

**Exploration of organised crime and
'undermining' in Sweden**

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Contents

1	Introduction.....	2
2	Even in Sweden.....	3
3	Street gangs in Sweden	5
4	Explanations for the growth of a violent street gang culture in Sweden	12
4.1	<i>Social-economic change</i>	12
4.2	<i>Social deprivation and segregation</i>	14
4.3	<i>Disadvantaged areas</i>	15
4.4	<i>Political polarization</i>	17
4.5	<i>Access to weapons</i>	18
4.6	<i>The position of the police</i>	19
5	Other forms of organized crime.....	23
5.1	<i>Drug related crime</i>	23
5.2	<i>Criminal networks and organizations: family-based groups</i>	25
5.3	<i>Criminal networks and organizations: Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMG)</i>	26
5.4	<i>Criminal networks and organizations: the brotherhoods street gangs</i>	28
5.5	<i>Crime nearby</i>	29
6	Tackling crime in Sweden	31
6.1	<i>Working apart together: the Regional Intelligence Centres</i>	31
6.2	<i>The Phase Model: Tackling crime in disadvantaged areas</i>	33
7	Comparison with the Dutch situation	38
7.1	<i>Criminal groups and networks</i>	38
7.2	<i>Social disadvantaged neighbourhoods</i>	39
7.3	<i>Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs</i>	39
	Sources	41

1 Introduction

Organized crime and its consequences for the fabric of society ('undermining') is not only a known phenomenon in the Netherlands, but also in many other countries, among which Sweden is an example.. Undermining is organized crime, but it places particular emphasis on its social effects on society as a whole and on the attractiveness it has on groups of people who cannot be directly considered as participants in organized crime themselves.

A comparison with Sweden is interesting, because the country has a number of characteristics that are similar to those of the Netherlands. For instance: it is a traditionally strongly developed welfare state that is under pressure in various ways, it has a history of openness and goodwill towards developing countries and refugees which at the same time provoke discussion and division, and a moderate, consensus-based political system that has to deal with new forms of polarization and populism.

Officially Sweden has a restrained climate when it comes to drugs (and alcohol), although historically there have been strong ties with the Dutch drugs scene. Since the seventies a lively illegal export trade of mainly synthetic drugs to Sweden has developed.

Sweden has a history of outlaw motorcycle gangs. In the last decades the country has gained experience with policies aimed at reducing and limiting them.

There is also evidence that in 'deprived' immigrant neighbourhoods around the big cities the police have trouble maintaining public order. In a recent report (summer 2017), the Swedish police speak of 61 problem areas, of which 23 are described as 'very problematic'. What they report is a mix of radicalization and crime.

These are all reasons why an exploration of the socio-cultural and social background of undermining in Sweden can be interesting. The objective is to find out which similarities and differences can be identified in the phenomenon itself and in the approach to fight undermining.

It is an exploratory study, that is based on (English) official and scientific reports and articles and on a series of interviews with Swedish respondents from the police and research institutes (see appendix 2).

2 Even in Sweden.....

In December 2017 the Swedish police released figures about gun violence. There were 306 shootings across the country. In these shooting incidents there were 41 deaths and 135 instances of injury. Stockholm and southern Sweden with large cities as Göteborg and Malmö were the regions with the most confirmed shootings: 110 in Stockholm and 92 in the south.¹ The victims are mostly young. According to the police a large proportion of the shootings is judged to be linked to conflicts between criminals. Especially in recent years the number of fatalities as a result of criminal firearm violence has risen sharply (Brå, 2017). The conflicts often revolve around drug deals, (gang) rivalry and revenge (attacks). In the last thirty years Sweden has seen a growth in criminal gangs. Gun violence among young men, who are connected to these gangs, is also on the rise. It's not only gun violence that causes victims. Stabbings, hand grenades and even car bombs are used. The violence is not only aimed at competing gangs, but also at the police. Several police stations and police officers have become the target of hand grenade attacks and shootings. The public also run the risk of getting into the crossfire. In January 2018 a 63-year-old man was killed in Stockholm by a hand grenade that was lost in the street. A Dutch exchange student was hit by a stray bullet during an execution-style killing at a pizza restaurant in Uppsala.²

This all makes street-gang violence a growing concern. The violent incidents are a cause of social anxiety. Apart from criminal violence, several Swedish suburbs have also been the scene of riots. This is not a very recent phenomenon according to some of our interviewees. Already in the seventies end eighties of the last century some of the suburbs experienced riots and severe incidents. But at that time the newspapers didn't write about it. There was a general feeling that "you should not blame the victims".

The first major signs of collective violence and protests in recent times came from the Rosengård neighbourhood in Malmö in 2008. Others followed in the next year, culminating in an uprising of unprecedented scale and intensity in 2013. In 2016 and 2017 again riots occurred in these neighbourhoods. Police stations were besieged and cars set on fire.

The violence attracts a lot of attention. Almost all political parties, left and right in the political spectrum, have elevated crime and security to a prominent theme for the general

¹ The Local, December 22nd., 2017.

² NOS, <https://nos.nl/artikel/2211816-nederlandse-student-zwaargewond-bij-schietpartij-in-zweden.html>

elections that will take place in September 2018. The political solutions for crime and insecurity are diverse. As the conservative and right wing parties mainly call for harsh repressive measures, the left wing prefers to maintain a mix of repression and prevention with a strong emphasis on tackling the social problems that are the source of criminal behaviour. However, under the violence of the street gangs even left wing politicians make firm statements. An example of this is the statement of the Prime Minister and Social Democrat Stephan Lofven on January 21, 2018, to deploy the army with the purpose to restore order in socially deprived neighbourhoods.³

The violent events in the Swedish neighbourhoods have drawn the attention of the foreign press too. On the Dutch television reports were shown about districts that were portrayed as no-go areas and where even the police would no longer dare to show themselves. The Dutch current affairs program *Nieuwsuur* showed the neighbourhood Rinkeby. A local policeman talked about how difficult it is to work in such a neighbourhood.⁴ On the internet and so-called social media various short films can be found of journalists being attacked in those neighbourhoods.

³ Elsevier, January 22nd., 2018.

⁴ NOS, Nieuwsuur, April 9th., 2017, <https://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2167422-in-zweedse-voorsteden-verloopt-integratie-moeizaam.html>

3 Street gangs in Sweden

The image of criminal groups or criminal networks that mainly operate in the disadvantaged urban areas is recognized by the Swedish police and various scholars. Some of them, like Rostami, speak of street gangs. This term has been adopted by the press. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, also known as Brå, prefers to speak of criminal groups. The existence of these criminal groups was denied for a long time by both the police and the local municipalities. Subversive behaviour of these young criminals was neglected. It was mainly marked as a juvenile problem. According to Rostami, Leinfelt and Holgersonn, who studied Swedish street gangs in 2012, this is one of the explanations why a good picture of the size and activities of these criminal groups was missing. A second reason for this incomplete image is that scholars have taken Klein's American gang model as an example. This model turns out to be less applicable to European criminal street groups, because the European situation differs from the American circumstances. Therefore the emphasis among Swedish scholars in the nineties has been to argue that gangs are not a widespread phenomenon and in case gangs exist they do not have the same characteristics and structures as their American counterparts. Some have even implied that the concept of organized crime groups is a police construction – a strategy for gaining more resources, new policies and expanded criminal laws.⁵ By 2010 there were no estimates on how many street gangs there were in Sweden, nor on the amount of individuals that were involved in these kind of groups.

This image has tilted. It is now recognized that in the late 1990s and the early 2000s Sweden witnessed the proliferation of street gangs, and it is only recently that street gangs have become recognized as one of the most significant challenges in socio-economically deprived areas. In their survey Rostami, Leinfelt, and Holgersson studied seven Swedish street gangs and found that these gangs are both criminally highly active and diverse. The age of members ranged from 15 to 49 years and the average age ranged between 22.8 years to 34.0 years, depending on the gang. They found that the Swedish street gangs are ethnically heterogeneous and that membership is not related to a specific country of birth or ethnicity. Roughly 42 percent of the gang members are born in Sweden and 76 percent are either first- or second-generation immigrants (from 35 different countries). The life cycle of these street gangs varied between 2 years and 18 years. The Swedish street-gangs seem to have versatile criminal

⁵ A. Rostami, F. Leinfelt & S. Holgersonn (2012), 'An exploratory analysis of Swedish street gangs: applying the Maxson and Klein typology to a Swedish gang dataset', in *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 28, (4) 426-445.

behavioral patterns featuring a wide array of offenses such as drug-related and weapon offenses and various violent crimes such as robberies, assaults and homicides. In this study, none of the examined gangs seems to be territorially bounded.⁶

Recent reports from the Swedish police indicate that new emerging street gangs have a lesser degree of formal organization, are more violent and territorially bounded, with more rapid and flexible recruitment process. In the survey *Criminal networks and groups. Police perception of power structures and criminal markets* (2017) the organization and activities of these criminal networks and groups are described. In this survey Brå uses a division into four different types of criminal networks or groups. The first type is the Self-defined group. These groups directly emphasize their group membership in the form of names, attributes, and membership. Examples of this self-defined groups are outlaw motorcycle gangs, as well as other gangs which have named themselves. The group's symbols are a constant reminder of the intimidation supply these criminal groups have. The second type is the unnamed group. This is an aggregated name for various types of relation-based networks which have neither a self-conferred nor an externally-conferred name. They often have more diffuse contours than self-defined groups, although in certain cases there may be a stronger bond of loyalty between the individuals. Examples of unnamed groups include certain city neighbourhood-based and criminal groups, which are based on residence in the same residential area, as well as certain family-based groups. The third type is the externally-defined group. This type has similarities with the second type: the unnamed groups. They do not themselves describe their group membership through names, symbols, and attributes. Instead they are named either by the police or by the media. This category may, for example, include the criminal groups based in socially disadvantaged areas which have been externally named, as well as certain family-based groups. The fourth type is the project-based constellation or project group which is formed in order to execute a profit-making criminal enterprise, for example narcotics smuggling, large-scale theft, or extensive fraud. As in the legal economy, a project-based constellation comprises one or more project managers as well as several project collaborators, often with specifically allocated tasks. These individuals can emanate from other self-defined groups, externally-defined groups, and unnamed groups. They are recruited on the basis of skills, reliability, reputation and ability, depending on the specific function they are to perform in the project group.⁷

⁶ Ibidem; see also Rostami A. (2017), 'Street-gang violence in Sweden is a growing concern', in *Sociologisk Forskning*, 54, 365–368.

⁷ D. Vesterhav & L. Korsell (2017), *Criminal networks and groups Police perception of power structures and criminal markets*, Stockholm, Brå.

Where does the recent problem of Rostami's street gangs fit into this typology? According to the report street gangs can be classified as unnamed groups and externally-defined groups. In the report they are referred to as criminal groups based in socially disadvantaged areas. These groups have specific characteristics. They operate often in their own neighbourhood. Their territory is not bigger than several streets. In this area they earn their money with open drug trafficking.

The organizational structures of the street gangs are often not formalized. The Swedish police uses a cylinder model to explain this kind of gang crime, although this model is also criticized for depicting a too neat and simple picture of the real world. Especially the relationship with the social environment is considered an 'oversimplification': "poverty is a very partial explanation".

The cylinder model looks upon the criminal process as primarily associated with social risk factors. It speaks of social risk factors that facilitate organized crime structures. The model distinguishes different generations within the criminal network. Some of the young people who grow up in the neighbourhood belong to high-risk groups. School dropout, unemployment and socializing with the wrong kind of friends make them vulnerable to crime. Usually it starts with norm breaking behaviour. This can turn into problem behaviour and ultimately into criminal behaviour. At the top of the cylinder model are the 'older' criminals. They act between the needs of the group or gang and the access to illegal goods and services. These persons run the group as a criminal business. They know how things work and most of the time they have a long term perspective. Often they grew up in the neighbourhood, but don't live there anymore. Now they live in luxurious apartments in the town Centre. They travel several times a year to Spain to arrange large amounts of cannabis or cocaine that will be illegally transported to Sweden. In the neighbourhood they have their distribution systems already in place. These are the local criminal groups or street gangs. This example shows that the "older" people don't necessarily have to be on the spot, but they maintain a connection with the group or gang. This does not mean that they own the leadership over the group. They only use the group as a means to distribute their illegal goods. What happens within the group is mainly decided by the group members themselves.⁸

There are no hierarchies or collective rules. Swedish police speaks of "disorganized crime".⁹ Alternatively the network structure is built up around certain authoritative actors. Rules and principles for punishment are seldom written but, instead, are formulated arbitrarily

⁸ Interview K. Nilvall, January 28th, 2018.

⁹ Interview A. Rostami, January 28th.2018.

by the leaders on a case-by-case basis. Many of these individuals are characterized by their desire for quick status and respect and the ease with which they are offended. Few individuals are willing to subordinate themselves for a longer period of time. These characteristics, in combination with substance abuse problems, insufficient loyalty, and big egos, easily lead to discord in the groups. Conflicts and power struggles are very common in the criminal groups based in socially disadvantaged areas. As a consequence many of the criminal groups based in socially disadvantaged areas have loose and changeable structures. Leadership is challenged, cracks appear, and constellations come and go. If a leader disappears, for example because he is in prison, a web of cracks may begin to appear in the network.¹⁰

There is no active and focused recruitment to the criminal groups or street gangs. It is rather the case that certain individuals gradually slide into criminality as a result of living in a certain area and therefore they find themselves in an environment with criminally active individuals in the vicinity. Relationship and kinship between individuals are risk factors. Previously committed crimes can be another driving force for further criminal activities. Several gangs consist of second generation foreigners, Somalians, Afghans and Iraqis. However, an ethnic relationship in itself is not decisive for being recruited to criminal networks or street gangs. Nevertheless the residential area plays a crucial role, since friendships are established in residential neighbourhoods and in local school environment.¹¹ Older criminal individuals serve as role models for some younger individuals. They have spent the money that they earn with their criminal activities on mopeds, expensive watches, clothing and jewelry. Many of the youth who are in the risk zone for being drawn into criminality, have not completed school and have lost faith in Swedish society. A number of them are, or have been, the subject of social welfare agency intervention. Other influencing factors which are emphasized are social exclusion, unstable and segregated residential areas and discrimination. The gang members find their role models in the gangster rap scene and in violent mafia movies such as *Scarface*.¹²

With regard to the use of force it can be established that the ‘members’ of the street gangs are more event driven and spontaneous. Their decision-making procedures are not as structured as in an outlaw motorcycle gang, but instead decisions are taken on an individual

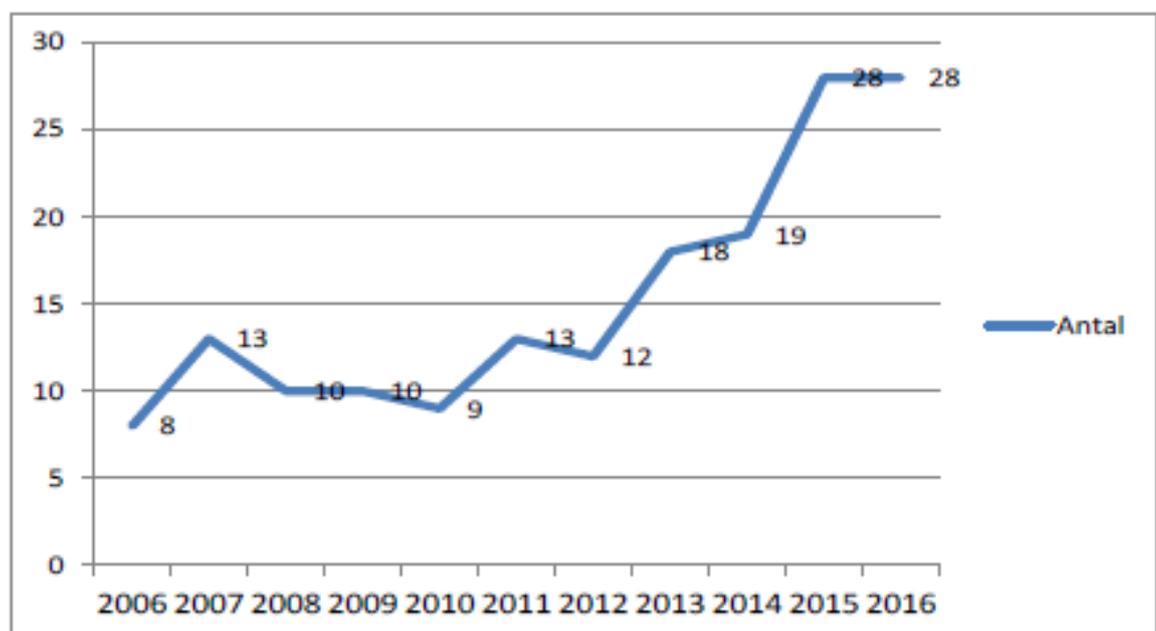
¹⁰ D. Vesterhav (2017), presentation, Brå, 9.

¹¹ G. Appelgren & P. Brodin (2013) ‘Facing a new criminal setting – A joint-agency initiative organized crime in the municipality of Södertälje’ in U. Töttel, G. Bulanova-Hristova & H. Büchler (ed), *Research Conferences on Organised Crime at the Bundeskriminalamt in Germany (Vol. II) Organised Crime – Research and Practice in Western and Northern Europe 2011 – 2012*, Köln, Wolters Kluwer, 197 (194-205).

¹² Interview A. Rostami, January 28th, 2018.

level. Sometimes the older ones in the group (see figure 1) give an assignment to kill someone. But in most cases it is a matter of social norms. Research shows that there is a social value of committing violence. It shows the loyalty to the group and it grants status within the group.¹³ The consequence is that they can often decide to go from word to violence within short notice. As a result, it is believed that a considerable number of shootings are not particularly planned. The individual's impulsivity can lead to their jumping into a conflict without thinking about the consequences. These conflicts are mainly caused by disputes about money, goods, women or non-compliance with an appointment. When the violence takes place between different street gangs, this usually leads to retaliation. When a rival has been challenged, it is not possible to step back without losing credibility. A young generation of individuals with criminal records who do not shrink from committing violence has risen.

From a criminal perspective, all this violence is in the end harmful to the criminal activities. After all, money has to be earned. And criminals usually earn this money by shielding their activities. The effect of this violence is attracting a lot of attention from the police as well as from the media. Repressive policing has intensified.¹⁴



Figur 1, Antal skjutningar med dödlig utgång i kriminella miljöer 2006-2016*

Figur 21 Number of shootings in criminal environments with a deadly outcome (statistics Swedish Police)

¹³ Interview K. Nilvall, January 28th. 2018.

¹⁴ Interview E. Wennerström & D. Vesterhav, January 29th. 2018.

The access to firearms is an important status symbol for individuals in the street gangs. Gang members who know that they will often be stopped by the police avoid carrying weapons. Firearms are otherwise hidden, not infrequently somewhere in the vicinity of the individual's residence, or are stored with an acquaintance, for example in a girlfriend's apartment or in a basement storage area. If, however, an individual is involved in a conflict there may be a need for quick access to a weapon. A typical task for individuals who are not high on the criminal career ladder is thus to serve as a weapon carrier. They are not stopped as frequently as more known criminals. Their task is to deliver weapons, by car or moped, upon demand. In this way a weapon is never farther away than a telephone call. The car or the moped can also be an escort vehicle to maintain a state of readiness should an emergency situation arise. Using the escort vehicle, a weapon can be quickly removed from the crime scene following the shooting. Parked cars are sometimes used as weapon depots.¹⁵

The shootings have adopted a recognizable pattern. The shooting is usually carried out from a moped. The driver and his passenger are both armed. One shoots first, the other finishes it off. This is only to make sure that they can't provide evidence to one another. The police think they use social media and create groups in order to have more sensors out there that provide the opportunity to interact against their opponents. By acting thus the digital world makes them more aware of the world around them and makes it possible to act immediately.¹⁶

There has been an overall increase in victim-to-perpetrator ratio of gun violence, which is especially pronounced for individuals under 30 years. Gun violence is becoming more concentrated and cemented in some urban areas. As an example, between 2011 and 2016, 1,165 shootings and 54 handgrenade attacks were identified in Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö, which resulted in over 100 dead and 440 injured. In all three cities there is a significantly elevated risk of new shootings within a relatively small distance and period, which are interpreted as an indication of gang-related conflicts. In 2017 there were 16 handgrenade attacks. In an ongoing survey Rostami estimates that around 35 percent of the homicides in Sweden between 2007 and 2011 is linked to organized crime groups such as street gangs. Gun offenders are most likely to be in the age group of 20–24.¹⁷

The activities of these criminal groups or street gangs have a strong effect on the neighbourhoods in which they operate. Drug trafficking, drug dealing, unlawful driving of

¹⁵ D. Vesterhav (2017), Differences and similarities between different forms of criminal networks and groups in Sweden, (presentation), Brå, 11.

¹⁶ Interview K. Nilvall, January 28th, 2018.

¹⁷ A. Rostami (2017), 'Street-gang violence in Sweden is a growing concern', in *Sociologisk Forskning*, 54, (4), 365–368.

mopeds and cars and their imminent attendance on certain strategic spots such as tube stations and shopping malls have an intimidating effect on their environment and cause a lot of social disturbance of order. These crimes undermine the social order in the neighbourhood. Brå speaks of unlawful influence. In 2017 Brå is assigned by the Swedish government to conduct a large scale research project on the *perceptions of the justice system in socially disadvantaged areas*. Brå looks whether the residents are subject to unlawful influence by criminal groups or street gangs. The conclusion is that residents in these areas report a feeling of unsafety to a significantly higher extent than residents of other urban areas. Extensive crime and public disorder are the main reasons for these feelings, the visibility of which affects residents even if they are not victims themselves. The response options “gangs who fight and disrupt”, “joyriding”, and “open narcotics sales” have had the greatest individual impact on the sense of safety. Serious incidents such as shootings have increased this sense even more. The study shows that many residents are willing to cooperate with the police, but are prevented by fear of criminals in the area. This is a common problem. No threats have been made to the residents themselves, but they know about the groups or gangs and their so-called intimidation capital. Therefore they stay silent. Brå calls this self-censorship or the code of silence.¹⁸

Unlawful influence is also directed against public agency personnel. There are riot-like situations which sometimes flare up in certain socially disadvantaged areas. In these cases, the precipitating factor has often been the unexpected presence of a public agency, for example when emergency services are called in or the police carry out an intervention. In addition to the riot-like situations, there are also more demarcated cases of unlawful influence. There is a threatening climate in some suburbs and city neighbourhood areas in respect of police in the field, and certain police officers and police stations in these areas become symbols of specific police activities. In the report *Criminal networks and groups* Brå points out that many individuals in the criminal street gangs based in socially disadvantaged areas have difficulties with authority. They are easily provoked, and they bear an arrogant attitude.¹⁹

¹⁸ J. Skinnari, F. Marklund, E. Nilsson, C. Stjärnqvist & D. Vesterhav (2018), *Perceptions of the justice system in socially disadvantaged areas*, Stockholm Brå, 5-6.

¹⁹ D. Vesterhav (2017), presentation, Brå, 13.

4 Explanations for the growth of a violent street gang culture in Sweden

4.1 Social-economic change

The post second world war ‘Swedish model’ enjoyed an international reputation for combining a dynamic economy and an active labour-market policy and free access to education. It’s extended, tax-financed public service sector aimed at the abolition of poverty, the forging of social mobility for the working class and, not in the least, stimulating female labour market participation and gender equality. In effect this resulted from the 1950s to 1970s, in a seemingly stable trend towards diminishing social inequality, making Sweden one of the most balanced societies in the area of the modern welfare states that were united in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).²⁰

The question is whether this image is still correct. In the last three decades social and economic changes have blurred this ideal image. These changes are considered by scientists as sources for growing inequality, social discontent and, finally, for the growth of crime in urban areas. This interpretation of the background of the growing amount of street crime in Sweden is still the dominant one. Others don’t deny that social, economical and political changes have played a profound role, but doubt whether there is a causal relationship. They think matters are much more complex. The social-economic interpretation fits all too neat in the ‘classical’ Swedish ideology of egalitarianism, social justice and active state policy. A simple restoration of that classical ideology will not be enough to push back street gang crime in the Swedish suburbs. However, a comprehensive alternative hasn’t been worked out until this moment.²¹

Scholars like Schierup, Ålund, Kings, Lalander, Sernhede and Dikeç, who adhere to the dominant social-economic paradigm, mention the rise of ‘neo-liberalism’. As well as in many other modern western liberal democracies this process started in the 1980’s. Since then economic reforms have been implemented under both social democratic and center-right governments. With these reforms, austerity policies started cutting back welfare. The emphasis on full employment and redistribution of income gave way to deregulation, benefit cuts, deficit reduction and even to the introduction of collectively financed but privately organized public

²⁰ C-U. Schierup, A. Ålund & L. Kings (2014), ‘Reading the Stockholm riots – a moment for social justice?’ in *Race and Class*, 55(3): 1–21.

²¹ Interview B. Wennstrom, January 27th. 2018.

services such as education and health care. The number of state owned companies decreased from 500.000 in 1983 to about 120.000 in 2010. A series of tax reforms increased income at the top level, widening inequalities.²² Between 1985 and 2010 inequality of income grew faster in Sweden than in any other OECD country. Although Sweden is still one of the highest spenders on public services, the inequality has taken its toll in less advantaged populations. Unemployment has increased steadily, especially youth unemployment. Youth also suffers from the changes in the educational system. The privatization of the public school system in the 1990's has increased the gap between the rich and poor. Families with higher income, living in the better parts of the cities, have more educational opportunities and resources for their children. This access to higher qualified schools provides these children with better chances to succeed in life.²³

Finally the reforms in the housing market have had an effect on social relations. These reforms have strengthened the decline of socially deprived neighbourhoods. Most of these neighbourhoods were built as a part of the so called Million Program. This ambitious project was the social democratic government's answer to the growing housing shortage. The Million Program provided for building a million new public housing units in order to supply every Swedish family a proper modern home. This project was realized between 1965 and 1974. The Million Program-neighbourhoods were raised in the peripheral areas of cities. They were the new suburbs, consisting of mainly three-storey buildings, small detached or semi-detached houses and larger housing estates. The Million Program housed mainly the Swedish working class, as well as immigrants and young people. It was as Dikeç describes a successful initiative, which raised the standard of housing for many families, providing them with more modern accommodation.²⁴ In the late 1970's these neighbourhoods lost their appeal. Wealthy Swedish families moved to better and more luxurious houses in the renovated city centers and newly built neighbourhoods. This process was fortified as a result of the privatization of the public housing sector in the 1990's. Housing subsidies and allowances were reduced. New legislation obliged the public housing companies to act according to 'business-like' principles. Together with the ongoing gentrification of neighbourhoods, close to the city centers rents increased and families with lower income had to move to the less attractive suburbs.

²² M. Dikeç (2017), *Urban rage. The revolt of the excluded*, Yale, 131-133.

²³ Dikeç (2017), 134.

²⁴ Dikeç (2017), 135.

From the early 1990's the Million-Program houses belonged to the least desirable dwellings in the country. The policy shifts as described above led to demographic changes of these suburbs. The peripheral suburbs became the residence of the more disadvantaged population. These changes are inextricably linked to the immigration process that started in the 1990s. Among these immigrants were large groups of refugees. The first stream consisted mainly of people from the Balkan, victims of the war in Yugoslavia. New conflicts outside Europe triggered new flows of refugees. From the nineties Sweden received large amounts of refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Somalia and Syria.²⁵ Most of them were housed in the Million Program suburbs. By the mid-1990's 65 to 85 percent of the population in these areas were non Swedes. According to Dikeç this is a disproportionate concentration, given that the foreign born population in Sweden is about 14 per cent of the total. Part of the reason for the concentration of immigrants is the existence of social networks, which make these areas destinations of choice for new arrivals.²⁶ According to scholars as Lalander and Sernhede there is an atmosphere of segregation and separation.²⁷

4.2 *Social deprivation and segregation*

The living conditions in these Million-Program suburbs are different from those in other areas. Already at the end of the 1990's the Metropolitan committee (Storstadskommittén), established by the Swedish Parliament to study big-city neighbourhoods, delivered several reports about the living conditions in these suburbs. Researchers, participating in the committee, characterized the areas as "socially vulnerable". The burden of the social economic changes is felt disproportionately in these disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Participation in the formal labour market is significantly lower in these areas than the Swedish average, as is the average income significantly lower among those who do have work.. Schierup et al. take Husby as an example. In this disadvantaged neighbourhood in the Stockholm region the employment rate is close to 24 percent lower than in the greater Stockholm region and most of those who work hold low income jobs. What has caused the worst concerns among politicians and social workers is the large number of young people who neither hold any type of formal employ-

²⁵ Sweden and immigration, <https://sweden.se/migration/#2000>

²⁶ Dikeç (2017), 136.

²⁷ P. Lalander & O. Sernhede (2015), Social mobilization or street crimes: Two strategies among young urban outcasts in contemporary Sweden, in *Educare* (2), 99-120.

ment or involvement in any form of education. Overcrowding is another problem. Respondents of the police mentioned houses fit for a family of four or five persons that were now inhabited by up to 15 people.

Herrgården, a neighbourhood in the district Rosengård in Malmö is another example of an extremely disadvantaged area, built in the Million-Program. The general picture is one of major social problems, poverty and a deteriorated physical environment reflected in bad school performance, poor health, riots, fires and high crime rates. Of the entire population 98 percent are of foreign origin, 50 percent are under 18 years, only 16 percent of the adult population have a post-secondary education and the unemployment rate is 87 percent. Herrgården is one of Sweden's most overcrowded neighbourhoods with 1.360 rental dwellings, and 4.878 documented people living there. Calculations by police and social workers estimated that up to 9.000 people could be accommodated in the neighbourhood.²⁸

Many young people in these areas state that they live with a feeling of alienation and "non-belonging" in relation to the world outside their own city neighbourhood. Based on the theory of social deprivation, the social and economic conditions in these areas as well as the stigmatization of certain neighbourhoods can generate social disorder, social unrest and crime. Scholars as Lalander en Sernhede speak of a segregated and separated society.

4.3 *Disadvantaged areas*

In 2015 the Swedish police released a list of so-called "vulnerable areas" as a part of their work to map the situation in some of the country's segregated suburbs. The number of these vulnerable areas was 53. An updated report has been released in June 2017, which is likely to be the focus of a lot of discussion in the run-up to Sweden's general election in 2018. This time the counter is on 61 areas. The police definition of a "vulnerable area" is: "a geographically defined area characterized by a low socio-economic status where criminals have an impact on the local community. The impact is linked to the social context in the area rather than a wish to take power and control the community." There are 32 of these vulnerable or socially disadvantaged areas. 23 areas are labelled as "especially vulnerable" or particularly disadvantaged. These areas are "characterized by social issues and a criminal presence which has led to a widespread disinclination to participate in the judicial process and difficulties for the police to fulfil their mission. The situation is considered acute". In especially vulnerable areas

²⁸ G. Blomé (2009), How to work in socially disadvantage large housing estates in Sweden, Malmö University, [http://muep.mau.se/bitstream/handle/2043/14167/paper_blome_w_13\[1\].pdf?sequence=2](http://muep.mau.se/bitstream/handle/2043/14167/paper_blome_w_13[1].pdf?sequence=2)

religious extremism is often prevalent. These areas are often hotspots for recruitment to militant groups. They are also areas where police regularly have to adapt their methods to the volatile situation. Residents often do not report crimes, either out of fear of reprisals or because they think it will not lead to anything. A “risk area”, of which there are 6, lies somewhere between the two. According to the National Police chiefs there it is believed that there are around 5,000 criminals, of which approximately 550 are characterizes as high profile, and 200 criminal networks to be based in these 61 vulnerable areas.

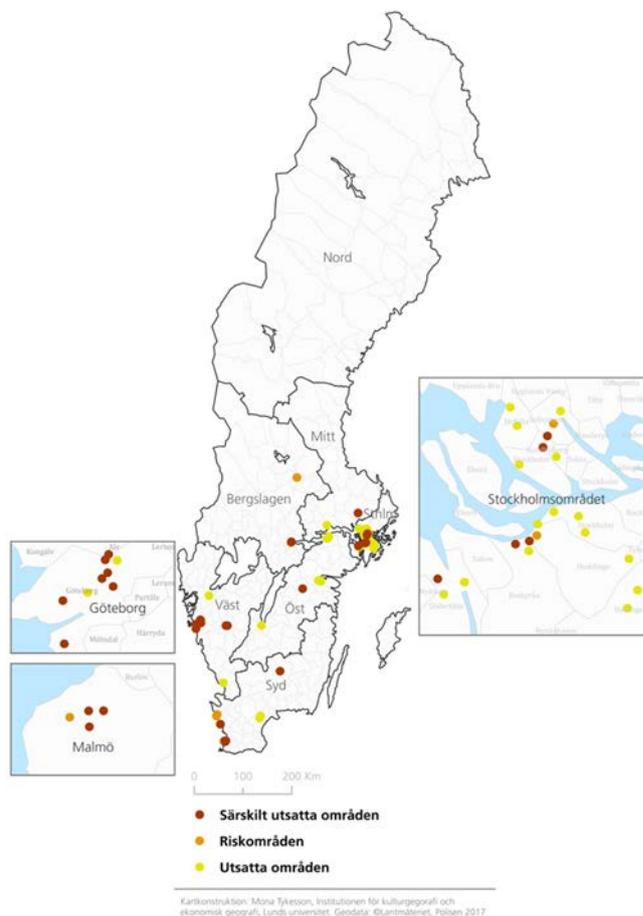


Figure 3 Overview of socially disadvantaged, particularly disadvantaged and risk areas in Sweden (Swedish Police. National Operational Department).

Concerning crime and the existence of criminal networks and street gangs there are certain risk factors such as stigma, ethnic and social segregation. According to Appelgren and Brodin from the Swedish police, segregated areas have a strong impact on the residents’ identity formation which can lead to crime and a rejection of mainstream society as the standard

bearer.²⁹ Segregated areas have a strong impact on the residents' identity formation. Crime and violence become a way of life. Lalander and Sernhede describe a street gang. The young members of this gang invest a lot of energy in a criminal street culture including excessive intake of illegal drugs, drug dealing and violence of the street. The violence they participate in is almost exclusively directed towards other young men who live a street life similar to theirs. This can be understood as a symbolic economy on the street, an economy where respect and money (also a sign of respect) are predominant benefits. The way they violently solve their problems with other gangs is justified according to the logic of the street where you are supposed to deal with those kind of problems without involving the police or other official authorities. Involvement in drug business is a way to feel more important and powerful and, in addition, that it is related to a maturity based on criminal activities on the street and alternative rites of passages other than those found in official society. Thus street crimes may be interpreted as ways to dissolve the feeling of being a nobody. Yet, it is charged with symbolical influences and meaning from a specific type of popular culture, framing it with a sense of fighting against subordination in a neo-liberal and highly segregated society.³⁰

Social deprivation and segregation can also be a driving force for radicalization. Since a large proportion of migrants have a Muslim background, specific risks also arise here. Between 2012 and 2016 around 300 people travelled from Sweden to Iraq and Syria in order to join militant groups, such as ISIS and Al Nusra. A lot of them had a criminal background. Others stayed in Sweden. Several suspected planned terror attempts in Sweden have been thwarted. In April 2017 an asylum seeker from Uzbekistan rammed a truck into a crowd in Stockholm, resulting in five deaths.

4.4 Political polarization

Because part of the street gangs consists of young people from ethnic communities, crime in the disadvantaged areas has become strongly politicized. It is an important issue for the populist Sweden Democrats. With its anti-immigration stance, the Sweden Democrats was a controversial newcomer to parliament in 2010. In 2014, the anti-immigrant Sweden Democrats gained 12.9 percent of the vote in parliamentary elections and grew to be the country's third-

²⁹ G. Appelgren & P. Brodin (2013) 'Facing a new criminal setting – A joint-agency initiative organized crime in the municipality of Södertälje' in U. Töttel, G. Bulanova-Hristova & H. Büchler (ed), *Research Conferences on Organised Crime at the Bundeskriminalamt in Germany (Vol. II) Organised Crime – Research and Practice in Western and Northern Europe 2011 – 2012*, Köln, Wolters Kluwer, 195. (194-205).

³⁰ P. Lalander & O. Sernhede (2015), 113-115

largest party, up from only 2.9 percent eight years earlier. The party has fascist and racist roots, but today mainly speaks of not mixing cultures.

The Sweden Democrats considers immigration not only as a threat to Swedish culture and national identity, but also as the root of crime, particularly of the violent and sexual category. Party stickers distributed in 1996 had the following declaration: “Drugs... Violence...AIDS... Crime... Immigration... Do you like living in the multicultural society?” The Sweden Democrats’ official journal *SD-kuriren*’s website regularly publishes accounts of crimes committed by people with immigrant backgrounds in an attempt to create an image of immigrants being the main cause of criminality. Sex crimes also draw the attention of the Sweden Democrats. One of the Sweden Democrats’ more successful campaigns, in the sense of the attention it generated, was a leafleting drive it launched in schools after a gang rape in the Stockholm suburbia Rissne “exposing” the immigrant backgrounds of the suspects and the allegedly racial motive behind the assault, as immigrants think it “not wrong to rape a Swedish girl.” One party member even said that immigration to Sweden is in danger of sparking off a civil war.³¹

Left parties are accused of looking away. According to their opponents, they have a little realistic picture of the consequences of mass migration for Swedish society. They are held responsible for an ‘open arms policy’. Their attitude is tolerant and complacent and imposes impose few obligations on migrants, making the integration process slow and laborious. This kind of criticism is also heard in police circles.

4.5 *Access to weapons*

It appears that the street gangs as well as other criminal groups and networks have an easy access to firearms. It is a problem that has been there since the fifties of the last century; it cannot be called a recent problem in Sweden, although it might have been intensified in recent decades. In the 1990s many firearm-perpetrated crimes were committed with firearms stolen from military depots. After the breakup of the Yugoslavian Republic and the ensuing war in the Balkans, the Swedish police found that a rather high proportion of illicit firearms was illegally imported from abroad, mainly from former Yugoslavian countries. Refugees from the

³¹ J. Rydgren (2014), ‘Radical right wing populism in Denmark and Sweden: Explaining party system change and stability, *in SAIS Review*, 25-26. (

Balkan played a role in firearms-smuggling. For the police it is an open question what will happen with firearms in Syria, Ukraine and other areas of conflict when the wars end.³²

Swedish policemen in the south say that the E6 motorway starts in Pristina and goes all the way to Gothenburg. This is a perfect way to get illegal goods in and out of Sweden.³³ The Schengen Agreement guaranteed in 1995 the free and unrestricted movement of people, goods, services, and capital. Border controls were abolished. The direct connections with Denmark have made it easier to enter Sweden. According to Brå firearms are transported in the rear bins of passenger cars, or in goods transports. The statistics show a growth in the number of illegal firearms in Sweden since 1995. It is easy to drive from Denmark to Sweden: it even happens that firearms are delivered to the criminals via parcel post.

4.6 *The position of the police*

The relationship between the police and the residents has been deteriorated in these neighbourhoods. That is the overall image in the Swedish media. Several scholars have looked at the reasons for this decline. First of all the deteriorating position of the police must be seen in a larger context. It is connected with the involvement of other institutions in the neighbourhood. The authorities have given less and less attention to these neighbourhoods. This is acknowledged in a presentation by the National Operation Department of the Swedish Police. They speak of weak or absent institutions. As a result of this, there is an inadequate response to citizens' needs and a decrease in institutional distrust. The police call it a governance vacuum. This causes an arena for alternative governance and a displacement of social order.³⁴

Secondly, in the recent past police action prompted dissatisfaction under the younger residents of these areas. Because of the crime problem these neighbourhoods have become spots for security concerns. The police focusses especially on younger male residents who are forced to endure continuous police surveillance, multiple identity checks and stop and search raids. It is an understandable reflex of the authorities who feel obliged to fight crime in these neighbourhoods. This condition of surveillance was exacerbated by the so-called REVA-project (Legal Certainty and Effective Enforcement) originating in 2008 as a collaboration between the police force, the migration service and the Swedish prison service. REVA aims at combatting irregular migration through amplified identity checks and deportation. The REVA

³² J. Sturup, A. Rostami, M. Gerell & A. Sandholm (2018), 'Near-repeat shootings in contemporary Sweden 2011 to 2015' in *Security Journal*, (31), 1, 73-92.

³³ Interview

³⁴ Interview Kim Nilvall,

identity checks that took place at transport hubs such as train and metro stations were strongly criticized. The police were accused of racism and ethnic profiling. The police has been criticized for targeting not merely ‘undocumented’, but numerous Swedish citizens of colour.³⁵

Therefore a part of the young people in these areas, often with a different ethnic origin, describe the police actions as aggressive. Some claim they are beaten. These stories appear on social media and in newspapers, although the basis for this widespread perception of these incidents is unclear.³⁶ Other violent incidents in which the police was involved, have also damaged the relationship with the public. One of these incidents in which the police shot a 69 year old man of Portuguese origin carrying a machete, has triggered the riots in Husby in May 2013. The riots broke out after the police leadership issued a report in which the agents involved were acquitted of using unauthorized violence. In various media the police are accused of police brutality and ethnic profiling.

The Brå survey *Perceptions of the justice system in socially disadvantaged areas* shows that mistrust in the police is the strongest among young male residents. They feel discriminated by the police. On the other hand over 79 percent of the residents feel that the police treat them with respect.³⁷ The crime survey over the period 2012-2017 shows an improvement compared with the period 2006-2011. The confidence in the police has increased a little, and the concern over crime has decreased.³⁸

Nevertheless, the police have a meager information position in these areas. Incidents like those in Husby have led to a decline in confidence in the police, which has severe consequences for the approach to crime. People are unwilling to share information or to report crime, even when they are victims of criminal behavior themselves. According to Appelgren and Brodin criminal groups can develop into these areas where cooperation with police is dismissed because the police are not seen as legitimate representatives of society, or residents can be afraid to cooperate with the police out of fear of retaliation.³⁹ This image is confirmed in the Brå survey on perceptions of the justice system in socially disadvantaged areas. More

³⁵ Schierup et al (2014), 7.

³⁶ P.O. Hallin, A. Jashari, C. Listerborn & M. Popoola (2011), *Varför kastar de sten? - om konflikter och erkännande*, University of Malmö, Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap, 33, 15-15

³⁷ J. Skinnari, F. Marklund, E. Nilsson, C. Stjärnqvist & D. Vesterhav (2018), *Perceptions of the justice system in socially disadvantaged areas*, Stockholm Brå.

³⁸ M. Söderström, S. Ahlin, S. Westerberg & A.I. Strid (2018), *Swedish Crime Survey 2017*, Stockholm, Brå.

³⁹ G. Appelgren & P. Brodin (2013) 'Facing a new criminal setting – A joint-agency initiative organized crime in the municipality of Södertälje' in U. Töttel, G. Bulanova-Hristova & H. Büchler (ed), *Research Conferences on Organised Crime at the Bundeskriminalamt in Germany (Vol. II) Organised Crime – Research and Practice in Western and Northern Europe 2011 – 2012*, Köln, Wolters Kluwer, 197 (194-205).

than the direct influence of criminal groups the fear for these groups plays an important role. Residents are afraid and therefore do not dare to talk to the police. No threats have been made to them, but they know about the groups and their intimidation stack , and therefore stay silent. Brå calls this self-censorship or the code of silence.⁴⁰ This means that criminals may operate relatively undisturbed. It is in such areas that unlawful influence takes the form of, for example, social unrest and “police fishing”, which means that it becomes difficult for the police and other authorities to act. It can in some cases lead to weak authority⁴¹.

For the police several particularly disadvantaged areas have become a hostile environment. Some media label these neighbourhoods as no- go areas. These are the areas where police stations were attacked with hand grenades and firebombs. Arrests, even of non-street gang members, always attract large groups of young people who then try to keep the suspect out of the hands of the police. Individual police officers working in these neighbourhoods were harassed at home. Working in these areas has become less popular. A picture has emerged that police officers are barely on the street and this also reduces confidence in the police. The well-meaning citizens feel abandoned. This is another factor that frustrates an effective approach to crime. The term no- go area caught on in international media after it was used by a columnist to label these areas, but police and emergency services have themselves repeatedly reject it, arguing that these are areas with a higher police presence, if anything.⁴² However, it is difficult and sometimes even risky for police officers in some of those areas to go out alone on the street. Therefore the police operate in small groups which partly explains the higher police presence. Emergency services do often adapt their behaviour, for example by making sure that there is proper back-up, by entering the areas via alternative routes or by reversing their vehicles into the areas in order to make sure they are able to leave quickly if needed. Emergency services have, for example, been exposed to threats, stone-throwing, or vandalism of their vehicles. Often nothing of note happens.⁴³

Finally the reorganization of the Swedish police is also mentioned as a factor that partially obstructs an effective approach to crime. On 1 January 2015, the Swedish police force was reor-

⁴⁰ Skinnari et al, (2018).

⁴¹ G. Appelgren & P. Brodin (2013), 196-197.

⁴² Interview Kim Nilvall, January 28th. 2018; Interview E. Wennerström & D. Vesterhav, January 29th. 2018.

⁴³ <https://www.thelocal.se/20170621/no-go-zones-what-you-need-to-know-about-swedens-vulnerable-areas>

ganized into a coherent government agency in the form of the Swedish Police Authority. Instead of 21 different regional organizations there is now one Swedish police force. This organization can be compared with the Dutch police that was reorganized in 2013. As well as in the Netherlands the intent in Sweden is that fewer chiefs and more officers in high-crime areas will mean more crimes can be prevented and cleared up. The police reorganization is not without criticism. Holgersson from the University of Linköping concluded that on the short-term efforts to implement the reorganization resulted in a loss of production. In addition, the way that the reorganization was implemented had been bad for the chances of getting a well-functioning policing because the focus has mostly been on organizational charts and not on the content of the business.⁴⁴

Several of our respondents named the police reorganization as an obstacle to tackling crime. As a result of the reorganization special police units have been decimated or canceled. This applies, for example, to the approach to gang-related crime and has reduced the necessary knowledge. At the same time there is an outflow of police officers who no longer feel at home in the new police organization. In 2015 121 policemen under the age of 40 dropped out of the police force.⁴⁵ In 2018 the situation has changed but little. There are still complaints that the police are understaffed.

⁴⁴ S. Holgersson (2017), The reorganisation of the Swedish Police with a focus on the police command centres,

⁴⁵ <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2054&artikel=6395267>

5 Other forms of organised crime

Although all the attention is now focused on the criminal groups in socially disadvantaged areas, other criminal networks are also active in Sweden. According to Brå these networks or groups benefit from this situation. These criminal networks can continue or even adapt their illegal activities.⁴⁶ This chapter provides an overview of crime and criminal networks in Sweden.

5.1 *Drug related crime*

Besides the street gangs Sweden also has to deal with other forms of organized crime. Korsell argues that a lot of crime is often small-scaled and locally organized. That would apply to the cannabis market and illegal alcohol and cigarettes. Stolen goods are almost always sold within Sweden.⁴⁷ Narcotics have become one of the main illegal products in Sweden. This has to do with the strong prohibitionist policies in the Nordic countries. Since long Norway, Finland and Sweden have introduced strong restrictions on the sale of alcohol. The reaction to the prohibition came fast. It opened up a new lucrative market for inventive criminal entrepreneurs. Smuggling of alcohol has been an old habit and for some a profession.⁴⁸

Since the end of the 1960's and the early 70's drugs have been the dominant theme in Nordic criminal policies. Although these countries are generally known as non-punitive cultures with levels of punishment that are viewed as lenient, an exception is made for drug cases, whereof the harshness of punishment has been un-Nordic since the 1970's. Although drug use in Sweden has been low for a time when compared with other European countries, the police resources used on the fight of import, sale and use of drugs since the early 1970's have been immense. The Swedish illicit drug market is dominated by cannabis and amphetamines. Cannabis remains the most frequently seized illicit drug. Some domestic production of cannabis and amphetamines has been reported in Sweden. This is often small-scale or household based, while large-scale indoor cultivation of cannabis also takes place and is mainly operated by organized criminal networks.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Interview E. Wennerström & D. Vesterhav, January 29th. 2018.

⁴⁷ Korsell (2013), 165.

⁴⁸ P. Larsson (2013), 'Homegrown and imported. Organized crime in the Nordic countries' in in U. Tötzel, G. Bulanova-Hristova & H. Büchler (ed), *Research Conferences on Organised Crime at the Bundeskriminalamt in Germany (Vol. II) Organised Crime – Research and Practice in Western and Northern Europe 2011 – 2012*, Köln, Wolters Kluwer, 118 (114-130).

⁴⁹ Sweden Country Drug report 2017. European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug addiction, http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/emcdda-home-page_en

This small-scale production contrasts sharply with a production country such as the Netherlands. Only cannabis is grown on a small scale. In 2012 Brå noticed changes in the cannabis market as a result of hobby cultivation having become transformed into large-scale greenhouse production. These greenhouses which use artificial lighting are set up in homes and on industrial premises. The new form of cultivation has introduced a new distribution channel of former home-growers. These people often have a different (non-criminal) background from their competitors on the drugs market. (Brå 2012). For them it is more a hobby than criminal capital. Selling takes place at local level. Another structural change on the market is that an increasing proportion of drug sales is being conducted on the internet (Brå 2012).

The production of synthetic drugs is virtually absent. According to the respondents this has to do with the availability of drugs from abroad. Obtaining these drugs is relatively easy. As with the smuggling of firearms the disappearance of border controls facilitates also the transit of drugs. Countries from which the drugs are imported are amongst others Poland, Italy, Morocco, Spain, South America and – last but not least – the Netherlands. The last one is the main supplier of MDMA. These drugs are of good quality. The favourable price- quality ratio makes it unattractive for Swedish criminals to invest in the production of drugs themselves. Furthermore this is increased by the risks of being caught.⁵⁰

Remarkable is the abundance of foreign criminal groups, which may smuggle consignments of such substances into Sweden. Once in Sweden, however, homegrown groups take over in the form of buyers and resell the consignment along the distribution chain. Local intermediate- and low-level distributors sell the drugs to the users. A common scenario for an active Swedish group is to buy a shipment of drugs abroad and then smuggle it into the country in order to distribute the consignment itself. The reason that foreign groupings are not responsible for domestic distribution can be found in the importance of being well-established in the environment where these crimes are committed. The risks involved in attempting to break into a criminal market as a complete unknown and with no contacts would simply be too great. It is important to know the right people and at the same time to stay away from those who can cause problems. Newcomers will attract attention and rumours will spread. Competitors may tip off the police. Vigilant drugs officers react when unknown faces appear. There is no help available within the local community. The risk of detection is constant. Another reason for minimal involvement of foreign groupings in the distribution of drugs is that

⁵⁰ Interview A. Rostami, January 27th.2018; Interview E. Wennerström and D. Vesterhav, January 28th. 2018.

the drug market itself is based on the sale and purchase of drug consignments between distributors who are independent of one another. Thus it is not a question of syndicates being responsible for large segments of the production and distribution chain, but instead the process is divided up into a series of sale-and-purchase transactions. It is therefore quite natural for distribution to be conducted by groups that are established inside Sweden.⁵¹

Some observers also see a connection with the reorganization of the police since 2015; combatting drugs was no priority in the new, nationalized Swedish police.⁵²

5.2 Criminal networks and organizations: family-based groups

As we saw above the Brå report *Criminal networks and groups* distinguishes four different types of criminal networks or groups. One of these types includes the externally-defined groups. This category may include certain family-based groups. An example of such a family-based group is the Syrian mafia in Södertälje and Botkyrka, two municipalities south of Stockholm.⁵³ This criminal group is labeled as a mafia organization because its behavioral patterns are embedded in community traditions and family ties. They are involved in illegal gambling, extortion and violence. Police operations and trials have revealed an extensive power structure that reaches in political and welfare sectors of the municipalities in which they operate. Families can be better described as clans than key families. Ethnic and religious backgrounds are a condition for membership. The influence on the surrounding society is often large. Gifts to the church, the local football club, relatives or a couple getting married become markers of loyalty and may lead to subsequent rewards in the form of a better position in the organization. Each family in the Syrian mafia possesses a set of strategic resources. As a result of law enforcement efforts, police officers and public officials have been the target of violence. Among several of the hardened criminal Assyrians/Syrians the idea apparently exists that while remaining relatively undisturbed, you can threaten in order to achieve different types of advantages. The police station in Södertälje has been subjected to bomb threats and shootings, a pipe bomb was deployed on a car belonging to an alcohol licensing inspector working for the municipality and police officers and firefighters have been attacked with verbal abuse and sometimes stone-throwing in intervention situations. At interventions and controls the criminal Assyrians/Syrians have pointed out that they know the police officers' resi-

⁵¹ Brå 2007:4.

⁵² Interview B. Wennstrom, January 27th, 2018

⁵³ described in an article by Appelgren & Brodin (2013).

dential addresses and what kind of cars they use. Last but not least there have been open violent conflicts. As a result of a territorial fight for the criminal market, open conflicts within the Assyrian/Syrian population have also occurred. The conflicts represent obvious risks to third parties.⁵⁴

5.3 *Criminal networks and organizations: Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMG)*

The outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMG) are by far the best example of self-defined criminal groups. They made big changes in the criminal world of the Nordic countries. Larsson claims that establishment of the Hells Angels MC and later the Bandidos MC made organized crime a public concept and also defined the criminal policy problem.⁵⁵ According to Korsell the appearance of OMG's form an 'new mafia' in Sweden, where they are involved in the trading of drugs, alcohol and cigarettes, as well as human trafficking for purpose of sexual and labor exploitation and money collecting⁵⁶. Beside this the expansion of the outlaw motorcycle gangs can be seen as an example of the globalization of crime. Larsson claims that the Hells Angels and the Bandidos in many ways have come to symbolize and be the archetypical form of organized crime for the media, politicians, the police and the general public.⁵⁷

The OMGs have a solid internal organization. There is a strong hierarchy. Recruitment is regulated from the leadership. There is a strict selection and prospective members have to go through a long initiation process before they can become full members. Membership is seen as a lifelong commitment to the club, its identity and lifestyle. Within the clubs there is a strong culture of control to such an extent that members control each other voluntarily. The collective resources of the OMG's include clubhouses, money, number of members, access to weapons and other goods. The OMG's have a strong influence on the social environment. Two characteristics, in the Brå report, stressed as intimidation capital are important in the way the OMG's operate. The first one is the power of numbers. When someone gets in conflict with an individual member, this person has a conflict with the group as a whole. The second one is the power of the patch. The OMG members are visible by the patches they wear on their jackets. This is their trademark and has an intimidating effect on their surroundings.

⁵⁴ G. Appelgren & P. Brodin, (2013), 199; A. Rostami, H. Mondani, F. Liljeros & C. Edling (2017), 'Criminal organizing applying the theory of partial organization to four cases of organized crime' in *Trends in organized crime*, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12117-017-9315-6> ; Interview K. Nilvall, January 28th.2018.

⁵⁵ Larsson (2013), 116-117.

⁵⁶ Korsell (2013), 109.

⁵⁷ Larsson (2013), 120.

For the OMG's the Nordic countries offered an attractive market to sell drugs. The first steps on Swedish soil were taken in Malmö, where a local car club was overmatched as the first Hells Angels chapter in Sweden. More bikers, who wanted to join the Hell Angels or sought protection under this larger international OMG, followed.⁵⁸ At the same time the Bandidos showed interest in the Nordic countries too. From the moment the Bandidos were established in 1966, they were one of the main rivals of the Hells Angels. In the United States, Australia and also in France it came to bloody conflicts between both OMG's. These conflicts can be seen as ordinary turf wars. The Bandidos strategy was the same as that of the Hells Angels. Clubs were overmatched and became chapters of the Bandidos. Several Swedish OMG's, who took offence at the dominance of the Hells Angels, joined the Bandidos. This led to the Great Nordic Biker War that raged from 1994 to 1997.

On 25 September 1996 the two clubs closed peace. For television cameras, the presidents of the Bandidos and the Hells Angels shook hands. This brought an end to the Great Nordic Biker War, which had cost the lives of 11 people. 96 people were injured. In fact, the Bandidos had decided the war in their favor. The Hells Angels did not manage to drive them from Scandinavian soil. They now had a strong foothold in Sweden. Above all the peace treaty divides the territories in North Western Europe. They would meet regularly to discuss potential problems. Without consultation the two OMGs could not set up new chapters. The Hells Angels introduced in 1996 the so called Sweden model, whereby biker clubs could exchange information and coordinate biker events. The task of this association was and still is to regulate the basic requirements for what constitutes a "motorcycle club" and the use of patches to avoid conflicts of interest. However, this association has become a tool for the Hells Angels to monitor other clubs and recruit new members. The goal is to organize all motorcycle clubs under the leadership of the Hells Angels, in return allowing clubs to become part of the organization's collective resources, both through recruitment and by providing space for organizational activities.⁵⁹

Wierup and Larsson observed that the Great Nordic Biker War was a violent marketing phase that established a dangerous reputation that could be used for extortion and heavy-

⁵⁸ A. Rostami & H. Mondani (2017), Organizing on two wheels: uncovering the organizational patterns of the Hells Angels MC in Sweden', in *Trends in Organized Crime*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-017-9310-y>

⁵⁹ A. Rostami, H. Mondani, F. Liljeros & C. Edling (2017).

handed debt collection.⁶⁰ The truce between the OMG's also made it possible for them to enlarge their influence. At the beginning of 2018 the HA 14 chapters spread over Sweden. Support clubs are the Red Devils and the Red and White Crew. The Bandidos have 12 chapters including 1 Prospect chapter, a hang around chapter and a probationary chapter. The OMG's are first and foremost establishing themselves in smaller communities. Korsell thinks that the reason for this may be the availability of cheaper club premises and the fact that the authorities outside of the metropolitan areas are less well-prepared to deal with these gangs.⁶¹

The Sweden model still exists and has become a tool for the new members. The goal is to organize all motorcycle clubs under the leadership of the Hells Angels, in return allowing clubs to become part of the organization's collective resources, both through recruitment and by providing space for organizational activities. Meanwhile, other international motorcycle clubs have settled in Sweden, including the Vagos MC and the Dutch OMG's Satudarah MC, which has a chapter in Malmö. Norway has seen the coming of the Outlaws MC. Europol warns for new turf wars.⁶²

5.4 Criminal networks and organizations: the brotherhoods street gangs

In the early 2000's new gangs emerged in Sweden. They were classified as brotherhoods of youth's from marginalized backgrounds. They were a new example of self-defined groups. Most of are the. These brotherhoods bear names such as the Brödrskapet or Brotherhood, the Original Gangsters, the Werewolves, the Naser League, the Brotherhood Wolfpack, Black Cobra and the Original gangsters. Some of these brotherhoods have been set up in prison.⁶³ This Swedish gang development has been associated mostly with outlaw motorcycle gangs. Although they are not bikers themselves, they are inspired by the lifestyle and organization of the outlaw motorcycle gangs and the strong fraternal ties that are common among bikers. What also played a role was that criminals simply had to team up with others to meet up with the biker gangs. So the biker gangs led to stronger organizations of other criminals.⁶⁴ For its members, the brotherhood is an artificial, substitute family. The brotherhood consists of people with a strong friendship. They share the local institutional norms and cultural territorial

⁶⁰ L. Korsell & P. Larsson (2011), Organized crime the Nordic way, in *Crime and Justice* (40), 1, 527 (519-554)

⁶¹ L. Korsell (2013), 166.

⁶² <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/fear-of-turf-war-between-outlaw-motorcycle-gangs-in-europe>

⁶³ Interview L. Nylén, January 27th.2018.

⁶⁴ Interview E. Wennerström and D. Vesterhav, January 29th.2018.

affiliation. Ethnic ties can also play a role. They also have strong ties with the local community, partly based on a similar ethnic background. This local identity was expressed through music, graffiti and tattoos.

Unlike the above-mentioned street gangs, most brotherhoods have a strict hierarchy and formal rules or a 'code of ethics' to which each member must comply. Therefore, they mostly resemble Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs. New members must be introduced by an active member. In some cases, support groups serve as a breeding ground. Violence is an important marker of loyalty and identification. As a result violence fulfils a central function in the organization. Criminal activity patterns are mainly characterized by so-called "cafeteria-style offences". Members engage in a range of types of crime. The gang operates within territorially bounded areas. The crimes they commit are drug trafficking, arms trafficking, robberies, murder and extortion.⁶⁵ Violence is no exception. The Brödraskapet was involved in a bomb attack on the house of a public prosecutor in Trollhättan. At that time the prosecutor was preparing a trial against members of this gang.

In some areas these brotherhoods have become the competitors of the OMG's. They interfere in the same illegal markets with the same illegal products as these biker gangs and this has been the cause for new conflicts within the criminal world. It is claimed that Swedish biker gangs have lost ground in recent years, often to competition from "immigrant gangs" from suburban areas. Brotherhood street gangs like the Wolfpack Brotherhood and the Werewolf Legion, compete for control of Sweden's narcotics, and extortion rackets. One respondent said that in Gothenburg OMG's no longer drive with patches through the city, because they fear to be shot at.⁶⁶ This has led to the OMGs seeking other means of existence. They focus on other forms of crime. For example, they are involved in environmental crime, financial crime such as tax evasion and large-scale fraud. This also implies that the ties with the upper world are strong.

5.5 *Crime at close range*

The OMG's had an enormous impact on Swedish society. Therefore, organized crime has become synonymous with biker gangs for large numbers of politicians, journalists and also for various groups working in public sector agencies. Korsell claimed in 2013 that this focus on biker gangs means that when a gang like this is absent in a given municipality, there is a perception that the municipality does not have any problems with organized crime. A lot of crime

⁶⁵ P. Larsson (2015), 123; A. Rostami et al (2017).

⁶⁶ Interview Kim Nilvall, January 28th. 2018.

is of a small scale and locally organized. Above all there is a huge market for illegal products.⁶⁷

Korsell, who has studied local organized crime, describes how a great deal of crime is often ignored. That is because local politicians expect that organized crime mainly comes from outside.⁶⁸ He takes theft as an example. The link between theft and organized crime is seldom recognized and theft is usually experienced as an everyday crime and dealt with in isolation. The same applies to various forms of nuisance. Nilval mentions driving around at high speed on mopeds in several disadvantaged neighbourhoods. This is often experienced as annoying traffic behavior, both by local residents and by civil servants. But further intelligence shows that the boys drive around the neighbourhood to deliver drugs.

This way of looking at crimes on a local level is explicable. It has to do with the exaggerated perceptions about what organized crime consists of and in the organizational structure of the municipalities. They are organized on the basis of a categorization of different areas of activity that has nothing to do with crime.⁶⁹ Brå claims that there is a combination of the discrete nature of organized crime together with the exaggerated perceptions that exist about the ways this type of crime manifests itself. This means that there is a risk that it will not be given sufficient attention at the level of the local community.⁷⁰ While organized crime has long been quietly getting on with business, local politicians continue living in the expectation that organized crime will come from without. There is therefore a risk that large segments of organized crime will be given little attention. The distorted image that people have of organized crime often leads to insufficient attention for this problem at local level. These problems are addressed at in a different way. The damage caused by organized crime, in the form of drug use and the problems that this entails, youngsters who are trapped into crime, prostitution among young people, risky environments and gambling addiction are usually regarded as social problems, health issues, youth problems, problems with integration or alcohol policy and public safety issues. In other words they are not viewed as manifestations of organized crime.⁷¹ This can be an explanation for the growth of the new generation of street gangs.

⁶⁷ E. Wennerström & D. Vesterhav, January 29th. 2018.

⁶⁸ Korsell (2013),

⁶⁹ Korsell (2013), 165.

⁷⁰ Brå (2010), *Lokal organiserad brottslighet. En handbok om motåtgärder*. Stockholm: Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, quoted in Korsell (2013), 165,

⁷¹ L. Korsell (2013), 167.

6 Tackling crime in Sweden

The political pressure caused by street violence has recently led to a series of repressive measures on the part of the government. The legislation has been adjusted. Penalties on the possession of firearms have been increased. The possession of hand grenades was also made punishable, which was not the case before. In addition, the police have received more legal means to observe and monitor criminals.

The approach to organized crime also requires more creative and integral methods. From the beginning of this century various initiatives have been taken to address the growing crime in Sweden. Below we describe some of these examples.

6.1 Working apart together: the Regional Intelligence Centres

To prevent and tackle crime it is important that all the institutions involved work together. Each of them has information about the criminal subjects and when this information is combined, a total picture of the criminal activities and structures is created and barriers can be raised. In a number of European countries permanent or semi-permanent bodies were raised that focus on the exchange of information. They can also act as platforms to coordinate disruptive and repressive actions. Their basic principle is an administrative approach in which agencies “work apart together”.

In the mid 2000s the threat of the OMG's and the brotherhoods encouraged the Swedish authorities to take measures. Minister of Justice Beatrice Ask initiated a program to combat organized crime. Part of this program was organizing task forces that had to deal with specific criminal problems or networks. There are eight of these task forces. What they do is decided by an Operational Board on a national level. Another part of the program are the Regional Intelligence Centres (RICs). Since 2009 Sweden has eight RICs, one in every region, and one National Intelligence Center. Together with the Task Forces they combat organized crime.

The purpose of the RIC is to collaborate with the authorities in streamlining intelligence work relating to organized crime and related economic crimes. It is not explicitly included in the RIC's mission statement, reported by the intelligence, that the center's developments should include information relevant to the recovery of criminal assets. The make-up of the authorities on the other hand, with a heavy element of economic focus in the broadest

sense, means that this kind of information is a natural part of the intelligence work. Information is shared between the police, customs (Tullverket), the Swedish Economic Crime Authority (Ekobrottsmyndigheten), bailiffs (Åklagarmyndigheten), the Crime Units of the Swedish Tax Authority (Skatteverket) and other agencies.⁷² A Steering Group decides at the strategic level which projects the RICs should work on. At the operational level, the Operative Council meets every four weeks to discuss specific cases and phenomena that require interventions. If a partner organisation is of the opinion that a particular criminal group or phenomenon should be tackled, it presents its case before the Council.

The RICs are a place where intelligence staff officers from the various partner organizations can access their information and integrate their findings. The staff works full-time in the RIC and is located on the same premises. Cases are discussed in informal, usually weekly meetings. Dependent on the nature and scope of the case, and the state of the investigation, a choice is made which partners will participate. One operation may lead to a number of different court cases with different public prosecutors, because the intention is not just to apprehend perpetrators but also to remove the infrastructure they use to commit crimes and launder money, for example. The importance of the RICs and the taskforces is that the partner organizations now have immediate access to relevant information, whereas before they usually received it only as a leftover when the other agency had completed its investigation. Another gain is awareness. The partners look at the problem in a different way. They do not only look at the crime or the suspect, but also at his businesses, his property, his finances. They ask themselves what they can do together.⁷³

Appelgren and Brodin describe an example of the work methods of the RICs. In coping with the Syriac Mafia in Södertälje the regional police realised that the problem could not be tackled only at a regional level. The cooperation of the National police was needed. A further analysis also showed that this problem could only be addressed by searching for and sharing intelligence and information with other government agencies. So, by means of cooperation in and around the Regional and National Intelligence Centre, this had become one of the most ambitious joint-agency initiatives against organised crime in Swedish history. So far the operation, apart from the police, included the following nine government agencies: Swedish Economic Crime Authority, Swedish Tax Agency, The Swedish Social Insurance Agency,

⁷² D. Vesterhav, M. Forman, L. Korsell (2009), *Criminal Assets Recovery in Sweden. A summary of report 2008:10*, Stockholm, National Council for Crime Prevention, 19-20.

⁷³ A. Spapens & M. Peters (2015), 'Practical application of the concept', in A. Spapens, M. Peters & D. van Daele, *Administrative measures to prevent and tackle crime. Legal possibilities in EU Member States*, The Hague, Eleven International Publishing, 4593-594. (569-611)

Swedish Coast Guard, Swedish Prison and Probation Service, Swedish Customs, Swedish Secret Service and Swedish Migration Board. The mission's aim was, broadly, to identify and take legal action against strategic key persons and to apply joint efforts within relevant agencies in order to forestall, obstruct and prevent the continuation of criminal activities. Furthermore, it is to forestall and obstruct the preconditions for the criminal subculture/parallel society that has grown strong in Södertälje and also to motivate and create scope for the "good forces of society" to work in the municipality of Södertälje. So the aim was also the social impact this intervention should have on the environment of the criminals. The joint-agency initiative Steering Group comprises a commander, an operations leader and their deputies. The interacting authorities also have their coordinators. One of the success factors of the joint-agency initiative so far is a joint problem scenario/statement with an in-depth analysis with a defined problem scenario. This problem scenario forms the basis for the joint target perspective anchored in all the coordinating agencies. Another key factor is sustainability and long-term operations planning based on the problem scenario with a 1, a 3 and a 15-year perspective. Coordinated operations carried out concurrently by the various crime fighting agencies provide operational depth and breadth. It also defines the responsibilities of the national, regional and local resources. Finally, active information will go to the mass media with a focus on the local perspective. There is extensive openness as to what has happened, is happening and will happen.⁷⁴

6.2 *Tackling crime in disadvantaged areas*

Regaining control in the disadvantaged areas is a major challenge for both the Swedish police and the municipal authorities. The Swedish police acknowledged that formal social control was reduced in some of the 23 particularly disadvantaged areas. Although they are not no-go areas, the risks in these neighbourhoods are large. The quality of life in these neighbourhoods has deteriorated severely and parallel structures have arisen. As described above, the authority of the police is under pressure. As a result of this, the police have lost their information gaining position and has only limited knowledge about crime in the areas.⁷⁵ This is why most of the initiatives as described start with a thoroughly mapping of the problems. The knowledge

⁷⁴ G. Appelgren & P. Brodin (2015), 204-205.

⁷⁵ Interview K. Nilvall January 28th.2018; E. Wennerström & D. Vesterhav January 29th.2018; R. Ekenstedt, January 29th. 2018.

acquired is the basis for further projects that are focused on the restoration of safety and proper living conditions.

In the last years different projects have been developed. One of these projects is a research network under the direction of Per Olof Hallin, professor of Human Geography and Urban Development at the Malmö University. In this project the scientists, police, municipalities and all other stakeholders that are involved in local society work closely together. The project establishes the connection between personal police knowledge and structured and evidenced knowledge from the academia. The project is now running for 2,5 years in Stockholm, Malmö, Gothenborg and Borås, where policemen are trained to cope with the problems in these socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The project is intended for reclaiming the socially disadvantaged areas.⁷⁶ This can only succeed when all stakeholders, including the police, work together. There is also a long term focus on solving the problems in these areas, which means that not only crime is considered, but also the underlying social problems that cause this crime.

Intelligence is a problem, because the residents of these areas usually won't talk to the police. In order to get an image of the situation and the problems which arise in these areas, police officers are asked what they consider as the most important problems in their neighbourhoods. In addition intelligence reports are studied as well as research reports on organized crime in Sweden. A distinction is made between well documented problems and less documented problems. The well-documented problems consist mainly of visible and recorded crimes such as public violence (shootings and explosions); open drug trafficking; social disturbance of order, such as unlawful driving on mopeds and the attendance of criminal networks and gangs. The less documented problems are based on the view of the police officers working in the neighbourhoods. They mention parallel social structures and violent religious extremism.

Another way to gather knowledge concerning the problems and the social climate in these troubled urban areas is the Brå project *Perceptions of the justice system in socially disadvantaged areas*. As described above this research consisted of door to door held interviews with residents. In this field work Brå received 1176 replies in eight weeks, which made the response rate 43 percent. In addition 43 depth interviews with residents were held as well as interviews with local business owners, NGOs and local authorities. This survey shows how

⁷⁶ Brå prefers to speak of restoring the confidence in the police.

uncomfortable people feel in an area where criminal groups largely dominate the streets. People do not feel free to talk to the police, because they fear for retributions. At the same time, the research shows that people still have faith in the police and that there are opportunities to work together.⁷⁷

The last example of an approach that is currently being implemented is the so-called phase model. The Phase model is intended to reclaim disadvantaged areas. The model is based on a combination of Intelligence Led Policing and Community Policing. As described above the code of silence in these areas makes it difficult for the police to tackle crime. The Phase model is a tool for planning and communication of long term measures against criminal networks that have a major impact on the local community. The main goal is to gradually reduce crime problems in an area. The model intends to highlight less visible crimes that are not necessarily regarded as a problem by the residents in the area. These types of crime are the core business of the criminal street gangs or other criminal networks that operate in these areas.

The Phase model consists of three phases. In the first phase the police is the key player. The main task of the police is to increase their presence in the area so the residents get used to the police. As it is difficult for the police to work in these areas and residents are not always willing to talk to the police, it is important to regain confidence and trust. The police officers have to show that they are there to serve the residents. A good method is to start a dialogue with the citizens and to recognize their problems. Police officers can do this through questionnaires. They approach the residents on the main square or in the shopping mall.

The first area where they tried this phase model was Angered, a socially disadvantaged area in Gothenburg. Three problems were mentioned by the residents: the open drug market, speed driving with mopeds and cars through the streets and littering. These were mainly highly visible problems. The first two were handled by the police. Littering was handled by the municipality. But in the eyes of the residents, the police had also contributed to solving this problem. This was a boost for trust.⁷⁸

In this first phase police work is mainly reactive. Priorities are maintaining law and order and solving urgent matters. The police and the municipality prioritise work concerning the main problems in the area as perceived by the residents. The police is also focussed on restoring the relationship with stakeholders in the area. Petty crime and organized crime will both be tackled.

⁷⁷ Skinnari et al (2018).

⁷⁸ E. Wennerström & D. Vesterhav, January 29th. 2018.

Phase two is all about building a relationship with the public. Police have gained control over the area and police officers can get again on foot patrol, which enables them to start a dialogue with the residents. This leads to an influx of information. The result of this new situation is not only that the police gets a better understanding of the problems, but also of the criminal networks that are operating in the area. This is an important addition to the information that has been known so far. The advantages of this approach are that the police and other institutions can work again freely in the area. There is also an improved trust in law enforcement and action driven police work takes less time and there is more space and time for crime preventing measures. The result of this all is a decrease of visible problems.

In phase three the police authorities focus on tackling and preventing organized crime. In phase one and two the law enforcement can and will work with organized crime, but they attempt to wait to phase three to launch large operations aimed at things many residents benefit from and do not perceive as a problem. Examples of these crimes are stores selling illicit cigarettes or stolen goods, restaurants and other services that can keep a low price due to tax offences, and so on. Collaboration with all stakeholders remains important.

These police operations must be accompanied by a good media strategy. The public should be informed of every phase. So if phase three starts and the police is dismantling the criminal networks that provide the residents with cheap goods, the police has to tell the public why they are tackling these criminals. They have to explain that these goods are linked with organised crime that has a disrupting effect on society. Therefore they have to make the public aware.

The police tackling these forms of organized crime only in this phase is a conscious choice. If they should deal with these illegal and criminal structures too soon, this will be counterproductive. They will lose the trust of the public again, because in this case they tackle crime that also benefits the residents in the area. Consequently the main trick is holding back the police. That is not always easy, because the police is an action oriented organization. When they have information of criminal activities the police are eager to react and this leads to what is called over policing. In areas like these there is also a risk of ethnic profiling. In that case trust in the police will be reduced.

Related to this is the way in which the results of the police are measured. Usually the police are charged on output. That can be problematic, because the results are not always demonstrable. The police put a lot of time and capacity in these operations. The operation in Södertälje led to a substantial amount of convictions. But it is obvious that the phase model

won't give results quickly. The police, the municipality and all the other stakeholders, including local and national politicians must beware of the fact that reclaiming these areas and regaining trust and confidence in the police is a long term process.

7 Comparison with the Dutch situation

What lessons can we learn from Sweden? To be able to answer that question, we first have to give a brief outline of the Dutch situation and to take a close look at the differences and similarities.

7.1 *Criminal groups and networks*

Unlike Sweden, the Netherlands is a drug producing country. The Netherlands is known for its liberal drug policy. Drugs can be bought in coffee shops. However, the law is less clear about the delivery of drugs to the coffee shops, in other words: the back door is not well organised. As the policy of the 1970s had to lead to drug control being verifiable and manageable, this led to a large criminal world. Large-scale cannabis cultivation has become a lucrative criminal activity. In addition Dutch criminals have focused on the production of synthetic drugs. All in all, a large proportion of crime in the Netherlands, if not the largest proportion, is related to drugs.

Drug production is in the hands of criminal networks. In a number of cases it concerns families. For their business premises they recruit citizens and entrepreneurs, including farmers, who make their lofts, sheds and business premises and sometimes even glass houses available for growing cannabis and for setting up drug labs for an attractive “rent”. Once you are connected to such a network, it is difficult to get out of it. Drug trafficking is, inter alia, in the hands of a few networks that consist largely but not exclusively of Moroccans. These are also referred to in the Netherlands as Mocromafia. This is not so much looked upon as street gangs, because the working area of the boys is larger than just their own neighbourhood and even reaches far beyond the border.

Exactly like the members of the Swedish street gangs, the members of these Dutch gangs do not back away from violence. In recent years, this has led to a series of shootings, settlements and liquidations in residential areas on several occasions. In January 2018 a young volunteer of a community center was killed in such a shooting. Another employee was badly injured. Hand grenades were used and in 2016 the severed head of a criminal opponent was found in front of an Amsterdam Shisha lounge. In this sense the impulsive methods are comparable. Some of the boys, like the Swedish street gangs, have been inspired by mafia movies and gangster rap. They are looking for adventure and they want to earn a lot of money quickly. Some of them are afflicted with mental disorder. The networks are not only involved in drug trafficking but also in burglaries, fraud and other illegal activities. Some of

them are involved in the cracking of cash machines with the help of explosives. The criminally gained money is spent on expensive clothing, cars, watches etc. The leaders also invest their criminal earnings in other cases, such as drug transports and real estate in Spain and Morocco. This group also included a part of the radicalized young people who traveled to Syria and Iraq between 2014 and 2016 to join extremist Islamist groups.

7.2 *Socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods*

As the Swedish situation reveals, it is important to constantly pay attention to the socially disadvantaged areas. Although the situation in the Netherlands differs from that in Sweden by for instance a more varied housing supply, there are also similarities. In some Dutch neighbourhoods a parallel society has grown, where criminals exercise a big influence on their living environment and where illegal activities are considered as normal by a large part of the population. They have an undermining effect, not only on the neighbourhood, but on society as a whole. A large number of socially disadvantaged areas have already been tackled in the years as part of the project for power districts that started in 2007. This project consisted of a combination of social, economic and security measures. The latter included the expansion of the number of community police officers. In practice only the visible crime was actually tackled. Undermining (of organized crime) remained largely out of the picture. As a result the influence of the main criminals, who often lived in these neighbourhoods, remained large. Recent research advocates a firm approach to this undermining criminality, in which all stakeholders work together. Barriers are raised to hamper and disrupt criminal activities, processes, investments and the building of power and influence positions in the vulnerable neighbourhoods.⁷⁹

7.3 *Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs*

Crime committed by outlaw motorcycle gangs has received full attention by Dutch law enforcement and the municipalities. The most important biker gangs in the Netherlands are the Hells Angels MC, Bandidos MC and the homegrown Satudarah MC and No Surrender MC. These biker gangs are involved in drug production and drug trafficking, fraud, extortion, illegal gambling and illegal prostitution. Until 2013 there was a Council of Eight, a consultation structure that was comparable with the Sweden Model. Eight biker clubs were represented in this council. Under the leadership of the Hells Angels agreements were made about the num-

⁷⁹ P. Tops & E. van der Torre (2014), *Wijkenaanpak en ondermijnende criminaliteit*, Amsterdam, Boom.

ber of chapters, which clubs were allowed to wear patches, etc. This meant that mutual conflicts were prevented. The Council of Eight fell apart because the Satudarah was angered by the dominant position of the Hells Angels.

Conflicts within the biker world increased when the Bandidos came to the Netherlands in 2014. There were shootings and stabbings. Attacks with hadn grenades were committed on the housing of the president of the Bandidos in Sittard. The arrival of the Mongols also caused anxiety . In 2016 it came to a shooting between members of the Hells Angels and the Mongols MC in a hotel in Rotterdam. Hotel guests had to move hastily towards safety.

Dutch policy is aimed at prohibiting the motor clubs on basis of the right of regulation. In 2017 this resulted in the elimination of the Bandidos MC. It has been clearly established that the presence of this OMG posed a risk to public order and safety.

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