

RECENT RESEARCH ON ORGANIZED CRIME IN THE NETHERLANDS

Introduction

Dina Siegel

On the geographical map of activities of contemporary organized crime every country occupies its own special place, but this is not to say that the nature of these criminal activities is unchanging. As well as other organizations, criminal groups are influenced by the process of globalisation and by the rapid developments in technology. Organized crime takes advantage of walls coming down and borders opening up; criminals create new connections, new opportunities and discover new markets and clients. Organized crime is well aware of the importance of communication. Criminals cooperate with each other, they exchange knowledge and share their experience. Criminologists don't always do the same...

A lot of interesting criminological information never reaches a wider audience because it is not published in the international literature or presented at conferences or seminars. The findings of local research do not always become public and as a result, knowledge and experience are often not shared between specialists. It is the intention of the CIROC to promote communication and cooperation between Dutch criminologists and scholars in other countries. This Newsletter is meant as a contribution to make Dutch research on organized crime better known to our colleagues and to all those who might take an interest in our activities.

This edition of our Newsletter offers the reader an overview of several recent reports on various activities of organized crime in the Netherlands. Henk van de Bunt and Edward Kleemans introduce their 'organized crime monitor', an ongoing research project based on an analysis of police files on cases of drug production and trade, human smuggling and trafficking in women, underground banking, etc. In 2002, two research projects on the production, smuggling and distribution of XTC were concluded. The first study takes a closer look at XTC couriers and petty smugglers, while the second study examines recent developments in the XTC world in Amsterdam. Dina Siegel gives a summary of the results. Organized crime in the Netherlands is traditionally connected to drugs. Henk van de Bunt analyses the recent debate on drugs, as well as the latest developments in Dutch policies regarding coffee shops and the decriminalisation of drugs. Hans Nelen conducted a study on corruption in the allegedly 'corruption free' country of the Netherlands. His presentation of a summary of his findings concludes this Newsletter. Except for the report on XTC in Amsterdam, all studies were published in Dutch.

Contents

- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Analysis: - Transnational organized crime in the Netherlands – 'organized crime monitor' research
 - New studies on XTC
 - Coffee shops under fire
 - Corruption not a necessity for organized crime
- ◆ Forthcoming
- ◆ Editorial board
- ◆ Colofon

Analyse

Transnational organized crime in the Netherlands – 'organized crime monitor' research

Henk van de Bunt and Edward Kleemans

From 1996 up until now, 80 case studies were collected in the so-called 'organized crime monitor', a continuous research project into the nature of organized crime in the Netherlands. The main sources of this research project are files of closed police investigations of criminal groups. A case study always starts with interviewing the police officers and public prosecutors involved. After these interviews we analyze and summarize the police files. For empirical researchers this direct access to police files is quite unique, compared to the situation in other countries.

When describing and analyzing these files, we use an extensive checklist, which elaborates upon the following questions: what is the composition of the group and how do offenders cooperate? What kinds of illegal activities do they engage in and what is their modus operandi? How do they interact with the opportunities and risks of their environment? What are the proceeds of the criminal activities and how do they spend these proceeds?

The availability of large police files allows us to shed light on the hidden problem of organized crime. Transcripts of wiretaps, data obtained from police observations, interviews with victims and interrogations of offenders often provide us with a detailed and interesting look into the social world of organized crime.

The first report of the monitor was published in 1999 (Kleemans et al., 1998). It was based on an analysis of 40 major police investigations on criminal groups in the Netherlands. Information was also drawn from public and confidential reports, crime analysis reports and interviews with experts. Recently a new report was published which is based on 80 case studies (Kleemans et al., 2002). The 80 cases pertain to the wholesale trade of traditional drugs (hashish, heroin, cocaine), the production and trade of synthetic drugs (amphetamines, XTC), the smuggling of illegal immigrants, trafficking women for sexual exploitation, arms trafficking, trafficking stolen vehicles, underground banking, money laundering, and several forms of fraud (cigarette smuggling, EU-fraud, et cetera).

The connections between the underworld and the legitimate world

Public debate and scientific research on organized crime have been heavily influenced by the image of 'mafia-type' organizations in Italy or the United States, which have gained control of certain economic sectors or regions, acting like 'alternative governments'. In our cases, however, the offenders do not seem to have the intention of establishing themselves permanently within the economic or political institutions of Dutch society (Kleemans et al., 2002). They are not interested in taking over certain branches of industry or regions, acting as alternative regulators. Protection, political corruption, labour racketeering or attempts to control economic sectors are almost completely absent in our case files. Furthermore, there are no clear indications of attempts to take over branches like catering or waste-disposal, through corruption and violence. These findings are consistent with previous research on organized crime in the Netherlands (Fijnaut et al., 1998; Van Duyne, 1990).

Rather than controlling certain sectors of the economy such as the transport or financial sector, criminal groups seem to join in with the legal infrastructure as well as with the legal commodity and money flows.

Economic sectors are being used to commit or to conceal crimes or to spend criminal funds, but the spending of proceeds of crime in the legitimate world is not aimed at the acquisition of power in Dutch society, as far as we have been able to establish. Criminal money is spent on expensive life-styles or investments in valuable objects. The money is also invested in companies and real estate, with the purpose of making further profits, legal or illegal. Most of these investments are in sectors familiar to the criminal groups, such as bars and restaurants, prostitution, cars and transport (Kleemans et al., 2002). Well-known examples are investments by criminals in Amsterdam's Red Light district and surrounding neighbourhoods, in real estate, catering and prostitution. (e.g. Fijnaut et al., 1998). Not only the nature, but also the locality of the investments is to a large extent influenced by the 'cognitive map' of the offenders: they often have a tendency to invest in their country of origin: the Dutch in the Netherlands, Turkish offenders in Turkey, and so on. In some cases money was invested in countries other than the country of origin, but this was always in places where the criminals conducted criminal activities or where they had close personal contacts. So again, investments were guided by whom offenders knew and what offenders knew (see also: Meloen et al., 2003).

Explaining transnational crime

The importance of social ties may help us to understand why the Netherlands plays a major role as a transit country for the drugs trade. The social basis for these illegal trade activities is, among other things, constituted by international migration flows. It is a historical coincidence that the very countries from which so many people emigrated to the Netherlands in the 1960s and 1970s (Suriname, the Antilles, Aruba, Morocco and Turkey) turned into the leading producers or transit dealers of the drugs dominating the European market in the 1980s and 1990s. The bulk of heroin now comes from Turkey, whereas Suriname, the Antilles and Aruba link Columbia and its cocaine to Europe. Morocco has developed into the leading hashish producer. The social ties between the Netherlands and the countries of origin, which have been created by migration, are a fertile breeding ground for international drug trafficking. Over and over again, family ties and bonds of friendship turn out to be the corner stone of transnational trading. Social relations are instrumental in bridging the gap between criminal networks in various countries.

The existence of these social links is not the only possible explanation for the dominant role of the Netherlands as a transit country. The existing infrastructure for the transport of goods and passengers should also be taken into account. The Netherlands has one of the most advanced ports in the world (Rotterdam) and an excellent network of roads and waterways. Consequently, the infrastructure not only facilitates legitimate trade, but inevitably also the illegal transport of people and goods. The fairly prominent position as a transit port for drugs is not, as is often suggested, due to the country's tolerant drug policy, but rather to its strong position as a transit point in general (e.g. Farrell, 1998).

Policy implications

Analyzing our 80 cases, we were struck by the fact that in only a few cases border control played any role at all. Just a handful of offenders were caught in this way. We also noticed that corruption of customs officers was very rare. For example: fifteen cases in our files regarded the illegal import of cocaine, mostly through the port of Rotterdam, but in none of these cases was there even an attempt to bribe the officers in charge. The various methods of smuggling all amounted to the basic concept of hiding the contraband. Apparently, seaports offer such good opportunities for secretly importing cocaine, that the bribing of customs officers is not even considered as an option.

Over the past few years a lot of effort has been made to keep organized crime away from the stock exchange, from real estate, from prostitution, et cetera. This approach has come to be known as the administrative, preventive approach (Fijnaut, 2001). As important as this approach may be, it is equally necessary to invest in other preventive measures, especially those which deal with the movement of goods, people and money across international borders in the context of transnational crime.

Although both incoming and outgoing movements are crucial for

transnational crime, in particular outgoing movements still seem to be a 'blind spot' (e.g. Kleemans et al., 2002: 147-151). A clear example is the legislation concerning smuggling illegal immigrants. Despite the fact that the Netherlands function as an important transit-country for the smuggling of illegal immigrants to the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States, the so-called 'smuggling out' is not even punishable by law in the original draft of the relevant legislation. This seems to be testimony to a blind spot when it comes to transnational crime.

Much has been written about the balance between the economic benefits of a swift flow of goods and passengers on the one hand, and the importance of upholding the law by frequent and time consuming checks on the other hand. There are obvious limitations to effectively controlling the borders. Nevertheless, a conscious 'trade off' is necessary. In one case of smuggling illegal immigrants, for instance, a public prosecutor remarked that the expensive criminal investigation was the price that had to be paid for ineffective border controls.

Balancing economic interests and adequate border controls is part of a very real problem facing the open Western economies. The world may have become a global village, but this does not mean that differences in wealth, safety and opportunities have disappeared. There is still a fertile breeding ground for organized crime and terrorism, while the opportunities to commit these crimes have grown as a result of increased mobility.

What will be the future reactions to serious manifestations of organized crime or terrorism? Will countries start hiding again behind their national borders? Will we see an increase in domestic security and surveillance? Will 'Fortress Europe' put up higher walls? How exactly will that be done? At this stage we simply do not know the answers to these questions.

Despite the growing unification of Western Europe, significant cultural differences between countries can still stand in the way of successful cooperation. Let us take the relations between Belgium and the Netherlands as an example. Two small neighbouring countries, where tensions only seem to arise during an important soccer match. In reality, behind the façade of good intentions and a strong determination to work together, we find fundamental differences of opinion regarding police-cooperation. Belgium blames Holland for not giving priority to cooperation and support when it comes to crimes involving hashish. A shipment of several hundred kilos from Belgium is not important enough for the Dutch authorities to intercept and that means the end of the Belgian investigation. This example raises the question to what extent individual countries, within the EU, for instance, are still in a position to independently evaluate their priorities in the struggle against transnational crime.

Recent publications by the Ministry of Justice have listed the priorities in the investigation of organized crime in the Netherlands. For years, the emphasis has been on the investigation of large drugs-organizations. Some people, however, seem to doubt whether the amount of attention given to drugs-investigations was right after all. A former policy plan states that police attention should be focused "to a substantial degree" on other forms of organized crime. Reference is made to the trade in chemical waste, medicine, blood or organs, and endangered species (Nota Criminaliteitsbeheersing, 2001: 34). A more explicit police-document mentions that the investigation of large drug-cases takes up too much of limited police capacity. The investigation of these cases – sometimes dismissively called "the hunt for the kilos" – is obviously less popular than it used to be. However, the question is whether the Netherlands is really in a position to pick and choose when listing its priorities. The 'transnational' character of 'our' organized crime calls for a certain amount of modesty in this respect. The drugs that are handled by groups operating in the Netherlands mostly end up in countries like Ireland, Great Britain, Germany or Sweden (or even further abroad). Consequently, other countries suffer from Dutch organized crime. Thus, viewed from a broader European perspective, it seems odd when the Netherlands announces to devote fewer resources to a kind of criminality that is causing so many problems for their European partners. The listing of priorities by the Dutch, should therefore not only take into account Dutch views and interests, but also those of other countries.

Summary

Many forms of organized crime in the Netherlands boil down to interna-

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tional smuggling activities (drugs, illegal immigrants, women for sexual exploitation, arms, stolen vehicles) and other transnational illegal activities, such as money laundering and tax evasion. Hence, the nature of organized crime in the Netherlands might be described as 'transit crime': criminal groups in the Netherlands are primarily involved in international illegal trade, using the same opportunity structure which also facilitates legal economic activities; furthermore, the Netherlands can be either a country of destination, a transit country, or, particularly for synthetic drugs, a production country.

In our view, explanations of transnational organized crime from the perspective of rational economic behaviour seem to have serious shortcomings. Elaborating upon insights from the emerging field of 'economic sociology', we have pointed to the importance of social ties for the organization and practice of worldwide criminal trade. By recognizing the importance of social ties, we are able to understand why migrant groups often function as bridgeheads, and why a country like the Netherlands with large immigrant populations originating from drug producing countries, can become an international point of distribution for illegal trade. Conversely, the Netherlands has a lot to 'offer', synthetic drugs, for example.

'Transit crime' is focused on trade, on crossing borders. It has no intention of dominating certain regions or economic branches. This kind of crime is fundamentally different from the kind of organized crime that can be found in the United States, Colombia or Italy, but these foreign stereotypes still inspire much of the present containment policies in the Netherlands. A lot of effort is being put into preventing organized crime from settling within the existing legal structures. However, given the transnational character of organized crime, attention should also be focused on border controls. Yet, checks on outgoing traffic still seem to be the 'blind spot' of customs authorities.

Finally, the transnational character of Dutch organized crime entails problems for other countries. Drugs are smuggled from the Netherlands and consumed in other countries. When deciding on investigation priorities, the Netherlands should perhaps take into more serious consideration the views and interests of other countries.

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The Netherlands is usually either admired or criticized for its liberal attitude towards the trade and possession of drugs in general and synthetic drugs in particular. In recent years it has become clear that the Netherlands occupy the leading position in the distribution of ecstasy. According to Interpol and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the majority of all ecstasy confiscated world-wide came from the Netherlands. United States authorities became aware of an increase in trafficking of ecstasy around 1995. US officials and US media reported the existence of Israeli trafficking networks, based in part in the Netherlands and supplied by Dutch producers. The US government has never been convinced that the liberal Dutch drug policy approach is effective (Blickman et al 2003) and the Netherlands is now labeled the main ecstasy producer in the world. To counter the ongoing criticism from different countries, the memorandum 'Mutual effort against ecstasy', which was presented in the Dutch Parliament in May 2001, included an action plan to reduce the production, trade and smuggling of ecstasy. Several research projects on various aspects of Dutch involvement in the production and distribution of XTC were initiated, two of which were concluded last year (van de Bunt et al, 2003; Blickman et al, 2003).

XTC couriers and petty smugglers

The first research project was commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Justice and conducted by criminologists from Erasmus University of Rotterdam and Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam (Henk van de Bunt, Daphne Kunst and Dina Siegel). Its purpose was to gain insight into the kinds of people who smuggle ecstasy. The findings will be used for an information campaign (proposed in the above-mentioned memorandum) that will target potential couriers and inform them about the risks they may face when smuggling ecstasy from the Netherlands.

In September 2002, 268 Dutch citizens were imprisoned all over the world on the charge of ecstasy smuggling. Up until now, almost nothing was known about the backgrounds and motives of ecstasy couriers and petty smugglers. Who are these people? Are they experienced smugglers involved in large networks, which include the production, distribution and smuggling of the drug? Do they have criminal connections, or are they innocent teenagers, unaware of the risks and dangers involved, and only in it to make some easy money to buy a few luxuries? Who are the people the information campaign should target?

The researchers collected data on the entire population of these Dutch prisoners, while focusing on those arrested in the USA and Germany. They conducted interviews in these two countries with respectively 19 and 7 couriers and 'petty smugglers'. A minority of the population of 268 Dutch persons in prison all over the world for ecstasy smuggling are under thirty years old. The United States, Germany and England are the countries where most of these prisoners currently reside. More than 70% of the group had previously been in contact with the police or the justice department. Almost one third of them had a record of at least five previous offences, the majority of which were not related to drug smuggling. Male prisoners had a criminal record more often than female prisoners. An analysis of their previous offences revealed that the ecstasy-couriers and smugglers are not always innocent and unsuspecting persons, seduced by ruthless drug criminals to smuggle ecstasy. Taking into account their age and criminal record, this group cannot be characterised as inexperienced and naive.

Similarities as well as differences were found between the Dutch prisoners in the USA and in Germany. The American inmates are 'real' couriers, who were approached by a third party and operated under orders from organisations involved in the export of ecstasy. In Germany, the petty smugglers operated on their own initiative and delivered to their own clients. The American couriers were approached by specific networks of Antilleans and Dominicans and came from the larger cities. The petty smugglers who operated in Germany were all native Dutch white men from the southern province of Limburg.

The smugglers in American and German prisons are in no way 'victims', who were taken advantage of. Almost all couriers knew what they were smuggling and took the risk. In general, however, they all

realised later (after their arrest) that the risk had been too high and the negative consequences worse than they had realised.

The smuggling methods vary between the couriers and petty smugglers. The American couriers have to board planes and pass border controls both in Amsterdam and in the United States. This requires more and better preparation, such as special suitcases and other attributes. Dutch smugglers to Germany use much less sophisticated ways of smuggling. They often carry the drugs in the boot of a car or in a backpack and they operate alone.

As mentioned earlier, our main question was whether these couriers and petty smugglers were innocent teenagers or experienced and sophisticated criminals. It appears that the main reason to smuggle was profit seeking. For these prisoners it was not a question of 'sport' or adventure, nor of pressure, blackmail or manipulation, but the expectation of a simple and fast way to earn money. In other words, the 'new drug' ecstasy has not created a 'new type of courier'. These are not privileged, successful youngsters who take a chance, but individuals with limited financial possibilities.

XTC Trafficking in Amsterdam

The second research project focused on the trafficking of ecstasy in Amsterdam, with special attention to its mid-level segment. The research was carried out as part of the project 'Synthetic Drug Trafficking in Three European Cities: Major Trends and the Involvement of Organised Crime', promoted by Gruppo Abele (Italy) in co-operation with the Transnational Institute (TNI, The Netherlands) and the Institute for Studies on Conflicts and Humanitarian Actions (IECAH, Spain) and co-financed by the European Commission. The Amsterdam team was made up of Tom Blickman (TNI), Dirk Korf (University of Amsterdam), Dina Siegel (Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam) and Damian Zaitch (Erasmus University of Rotterdam).

The team conducted interviews with ecstasy dealers and police officials and studied the scientific literature as well as newspaper reports. The focus was on Amsterdam as a centre for the trade and distribution of ecstasy, as a tourist attraction for drug users, and as an international trendsetter. While most ecstasy production takes place outside the inner city, pills arrive in Amsterdam for wholesale and retail purposes. Most traffickers are involved in smuggling ecstasy out of the Netherlands, since export is much more profitable and the Amsterdam market itself is saturated. Ecstasy export takes place overland (to other European countries) and by air to the United States, Canada and other more distant destinations. The role of Israeli criminal networks is important in managing the trafficking routes; they mainly supply the North American and Australian markets.

The local market is different. In Amsterdam it is mostly 'hidden'. Pills are sold at private addresses among friends and relatives. There are also delivery services and there is some dealing in clubs, pubs and at raves, but street dealing is rare. There is a difference between the bigger dealers, who are close to the producers, and the smaller dealers and retailers, who are close to the users. The ecstasy market is 'open': anyone with the right contacts can enter it. There is no indication that there is any specific (ethnic) group dominating the business. In Amsterdam, the key to success in XTC trafficking lies in having close contact with mainstream Dutch youth on the party and rave circuit.

Law enforcement in clubs, discos and at raves is left to private security companies operating under police supervision. The Amsterdam regional police force is involved at different levels with law enforcement in the ecstasy chain, mainly concentrating on individual cases, the number of which is increasing rapidly.

At this stage, there is no clear view of how the top levels of the ecstasy industry in the Netherlands operate. It seems that the top level is dynamic, flexible and composed of loose coalitions involving established criminals in Dutch big cities and in Limburg. Occasionally violent disputes break out, resulting in liquidations.

Despite Dutch efforts to avoid straining relations with the USA, the significant differences in drug policies between the two countries create tension. The American DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) has been known to complain about not getting enough support from the Netherlands. On the Dutch side there is no great appreciation of the DEA's investigative methods and level of expertise.

From an international perspective (the research was conducted in Turin, Barcelona and Amsterdam) criminologists concluded that the different positions occupied by the three cities in the geopolitics of ecstasy trafficking and distribution, clearly influence the way in which law enforcement's priorities are identified and pursued. The Dutch research group emphasizes the major role played by the United States and some European partners in labelling the Netherlands the major ecstasy producer. 'Ironically, the paradox of successful law enforcement would be that it triggers stigmatisation: the more is seized in the Netherlands, the more the country appears to be the source of the problem' (Blickman et al, 2003: 230).

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Coffee shops under fire

Henk van de Bunt

In April 2003 a senior Dutch judge proposed the decriminalization of drugs, starting with cannabis. He explained in a newspaper that the prosecution and trial of drug cases took up too much of the courts' time and effort, leaving not enough for other criminal cases. He suggested immediate legalisation. Although it is not common for judges to publicly question existing laws, his ideas met with considerable support. More than one political party expressed agreement with his plea for the legalisation of cannabis. To an outsider these events may seem to underline the reputation of the Netherlands as a country tolerant towards drug use, but it should be stressed that the policy on cannabis does not go unquestioned on the domestic front.

It is perhaps not always understood that the Dutch law on narcotics prohibits the cultivation and production of cannabis, as well as the possession and trade of cannabis. In the 1970s however, the public prosecutor issued a directive stating that the sale of small amounts of cannabis to users would not be prosecuted. This sale is permitted under specific conditions, in so-called coffee shops, where the use and sale of hard drugs and alcohol are not allowed and no persons under 18 years old can enter. The purchase of cannabis is limited to 5 grams per person per day and the stock present in the shop should not exceed 500 grams. It is up to the local authorities whether or not to allow the establishment of one or more of these shops within their municipality. The present regulatory framework is limited to the sale to the consumer at the "front door" of the coffee shop. The shop is not allowed to buy its wares at the "back-door", because the cultivation and wholesale trade of cannabis are not tolerated.

In recent years it has become clear that these two activities can be very profitable. The government's policy of tolerance ("*gedoogbeleid*") has led to the emergence of an illegal and highly lucrative market for cannabis cultivation and trade. The criminologist Frank Bovenkerk from the University of Utrecht recently gave a detailed account of the different ways of cannabis cultivation in the Netherlands. He described how (former) horticultural firms have moved into the large-scale cultivation of cannabis and how residents of trailer camps or underprivileged neighbourhoods are drawn, sometimes forcibly, into the production of cannabis. Often the lamps and other necessary equipment are provided by organizations with a criminal background. Bovenkerk argued that these people also deal in hard drugs and that their operation may be described as organized crime. If his conclusions are correct, he has levelled serious criticism at the Dutch tolerant policy on cannabis, since the rationale behind it has always been the separation between soft drugs and hard drugs markets.

From the recently published results of research conducted by Bieleman et. al., it appears that the number of coffee shops in the Netherlands has decreased considerably over the last few years. In the 1980s there were approximately 1500 shops, in 2002 only 782 were counted. This is probably the result of a more stringent enforcement of

regulations and more intensive monitoring by local authorities. Almost 80% of the 496 Dutch municipalities do not allow the establishment of coffee shops or are working towards the disappearance of the shops currently operating. In other words, on the local administrative level the phenomenon of the coffee shop is much less warmly received than is sometimes assumed. The above-mentioned studies both illustrate that the Dutch “gedoogbeleid” raises serious questions and is subject to criticism not only from abroad, but also from within the Netherlands itself.

More significantly, the Dutch “gedoogbeleid” may very well collapse as a result of its intrinsic paradoxes. The first paradox is that persons under 18 are not allowed to enter a coffee shop, while the whole idea of tolerating the sale of cannabis in coffee shops was designed to protect young and vulnerable users. The reasoning behind it was that the criminalization of cannabis would marginalize the users and drive them into the arms of pushers who would try to sell them not just cannabis, but heroin and cocaine as well. The age limit was raised a few years ago and is now actively enforced. In an attempt to assuage criticism from abroad, the Dutch government decided to impose strict regulations on coffee shops, but as a consequence they are now no longer accessible to the most vulnerable cannabis users.

Another paradox is that coffee shops are allowed to sell cannabis, but are not allowed to take deliveries. Over the last few years, the Dutch police and judicial authorities devoted much of their energy to dismantling larger and smaller cannabis plantations, again in response to foreign criticism. As a result, the discrepancies and dilemmas surrounding the “backdoor” and “front door” policies are more acutely felt. Several years ago the Minister of Justice indicated that he saw no possibility to resolve this paradox, for instance by allowing coffee shops to conduct transactions at their “backdoor”. He referred to the international treaties on drugs, which do not allow for increased tolerance.

A final paradox is that more control will lead to more uncontrollable situations: constant monitoring and supervision will push coffee shops into illegality. The number of illegal outlets will increase and the “policy of tolerance” will cover a smaller segment of the retail market.

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Corruption not a necessity for organised crime

Hans Nelen

The Netherlands has a reputation of being a corruption free country. The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index shows a stable picture of the Netherlands as one of the least corrupt nations, also in comparison to many other western democratic countries. However, Dutch empirical research on the extent of both public and private forms of corruption is still scarce. The issue is nevertheless taken seriously, and integrity is placed on the agenda of many political and administrative organisations.

The sudden political and public interest for integrity was caused by a number of factors. Firstly, the revelations during the last decade in other European democratic countries – e.g. Italy, France, Germany, Belgium – have overturned the notion that corruption is a phenomenon characteristic of developing countries, authoritarian regimes or “Mediterranean” societies (Della Porta, Vannucci, 1999). The thesis of an inverse correlation between corruption and economic and political development has been convincingly challenged in the Netherlands as well. Instead, it is now widely acknowledged that corruption is common to most, if not all democracies, including the Netherlands. A second major factor in the social construction of integrity as an important issue in society were publications by Dutch journalists on a number of ‘corruption’ cases resulting from the close relationships between local public functionaries and businesses in the construction industry. Thirdly, in the early nineties, organised crime became an important political issue. The

entwining between organised crime and corruption was emphasized in the political arena.

Recently, a report was published by Nelen and Nieuwendijk (2003) that contains the results of a scientific analysis of all cases that were labelled “public corruption” by the Dutch National Police Internal Investigation Department (*Rijksrecherche*). This department is part of the public prosecution service and is an independent investigative unit. It operates under the responsibility of the public prosecutor (Board of General Procurators). The research covers the period 1998-2000. During this period of three years, 145 cases were labelled as investigations into public corruption. In the research project, public corruption was defined as follows: a civil servant is considered corrupt, when he harms the public interest in exchange for the rewards or promises offered by outside actors.

The researchers emphasize that because of two reasons their overview of corruption cases is *not* representative of the actual state of affairs concerning public corruption in the Netherlands:

1. Nature of the crime: generally speaking, it is not in the interest of either one of the parties involved, to report the integrity violation to the authorities. Thus, the dark number of corruption is high: relatively few corruption cases are being reported to the National Police Internal Investigation Department;
2. Besides the National Police Internal Investigation Department, many other agencies cope with corruption cases (the bureaus of internal affairs of the regional police forces; the integrity bureau of the City of Amsterdam and – in the private sector – the forensic services of the major accountancy firms).

A second major point that has to be stressed, is that the 145 cases are criminal investigations into the *possibility* of public corruption. The majority of cases is not prosecuted, for a variety of reasons: no corruption found, no perpetrator identified, lack of evidence, lack of priority etc. Only 12% (= 17 cases within a period of three years) ended in the prosecution of the perpetrators. The percentage of actual convictions is even lower.

What forms of public corruption investigations can be distinguished on the basis of the 145 cases? Three manifestations of corruption catch the eye: the abuse of confidential information by police officers, the smuggling of drugs or weapons by prison guards, and the special treatment of entrepreneurs by civil servants within city administrations. Corruption may take place at either an executive level – as means to commit crimes – at a law enforcement level – as means to shield or conceal criminal activities – or at a strategic level – as means to acquire economic or political power. Most corruption investigations in the Netherlands concern corruption cases at an executive and law enforcement level. Only 15% of the 145 cases pertains to a form of (alleged) corruption at a strategic level. Most of this type of corruption can be found in the category special treatment of entrepreneurs and concerns the decision-making-process in tender procedures at a local level. Only 3 cases are related to alleged malpractice of a public prosecutor or judge. In none of these cases was there enough substantial evidence to prosecute the suspect.

The results of the study confirm the notion that corruption is by no means a *conditio sine qua non* for organised crime. Depending on the alternatives that criminals have to attain their goals, corruption may be an option. Due to the fact that organised crime in the Netherlands is transnational by nature, meaning that criminals abuse legal facilities in the Netherlands to a large extent but are not interested in achieving and developing economic and political power, the extent of corruption at a strategic level is rather low.

References:

Nelen, H. & A. Nieuwendijk, 2003, *Geen ABC. Analyse van rijksrechercheonderzoeken naar ambtelijke en bestuurlijke corruptie*. Den Haag: Boom Juridische uitgevers.

Forthcoming

Van de Bunt, H., Siegel, D., Zaitch, D. (eds), *Transnational Organized Crime. Current developments*. Deventer: Kluwer.

Dutch criminology is becoming more and more involved in international research on transnational organized crime. A few important books on this subject will be soon joined by a new edition, initiated by Dutch criminologists. The new book *Transnational Organized Crime. Current developments*, includes selection of presentations of various scholars, who participated in seminars organized by the CIROC in 2001/2003. The book is divided into five sessions: International Drug Trafficking, East-European Organized Crime, Human Smuggling and Women Trafficking, Financial Crime and Organized Crime and Terrorism. The list of authors includes M. Amir, F. Thoumi, F. Bovenkerk, M. Levi, N. Passas, etc.

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