



“Firing in” Joe Soap? Stripping down the engine of organised crime

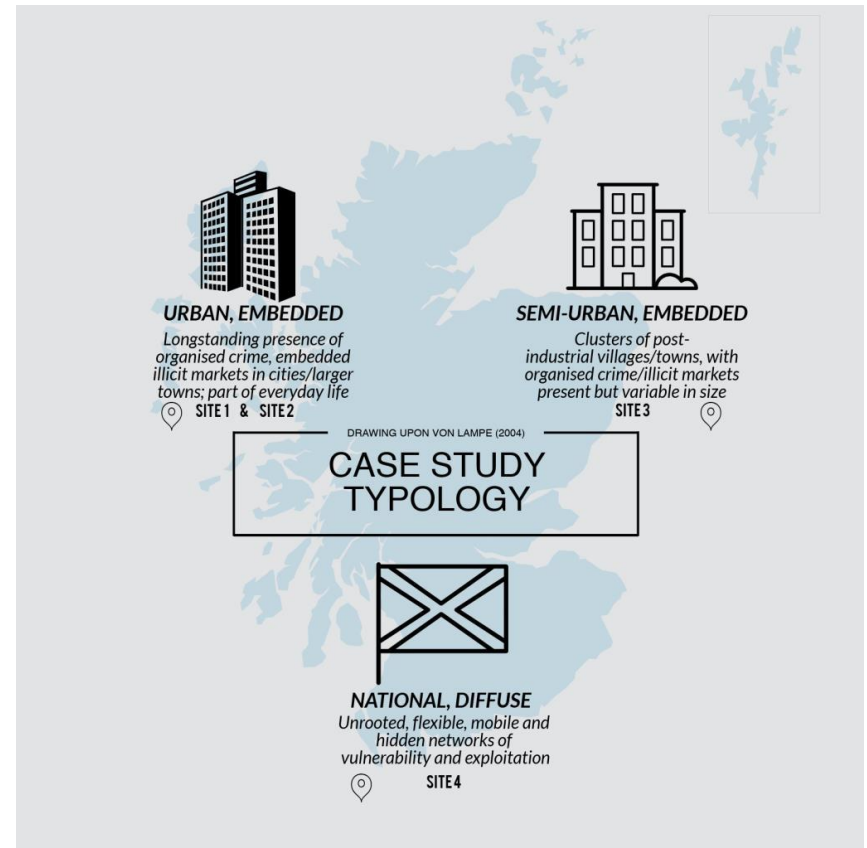
Niall Hamilton-Smith, University of Stirling
Scottish Association for the Study of Offending, Edinburgh
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The Community Experiences of Organised Crime

- What are the relationships that exist between SOC and communities in Scotland?
- What are the experiences and perceptions of residents, stakeholders and organisations of the extent and nature of SOC within their local area?
- How does SOC impact on community wellbeing, and to what extent can the harms associated with SOC be mitigated?

The Study

- Everyday experiences in four case-study areas
- 188 participants
 - 84 community
 - 52 statutory
 - 14 diffuse OC
 - 12 business
 - 12 lived experience
- Community co-inquiry



Four Key Themes

- ***Wider Disadvantage*** – *how it can create conditions for crime*
- ***Importance of Stories*** – *Which attract people to get involved*
- ***Vulnerable People*** – *And how they are used*
- ***Services*** – *And their effectiveness in combating it*

Wider Disadvantage

- Organised crime makes regeneration difficult - damaging community reputation, discourages investment
- Creating bigger gulf between community members and statutory services
- But crime not the root of all problems stopping it won't solve everything
- Economic exclusion and political neglect, provide ideal conditions for organised crime.
- A 'chicken and egg' relationship – needs tackled as part of wider regeneration initiatives.
- Current climate - cuts, service withdrawal, and short-term, insecure funding makes solutions harder

Stories of Need

“...if you’ve got a choice of sitting without any power and food, or doing something about it, I don’t blame them for doing something about it. It’s logic... I’d hate to think what I would do if faced with that. You either die, or you do something about it”

Stories of Strain

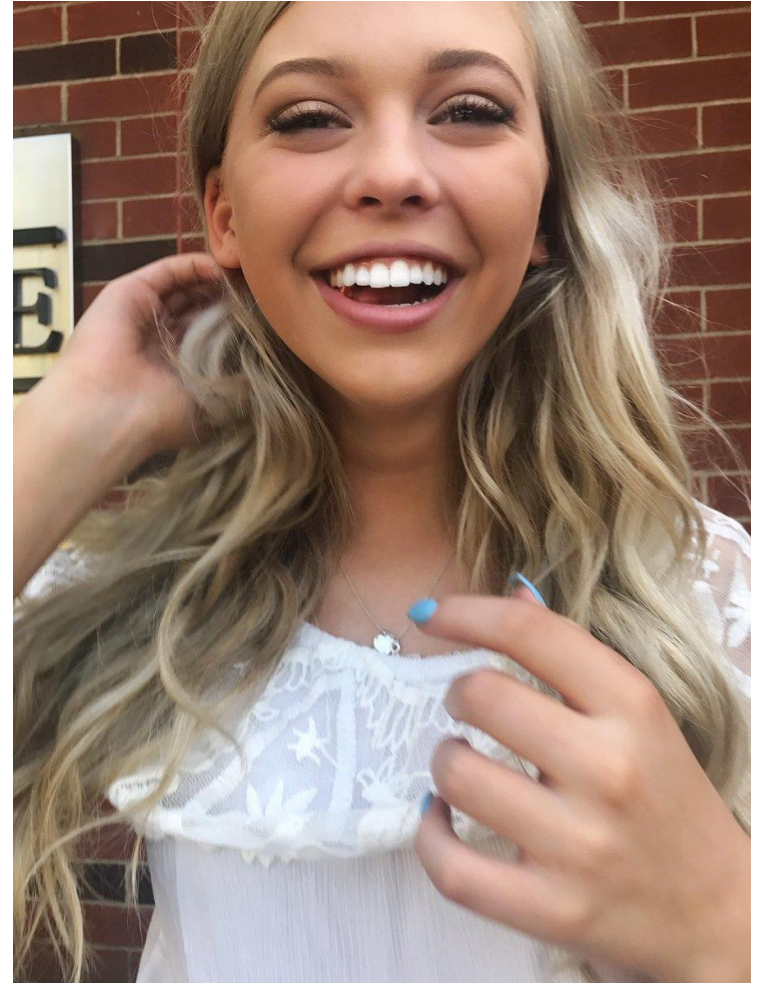
'It's tough bein fae an area where there's nae opportunity. Ye don't really realise it tae yer older that there isnae the opportunity tae move up in society, there's nae upward social mobility...ye could drive tae the [supermarket nearby] and ye drive past fancy hooses, flash cars and ye think, well, why should ah naw huv that? And when you've naw really been taught how tae dae it in a legitimate way, ye dae think drug dealin is an easy option.'

Importance of stories

- *“ We call it economics, we’re saying to the laddies ‘you come and dae this course for five days a week and we’ll gie you £55’. And the laddies are looking at you and goin, £55?... [They’re] sitting wi about four grand in their pocket. Like, it’s, it’s, that’s what you’re up against.”*
- *“At the end of the day, I think it’s not attractive enough... The pain you need to go through to get into that position... It’s just too difficult. ... And I think augmenting your income, ...is a very rational decision that they’re making, you know?”*

Stories of aspiration and alternative role models

“There’s a guy in his twenties who drives around in an X5, not worked a day in his life, so he could be the next one that comes through... That’s gotta be an attraction to the kids – ‘look at him, he doesn’t have to work, he’s protected by that person”



And the need to change them

- Organised crime is persuasive at advertising itself as something to aspire to
- It only takes one or two prominent local 'businessmen' to become standard bearers for a life of crime.
- The reality is very, very different for most people (e.g. 50 years old, burnt through the cash, a life looking over your shoulder)
- Organised crime can spin - for communities neglected by government it supplies security, finance, cheap services and goods,
- It creates a sense of belonging for it's foot soldiers,
- Organised crime often means vulnerable, low level offenders in jail whilst big men walk free

Vulnerability

- Organised crime 'groups' know vulnerabilities in communities better than officials in many cases,

They use this knowledge to:

- Recruit and coerce the vulnerable people to get involved
- Getting folk to store or move cash, drugs or other goods)
- Targeting/grooming those disaffected with school
- People with mental health issues or learning disabilities etc.
Grow four cannabis plants and keep one for yourself
- Target the vulnerable as customers
- Control by threat of 'Ambient violence'

Vulnerability cont...

- Exploit 'gaps' or failures in service provision
- Fear of the bedroom tax
- Impact of benefit sanctions etc.
- By controlling the roof over peoples heads
- Using local intelligence from within their crime networks e.g. money lending



“if they live in the area they know who they can target... They know exactly what they’re doing. They’ll also then know in terms of some of our customer groups who have got severe issues with alcohol or drug addictions and on mental health issues and they play on that. So they know they can profile within the local community and identify exactly who knows what. “

“The vast majority of people in your community are good law abiding citizens so there’s a general atmosphere of fear, a kind of low level fear. What I mean is that there is just that reluctance to speak up. Whilst they are not living in fear that the OCGs are going to come round their door and do them damage you know. I think there is an acceptance that if they were to do something to speak up against them, then damage could be done to them.”

“there’s a lotta good people. I’m happy to say I love my area. But it’s definitely stigmatized... Many of the high-profile gangsters are tied to the area.”

Challenges for Service providers

- A lack of communication on problems within and between services
- Worsened by key service withdrawal e.g. youth projects, but also police stations, social work offices
- Violence hidden and therefore under-reported – hard to respond to
- A sense that statutory agencies can't protect you and can't police 'them'

“...This group of individuals have an incredible amount of strength and power because we can't be standing beside everyone's front door”

The myth of alternative governance



SOC can distance communities from state actors, it weakens information flows, erodes trust and confidence

Individuals have a control over the communities, they replace the police in some respects. You're living in a community, you're trying to live a normal law-abiding life, you've got children and something happens to the children. It's frowned on to go to the police, people are reluctant to go to the police. Sometimes people go to them [organised crime groups] to resolve things, then you're compromised

Community empowerment and asset-based approaches?

Key challenges for managing offenders

- Joe Soap – Communities do not blame SOC for his/her fate
- Challenges to desistance
 - Prison environment
 - Surviving the first weekend of Kafka-esque 'freedom'
 - Social capital versus banishment?
 - Will 'they' let you go ('they' being a two edged term)
- Barriers of fear, anger and inarticulateness
- Stigma and (self) exclusion of the 'undeserving'

Managing Mr Big?

Social Worker- I'm a civilian, yeah. And he was quite... It was quite... It was really interesting, but very amenable, very likeable, "how are you?" We're not a threat to these guys, do you know? They want to engage with- they want to- their licences are an inconvenience to them, they want to get them done and they want to get them out the way, and they often do, yeah.

Interviewer - So I mean, wondering if that's as much a part of the community 'sell' as the fear. So, the patter, and the friendliness...

Social Worker - Well, uhu. I think, though, for the chap that was really, the patter that was really, ehm, he was absolutely feared by his counterparts in their world, if you like. Really, one of the, the police saying, we hear the police officer remembered the night of the offence that took place and it was horrendous. Ehm, and that man lived through, he did everything, they were terrified of him. But a nicer man to us, a nicer man you could never meet! And the two were so poles apart...

Gaps and Questions

- Successful criminal careers
- Effective management of offenders
- SOC desistance journey
- Impact of high-profile violence
- Mechanisms for community participation in policy
- Hidden forms of violence and exploitation
- Successful community stories

