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Organised crime, occupations and opportunity

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This paper elaborates upon occupations, work relations, work settings, and their connection with organised crime activities. The analysis is based upon data from 120 case studies from the Dutch Organised Crime Monitor, involving 1623 suspects. The paper describes the different kinds of occupations encountered in cases of organised crime and the main characteristics of these occupations. Furthermore, the paper describes in more detail four cases of organised crime that illustrate the embeddedness of certain organised crime activities in work relations and work settings. Following Mars,¹ the paper analyses both the grid dimension and the group dimension of certain occupations and work settings. The paper concludes that social relations as well as settings and opportunity structures provide structure to the organisation of many forms of crime, including organised crime.

Keywords: organised crime; occupations; opportunity theory; social network analysis; criminal careers; theory

1. Organised crime, occupations and opportunity

Criminal career research has made great progress over the last two decades, yet many studies still focus primarily on juveniles, adolescents, and high-volume crime.² The abundance of longitudinal research into these mainstream issues is not paralleled by a similar abundance of thorough empirical research into different types of offenders, particularly adult offenders, and

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1. Gerald Mars, *Cheats at Work: An Anthropology of Workplace Crime* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1982).
2. E.g. Alfred Blumstein, Jacqueline Cohen, Jeffrey A. Roth and Christy A. Visher, eds., *Criminal Careers and Career Criminals* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1986); Terence P. Thornberry, ed., *Developmental Theories of Crime and Delinquency*, *Advances in Criminological Theory*, Vol. 7 (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1996); Marc LeBlanc and Rolf Loeber, 'Developmental Criminology Updated', in *Crime and Justice: Review of Research 23*, ed. Michael Tonry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998): 155–98; Alex R. Piquero, David P. Farrington and Alfred Blumstein, 'The Criminal Career Paradigm: Background and Recent Developments', in *Crime and Justice. A Review of Research 30*, ed. Michael Tonry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003): 137–83; David P. Farrington, 'Developmental and Life-Course Criminology: Key Theoretical and Empirical Issues – the 2002 Sutherland Award Address', *Criminology* 41 (2003): 221–55; David P. Farrington, ed., *Integrated Developmental and Life-Course Theories of Offending*, *Advances in Criminological Theory*, Vol. 14. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2005); John H. Laub, 'Edwin Sutherland and the Michael-Adler Report: Searching for the Soul of Criminology Seventy Years Later', *Criminology* 44 (2006): 235–58; Terrie E. Moffitt, 'A Review of Research on the Taxonomy of Life-Course Persistent and Adolescence-Limited Offending', in *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory*, *Advances in Criminological Theory*, Vol. 15, eds. Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright and Kristie R. Blevins (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 502–21; Akiva M. Liberman, ed., *The Long View of Crime: A Synthesis of Longitudinal Research* (New York: Springer, 2008).

different kinds of crime, particularly organised crime and white-collar crime.³ However, recent research into criminal careers in organised crime has generated several interesting findings that challenge basic received wisdoms of criminal career research. Quantitative and qualitative research into the criminal careers of about 1000 offenders who were involved in 80 extensively analysed cases of organised crime draws attention to people – without any appreciable criminal history – in conventional jobs who switch careers, also later in life.⁴ For instance, a significant number of (ring) leaders and nodal offenders had made a switch from a legal occupational background to organised crime. Furthermore, the involvement of several starters in organised crime was explained by work-related contacts, underlying criminal co-operation. These research findings suggest that occupations,⁵ work relations and work settings might be salient in promoting certain pathways into organised crime.

Many studies on organised crime tend to draw a sharp distinction between licit and illicit activities and between the legitimate world and the underworld. Some studies focus on infiltration of licit economic sectors by organised crime, while other studies tend to stress symbiosis and ‘interfaces’ between legal and illegal actors. Passas,⁶ for instance, developed a typology of various connections between legal and illegal actors, from antithetical to symbiotic interfaces.

In this paper, we elaborate upon occupations, work relations, work settings, and their connection with organised crime activities. The analysis is based upon the data from 120 case studies from the Dutch Organised Crime Monitor, involving 1623 suspects (Section 1.1). Section 1.2 describes the different kinds of occupations encountered in cases of organised crime and the main characteristics of these occupations. Section 1.3 describes in more detail four cases of organised crime that illustrate the embeddedness of certain organised crime activities in work relations and work settings.⁷ Our cases include several striking examples of organised crime

3. E.g. David Weisburd and Elin Waring, *White-Collar Crime and Career Criminals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Nicole Leeper Piquero and Michael L. Benson, ‘White Collar Crime and Criminal Careers: Specifying a Trajectory of Punctuated Situational Offending’, *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 20 (2004): 148–65; Letizia Paoli, *Mafia Brotherhoods: Organized Crime, Italian Style* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Nicholas Dorn, Michael Levi, and Leslie King, ‘Literature Review on Upper Level Drug Trafficking’, in *Home Office Online Report 22/05* (London: Home Office, 2005); Carlo Morselli, ‘Structuring Mr. Nice: Entrepreneurial Opportunities and Brokerage Positioning in the Cannabis Trade’, *Crime, Law and Social Change* 35 (2001): 203–44; Ibid., ‘Career Opportunities and Network-Based Privileges in the Cosa Nostra’, *Crime, Law and Social Change* 39 (2003): 383–418; Ibid., *Contacts, Opportunities, and Criminal Enterprise* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Darrell Steffensmeier and Jeffery T. Ulmer, *Confessions of a Dying Thief: Understanding Criminal Careers and Criminal Enterprise* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Aldine, 2005); Neal Shover and Andy Hochstetler, *Choosing White-Collar Crime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

4. See, Edward R. Kleemans and Christianne J. De Poot, ‘Criminal Careers in Organized Crime and Social Opportunity Structure’, *European Journal of Criminology* 5 (2008).

5. For the complex relationship between crime and work, see, Jeffrey Fagan and Richard B. Freeman, ‘Crime and Work’, in *Crime and Justice. A Review of Research* 25, ed. Michael Tonry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 225–90; Akiva M. Liberman, ed., *The Long View of Crime: A Synthesis of Longitudinal Research* (New York: Springer, 2008).

6. Nikos Passas, ‘Cross-Border Crime and the Interface between Legal and Illegal Actors’, *Security Journal*, no. 16 (2003): 19–38.

7. In the criminological literature, ‘occupational crime’ involves crimes committed as a result of an opportunity presented during lawful professional practice, e.g. Garry Green, *Occupational Crime* (Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1997), for example, corruption by civil servants, environmental pollution and fraud. The term ‘workplace crime’ relates to conventional crimes (for example, abuse or stealing from a colleague) that are committed at work. These crimes are not necessarily connected to a specific opportunity that is presented by a specific occupation.

activities that are embedded in the existing work relations and work settings. These cases do not concern ‘interfaces’ between criminal businesses and legitimate occupations, yet offenders who engage in organised crime in the context of their daily work. For instance, airline staff members who engage in smuggling cocaine or a group of financial and tax advisors who – in the slipstream of their legitimate activities – systematically collaborate to defraud the tax authorities. Following Mars,⁸ this section analyses both the grid dimension and group dimension of certain occupations and work settings. The paper ends with a reflection on the most important research findings (Section 2).

1.1 Data: Dutch organised crime monitor

The main sources for this ongoing research project are files of closed Dutch police investigations of criminal groups, often spanning a period of several years.⁹ From 1996 to 2006, we systematically analysed 120 large-scale investigations (40 case studies per sweep). Each case study always starts with structured interviews with police officers and public prosecutors. After these interviews we analyse and summarise the police files. When describing and analysing these files, an extensive checklist is used that elaborates upon the following leading questions: What is the composition of the group and how do offenders cooperate? What kinds of illegal activities do they engage in and how do they operate? How do they interact with the opportunities and risks presented by their environment? What are the proceeds of the criminal activities and how do they spend these proceeds? Unobtrusive police methods, such as transcripts of wiretaps and data obtained from police observations, and interrogations of victims and offenders, often provide us with a detailed and interesting picture of the social world of organised crime.

Following three data sweeps, we have now collected a wide cross-section of 120 cases about the various forms of organised crime,¹⁰ involving 1623 suspects. The major areas of business of organised crime groups in The Netherlands boil down to ‘transit crime’: international smuggling activities – drug trafficking, smuggling illegal immigrants, human trafficking for sexual exploitation, arms trafficking, trafficking in stolen vehicles, and other transnational illegal

8. Mars, *Cheats at Work*.

9. For more information, see, Edward R. Kleemans and Henk Van de Bunt, ‘The Social Embeddedness of Organized Crime’, *Transnational Organized Crime* 9 (1999): 19–36; Ibid., ‘The Social Organisation of Human Trafficking’, in *Global Organized Crime: Trends and Developments*, ed. Dina Siegel, Henk Van de Bunt, and Damián Zaitch (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003); Henk Van de Bunt and Edward R. Kleemans, ‘Transnational Organized Crime: New Directions for Empirical Research and Public Policy’, in *Punishment, Places, and Perpetrators: Developments in Criminology and Criminal Justice Research*, eds. Gerben Bruinsma, Henk Elffers, and Jan de Keijser (Columpton: Willan Publishing, 2004): 198–211.

10. In the literature, we find a continually recurring discussion on whether organized crime should be defined in terms of characteristics of groups or of criminal activities. For an overview, see, Letizia Paoli, ‘The Paradoxes of Organized Crime’, *Crime, Law and Social Change* 37 (2002): 51–97; Cyrille Fijnaut and Letizia Paoli, eds., *Organized Crime in Europe: Concepts, Patterns and Control Policies in the European Union and Beyond* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2004). In the organised crime monitor, organised crime is mainly distinguished from terrorism, corporate crime, group crime and other types of crime by the characteristics of the groups involved. Following the Fijnaut research group, Cyrille Fijnaut et al., *Organised Crime in the Netherlands* (The Hague/London/Boston: Kluwer Law International, 1998), groups are considered as organised crime groups when they are focused primarily on obtaining illegal profits; systematically commit crimes with serious damage for society; and are reasonably capable of shielding their criminal activities from the authorities. Shielding illegal activities from the authorities is made possible by using various strategies such as: corruption, violence, intimidation, storefronts, communication in codes, counter surveillance, media manipulation, the use of experts such as notaries public, lawyers, accountants.

activities, such as money laundering and evasion of taxes (cigarette smuggling, European Community fraud, for example).¹¹

It is important to note here that – compared to other countries – Dutch criminal investigations provide a lot of ‘objective’ evidence on offender behaviour, due to the extensive use of wiretapping, observation techniques and other special investigation methods, and the absence of plea bargaining. Having access to the original police files, the evidence can be checked to a large extent by the researchers themselves.

1.2 Occupations as the basis for criminal co-operation

Between 1730 and 1778 bands of mobile bandits, publicly known as the ‘Bokkeryders’, terrorised the lower Meuse, the rural area enclosed by the towns of Maastricht (The Netherlands), Aix-la-Chapelle, Gulik, and Roermond.¹² In the middle of the night, they staged (violent) raids against churches, farms, inns, rectories, and monasteries. It took the authorities of this area, fragmented into several jurisdictions, more than forty years to contain this form of banditry, through arrests, trials and executions on a massive scale in the hometowns of the accused.

Analysing the history of Bokkeryders, Blok¹³ investigated among other things the occupational background of these robbers. They turned out not to be mobile bandits, lacking hearth and home, but ordinary people with local roots, often having a home, a wife and children. They were born and raised in the same area, where the robberies occurred and were often familiar with their victims in their daily lives. The majority of the offenders were artisans (skinners, saddlers, shoemakers, iron-workers, spinners, weavers) and retail merchants (peddlers, carters, cattle dealers).¹⁴ Blok suggests that this overrepresentation¹⁵ is probably due to the opportunities these occupations offered for these specific criminal activities. Skinners, for instance, played a dominant role in these criminal groups. It was their job to kill sick animals, to dispose the dead cattle, to flay horses, and to remove the other organic remnants from public areas.¹⁶ Being on the road frequently, day and night, they acquired much knowledge about the area and about potential victims and targets, and they did not evoke suspicion, when travelling at night, transporting bags with loot.

11. This type of organised crime is primarily concerned with the provision of illegal goods and services. Hence, transit crime differs fundamentally from the archetype of organised crime that dominates the North American literature: ‘Mafia-type’ organisations which have gained control of certain economic sectors or regions, acting as ‘alternative government’, Paoli, ‘The Paradoxes of Organized Crime’, 71; Fijnaut and Paoli, eds., *Organized Crime in Europe*, 603–21; Edward R. Kleemans, ‘Organized Crime, Transit Crime, and Racketeering’, in *Crime and Justice in the Netherlands. Crime and Justice. A Review of Research*, ed. Michael Tonry and Catrien Bijleveld (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 163–215.

12. Florike Egmond, *Underworlds. Organised Crime in the Netherlands, 1650–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1993); Anton Blok, *Honour and Violence* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2001).

13. Blok, *Honour and Violence*, 29–68.

14. Lange discusses the occupational background of the members of four German groups from around the same period and particularly reveals the overrepresentation of mobile professions. Besides the opportunities that these professions offer for criminal activities, Lange stresses social exclusion too, Katrin Lange, ‘Many a Lord is Guilty, Indeed for Many a Poor Man’s Dishonest Deed: Gangs of Robbers in Early Modern Germany’, in *Organised Crime in Europe: Concepts, Patterns and Control Policies in the European Union and Beyond*, ed. Cyrille Fijnaut and Letizia Paoli (Dordrecht: Springer, 2004), 113–21.

15. In those times, the majority of people were farmers or day labourers. Only 20% of the robbers fell into this occupational category.

16. They also assisted the executioner in torture, in his work on the scaffold, and in transporting and burying executed people.

Furthermore, Blok¹⁷ concludes that occupations influenced the places where people lived as well as their marriage opportunities, particularly for infamous occupations such as ‘ritual unclean’ skimmers. As a consequence, these artisans constituted a widespread, regional and endogamous network. The bands in the first periods were characterised by various family relations, including the involvement of wives, sisters and daughters.¹⁸ Work, social and criminal ties were interconnected and criminal cooperation was facilitated by the opportunities provided by work relations and work settings.

1.2.1 Occupational backgrounds in organised crime

Analyzing all 120 cases of the Organised Crime Monitor, we listed all the occupations of the 1623 suspects, if known.¹⁹ Obviously, this list of occupations is far more heterogeneous than the list produced by Blok on the agricultural society of the 18th century. The 120 cases are also far more heterogeneous than the criminal gangs that Blok analysed.

The list features a very wide range of occupations and professions, from cleaner to company director. Further consideration shows that, despite diversity, there are several common characteristics. First, the most important common characteristic is that a relatively large number of occupations involve some degree of mobility, transport or logistics: taxi driver, car dealer, truck driver, director of a transport company, garage owner, warehouse employee, dock worker, owner of a camper leasing company, director of a container business, (airport) baggage handler, or steward. A second characteristic is that, in many cases, these offenders are not in salaried employment, and are able to operate relatively independently because of the nature of their job or their (hierarchical) position. This refers to directors of businesses (usually small ones), independent professionals (tax adviser, lawyer, accountant, pharmacist) and, in a few cases, to senior individuals in companies and banks. Thirdly, it is striking that a relatively large number of occupations are ‘social’, facilitating the search for suitable co-offenders. Added to the taxi drivers and lawyers already mentioned, these occupations include employees and owners of cannabis outlets (coffee shops), sex club operators, porters, bodyguards, bar owners, disco owners, gold dealers, and directors of car lease businesses.

The list of occupations provided above represents just an inventory of the occupations practised by the various offenders. There are several ways in which occupations and criminal activities may be interrelated. First, occupations or legal activities may be a cover-up for criminal activities. For instance, in one of our cases a video shop is used as a cover for underground banking.²⁰ Secondly, occupations, professions or businesses may be involved in criminal activities through specific expertise or facilitating services. For instance, a transport company that transports drugs from Morocco, or a lawyer who performs illegal activities for his client. A third kind of involvement is the major focus of this paper: the embeddedness of criminal activities in work relations. The social embeddedness of many organised crime

17. Blok, *Honour and Violence*, 33.

18. *Ibid.*, 32–5.

19. We listed the occupations mentioned in the police files. Hence, occupation may relate to education or to licit activities before or during the engagement in criminal activities. Furthermore, the cases contain a large number of suspects without an occupation or with unknown occupational background. Practising an occupation is by no means necessary for engaging in organised crime activities.

20. See for more case material from the Organised Crime Monitor on underground banking, Henk Van de Bunt, ‘The Role of Hawala Bankers in the Transfer of Proceeds from Organized Crime’, in *Organized Crime: Culture, Markets and Policies*, ed. Dina Siegel and Hans Nelen (New York: Springer Sciences and Business Media, 2008).

activities is rather well-documented.²¹ The next section focuses on criminal activities that are embedded in work relations and work settings. We will elaborate in more detail on four specific cases, describing both the grid and group dimensions of certain occupations and work settings.²²

1.3 Criminal cooperation within work settings

All occupations present specific opportunities for criminal behaviour. For example, knowledge or contacts obtained during licit activities may be used for criminal purposes. Related to transit crime, certain occupations are a fertile breeding ground for illegal smuggling activities. For example, one of the main figures in a major cannabis smuggling operation had at some point in his previous life been a fruit dealer and had done a lot of business with Morocco and Lebanon. Based on his social contacts and logistical knowledge, he was soon able to organise a brisk cannabis importation operation from Lebanon and Morocco. This is a simple example of how licit activities provide the opportunities as well as the social contacts needed for illegal activities.

Several cases illuminate how colleagues can ultimately become 'partners in crime'.²³ Case 1 is an example of normal licit activities which provide opportunities for systematically smuggling drugs:

This case essentially relates to the transportation of ecstasy pills in the so-called pilot trolleys from The Netherlands to the United States by airline staff. Furthermore, cocaine is transported from the Caribbean to The Netherlands. Money is also smuggled back to The Netherlands.

The collaborative venture involves airline staff, known from the local gay scene. In the past, one of the main suspects had also worked as a purser for an airline company. At the airport, airline staff uses a separate staff passage to move from landside to airside, and vice versa in the United States. In the past, checks on this passage were negligible. The ecstasy pills are simply transported in pilot trolleys; the offenders make no effort at all to hide the pills any further. As a consequence, of the tightening up of checks at staff exits, a different mode of operation is adopted (Case 1).

It almost goes without saying that the daily activities performed by these individuals, in combination with their specific privileges, presented them with the ideal opportunity to smuggle drugs. Just as people were oblivious to skimmers operating at any time of the day or night, so the travel behaviour of these smugglers went without notice. What is interesting in this case is that existing contacts with colleagues are also used to enter into new collaborative relations:

21. E.g. Joseph L. Albini, *The American Mafia: Genesis of a Legend* (New York: Appleton, 1971); Francis A.J. Ianni and Elizabeth Reuss-Ianni, *A Family Business: Kinship and Social Control in Organized Crime* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972); William J. Chambliss, *On the Take: From Petty Crooks to Presidents* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1978); James O. Finckenauer and Elin J. Waring, *Russian Mafia in America: Immigration, Culture, and Crime* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998); Kleemans and Van de Bunt, 'The Social Embeddedness'; F. Varese, *The Russian Mafia: Private Protection in a New Market Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 737–67; Sheldon Zhang, 'Enter the Dragon: Inside Chinese Human Smuggling Operations', *Criminology* 40 (2002); Morselli, *Contacts, Opportunities, and Criminal Enterprise*; Mangai Natarajan, 'Understanding the Structure of a Large Heroin Distribution Network: A Quantitative Analysis of Qualitative Data', *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 22 (2006): 171–92.

22. Mars, *Cheats at Work*.

23. The four cases that are described in more detail concern monthly ecstasy transports (14 observed ecstasy transports; total estimated amount of pills: 700,000), systematic tax fraud (over a 5-year period; total estimated loss: more than 100 million Euro), frequent cocaine transports (monthly or every two weeks; estimated amount of 15–40 kilo per transport), and oil fraud (over a 3-year period; total estimated loss: more than 40 million Euro).

At a certain moment, courier Y says he does not want to be involved in ecstasy transports any more. Because of this, his ex boyfriend, who is also a steward, is asked whether he is willing to do this (Case 1).

In the meantime, another crew member (C) has been found who is willing to do transports. C is coincidentally rostered on a flight to a Canadian airport and A instructs him to see how checks are carried out there, because A has a contact in Canada. Later on, money transports to The Netherlands are also carried out from this airport (Case 1).

Contrary to the fruit dealer, who crossed over to illegal trade and, as such, had to use other social contacts and different modes of transport, these stewards continue to do their normal work alongside their criminal activities. The step from steward to ecstasy smuggler seems a remarkably big one. In several other cases, the transition from 'licit' to 'illicit' was far less radical. The illicit nature of activities was an extension of licit professional activities or could barely be distinguished from them. Three different examples from our case file might illuminate this: the transport company that transports legal cargos, but also systematically transports illegal cargos and becomes part of a smuggling organisation; the tax and banking specialists, experts in developing tax constructions, who use their collaboration to regularly pull off a fraud trick; or baggage basement staff that collaborates on the misuse of the airport's baggage handling system, in order to smuggle cocaine.

The occupations indicated so far have the following in common: international contacts and travel movements are a part of the daily activities. This makes these occupations attractive for smuggling activities. However, it is striking that certain privileges are linked to these occupations too, as a result of which these professionals have a relatively high degree of freedom of movement or freedom of action. This autonomy is not only vital for the performance of their tasks and duties, but also presents opportunities to overstep the mark unnoticed. The anthropologist Mars elaborated on this in more detail in his book 'Cheats at Work'.²⁴ If one wants to understand the nature and extent of work-related crime, Mars states it is important to consider both the freedom or discretion the individual has (or does not have) in his work (the *grid dimension*) and the collective of which he forms part (the *group dimension*).²⁵

The more autonomy people have and, as such, are also able to determine the rules and decide how and when to use their time, the more opportunities there are for abuse, as well. This often involves well-paid professions with a high degree of trust. The offenders would seem to be above suspicion.

Case 2 is an intriguing example of how such professionals meet each other in international settings and use their knowledge and contacts in illegal ventures, in order to cheat the tax authorities out of huge amounts of money:

Besides their normal licit activities, an international group from the social world of 'haute finance' are also involved in large-scale tax fraud. The fraud trick that is performed in different ways and in different contexts consists, basically, of 'corporate vampirism'. The group buys a private limited company and makes sure that existing profits change into losses, through buying a.o. – hugely overvalued – (exploitation) rights. Although, these rights are written down for depreciation, they do

24. Mars, *Cheats at Work*.

25. As an anthropologist, Mars places great emphasis on culture, but we prefer to reserve the grid dimension for the organisational structure and formal social control, while reserving the group dimension for informal social control (and organisational culture). We will also disregard his interesting typology, which is derived from ecology (donkeys, wolves, hawks, vultures). This typology may be enlightening for Mars' purposes, but loses its value, in our opinion, when applied to crimes often committed in a group context. The distinction between 'hawks' (that hunt alone and do not need to concern themselves overly with the group) and 'vultures' (that operate independently, on the basis of a group with strong cohesion) particularly loses its value in this application and is confusing rather than enlightening. Ibid.

not generate any or barely any revenue at a later date. Almost immediately after buying the company, a large part of the cash balance – actually the money reserved for the corporation tax due – is withdrawn from the company.

The professionals know each other from the financial world. They meet each other at international tax conferences. When they discuss legal affairs, 'creativity is displayed'. Their fraud constructions utilise the legal positions of the individuals concerned and their knowledge of suitable tax regimes, suitable companies and suitable legal constructions. Two professionals also worked for the tax authorities in the past, as a result of which they are familiar with the audit techniques and the timing of these audits (Case 2).

The professionals from this case are tax advisers, lawyers, asset managers and/or directors of companies. They live in an international world in which their day-to-day work consists of looking for legal loopholes and constructions that make it possible to pay the smallest possible amount of tax. Despite the very professional performance of the fraud trick, the tax authorities eventually traced the fraud. This was not due to the alertness of the organisations that were involved. Even for those who work in large organisations, it is striking how much trust is placed in them, and how little monitoring there would seem to be with respect to their activities:²⁶

One of the professionals works for a large bank. From his formal position at this bank, he is able to legally bind the bank to the purchase and sale of legal entities. He abuses this position when buying and selling companies (legal entities) that are used to commit fraud. In a certain period, a system involving stricter monitoring is introduced at the bank. However, the monitoring committee depends largely on material provided by the department, managed by the individual concerned. The main reason for turmoil is a stupid mistake, when a briefcase with cash is left and found in the garage (Case 2).

The opposite of this group of offenders is a work-related criminal network that does not protect itself through autonomy, but through strong group loyalty. The *group dimension* of an occupation relates to the nature of contacts between colleagues and the division between the group and the outside world. For example, miners and dock workers are regarded as typical examples of occupations with a strong group dimension, while entrepreneurs, scientists and artists are examples of occupations with a weak group dimension. What is interesting about the group dimension is that strong social cohesion may discourage deviant behaviour (positive social control) but can promote it too, when different norms apply within a certain group. This is also evident from Case 3. This case would seem to be an example of a relatively closed world of low-paid employees with plenty of opportunities to make illegal extra earnings and also a certain tolerance towards the extra earnings of this nature. The collective dimension is also evident from the fact that a number of employees from the same company are involved in the criminal activities at hand:

Scheduled flight traffic is used to smuggle cocaine from the Caribbean to The Netherlands, with the collaboration of staff from a baggage handling company. Criminal activities in the baggage basement at the airport are closely connected to the daily work performed by the offenders, i.e. unloading airplanes. These staff hide backpacks with cocaine in suitcases that are transported in containers, and sometimes also in individual suitcases. In general, this concerns transfer baggage. In the baggage basement, staff remove the suitcase from the container, remove the backpack with cocaine from the suitcase, and return the suitcase to the system. A member of staff takes the backpack with cocaine from airside to landside via a turnstile, where no physical checks are performed on incoming or outgoing staff. The members of staff work on airside, while the canteen is

26. A parallel could be drawn here with the 'control balance' theory developed by Charles R. Tittle, *Control Balance: Toward a General Theory of Deviance* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), a recent general theory about criminal behaviour which has also been applied to organisational crime, Nicole Leeper Piquero and Alex R. Piquero, 'Control Balance and Exploitative Corporate Crime', *Criminology* 44 (2006): 397–429.

situated on landside. During breaks, staff members walk over to landside to eat, as a result of which no one notices people walking back and forth between airside and landside. On landside, there is a delivery road, a public road with a lot of incoming and outgoing traffic. Here, the backpack is passed to another associate (Case 3).

Hence, in this case, the context of licit work, i.e. unloading airplanes, provides the opportunity structure for criminal activities. In baggage handling, it is very difficult to distinguish, whether staff members are engaged in licit activities or in criminal activities. Additional factors are the time pressure when loading and unloading airplanes, the absence of effective checks between the airside and landside, and the 'closed' world of the baggage basement. Investigating officers in Case 3 emphasise the criminal atmosphere in the baggage basement and its 'closed' world, where outsiders are spotted soon.

Just like the occupations that are mentioned by Blok,²⁷ some occupations are better fit for committing some types of crime than others. Occupations that are related to mobility and logistics are a fertile breeding ground for smuggling activities. These occupations do not only provide opportunities for smuggling, but also for concealment. Legitimate reasons for frequent travelling do not evoke suspicion. Mutatis mutandis, the same applies to the aforementioned tax experts. Their core activity, legitimate 'tax planning', is also very close to their core criminal activities, in which they make use of the same knowledge, legal constructions and contacts as in their daily work. This proximity of illegal activities might also account for the intriguing side step of these professionals.

1.3.1 Work settings and organised crime

Work settings present good opportunities to gain trust in someone else when entering into relationships, or to exercise control. Trust is important in organised crime, as these activities involve significant financial and other risks.²⁸ After all, the advantage is that colleagues already know each other and, based on experience or reputation, they can assess whether a person is a suitable co-offender. The position that one occupies in the organisation can sometimes be used to make sure that specific persons are placed in a specific position:

Offender A has a leading role in one of the criminal groups studied, in which four of the six suspects work for the same company. He is a coordinator in a cargo handling company and also prepares the shift rosters. As a result, he is able to make sure that specific people work at specific times. He does not have the power to recruit or dismiss staff. He selects suitable staff members and approaches them. Earnings vary from 5000 to 20,000 Euros per suitcase. The member of staff is rostered in on a specific day. Subsequently, this staff member will be told what the suitcase containing the cocaine looks like and, where it is positioned in the container (Case 3).

Another criminal group, in which 11 of the 13 suspects work for the same company, pay a coordinator to turn a blind eye. He rosters people for the handling of specific flights, based on the information from one of the suspects (X). After some time, X and Y prepare the roster themselves (Case 3).

27. Blok, *Honour and Violence*.

28. See, for example, Peter Reuter, *Disorganized Crime: Illegal Markets and the Mafia* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983); D. Gambetta, *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988); Gary W. Potter, *Criminal Organizations: Vice, Racketeering, and Politics in an American City* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1994); Gerben Bruinsma and Wim Bernasco, 'Criminal Groups and Transnational Illegal Markets: A More Detailed Examination on the Basis of Social Network Theory', *Crime, Law and Social Change* 41 (2004): 79–94; Klaus Von Lampe and Per Ole Johansen, 'Organized Crime and Trust: On the Conceptualization and Empirical Relevance of Trust in the Context of Criminal Networks', *Global Crime* 6 (2004): 159–84.

In many cases, where criminal relations are embedded in work relations and work settings, there are (close) social relationships too. For example, the bonds between the stewards in Case 1 were partly forged in the local gay scene. Other cases also show that work relationships and social relationships coincide:

The professionals from 'haute finance' organise 'tax seminars' for each other at exotic destinations. The main objective is to strengthen the social bonds between collaborators from different parts of the world. The main activities do not consist of lectures or meetings, but of golf, fishing, lunching, and dining. The sizeable police file on this case contains photographs showing the cheerful collaborators in a golf buggy, clearly having a very good time. Later on, successful scams are celebrated together as well. Even an official trophy is produced for each successful scam (Case 2).

Perhaps, this collective dimension may also provide an explanation for collective hubris. What is striking about this case is that, although, the fraud trick was very professional – involving the engagement of various legal entities and licit companies, trust offices, banks and bank accounts in tax havens – it still is a trick that the tax authorities would have to find out sooner or later, while various suspects – with senior positions and high salaries – had a lot to lose. Perhaps, this could be described as some kind of 'groupthink', a phenomenon that is well-known from research on crisis decision-making, when small groups, caught up in the interaction between the members of the group, lose sight of reality, start to adopt different norms and values and collective rationalisations, and display a sense of invulnerability and over-optimism.²⁹

Social cohesion also plays a role in large-scale frauds in business sectors that are dominated by independent entrepreneurs. For example, a large-scale oil fraud case illustrates the important function of social cohesion between fraudulent ship captains:

The fraudulent captains come from a professional group in which many of them know each other and know what is going on. Often, this profession is passed down from father to son. There are also several family connections between the captains who are involved. Indirectly, the captains also know about each other's financial situation. This way, the message spreads easily that money can be earned if defrauded oil from major clients (shipping and airline companies) is passed on to a certain business. A good example involves two brothers, X and Y, who soon find their way to the fraudulent business when they hit hard times. The oil finds its way back into the legal circuit through this fraudulent business (Case 4).

Various fraud cases illustrate that business contacts can be used to easily pass on a certain fraud trick to others, or to carry it out with various co-offenders.³⁰ Business contacts are also important to bring in other companies, which are often based in other countries, to facilitate credible fraud constructions.

2. Conclusion

Research on occupations and organised crime speaks directly to the important theoretical issues such as searching for suitable co-offenders and connections between the licit and the illicit world.³¹ Many studies on organised crime tend to draw a sharp distinction between licit activities and illicit activities and between the legitimate world and the underworld. Some

29. See also, Irving L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1972).

30. For instance, Wayne E Baker and Robert R. Faulkner, 'Diffusion of Fraud: Intermediate Economic Crime and Investor Dynamics', *Criminology* 41 (2003): 1176–83.

31. For a review, see, Albert J. Reiss Jr., 'Co-Offending and Criminal Careers', in *Crime and Justice. A Review of Research*, ed. Michael Tonry and Norval Morris (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), 117–70; Pierre Tremblay, 'Searching for Suitable Co-Offenders', in *Routine Activity and Rational Choice*, ed. Ronald V. Clarke and Marcus Felson (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 17–36; Mark

studies focus on the infiltration or extortion of licit economic sectors by organised crime, while other studies tend to emphasise symbiosis and ‘interfaces’ between legal and illegal actors.³² Our research findings indicate that both worlds may converge. Occupations, work relations and work settings may provide the breeding ground for organised crime activities, particularly transit crime. There are different ways in which occupations may present opportunities for committing organised crime. First, through international contacts and travel movements. Contacts with other countries and other social groups provide ample opportunity to discover and act on certain opportunities for (transit) crime. Examples are occupations involving mobility, transport, and logistics. Secondly, the individual freedom of movement and/or discretion is important. This explains the involvement of directors of (small) businesses, independent professionals and, in some cases, individuals with relative autonomy in larger organisations, such as companies and banks. More trust and autonomy means more opportunity for abuse as well. Thirdly, the social nature of certain occupations is important. Occupations in which people often meet with different people also present many opportunities for encounters with potential co-offenders.

These main characteristics might explain the intriguing transition of some careers³³ and are also relevant in the context of ideas of brokerage – connecting disconnected others – for explaining careers in organised crime.³⁴ Furthermore, occupations offer work relations and work settings that are directly relevant for providing opportunities to search for suitable co-offenders, to gain trust and to exercise control. Social cohesion is important here too. In this context, we referred to the work-related opportunity structures for independent entrepreneurs. Close mutual social relations may cause a snowball effect, as a result of which certain fraud methods are transferred to others or are implemented with various co-offenders.³⁵ In certain ‘closed’ social worlds, different norms may also emerge on what is right and wrong, and rationalisations and justifications may promote and maintain illegal behaviour.³⁶

Social ties cross boundaries between legality and illegality, as do some work settings in which people spend a considerable share of their daily life. Our research findings highlight the salience of social relations, work relations and work settings for criminal activities, also in cases of organised crime. Of course, our empirical findings should not be misinterpreted as findings from a representative sample. Yet, from a theoretical point of view, these findings are important in bridging ideas from the social network theory and opportunity theory. Social relations are influenced by ‘foci of interaction’.³⁷ Social relations do not happen at random but often obey the laws of social and geographical distance, producing a certain kind of clustering based on

(Footnote 31 continued)

Warr, *Companions in Crime: The Social Aspects of Criminal Conduct* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Waring and Weisburd, eds., *Crime and Social Organization*.

32. E.g. Passas, ‘Cross-Border Crime’; Edgar Tjhuus, *Transnational Crime and the Interface between Legal and Illegal Actors: The Case of the Illicit Art and Antiquities Trade* (Nijmegen: Wolf Legal Publishers, 2006).

33. Kleemans and De Poot, ‘Criminal Careers’.

34. E.g. Morselli, ‘Structuring Mr. Nice’, *Ibid.*, ‘Career Opportunities’, *Ibid.*, *Contacts, Opportunities, and Criminal Enterprise*.

35. E.g. Baker and Faulkner, ‘Diffusion of Fraud’.

36. Gresham M. Sykes and David Matza, ‘Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency’, *American Sociological Review* 22 (1957): 664–70; Shadd Maruna and Heith Copes, ‘Excuses, Excuses: What Have We Learned from Five Decades of Neutralization Research?’ *Crime and Justice. A Review of Research* 32 (2005).

37. Scott L. Feld, ‘The Focused Organization of Social Ties’, *American Journal of Sociology* 86 (1981): 1015–35.

geographical distance, ethnicity, education, age, etc.³⁸ For many people, work is also an important focus of interaction. Secondly, social relations and work relations often coincide, either because people find a job through social relations or because working relationships develop into more or less close social relations. Thirdly, the blending of work relations and social relations may also contribute to the effective concealment of illegal activities. For a variety of reasons, potential witnesses may remain silent, look the other way, or feel reluctant to blow the whistle. Effective concealment does not require secret societies. 'Walls of silence' may also emerge in licit worlds that are mobile, dynamic and social.³⁹ Finally, some people seize upon illegal opportunities, while others do not. Clearly, there is both 'agency' and 'opportunity'.⁴⁰ The question why, when confronted with opportunities, some people turn to crime and others do not, and under which conditions, is not resolved and needs further exploration.

Until recently routine activity theory and opportunity theory have focused primarily on street crime, but several theoretical ideas are worthwhile to explore within the context of organised crime.⁴¹ Particularly relevant is Felson's work on routine activity theory and, more recently, his ideas about offender convergence settings:⁴²

An offender convergence setting provides crime structure and continuity – despite instabilities among individuals, groups, or networks... The main point is that some settings facilitate criminal action, whatever the type, however inadvertently, and regardless of the initial reasons that people have entered.⁴³

Although Felson has mainly applied these ideas to street crime and other conventional crimes, it would be important to explore his ideas more widely within the context of the organised crime.⁴⁴ Furthermore, routine activities play a key role in discovering and exploiting opportunities that are presented in daily work settings. By merging ideas from social network theory and opportunity theory,⁴⁵ one might avoid two common fallacies of theories on organised crime: either presenting an 'oversocialised' view on the organisation of crime or an 'undersocialised' and oversimplified

38. E.g. Ronald S. Burt, *Structural Holes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Ibid., *Brokerage and Closure: An Introduction to Social Capital* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

39. Henk Van de Bunt, 'Muren Van Stijlswijgen', in *Drie Perspectieven Op Sociale Controle*, ed. Henk Van de Bunt, René Van Swaeningen, and Pieter Spierenburg (Den Haag: Boom Juridische Uitgevers, 2007), 113–36.

40. John H. Laub and Robert J. Sampson, *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives: Delinquent Boys to Age 70* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

41. See also, Derek B. Cornish and Ronald V. Clarke, 'Analyzing Organized Crimes', in *Rational Choice and Criminal Behavior: Recent Research and Future Challenges*, ed. Alex R. Piquero and Stephen G. Tibbetts (New York: Routledge Press, 2002), 41–62; Henk Van de Bunt and Cathelijne van der Schoot, eds., *Prevention of Organised Crime: A Situational Approach* (Collumpton: Willan Publishing, 2003); Marcus Felson, *Crime and Nature* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2006); Ibid., 'The Ecosystem for Organized Crime', in *HEUNI Papers* (Helsinki: HEUNI, 2006); Edward R. Kleemans, 'Introduction to Special Issue: Organized Crime, Terrorism and European Criminology', *European Journal of Criminology* 5 (2008): 5–12; Carlo Morselli and Julie Roy, 'Brokerage Qualifications in Ringing Operations', *Criminology* 46 (2008): 71–98.

42. E.g. Ronald V. Clarke and Marcus Felson, 'Introduction: Criminology, Routine Activity, and Rational Choice', in *Routine Activity and Rational Choice*, ed. Ronald V. Clarke and Marcus Felson (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 1–14; Marcus Felson, 'The Process of Co-Offending', *Crime Prevention Studies* 16 (2003): 149–17; Ibid., *Crime and Nature*.

43. Felson, *Crime and Nature* 98–99.

44. Ibid., 'The Ecosystem for Organized Crime'.

45. E.g. Morselli and Roy, 'Brokerage Qualifications'.

picture of 'disorganised' crime. Social relations as well as settings and opportunity structures provide structure to the organisation of many forms of crime, including organised crime.

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