GLOBALIZATION AND CRIME

VOLUME 2

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Transnational Crime, Deviance and Crime Control

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Contents

Volume II: Transnational Crime, Deviance and Crime Control

18

Going Down the Glocal: The Local Context of Organised Crime

Dick Hobbs

> 'For the moment we are not only without an adequate cartography of global capitalism, we lack political maps of our own backyards'. (Cooke 1988, p. 489)

> 'And sometimes a person from the underworld?'
> 'Yes' said the witness, 'some might drop in'.
> 'Pimps and thieves and things?' queried the judge.
> 'Possibly so' replied the gambler. (Landesco 1968, p. 72)

The destruction of national boundaries, and in particular the redundancy of cold war narratives, have resulted in an enormous growth in concern regarding transnational organised crime (see Godson and Olson 1993; Labrousse and Wallon 1993; Williams 1993, 1994; Williams and Savona 1995; Sterling 1994; Calvi 1993). 'Transnational' is especially problematic in referring to organised crime, as it is a term that normally relates to cross border activity involving the explicit exclusion of the State (Hobsbawm 1994). The relationship between the State and serious crime is now established as so varied and indeed ambiguous that the term 'transnational organised crime' only has some meaning when situated within the political science inspired moral panics that have emerged as a response to the fragmentation of the Eastern bloc and found a home within the budget wars of declining western states (Naylor 1995). This paper, while not seeking to engage with the new apocalypse, will highlight a complementary conceptual trend, that of localisation.

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Current trends in the study of organised crime express both the concept's global nature and the redundancy of any perception of organised crime that does not embrace the centrality of transnationality. Yet this trend persists without the hindrance of empirical evidence. For instance at a conference on organised crime in Aix en Provence during the mid-1990s, the Chinese representative explained that organised crime had been eliminated in 1949, and blamed the slackening of social controls and the infiltration of outsiders on its recent manifestation in Chinese society. The French blamed the Russians, and the Interpol representative spoke mysteriously of the threat from the East. Only the Italians saw the phenomenon as a home-grown phenomenon, and for them the Italian experience was the sole authentic one (Borricand 1997). As Potter (1994) expertly explains: 'To suggest that righteous citizens are being perverted, intimidated, and forced into vice by alien forces is far more palatable than suggesting that "native" demands for illicit drugs, sex, and gambling invite the creation of organised crime groups' (p. 10).

The persistence of Alien Conspiracy theories has not been limited to academic debate (cf. Cressey 1972). Threat assessments contrived by the National Criminal Investigation Service (NCIS) have concentrated upon Triads, Yardies, Russians, Colombians, Italians and Turks (NCIS 1993a, 1993b). The identification of Aliens as the principal organised crime threat to British society, is a device that conveniently excludes British society from taking responsibility for its own maladies, conforming to a mythological version of globalisation (Ferguson 1992). An overriding of the particular, that is little more than a reworking of 'mass society' rhetorics crossed with a jingoistic belief that this sceptred isle's crime, like its beef products, is perfectly harmless if only meddling foreigners would desist from dipping their toxic bread in our gravy.

As indicated by Robertson (1992, 1995), globalisation has intensified the distinctiveness and viability of locality as a context for a distinct social order, and as Hobbs (1997) and Ruggiero (1995) argue, the organisation of criminal labour mirrors trends in the organisation of legitimate labour. Local criminal organisation was always deeply entrenched in the cultures of the urban working class, and de-industrialisation and the consequent fragmentation of traditional communities has resulted in their transformation into disordered mutations of traditional proletarian culture (Hobbs 1995). Transactions within the new criminal market, in common with its legitimate counterpart, are within networks of small flexible firms featuring short-term contracts and lack of tenure.

As the dialectic between the local and the global substantiates, the indirect nature of the power wielded by large multinationals confirms elements of flexibility, autonomy and independence that were absent during previous eras dominated by increasingly arcane institutions such as the mob, the firm or the gang. Trading relationships between coalitions of criminals of different national origins involves a coagulation of local interests. It is at the local level that organised crime manifests itself as a tangible process of activity. However,

research indicates that there also exist enormous variations in local crime groups (Hobbs and Dunnighan 1997). It is possible to draw close parallels between local patterns of immigration and emigration, local employment and subsequent work and leisure cultures with variations in organised crime groups. In this article I will concentrate upon two aspects of organised crime at opposite ends of the serious crime spectrum. In the first section I will summarise preliminary findings from Hobbs and Dunnighan that relate to traditional local neighbourhood organised crime in two areas of England. In the second section I will refer to organised crime personnel and suggest that for a contemporary understanding of organised crime the career trajectories suggested by life histories emphasise characteristics of the current serious crime market that require a very different reading from that required of the traditional model.

The Local Firm

Downton

The Downton scene reflects the diversity of both the legitimate economy and the ethnic mix of its population. Since the 1960s the fragmentation of working-class populations and disintegration of extended family networks have been extensive (see Beck 1992). When the material base for such communities is removed, crime becomes located within loose collectivities of *ad hoc* groupings. All that is left behind from the family firms of the 1960s are remnants, some of whom can be found wandering around the public bar in a shiny suit with inappropriate lapels mumbling 'they only hurt their own' into a glass of flat beer. Others however, often trading under the family name operate successfully as individuals, while other family firms have mutated into all-purpose disorganised deviant scavengers operating at the edge of any coherent society, criminal or otherwise; the kind of family recently described as 'Steptoe and Son written by Tarrantino' (Campbell 1996). What is suggested here is not a denial of the importance of families in nurturing and generating deviant collaborations, rather than the fragmentation of both the traditional working-class neighbourhood and of the local labour market has made it difficult for family-based units to establish the parochial dominance previously enjoyed by the feudal warlords of the 1950s and 1960s. 'The dissolution of the traditional working class milieu with its particular domestic arrangements, organisation of leisure time, neighbourhood patterns and oral networks' (Pakulski and Waters 1996, p. 110) has led to the dissolution of those traditional forms of organised crime that were so reliant upon this milieu, and upon traditional family structures in particular. The new entrepreneurial based arenas are supportive of networks that function as fertile terrain for an abundance of entrepreneurial options, both legal and illegal (Ruggiero and South forthcoming). As Potter

(1994) explains, these networks are: '... flexible, adaptive networks that readily expand and contract to deal with the uncertainties of the criminal enterprise' (p. 12).

The new rhythms of consumption and circulation which are bound by new configurations of bureaucratic and technological capital determine social incorporation, and are a direct consequence of the emergence of the market-place as the primary societal dynamic. Any analysis of contemporary society that is harnessed to the boundaries of traditional cultures and subcultures (Horne and Hall 1995) is meaningless, and in the case of organised crime it is apparent that the serious crime community has followed the same trajectory as that of communities based upon traditional industries (Soja 1989). It should be stressed that unlike traditional heavily localised criminal groups, with their overt adherence to the formal relations inherited and adapted from the indigenous socio-economic sphere (Block 1983, ch. 2), the contemporary serious crime community is the 'arch enemy of uniformity' (Bauman 1992, p. 52).

A fine example of the new hybrid form of criminal governance, concerned with market, as opposed to territorial domination, can be found in the case of Patrick Tate, Tony Tucker, and Craig Rolph. Not the first group of criminals to name themselves 'the firm' these three men captured part of the lucrative ecstasy market of south Essex, and were involved in the importation of cannabis. A small disintegrated firm, located amongst a mixed, but largely working-class population relocated some way removed from the traditional inner city alcoves, which along with the neighbourhood and the extended family serve to nurture the traditional family firm. This alliance made vast sums of money in a very short time without having any significant influence upon the local social order. For instance, a near neighbour of Tate, aggravated by the constant barking of the body-building heroin addict's dog, was unaware of Tate's criminal status, or the fact that he often carried a handgun. Until a couple of days before Tate's death the neighbour was threatening to 'go around and sort him out'. In December 1995 Tate, Tucker, and Rolph were shot dead while parked in a Land Rover in a remote country lane. While all three men had violent criminal careers, only one had any significant lineage, retaining close links with his native East London. Their influence was upon local trade, their territory defined by the whims of a predominantly youthful market; the normative local order of south Essex remaining unaffected.

Upton

Despite the destruction of its industrial base, Upton's cultural inheritance is one of a static population grounded in traditional notions of family and neighbourhood, both of which remain coherent and relatively intact.

The principal crime groups reflect this traditional profile by being family based and territorially orientated and are persistent features of the local landscape across generations. Their focus is the drug trade and the protection business generated by the city's highly concentrated leisure industry, and they represent in both style and content an overt, identifiable and heavily localised image of organised criminality that is totally in accord with the city's cultural inheritance (Ianni 1971). The form of protection that is referred to here, is as specific and particular as that considered by Gambetta (1988, 1993), as being central to the development and persistence of the Sicilian Mafia. The creation of an illegal drug market centred on amphetamines and Ecstasy generated a necessity to police the trade in and around the point of consumption; youth orientated pubs and clubs. Unable to turn to more conventional methods of regulating trade and protecting market share, club owners and managers rely heavily upon the violence and violent potential that is central to the existence of the traditional neighbourhood crime groups that are so prominent in Upton. Their reputation and longevity inspire a sense of trust that is crucial to the continued prosperity of any old established firm (Hobbs 1995, chs. 3, 6), while simultaneously enhancing its future prospects by expanding its operations beyond the confines of the old neighbourhood into the newly defined leisure ghettos of the post industrial city (Hollands 1995). The spectacle of physically imposing, frequently uniformed security staff policing both the interiors and public exteriors of pubs and clubs, afford an elevated and highly marketable profile for criminal entrepreneurs seeking to establish a monopoly via the image of super competency implicit to the working of any market that leans heavily upon the marketing of trust (Gambetta 1988, 1993). Unlike the now dated form of protection described by Schelling (1984), the protection that is provided within the context of Upton is extremely ambiguous, in that the entity being protected is essentially a mutant of both market and territorial domains. The ambiguity lies in the question whose market? and whose territory? For although the premises are seldom owned by the crime groups concerned, and their services have been purchased to discourage disorder, when the market is manifested as contested space it can become an arena for old feuds between families and individuals, as well as more innovative conflicts concerning market dominance.

Their primary concern is to translate territorial priorities into market prerogatives, and this is reflected in the essentially conflictual relationships that exist between the groups. The style of organised crime in Upton represents an ideal synergy with the past, and internal order and identity is maintained by 'lifting out' (Giddens 1991, p. 18) and rearticulating those routine traditional strategies that retain coherent market potential, and shift them to the forefront of pragmatic consciousness (see Horne and Hall 1995; Davis 1990, ch. 5; Hobbs 1988). The dilution and eventual

disappearance of the legitimate employment market redefines criminality in the context of the new decentered, unpredictable trading economies created by the harsh post-industrial thrust that has laid waste to traditional communities, 'emptied out' of marketable labour and traditional forms of governance (Wilson 1987).

Overt organised crime in Upton is firmly entrenched in the locations, working practices, occupational cultures and oppositional strategies of the industrial working class, which was in itself a pragmatic response to the demands of the craft and artisan based market-place that became valorised as a distinct life form in the configuration of a material community (Samuel 1981). There are, no doubt, bigger money-makers operating locally, but in terms of their effect on the local order of this city, the impact is made by these traditional neighbourhood firms who provide a form of spatial governance that fits with the immobility of the working-class population, and the continuity of neighbourhood boundaries and the relevance of familial ties. We consider Upton to be an exception. The fact that it is possible to conduct mapping exercises indicating the origins and operations of the city's organised crime groups suggests that compared to Downton where such mapping exercises have been futile for a quarter of a century, Upton's mode of organisation is very simple.

New networks of criminal entrepreneurs, some with ancient affiliations, have no need to limit themselves to the parameters of specific neighbourhoods, and operate across locales, while local thieves and dealers no longer require the benefaction of the local lord of the manor to make a fast Ecu. The Downton scene is diverse, fragmentary and temporaneous: the ancient feuds that mark much of the violence to be found on Upton are largely missing. With so few traditions or reputations to protect, violence at this level in Downton is far more likely to be either economically instrumental or purely recreational[1]. The important issue here is to stress that this is not a wholly 'culturally constituted world' (McCracken 1988). Material success is dependant upon performance within the constraints of the structural dynamics of a local class milieu that is realigned in negotiation with global markets. Consequently the ever evolving ecology of late 20th century urban Britain is as influential upon structures of criminality as it was in the writings of Mayhew (1861) or Booths (1889; cf. Chesney 1968). The east ends and the west ends of our cities, and their signature deviant coalitions were created by the 'ecological communities' (Burgess 1929; cf. Thrasher 1927; Landesco 1968; Morris 1957, chs. 2, 4, 11), of both pre-industrial and industrial worlds, which in turn were framed by the economic exploitation of particular topographies (Hobbs 1988, ch. 5) as well as the municipal strategists of the 19th century (Stedman-Jones 1971, ch. 8) and their contemporary heirs. This is the backcloth upon which contemporary serious crime networks operate.

Hubs

During our, at times, vain search for structure amongst the plethora of deviant identities that inhabit the urban landscape, we became all too aware of the biographies and career trajectories of individuals who were free to seek out money-making opportunities as sole traders, yet will often collaborate with established criminal firms. These individuals operate within multiple cross-cutting networks of criminal and legitimate opportunity: they are not 'gang members', nor have they pledged allegiance to some permanent structure, but constitute hubs of action and information linking networks featuring webs of varying densities. In some cases these individuals are better money-makers than the household names who make up the criminal firms that will be recognisable to any local cab driver.[2]

Bill and Ben

Bill and Ben's criminal careers began separately as local teenage burglars. They started working together in their late teens, robbing offices and factories, operating within various amorphous coalitions of part-time thieves. In his early twenties Bill received two years imprisonment for theft and receiving stolen goods, and on his release he teamed up with Ben and an associate from prison in order to plunder building sites. They worked in collaboration with building workers and contractors to steal large quantities of builders supplies, and then switched to equipment and light plant machinery. With the close collaboration of contractors, in particular, they became over a five-year period wealthy men, and both were able to invest in property. Ben bought a suit and moved into property development funded by mortgage frauds, using family members on his wife's side as a front. During the property boom Ben had invested in the importation of cannabis and by the time his business went bust he was borrowing money to invest in dope. The property market collapsed, his marriage failed, and the familial fallout of the mortgage scam intensified the chaotic divorce proceedings. Ben's lack of funds and an unrelated dispute with his partners assured the decline of the dope importation business which had been located within a legitimate transport company, and Ben joined the massed ranks of small-time local dealers.

Bill meantime had prospered, buying a share in a thriving pub. He teamed up with Ben as part of a loose collectivity of men who plundered lorries in all night car parks. They would borrow a lorry, put false plates on, enter the lorry park, pay the fee to the security guard, park the lorry and the driver would leave. During the night the thieves, who had been playing cards in the back of the lorry, would exit, locate a target or targets and load up their own lorry. At dawn the driver would return and drive thieves and plunder to

the goods yard of Ben's dope partner, change the plates back to the original and distribute the goods via a network of outlets constituted mainly of legitimate businesses.

Bill struck up an association with a group of men importing and dealing in amphetamines. The myriad of connections that this led to in the pub and club fraternity proved more profitable than robbing lorries, an activity from which he gladly retired and opened a secondhand furniture business, using his contacts in the clubs to move large quantities of stolen CDs and designer clothes. Bill, lost in drink, remarried and left the area, and Ben's business partners have become 'heavier' as his wealth has increased.

There are no key players in this network, no ring leaders, bosses or godfathers. It is a co-operative, a series of temporary social arrangements that enables a constantly changing group of actors to make money from predominantly criminal opportunities.

Dave Peters

Dave Peters was an all-purpose thief who by the late 1970s regularly collaborated with various criminal coalitions to import and wholesale cannabis. His criminal career has featured a long-term relationship with Gary Smith. He was involved during the early 1980s with the administration of a team of burglars who were working freelance with Gary Smith, and later went on to assist in the management of a number of prominent pubs that now form a chain across Downton. In the early 1990s, Dave moved to Spain and set up a business as a shipping agent: he deals primarily with consignments to Ibiza and owns both commercial and residential property on the Costa Del Sol. Gary Smith owns clubs on Ibiza and has for at least eight years been importing and distributing Ecstasy and amphetamines, and for about five years he has been involved in importing cocaine. Dave also owns warehouses on the periphery of Downton, which apart from their legitimate use, are also used by thieves as a 'slaughter', a venue for the 'cutting up' of loads and distribution of stolen goods.

Ned

In many respects, Ned is not dissimilar to other successful 50-year-old businessmen. He lives with his second wife and their two children in a £100,000 house; he drives a new Mercedes car, is being pursued by the Inland Revenue for unpaid tax, is a member of his local sports-health club and has a mistress. Where he differs, however, is in the diversity of legal and illegal income-generating activities in which he has been, and is, involved.

Born into a family who had for three generations been successfully involved (both legally and illegally) in taking bets on horse races, he had, as

a young man, been accustomed to having access to large sums of ready cash. However, on leaving school with a handful of GCEs and CSEs, he found the small fixed wage he received as a trainee shop manager insufficient to satisfy his developing fondness for women, gambling, drinking bourbon and smoking cannabis. With requests for cash rebuffed by his father, who told him that 'you've to stand on your own two feet', Ned sought additional sources of income. He became a regular visitor to greyhound racing 'flapping' tracks where he quickly became involved in the doping of dogs and the fixing of races. Using pseudonyms and travelling widely, his betting on fixed races started to generate the income he desired. However, he sought greater rewards. Using the proceeds of a win on a fixed race, he bought enough cannabis to set himself up as a small dealer in the predominantly rural clubs and pubs that he regularly visited to listen to folk music. Initially dealing to friends and close acquaintances, within months he had established a small distribution network, directly employed three others and was able to leave his paid employment. Through that drug network, Ned met Angus who was part of an active burglary team targeting 'good quality houses'. Over the next two years he bought stolen property from Angus and others who had learned of his abilities to sell-on virtually any item through the extensive network of contacts he had built up by his drug trading and his gambling at dog and horse race tracks throughout the UK and Ireland.

The good luck ran out when someone whom the police had caught in possession of ten crates of stolen whisky, bought from Ned, informed on him. Ned was sentenced to nine months for handling stolen goods. On release, he set himself up as a jobbing plumber (having learned the basics from a family friend) and quickly became reasonably prosperous. Within two years he was employing a dozen or so men and, by paying backhanders to 'oil the wheels', successfully tendering for large plumbing contracts. At the same time, Angus introduced him to a wider circle of criminal contacts – some of who were part of a gang involved in armed robberies at sub-post offices.

Having found prison a 'devastating experience', Ned believed it might be useful, if he was arrested again, to have a bargaining tool with which to alleviate the consequences of the situation. He decided therefore, to inform on the robbery team. He approached a police detective he had met at a social event and, over a period of months, provided information that eventually led to the arrest of a number of gang members. Although money was not his motivation for doing so, he found the rewards that the police paid for information a useful addition to his income. Ned has maintained relationships with police officers since that time – informing 'as and when necessary'. His informing activities went undetected by his criminal acquaintances, and throughout the 1970s and 1980s Ned continued to dispose of stolen property – anything from an industrial generator to a lorry-load of toys. During this period his legitimate business activities had their ups and downs and, while continuing to run the plumbing business, he briefly

diversified into the hire of plant and the selling of upholstery. Neither proved viable and, after selling them at a loss, he concentrated on consolidating his plumbing business.

With the awarding of plumbing contracts within the UK and Europe, his network of contacts grew. Many of those he met through legitimate activities were wealthy and it was not unusual for Ned to be invited to their homes. Sometimes, if he thought he could make a reasonable amount of money, he later arranged for their homes to be broken into and have items he specified stolen. Believing dealing in drugs to be 'too risky' and likely to get him a substantial prison sentence if caught, Ned had not resumed dealing on his release from prison. However, during the 1980s while working on a contract in Holland he was approached by a group of criminals whom he knew by reputation only. 'You could not refuse these people unless you wanted to end up badly beaten or worse' and on two occasions he allowed a work van to be driven into the UK from Europe by a third party. Although never directly told what was being smuggled he had little doubt and was 'well rewarded' for his 'assistance'.

By the end of the 1980s Ned was relatively well off. Nevertheless, during the 1990s, while continuing with his flourishing legitimate business activities, he is persistently on the look out for supplementary sources of income. Provided he assesses the activity to have a low risk factor, he will still buy and sell stolen property, dabble in selling counterfeit currency or any other commodity that will return a profit. However, most days of the week Ned can be found at his health club where he is considered by the staff as a businessman reaping the rewards of a successful career.

Discussion

The flexibility that is apparent within the contemporary serious crime 'community' assures that there is considerable scope for innovative engagements with the market. These engagements create disintegrated criminal firms unfettered by 'nostalgic paradigms' (Robertson 1995), or the shackles of arcane practices, and are typified by their flexible nature and increasingly unpredictable temperament. They are operating within multiple, interwoven networks of legitimate and illegitimate opportunity constituting both personal criminal networks and specific activity networks, and as Potter (1994) notes, these networks are: 'small, fragmented, and ephemeral enterprises (which) tend to populate illegal markets – not large corporate syndicates' (p. 13). Within the drug market in particular, trade is carried out between networks of these small flexible firms, for disorganised crime mirrors disorganised capitalism, in that the indirect nature of the power exercised by large transnationals confirms elements of flexibility and adaptability amongst smaller structures (Lash and Urry 1994).

The heritage of locales such as in Upton, that are steeped in traditional notions of criminality established by the precedents of indigenous markets, yet succeed in simultaneously engaging with contemporaneous criminal opportunities, is an explicit acknowledgement of the distinct characteristics inherent in local demographics, of variations in demand, of the indigenous utility of space, and of the power inherent in the notion of a distinct homogeneous and identifiable enacted environment of local serious criminal activity. Cumulatively, this empowers organised crime with the capacity to summon some retrospective order, and inject it into a lifeworld that is prone to chaotic, apparently incoherent interludes (Reuter 1984). By blending their experiences of the enacted environments of contemporary serious crime markets with this sense of 'retrospective unity' (Bauman 1992, p. 138), a generalised recipe of locality (Robertson 1995, p. 26) relying heavily upon an invented tradition (Anderson 1983) is created.

However, in Downton, the territory that defined and shaped organised crime groups has disintegrated, and serious crime become removed from the territories that spawned its most prominent practitioners and their elementary forms of organisation (King 1991, p. 6). As Morris (1957, ch. 11) has so clearly indicated, the specificities of local housing policies are crucial in understanding the distribution of delinquency (cf. Baldwin and Bottoms 1976). In the case of organised crime groups, both Downton's municipal housing policy, and the region's private housing market has succeeded in distributing the serious crime community and its progeny over a wide, amorphous territory. This instability along with the globalisation of legitimate markets, has speeded the disintegration of traditional cultures (Bursik 1986), and the fact of global drug markets has contributed significantly to the elimination of traditional criminal territories and their accompanying historic practices, feuds, and alliances. Consequently organised crime groups as social systems have been stretched across time and space, their practitioners residing upon a socio-economic terrain indistinct from that occupied by civilians, and contrasting with all prior forms of criminality: '... in respect of their dynamism, the degree to which they undercut traditional habits and customs, and their global impact' (Giddens 1991, p. 1). In Downton with the exception of entrepreneurial youth gangs, it is quite simply impossible to exchange territorial superiority for market domination, and the drug market is an essentially disintegrated sector. The paradox is that the alleged emergence of transnational crime federations has created markets best served by 'vertically disintegrated networks of small firms engaged in transaction rich linkages of market exchanges' (Lash and Urry 1994, p. 23).

The dialectic between the local and the global (Giddens 1990, p. 64, 1991, p. 22) epitomises and underlines markets in both the legitimate and illegitimate spheres where complex affinities between global and local spaces are negotiated, creating an enacted environment consisting of indigenous renditions of global markets (Robins 1991). This environment is where: