Thus, YCGs effectively either become an OCGs in their own right, or certain, successful members, are absorbed into existing OCGs¹. Where YCGs and OCGs differ most noticeably is in that YCGs will still engage in a range of other activities as well drug dealing – typically involving a wide range of drug types also – yet, OCGs on the other hand tended to specialise in one particular criminal activity, usually drug supply, (as noted in the literature review) and with substances with high monetary value. This is at the expense of other criminal activities which tend to be unrelated, such as robbery although its proceeds may help fund the core focus. Experienced OCG member Peter explains:

'[Only dealt with] the moving of [drugs]. I had been doing this, as far back as I can [recall]. [I] got a [criminal] record... when I was a teenager [for]... fight[ing], stealing cars.' – Peter

Peter states that he had always been involved in supplying and transporting illegal drugs from his teenage years. His criminal record would seriously impair him gaining legal access to legal employment and contribute to extra-legal pathways to income, and their criminogenic human ties. As a teenager Peter engaged in a range of criminal activities, and perceived crime as having the dual purpose of being 'fun' and giving access to material goods. As Peter ages and was faced with a range of mundane adult responsibilities, paying bills, taking out finance, supporting children, he would engage less in crime for its fun dimension and more for financial gain. He eventually specialised in what he knew, i.e. distributing drugs. With experience Peter distanced himself from direct handling of drugs and instead he would coordinate this criminal enterprise from afar, handle money, and making the logistical arrangements. Murray (2016) argues that this concatenation of tasks is common practice in organised crime and OCG activities. It is more effective for law enforcement to 'chase the money' than 'chase the drugs': the latter typically resulting in the apprehension of 'low-hanging fruit' than high-end players who invest it or launder it to lubricate more crime (Ratdcliff, 2008).

Experience, detection avoidance strategies, and potential gains to be made, were all perceived as variables steering Peter's criminal balancing acts. His criminal associates whom he conducted criminal activity with also grew to become

¹ Note, more common though is that YCGs will disband or dissolve, for numerous reasons.

specialised in their criminal domain. Kean, who had previously worked with Peter, explained the lure and nature of specialisation:

'[Similar to] anyone [in any profession] who does anything... [overtime you] become an experienced expert. [This was] same with [our OCG]. Bringing [illegal drugs] in[to the country] takes effort [you] can't [have your] fingers in every pie going, [or you] just get nowhere.' – Kean

Specialisation represents then an apprenticeship. It grows from immersion in the challenges and risks of one type of major criminal enterprise. As Kean points out in order to be successful in the criminal underworld and continue to climb the hierarchy to organised criminal echelons, it is particularly advantageous to specialise in a few areas of activity, rather than trying to place 'fingers in every pie'. As noted in the literature review specialist expertise falls within the ambit of OCG. We found that even secondary activities such as money laundering or owning premises illegally, were often done so as necessary components to win cover for supplying illicit drugs successfully. Attempts to engage in a variety of activities lead, he suggests, to diffuse efforts of energy being needlessly expended. To indulge in anything excepting specialisation would result in 'get[ting] nowhere' or merely 'side-tracked'.

As professionalization develops as a culture an increased effort to go towards joining or accessing the legitimate economy. Kean discusses how overtime he acquired other sources of legitimate revenue but blurred this with, and was originally funded by, the proceeds of illegal income. This recognition of interpenetration between the illegitimate and legitimate helps to explain the challenge for policing this multifaceted phenomenon. As a corollary of criminal boundary blurring difficulties grew in determining where illegal and legal income originated:

'The [court believed] I [earned] six figure sums on a regular basis from the [supply of] illegal [drugs]. That was bullshit [as] I [owned] three [legitimate] business. [Yes], the first property might have [initially been purchased] with [money] from drug[s]. After[wards], most, the cash was [legitimate].- Kean

As with Kean, most participants in the study involved in OCGs blurred the legitimate and illegitimate sphere. This may even be through (co)ownership of businesses or taking premises out in the names of legitimate members of society. Although, as Kean mentions, such acquisitions often started out by being purchased with money gained through illegal activities. However, while participants spoke of desisting from crime to become 'legit' business owners, or knowing of, or having worked with, others who likewise appeared to have disengaged from gangs to become legit business owners, often this was only the case after several legal businesses had been purchased such as nail bars or a monopolisation of the legal market had been achieved (McKay, 2006 on security firms). Yet greed, declines in financial revenue, 'owing favours' from prior criminal life, or attacks from active criminal rivals, as noted through our newspaper references in the introduction, combined to haul people back into criminal activities:

'[It is hard to] get out of this life. I [have] tried to leave... a few times. I had [several] tanning salon[s], I... co-owned. [Rival OCGs] get jealous [however]. A few of my premises ended up being vandalised. – Stephen

The reality of involvement in organised crime combined with a criminogenic neighbourhood context and created a dichotomous position for many research participants. In other words their initial involvement in organised criminal activity was perceived by themselves as a logical steppingstone for persistent offenders who wished to remain in crime, yet most had an apparent desistence end goal of being able to leave 'a life of crime' and go 'straight' once a certain level of success had been achieved. Yet greed, and inadequate desistence strategies, continued to foster their criminal ties. As noted in the literature review 'old scores to be settled' meant that more often than not, leaving was either impossible or highly unlikely. Earlier in their criminal lives they entered into the world of violent retribution and low trust, it never tired of haunting them. The retributive forces wrongdoing had unleashed become a form of illegal governance, a code of the street' which cast a dark shadow of menace. The process of "becoming a professional" criminal does not result in the shedding of a criminal past and its associations.

Governing in changing times

McLean (2017) argues that engagement in organised crime involves the four mandatory positions of the Palermo convention (2000), and illegal governance (von Lampe, 2016). Activities illegal governance embraces include products, services, criminals, the local population and wider community. As OCGs increased in expertise, knowledge, connections, and gain power they acquire capacities to cement their violence capital and positions of prestige within higher echelons of a criminal underworld whose core members are likely to have met during prison terms. Utilising illegal governance, the OCGs working illegal drugs trade adopt two methodologies: direct control of other actors in the targeted market; or secondly through direct control of the illegal drug product being distributed.²

In relation to the illegal drug market in Scottish while in the 1980s the drug trade began to boom and OCGs made efforts to win exclusive control over the supply and distribution on their 'claimed' turf, nowadays in the contemporary era most OCGs do not attempt to monopolise the illicit drugs through that strategy (McLean & Densley, forthcoming). Arguably, this historical change in criminal distribution behaviour can be attributed to a growing recognition that along with globalisation, technological advances (the internet, social media platforms, and mobile devices) have contributed to an unprecedented rise, and subsequent illegal drug accessibility, to what has now

² Although note, more often than not though, illegal governance overlapped into both spheres on occasions.

become a globalised market-place. OCG members acknowledged that illegal drugs flowed into the country from a multitude of sources, ports in many regions around the globe constituted a network. As a corollary access to criminal networks has also opened up beyond traditional British crime family kinship ties. Shaun, a former police officer in the west of Scotland, explains the underlining diachronic shift alluded to earlier in criminal strategy:

'[In previous decades] it was like 'firms'... you know, 'crime families', that were involved in guns, drugs, what have you... If it was high profile, then [we] usually knew who had been [involved], the usual suspects, [or] had a fair idea... [nowadays it] is not quite the same... all drugs now... [the usual suspects] are still here, [but] there is also a lot more people getting into [drug dealing] that you wouldn't expect. [They] wouldn't have been on the radar [in prior decades]... [when the police] made an arrest [in recent years], more now, I would begin [to be] thinking "oh aye, [I would] never have thought [the individual in question] would have been doing that". The world is a smaller place [now]... [and] technology [has played a] role in this change.' -

Whilst it may feel "smaller" this criminal world interconnected with internet technology he conjures has greater geographical reach and is no doubt multi-layered and lacking the transparency of a more face-to-face culture. As Shaun states, traditionally OCGs were based around kinship, reputable associates, and tied to local physical turf, yet significant changes the speed and numbers of changes in our 'liquid modern' world how people live, interact, socialise and consume goods has meant that traditional criminal families no longer have sole access to illicit goods, control over supply lines, and knowledge of all the others within any network. Likewise, McLean & Densley (2019) argue that traditional illegal-governance ideology, and methods were anyway largely ineffective and counterproductive to accumulating financial capital. For instance, drawing attention to 'drug wars' during the 1980s and 90s, these two authors note that such tactics left few survivors. Rival criminal gang families sought to illegally-govern by literally killing off or seriously injuring other rival drug dealers. Likewise, the growth of this trade meant that OCGs had to adapt and begin to 'off-load' inherited responsibilities. Effectively they had to shift to a supply-chain model whereby they would operate and deal only with a limited number of three core defined tasks, importation, coordination, and high-end wholesaling. This criminal strategy sought control over drug product flow whereby OCGs grew specialised in just one or two Class A drugs, while acting as middlemen to other dealers within their sphere of influence. Paul, a former incarcerated drug dealer, explained:

'[My OCG] take nothing to do with [selling drug types out with our speciality], really. [We act as middlemen] for [example], Mr Jones, just say, has say £10,000 worth of [ecstasy]. I would just say [to Mr Jones] "I know a guy that might be interested" ... [I would] then phone [criminal associate], [be]cause that's his [specialism], he deals with that [drug type]. [We then] take a cut...

for doing that... basically [we] make sure [Mr Jones] doesn't get bumped [by criminal associate]'.

Paul's OCG only dealt in drugs deemed to be 'most profitable'. Involvement in other drug types, particularly those not class A or B category, were thought 'not worth the risk'. Yet drawing upon an established reputation in the criminal underworld and using established connects, this OCG would act as middlemen to connect buyers and sellers operating high-end of drug supply networks making sure transactions went smoothly. A substantial fee went to them for delivering these tasks.

Where OCGs look to establish themselves in governing product import and delivery is by making sure they purchase the largest quantities at the purest quality before communicating with wholesale buyers on time and frequently. Operating efficiently takes considerably experience, transnational connections, and reliable logistical management as well as having the social capital resources to translate 'dirty money' into 'clean money'. As Paul explains 'it's all about the quantity' and 'making sure people get what they want when they want'. Customer satisfaction is key to their business model's success and inter-criminal group co-operation over payments.

Yet, OCGs are effortful to control those other actors, in the higher echelons of this other less dominant organised criminal activity. Stuart emphasises this point:

'[If criminal activity occurs] in my [area] then [my OCG]... get paid first. [I] never bother with [adolescents] [But if] like [profitable crime is] ongoing... then we need to get paid... [or criminal activity] does[t] happen.'

However, while Stuart suggests some intimidation occurs, in general the methods and tactics now used are subtler than traditional tactics of eliminating rivals through gangland assassinations, or threats emphasized by intimidating tough talk. As mentioned, while some YCGs may continue to evolve and become OCGs in their own right, on most occasions though it is only the successful and 'trusted' and 'clam-headed' individuals within particular YCGs that become affiliated to existing OCGs. YCGs act somewhat as a conveyer belt of 'talent' displaying upcoming star criminals, from which the best can be selected and incorporated into an existing OCG structure and role. According to Harold,

'I basically kept myself to myself and [distanced] from [former YCG associates]. They were too [high risk]. I miss [socialising with] them... but they were bad news. [They] never grew up.... I [forged an alliance] with a guy [our YCG] had done business with [previously]. He... [propositioned me to] help him out.... [But] only if I ditched my [friends].' (Harold)

Eligibility criteria to join an OCG made it mandatory for previous networks to be abandoned. That shedding reduced contaminating the established culture of trust in the OCG. Yet Harold also introduced vulnerability into his own life by leaving behind him established ties however volatile. Harold's account clarifies that as an upcoming YCG with a notable reputation, an existing OCG in the area, which had worked previously with the YCG, propositioned Harold, as the 'main player' in his street gang

to leave his YCG and join an existing OCG where he could make money in a more 'professional' and monetised group. OCGs absorbed young talented actors from upcoming groups operating in their sphere of operations. This would not only see the best candidates become intertwined with the Organised Crime Group (OCG) and see themselves as one of their own, but this recruitment dynamic would hinder any potential threat from upcoming groups which, if given time, could eventually challenge existing OCGs. OCG member Billy summarises the message behind this recruitment when he stated 'How's the old saying go? Keep your pals close and enemies closer, know what am saying?' Such cliques about the immorality of governance requires material underpinning if they are to stand the test of reality.

Violent local governance

How OCGs seek to enact and project illegal governance over other criminals in their sphere of influence evolves. In recent decades since the significant intensification of the illegal drugs trade whilst on occasion they resort to traditional methods of illegal governance, typically via violent feuds after other avenues of resolution have been exhausted. This often results in 'hits' (targeted murders), organised attacks and serious assault. Published academic literature concerning this area is very minimal given its challenges as well as gaining ethical approval and overcoming risk issues. The level of violence used to sanction other criminal outfits is often in accordance with the level of threat they are perceived through OCG intelligence to pose, and the duration of feud. Graham explains:

'[enemies] come with the territory. If [you] are in this line of work then got to expect it. Plenty of guys out there [who] want what you have... [My OCG V] always had battles with [OCG Z], could not see eye to eye. [Mostly] avoided each other, [occasionally though] the fighting would spark up again. [We] would attack one of them, they would attack one of us.'

This criminal world faces threats from within itself. Violence capital is critical to gaining and protecting assets. When probed as to who exactly would be attacked or targeted by Graham's OCG in retaliation, he responded:

'[Mostly] nobodies, know, truth be telt (slang for told). Fringe cunts basically mate. Didn't want shite getting out of hand. Slash their main guy [or similar incidents] then shit will defo go down fast.'

By removing or seriously wounding elite (e.g. "enforcers") criminals a signal is sent which seems to dampen the kinetics of those lower in the status hierarchy. The slashing establishes the public marking and capacity of the defenders are recorded as beyond dispute. When probed whether 'shit' had ever 'gone down fast', Graham elaborated:

'Once. Probably, once. Wee [OCG member V] was steaming [and] booted the shit out of [OCG Z] member [P]. He was like their [enforcer], if you know what I mean. It wasn't pretty. They didn't like that... no fucking way... [resulted in] a pure heavy war. Get to a point that it is pretty even Steven

[and as a result] every cunt can save face [and] back down... no one wins really mate. [It is] never about that. Nothing changes, just blood got to be split every now and again.'

Graham characterises a gangland 'cold war'. This world is never at peace with its rival operators. Instead resorts to physical violence offer temporary respite rather than enduring resolution of conflict during which there appear to be no actual winners. As Graham points out, while feuds with other high level OCGs remain ongoing with low levels of violence occasionally being enacted, this is mainly to demonstrate their power and greater resource over rival OCGs. Unless the more established members come under direct attack whilst violence and sanctioning remain low this tacit world of compromise it does not symbolise a peace contract. Yet occasionally this 'cold war' become a 'hot war' as incidents trigger action. The criminal landscape 'gets out of hand' and OCGs will go to 'war'. This is when the most serious incidents occur, shooting and gangland assassinations, or attempted assassinations (see earlier media footnotes). Andrew explains:

'Wars are no good for no one. [Police] up in your face. No one can make any moves... fuck sake I couldn't even go to get milk from [the local shop] by myself. I was phoning for haunners (assistance) just incase I had a hit out on me.'

The everyday lives of these individuals are compromised as these banal restrictions remind us. His fear of purchasing milk locally implies enemies are rarely far away and are motivated. His criminality compels dependency on others "for assistance". As Andrew suggests, OCG who are engaged in ongoing feuds which enact high level incidents are usually 'put to bed' as quickly as possible. Yet, this can, Andrew argued sometimes be harder than he thought and to achieve such goals requires drastic actions:

'Sometimes someone has to go AWOL (missing). No one wants it... [however if] 90% of everyone, on both sides pal mind... involved [is] wanting it to end but some prick just won't drop it, then more likely they need to vanish (go missing). [On occasion] the own pricks [OCG are the group] that arrange it.'

Human sacrifice purges the communities of conflict. The "AWOL" proxy term for murder is iconic for the unreliability of others in this world. Attachments seem worthless, individual expendability the norm. Ensuring his "AWOL" conveys local 'shock and awe', it is a signally mechanism, or tactic intended to extirpate "some prick" whose presence is deemed hurtful to the interests of each criminal group to such a degree that even his own side may ensure "AWOL". The human being is prepared for his passing by the negative othering of the vocabulary sexual reference, he has the mere status of a "prick". It is the presence of "Codes of betrayal" presented in organised crime fiction in the novel of that name by Dorothy Uhnak that this dark "AWOL" is situated. We see in this case policing through illegal governance which Elijah Anderson sets of in his classic 'code of the street' treatise where reputation projects fear, it protects the individual and invites challenge.

Community governance represents an informal rule of local law resonating with Anderson's US street code, as the final section illustrates its reach in extends widely and in, Machiavellian aspect, upwards.

Community and elite governance

The wider community living within the physical sphere of OCG activity and influence, are classified through umbrella terms by OCG members. An ideology of separation is conveyed through the terms 'civvies' (civilians) and 'normal folk' (those not engaged in crime). Their use of differentiation is arguably a model of divide and rule. It permits to construct a universe in which they legitimate their subsequent targeting and intimidation. Although a number of terms are deployed typical ones that self-demonised the interviewee and evangelised parts of the wider population. Illegal governance over 'civies' typically came in two forms. These were through 'fear' and through 'assistance'. Fear was used as a last resort as successful OCGs often wished to retain their supposed popularity and positive favour in their community. Sometimes a 'hearts and minds' was not successful and OCGs resorted to installing fear. That meant projecting intimidation by making an example of someone or demonstrating their fearsomeness in a different guise. Typically, fear was inflicted over vulnerable civvies deemed voiceless in the community or otherwise weak³. They were judged as lacking a capacity to retaliate. Strategically that choice of individual that OCGs target such comparatively 'weak' victims helped ensure others did not perceive they were unjust or taking unjustified liberties. Their Machiavellian rationality connected with directing intimidation indicates the community was not only a context for their lives as community members, but also that they were dependent upon its goodwill for 'cover' from police authority.

Gus recalls such an incident, whereby fear was created by another OCG over a 'limited individual', a person neither strong or entirely weak:

'It was all really for show... think about it. The boy [OCG X assaulted] was no[t] much honestly... [yes the individual] had a [reputation] for himself, was a bit of a brawler, [but] what the fuck is he really going to do to [OCG member A's] lot. They would have him shot him where he fucking stood if he even fought back.... [it is all] an [act for] every cunt to see'. - Gus

Public displays of illegal power serve to remind and ward off challenge. "The boy" is made an example. He was sacrificed to send a message or signal to others regarding where illegal governance lies and its preparedness to impose control. It was estimated that the victim's capacity suited him for the purposes of this sacrifice

³ Limited refers to the ability to retaliate. Individuals with no ability can be classified as those with no criminal capital, those with limited ability can be deemed as those who have criminal reputations but little connections to those in the higher echelons of criminal activity, nor have access to any great deal of weaponry, arsenal, or resources to inflict revenge or retaliation.

signal. According to Diego Gambetta criminals communicate through particular types of signally system. At other times OCG actions cause fear and can invoke assistance. Jon states when recalling a time where he presented himself to troublesome local youths and verbally issued a warning over their behaviour in the neighbourhood.

'I like things to go quite yeah. Not going to lie, I can't be arsed with bunch of Neds acting up in the street or nothing. It is a quite area in which [I and my family live].... Likely because I stay there though (laughs). The neighbours know I like the peace and quiet. The [neighbours] like [having myself in the neighbourhood] as well [as it deters trouble]. – Jon

Here we learn about the voice of a more powerful criminal. Teenage youths who threaten everyday harmony in the street are not tolerated. That policing function of an OCG individual is welcomed by residents despite their criminality. That kind of illegal governance imposed down a social hierarchy OCGs co-exists with the more nuanced upwards governance through networks. This sophisticated requires governance is possible as it is invisibly intertwined with legitimate society. To exercise this governance type requires circumspection.

'It is weird... [This is] probably what separates us (Baily OCG) from [other lesser non OCG criminals] [the manner in which] we deal with shit.... Sometimes it takes brains, aye, brains, [and] negotiation... keeping them lines of communication open.'

Baily's statement above is in reference to how OCGs deal, interact, and sanction those actors who are the face of legitimate society, political figures, professional services, and established business owners. Arron, who is also Baily's associate, adds to the conversation and points out differences in exchanges:

'[If] say [a civie] was talking shit. He is fuck all. [He] would get a slap, end of... I have seen the papers print untrue things about me. Saying stuff that pure isn't nice, get me. [However, I cannot] just slap the daftie and be like "[don't] fucking write that shit about me ya dick". [I have to be] more diplomatic.'

Baily, adds:

'Maybe a quite word. If you know people that have stuff on him, then say, contact them, just let the guy know... [that you] can expose [his secrets] ... no one is squeaky [clean].' – Baily

Blackmail is used to coerce and intimidate a legitimate societal class although its members have skeletons in the cupboard these are unknown except by a few. Their existence gives the OCG opportunities to exact leverage even over them. It would seem that while general members of the public may be sanctioned for such behaviour with minor violence or the threat of violence, those who work in the media or have the power to communicate widely with audiences, may be threatened through emotional blackmail and public shaming. OCGs 'dig dirt' on them first. That

knowledge becomes the nexus through which illegal governance is developed. A journalist's reputation is a key asset without which his credibility is diminished. Illegal governance as this case illustrates can extend up the class hierarchy bring into disrepute those judged a threat to the OCG. This type of power is more abstract and premised upon emotional and social norms as opposed to fear of physicality.

Those in the political arena, or who are members of the political establishment such as law enforcement are also analysed and identified with in ways designed to assess their vulnerability. Bribes are utilised to accomplish the illegal governance. Baily's cynically argues "money talks mate, you know". Business owners under threat of harsh sanctions do not necessarily capitulate. Zeb's explains that when meeting about a business arrangement where the owner of the business broke the contract to keep up within agreed business arrangements Zeb recounts the governance he then faced:

'One fanny [business owner A] just would not pay up. Man, even if you (the interviewer) seen this gadgy, oft man, face I wouldn't get sick of slapping. No cunt would... [business owner A] wouldn't pay... man, I threatened to tan his [business]. I threatened to [have him assassinated]. Everything man. Tight as fuck with that money... [I even] wedgied⁴ him [on] his [business premises], right in front of [staff]... still man... he knew he had my baw's. That was all [it was]. Fucking knew [his importance to my operation]. Fucking wee dick knew it as well. [eventually I] had to agree to let him fault on it [in return for] me getting my maw and da[d] brand spanking new kitchen put in.' – Zeb's

Zed compromised in the face of this person's intransigence and contextual power. Having permitted the owner to fault of an extortion arrangement he saved face by gaining instead a freely installed kitchen. Zed used a range of tactics against the business owner but had to adapt his sanctioning techniques, and in recognition of the role his partner played, he had to be open to negotiations and agreements alternative settlements in order to keep the partnership in place and at the same time save face and 'get what [he] could' from the deal.

One explanation for this outcome is to argue that well established businesses may have experience of dealing with such customers, recognise that agreed arrangements are unmaintainable, recognise or want acknowledgment for their role in arrangements, and have other resources to draw upon, occasionally including the backing of other OCGs. In addition, Zeb recognised that his legitimate business partner was a vital cog in legitimatising his own activities and also that violence would only draw a high degree of attention from law enforcement, customers, and the general public. This case illustrates the limits of violence and intimidation. It illustrates dependency on others whose support is critical to the viability of the illegal criminal work that attaches to the legal business. This case foregrounds one of Machiavelli's principles which is that once of prince has taken over a place, he can

⁴ an act of pulling a victim's underwear up over his trousers while the victim is wearing them

maintain this power by allowing them to keep their own laws and exact tribute (Buttery and Richer 2003: 427). Machiavelli's realism is based on the view of observing mankind not in terms of what it ought to be, but in terms of how it is. Zeb personifies the Machiavellian advice about not acting virtuously as that will result in his downfall, as so few are virtuous, he would lose power if he did practice virtue. Illegal governance is in many ways quintessentially Machiavellian oriented. .

CONCLUSION

The thesis presented in this paper is that illegal governance is always strategic and multi-dimensional. It's typical 'stakeholder' lies as the literature indicates mainly in areas of deprivation where the sociological conditions that include suspicion of the police permit OCG's to gain purchase. The character and methods of illegal governance have been found to bear similarity with Machiavellian maxims about gaining and maintaining power. The capacity of an OCG to remain active is always under threat. As its power often depends upon subterfuge that can only work when the victim is either unsure of themselves or has holds a stronger tactical position. The latter appears to be the case when the OCG attempts to shift its dominance beyond the class control variables that reside in disadvantaged areas into practices of extortion and bribery which appear as more challenging in terms of the goals being pursued. It is likely that the practice of illegal governance is considerably more complex and difficult than our sample of respondents were able to express in words. The canvas of this paper is comparatively small and arguable exploratory. Our reliance of the testimony of those with direct knowledge of OCG and who still reside in their areas runs the risk of bravado contaminating the validity and reliability of the data their interviews generated. That said our results are supported when they are triangulated against the literature review findings adumbrated in the first section of this paper. Temperamentally we are drawn to a micro-sociological analysis of the discourses in the extracts. We acknowledge the value of a political theory based about the prism of business operations as basis for the application of a reading that is Machiavellian. Our paper therefore draws upon a comparative assumption that illegal governance is informed by the cynicism associated with the political advice about power found in the writings of Machiavelli. Criminal governance and political theory intersect it is suggested.

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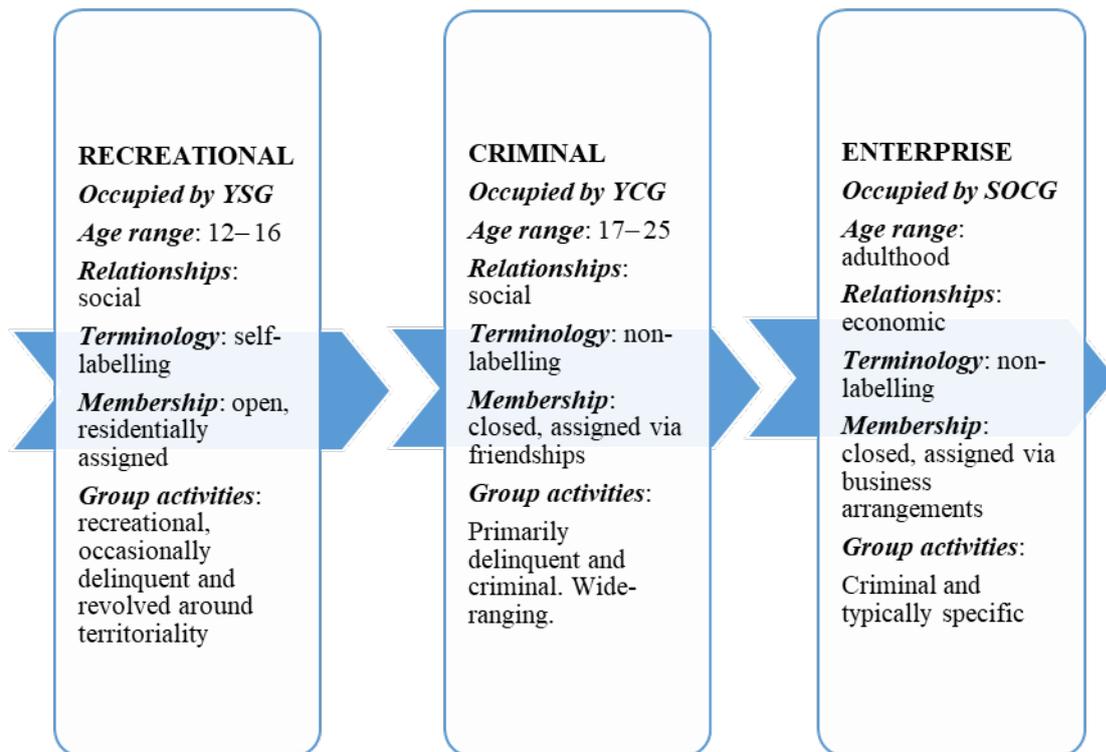


Figure 1: McLean's (2017) Evolving Gang Model