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Lars Korsell and Paul Larsson

Organized Crime the Nordic Way

ABSTRACT

Organized crime in the Nordic countries shares some common traits and usually takes the form of small and flexible networks. There are very few, if any, Mafia-like groups. The level of corruption of officials is low and the level of violence between groups is, with some exceptions, quite low. Organized crime reflects the societies, the economy, and the historic and cultural background of the Nordic countries. Organized crime can not be said to be strongly integrated in the central trade and industry. Criminal networks are not a new feature. There have been well-established groups of smugglers and illegal makers of alcohol since the early twentieth century. Organized crime as a topic, problem, and social phenomenon was not focused on before the early 1990s.

Organized crime is often presented by the media and politicians as an uncontrollable force synonymous with violent and serious crime (Larsson 2008*b*; Ingvaldsen and Lundgren Sørli 2009; Korsell, Skinnari, and Vesterhav 2009). With some notable exceptions, this view is erroneous.

Organized crime mirrors the basic traits of the Nordic societies. The level of corruption by organized criminals is low compared with most other countries and the damage to society seems to be relatively small

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(Johansen 1996; Korsell, Wallstrom, and Skinnari 2007; Larsson 2008*b*; Skinnari, Weding, and Korsell 2008; Baard et al. 2009). Corruption of public officials has no significant history in the Scandinavian countries, although this is not to say they are without corruption (Spencer et al. 2006; Viuhko and Jokinen 2009). There are many well-known examples of corruption from the last decade, but most involve private businesses or relate to municipal and other local authorities and their dealings with local industry (S. Andersson 2002; Korsell 2008; Larsson 2008*b*). There are ample instances of corruption associated with shipping and international trade (Bratt 1988; Wåsterfors 2004). However, corruption as described in international literature, by organized criminals in connection with their activities, seems to be at a very low level (Baard et al. 2009).

Organized crime in the Nordic countries is neither systemic nor embedded in the legal economy. The merging of the legal and illegal economies is still at a low level (Johansen 1996, 2009; Skinnari, Weding, and Korsell 2008; Korsell, Skinnari, and Vesterhav 2009). That politicians or public officials have direct contact with criminal groups, or that industry regularly makes deals with them, are not Nordic realities.

There is a gap between academic definitions of organized crime and practical understanding and uses of the concept. The main focus of the police is on drug-related crimes, and smuggling is also important. There often is a lack of understanding of the importance of economic forms of organized crime and of markets for criminal or “tax-free” goods and services. To a certain extent this reflects the organization of the police and public authorities; the units working with economic crime are commonly perceived as being outside the “ordinary” police (Alvesalo 1998). Sweden, where the strategy “go for the money” is an important part of law enforcement and is applied in collaboration among different authorities, is an exception to this rule (Vesterhav, Forsman, and Korsell 2008).

Beside drug-related crime, organized crime as presented by the media, politicians, and law enforcement agencies has focused on visible gangs, especially bikers and violent “robber gangs” (Björk 2006; Larsson 2008*b*; Korsell, Skinnari, and Vesterhav 2009; Korsell et al. 2010). The threats from these gangs are overestimated, while the effects of the criminality of more cautious entrepreneurs have been underestimated.

Trafficking in human beings for purposes of sexual exploitation is an important political issue (Justitiedepartementet 2010, p. 49). Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Iceland all have legislation directed against the purchasing of sexual services in different contexts (see Skilbrei and Hølmström, in this volume).

To understand crime in a country or region you need basic knowledge of its history and characteristics. There are differences among the Nordic countries, but they are bound together by historical and cultural similarities. Compared with the United States, Eastern European, Latin American, or Italian descriptions of organized crime, the Nordic reality is very different. Nils Christie's criticism of Donald Cressey's *Theft of the Nation* (1969) provides a good illustration (Christie 1970). Christie was skeptical of the idea of a tight, hierarchical organization and of the sources on which Cressey based his work. Kettil Bruun (1970) criticized Cressey's definition of the term "organized crime" and wanted to open the definition up to cover forms of white-collar and high-status crime. Christie and Bruun showed that the concept could be viewed in more theoretical terms and that the examples typically used were American. Thirty years later Per Ole Johansen (2005) wrote of organized crime "the Norwegian way." We would expand this phrase and coin the term "organized crime the Nordic way." Tage Alalehto (2009) asked "Is Sweden really like Italy?" in respect of the focus on organized crime.

These differences in view reflect the social realities that shape the manner in which crime is committed, structured, and handled by the authorities. The characteristics of organized crime in the Nordic countries challenge general theories that presuppose certain central features that are absent from or of little importance in the Nordic region. Organized crime in the Nordic countries does not generally corrupt the police, customs, or politicians. It is not particularly violent. Even if parts of it have international links, it is mainly local, and if international, it is usually assimilated into Nordic societies.

Since at least 1500, Sweden and Denmark have been preeminent among the Nordic countries. Norway, Finland, and Iceland have been dominated for hundreds of years by these two "superpowers."¹ Finland is the odd man out. For long periods its main attention and activity

¹ In the Viking age and later (AD 800–1300) Norway was a powerful kingdom that dominated huge areas.

were directed toward Russia. The Finnish language is unrelated to any of the other Nordic tongues.

Some traits are often described as typically Nordic (Ramsøy 1974; Hofstede 1989).

Peace and Freedom. With the exception of Finland, and the German occupations of Norway and Denmark, the Nordic countries have a long history of peace and freedom. Their history is therefore very different from, for example, Sicily's tradition of resistance against foreign domination, present-day political corruption, and a culture of suspicion of state power (Alalehto 2009).

A Strong and Benign State. In all Nordic countries the state has a special position. Sweden and Norway have been social democracies since the 1930s and political tensions are generally low key. The trade unions and the employers' organizations have traditionally worked well together. In comparison with many other regions the number of strikes and other conflicts has been low. The state is normally viewed as a representative of the people. It is usually perceived as an institution that benefits the population by providing schooling, public health, and security. There has been a recent neoconservative wind, but the effects, especially on the privatization of public services, have generally been less dramatic than in many other European states.

The state and its representatives are generally viewed positively. The public generally trusts the police, customs, and the justice system, and their abilities to solve problems. Corruption is seen as un-Nordic, even if certain forms of corruption, often in connection with private firms and municipal authorities, seem to be quite common (S. Andersson 2002; Karlsson and Korsell 2007; Gedde-Dahl, Halstad, and Magnusson 2008; Norin Östin et al. 2010). The general belief in the public sector and especially the justice system provides a foundation for a high level of trust among the citizens (Rothstein 2003). People trust one other; there is little room for a narrow collectivistic belief in the family and a system of honor and revenge (Lappalainen 1993).

Democratic Societies. The Nordic countries have a fairly long tradition of democracy, even if Finland's history is more dramatic. It was for a century part of the Russian empire and was liberated as a result of the 1917 Revolution, after which it went through a long bloody civil war. Local communities and their organizational predecessors in the Nordic countries have long been independent, which gave rise to de-

mocracies close to the people. This local democracy has stimulated citizens to take responsibility for long-term and collectivistic matters.

Affluent Societies since World War II. Norway and Finland have long histories of relative poverty. Nonetheless, the Nordic countries have experienced tremendous growth in wealth since World War II. This affluence has been very evenly distributed compared with most other nations. The strong ideal of equality combined with the victory of the social democratic idea has produced a belief that we all are equal, even if social statistics clearly document the existence of social classes. Social mobility is fairly high, and student financing schemes make it possible for almost everyone to obtain a proper education. The welfare system has provided a security net that still works well, and unemployment rates have been low. Norway has long had labor shortages and has had to import workers from, especially, Sweden and Denmark.

Gender Equity. The Nordic countries are progressive when it comes to equality between the sexes. Prostitution and pimping are lower than in many other countries. Since 1999 in Sweden, it has been a crime to buy sexual services, a measure premised on notions of equality. Norway and Iceland has recently adopted the Swedish approach, and in Finland it is a criminal offence to buy sexual services from trafficked persons.

Monoethnic and Religious Societies. Historically, the Nordic countries have had three major ethnic groups. One is the Sami, who live in the northern regions of Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Russia. The second is the Germanic peoples of Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, and Norway. The Finns have roots in Eastern Europe. Until quite recently these countries have been predominantly white. Large-scale immigration dates from the late 1960s. Today, Sweden is a multiethnic society. An overwhelming segment of the population of the Nordic countries belongs to Protestant churches, even if most people are rather passive celebrants.

Norms and values systems are shared by a majority of the population, although these beliefs vary. Large parts of these countries are rural, especially in Norway, Sweden, and Finland. There are few large cities or urban areas; only Stockholm and Copenhagen have more than 1 million inhabitants. The sparse populations of these countries also explain why it was not possible to establish large factories to produce moonshine or to undertake other forms of large-scale organized crime (Johansen 1996, 2004*a*). The result has been an organized criminality in which “small is beautiful.”

The historical conditions that give rise to Mafia-like organizations elsewhere have not been present in the Nordic states (Ianni and Reuss-Ianni 1972; Paoli 2003). The question arises why, despite all these positive factors, organized crime has developed in the Nordic countries. The first answer is the invisible hand of the market (Korsell, Skinnari, and Vesterhav 2009; Korsell et al. 2010). Until the end of time there will be a demand for illegal, cheap, and tax-free goods and services, and criminal entrepreneurs will always try to supply this demand if there is money to be made. The division of labor, criminal business strategies, and security measures result in an organizational approach to running such businesses. The second answer is that people who feel excluded sometimes fall for the temptation of belonging to a group and being someone (Larsson 2008*b*). The growth of gangs has been a phenomenon of the last couple of decades and may indicate a trend toward a more divided society, with marginalization of certain groups and growing social problems, inequality, and lost opportunities (cf. Björk 2006).

This essay has six sections. The first describes the various ways—mostly not very useful—Nordic governments have defined organized crime in legislation. The second discusses the forms organized crime has taken. Mafia-type organizations are conspicuous in their absence. Biker gangs, groups organized to service illegal markets, and ethnic gangs often associated with immigrant groups are the principal organized crime groups. Section III discusses the four principal activities—drugs, untaxed alcohol, human smuggling, and money laundering. Section IV discusses government responses and Section V speculates about the future.

I. Definitions of Organized Crime

A Swedish definition of organized crime was formulated in the 1970s in order to devise a questionnaire intended to survey the extent of organized crime within the country (AMOB 1977; Lindgren 2000*a*; Korsell 2006). The following criteria were defined as central:

- organized crime should take the form of an activity;
- this activity should be criminalized in itself (in contrast to economic crime, which is committed in a legal activity, a company);
- the activity should have a continuous character;

- the activity should have a fixed direction (but several branches of crime are possible);
- the activity should be capable of being planned and guided in advance with a reasonable level of certainty;
- the activity should have connection to permanent premises, places, or areas;
- the activity should include several participants;
- the participants should be organized within a decision and functional hierarchy (they have different powers and undertake different tasks) in which each single member is interchangeable;
- decisions, information, communication, and the flow of money, commodities, and services follow certain predetermined patterns.

This definition is similar to the commonly applied 11-point definition of the European Union, with the exception that the latter stresses the capacity to protect the organization and facilitate its criminal activities through unlawful means such as violence and corruption (Korsell, Skinnari, and Vesterhav 2009). Contemporary U.S. definitions from the 1970s also stressed that the capacity for unlawful influence distinguishes organized crime from crime in general (Clinard and Quinney 1967). However, the elements of violence and corruption are comparatively uncommon in Sweden and the other Nordic countries and the Swedish definition still works well. Even if violence and corruption are linked to organized crime, criminal activities in many cases are carried out in a businesslike manner, and criminal actors try to avoid conflict and violence. Organized crime tends to use subtle and nonpunishable forms of influence such as harassment (Baard et al. 2009; Korsell, Skinnari, and Vesterhav 2009). However, for specific gangs, in which brotherhood and a feeling of solidarity are important, unlawful influence can be a way to strengthen their image, especially for newcomers (Baard et al. 2009).

The 1970 Swedish definition of organized crime was forgotten for several decades and it does not play a role today. Instead, Swedish law enforcement agencies use the 11-point EU definition (Korsell, Skinnari, and Vesterhav 2009), as do Norway, Denmark, and Finland (Politidirektoratet 2003*b*; Cornils and Greve 2004; Junninen 2006). Norway and Finland also have statutory definitions of organized crime. The “Mafia paragraph” in the Norwegian Penal Code from 2003, states: “An organized criminal group is here defined as an organized group of three or more persons whose main purpose is to commit an

act that is punishable by imprisonment for a term of not less than three years, or whose activity largely consists of committing of such acts” (Act of 22 May 1902 no. 10, General Civil Penal Code, sec. 60a). This definition is vague and circular (Ingvaldsen and Lundgren Sørli 2009). It has been used on few occasions—perhaps in fewer than 20 court cases. Its vagueness made the law an ideal target for the defense. Section 60a has been used in some rather well-known criminal cases, including the Nokas robbery, the Munch trials, and a trafficking case in Trondheim relating to prostitution and trafficking of women from the Baltic.²

The Norwegian paragraph resembles chapter 17 of the Finnish Penal Code as amended in 2003: “A criminal organization is defined as a structured association, established over a period of time, of at least three persons acting in concert to commit the offences referred to in subsection 1” (Penal Code of Finland, chap. 17 sec. 1a [142/2003]).³

The Finnish definition also has been applied only a few times (Viuhko and Jokinen 2009).

II. Organized Criminals

The Indigenous organized criminals are principally bikers and small-scale illegal enterprises. Ethnic gangs based in immigrant communities have emerged, and international organized groups have made appearances, on a small scale in both cases.

Academics and practitioners (e.g., police) hold conflicting views on whether biker groups are to be understood as organized criminal groups. Many biker group members are registered for criminal offenses (two-thirds in Norway), but few have been convicted for any serious offenses. Crimes committed are not done by the groups themselves but by individual members. The reason for mentioning bikers here is mainly that they have come to symbolize organized crime in the Nor-

² The Nokas robbery was the largest in Norwegian history (Fahsing and Gottschalk 2008; Ingvaldsen and Larsson 2009). The Munch case concerned the theft of the two paintings *Scream* and *Madonna* from the Munch museum in Oslo, which were later recovered. The trafficking case from Trondheim related primarily to Estonian women held as prostitutes by Estonian criminals.

³ An unofficial translation from the Ministry of Justice is available online at <http://www.finlex.fi/pdf/saadkaan/E8890039.PDF>. The Norwegian Code is online at <http://www.ub.uio.no/ujur/ulovdata/lov-19020522-010-eng.pdf>.

dic countries, even if this view might be wrong (Korsell, Skinnari, and Vesterhav 2009).

A. Bikers

If you ask about organized crime in an ordinary city in Sweden, Norway, Finland, or Denmark, the answer could be: “We do not have any problems with organized crime. There are no biker gangs here” (Korsell et al. 2010). The bikers are motorcycle gangs whose members are associated with criminal activity.

Biker groups appeared in the 1970s, but the “biker problem” was first recognized in Denmark in the early 1980s with the establishment of Hells Angels (Cornils and Greve 2004; Larsson 2008*b*). They appeared in Sweden, Finland, and Norway some years later. In Denmark the problem was initially characterized as “criminal biker gangs,” but in time that term was replaced by “organized biker crime” (Bay 1992, 1994). The biker clubs were seen as synonymous with organized crime.

The “Nordic biker war” between the Hells Angels and Bandidos raged from 1995 to 1997. The struggle is often described by the police as a war for control of drug markets, but it was more likely based on personal conflicts dating far back in time. It spread to Norway, Finland, and Sweden (Larsson 2008*b*). The level of violence was unprecedented. Eleven people were killed and there were 74 attempted murders, open shootouts, car bombs, and attacks on clubhouses with antitank rockets (Cornils and Greve 2004; Rigspolitiet 2009). In Norway a clubhouse in Drammen was bombed, leaving a burning house and one civilian fatality. In a rocket attack against Hells Angels in Copenhagen, two people were killed and 18 were injured. In Sweden, two people were killed and there were about 20 attempted murders (Wierup and Larsson 2007).

Since the “Nordic Peace Treaty” was reached between the clubs in 1997, the level of violence has been low, even though the problem has recently flared up in Denmark. One aspect of that treaty was a restriction on establishing new chapters. Recently, Outlaws MC has expanded in Norway, possibly a result of the restrictions on Hells Angels and Bandidos; and this situation may threaten the equilibrium. With hindsight, Wierup and Larsson (2007, p. 127) observed that the “war” was a violent marketing phase that established a “dangerous reputation” that could be used for extortion and heavy-handed debt collection.

In all Nordic countries the outlaw biker gangs—the “one-percent” biker clubs—are now common. The Danish police counted up to 80 different kinds of gangs with more than 900 associated individuals in Denmark alone (Rigspolitiet 2009). There are some problems with these numbers. They include one-percent groups, supporters, and what the Danes call “bands.” Three hundred and ninety-six people are associated with Hells Angels, the supporter group AK81, and Bandidos. There are approximately 180 members of immigrant street gangs (*Berlingske Tidende* 2009). In Sweden, gangs are established in about 25 municipalities (Wierup and Larsson 2007). They are involved in drug trafficking and violent crime and are often in possession of illegal weapons. Honor and a strong identity among the “brothers” easily result in conflicts between different groups, especially between outlaw biker groups such as Hells Angels and immigrant gangs (Larsson 2008*b*). Since August 2008, the conflict has resulted in four deaths in Denmark, a sensational figure for the Nordic countries.

In many ways Hells Angels and Bandidos gave meaning to the concept of organized crime, especially after the Nordic biker war. Foreign ideas and perspectives and especially EU regulation were imported by the Nordic countries.⁴ In the background, there was also “traditional” market-oriented organized crime dealing in drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, and stolen goods.

In Norway after 2000, drug sections of the police were renamed organized crime units. Drug squads were swallowed by organized crime units and money earmarked for dealing with narcotics was diverted to fighting organized crime (Politidirektoratet 2005).

B. Small-Scale Criminal Entrepreneurs

Organized crime groups work best when they are hidden and quiet. Junninen (2006) classifies the Finnish criminal groups as semiorganized. They have the characteristics and features of organized crime but their activities are described as unprofessional and periodic to such a degree that it is hard to define them as organized crime.⁵

This phenomenon resembles the evolving British market depicted by Dorn, Murji, and South (1992). They describe seven forms of traf-

⁴ Norway is not a member of the European Union, like Sweden, Denmark, and Finland, but has a number of treaties with the European Union and has committed itself to harmonizing its laws with EU laws.

⁵ In such a way that they resemble what Reuter (1986) calls “disorganized crime.”

ficking “firms,” two of which are trading charities and criminal diversifiers. Swedish studies of organized drug trafficking describe networks of persons coming together in trafficking projects in order to smuggle or import drugs and distribute them (Korsell et al. 2005). A project could be short-lived in order to purchase a quantity of drugs from a specific vendor and then smuggle them. A project could also be a long-term operation that consists of many consecutive projects. The groups that undertake these projects are often small and flexible; one person might take part in one project and not in another, but there is a rather stable core.

These small-scale networks are what Per Ole Johansen (2005) called “organized crime Norwegian style” when he studied the history of liquor smuggling. He contrasted the small, flexible, and quite peaceful networks with organized crime in other countries.

Trust and the capacity to remain silent are fundamental qualifications in recruitment of participants to these projects (Skinnari, Vesterhav, and Korsell 2007). Sensing danger and “remembering faces and knowing people and ‘reading’ their characters” are talents that enable smugglers to succeed (Gross 1992; Johansen 2005, p. 196; Larsson 2009*b*). This requirement is a reason why organized crime groups tend to be made up of brothers, relatives, close friends, and kin and why ethnicity may provide extra security for those involved.

Some contacts, positions, and tasks are more important than others. The most sensitive responsibility is to take care of the main stock of drugs and to transport and store money (Skinnari, Vesterhav, and Korsell 2007). In many instances, criminal entrepreneurs have chosen “warehousemen” outside the criminal network, such as relatives, alumni, or other persons without a record.

Couriers are often recruited from individuals outside the circle of criminal acquaintances, the network in which coworkers are found. It is often desirable that the couriers have as little knowledge as possible of the business and it is not unusual to engage middlemen as courier recruiters in order to create a watertight barrier (Korsell et al. 2005; van Duyne and Levi 2005).

When a trafficking project is undertaken, it often has some formal organizational features (Korsell et al. 2005). Even if there are no large drug trafficking organizations to be found in the Nordic countries, there are still some hierarchical elements in the groups that undertake these projects. There are usually one or two people who make the plans

and have contacts and provide the finance. Others do the trafficking. It is not unusual to have money couriers.

C. Ethnic Groups

Some ethnic groups are frequently connected with organized crime. Russian and Estonian criminals are important in Finland (Viuhko and Jokinen 2009). Ethnic gangs are more prominent in Sweden and Denmark than in Norway. The Pakistani gangs in Oslo are well known for episodes of open violence, mainly between two rival groups (Næss 1999), and there have been open shootouts in the streets in Oslo. This violence seems to be a consequence of old personal rivalries and conflicts (Larsson 2008*b*).

Quite a few people in the organized crime milieu in Norway and Sweden came as refugees in the 1990s in connection with the civil war in former Yugoslavia. Some of these have gained reputations as rather tough criminals and some work as enforcers. Kosovo-Albanians who arrived at the same time, and who have been closely connected to the import of and wholesale trade in heroin, are also well known to be central to drug trafficking to Norway and Sweden (Snertingdal 2007).

The Vietnamese are usually well integrated and law-abiding, but there are well-known groups that mount large-scale shoplifting operations in Norway. These groups have been active for many years and are known to cover vast distances in southern Norway. They have often specialized in shoplifting from certain shops, particularly those selling perfume and women's clothing and located in large malls. Such theft has often been labeled petty, but the total volume has been substantial.

The best-documented foreign groups operating in the Scandinavian countries are generally—but possibly mistakenly—known as Lithuanians. For more than a decade small groups of people with Lithuanian passports have stolen large volumes of razor blades, cell phones, nylon stockings, and other items and sent them back home. In recent years they have stolen larger items, such as outboard motors and TV sets. One problem in dealing with Lithuanian groups is that few know their identity or whether they really are from Lithuania. There is evidence that many of them have fake passports bought at the market in Kaunas.

In the last couple of years the activity of so-called mobile criminal groups has grown. These commit crimes mainly for profit, such as

theft, pick pocketing, and robbery. Today this activity is dominated by Polish, Lithuanian, and Romanian groups.

D. The Threat from Abroad

Organized crime in Scandinavia is usually associated in Scandinavian minds with threats from abroad and from strangers (Johansen 2004b). The organized criminal is not the boy next door; he has to be remote and vague in order to be viewed as truly threatening. This is one reason why traffickers in alcohol were never viewed as real organized criminals; their crimes were often considered less serious.

With the fall of the Iron Curtain and demise of the Soviet Union came the fear of hordes from the East. This fear is not exclusive to the Nordic countries; it was strong in Europe and the European Union (Levi 2002). Fear of the East appears to be stronger the farther one is from a border with Russia. The first half of the 1990s saw periodic media attention to the “Russian Mafia.” It was often said that Russian groups were taking over gambling, drug markets, prostitution, and similar illicit markets and behaviors. The general belief was that these groups were so ruthless and hard-boiled that local crime groups would be unable to resist them. Police statements were much more sober. Intelligence analyses did not document any wave of Russian Mafia-type groups.

A reality often overlooked by those predicting an invasion by foreign groups is that organized crime must have strong local support to work efficiently and safely (Fijnaut 2002; Fijnaut and Paoli 2004; Korsell, Skinnari, and Vesterhav 2009). Otherwise, the risk of being caught or swindled is too great. Speculations about the import of organized crime from abroad, especially from Eastern Europe, were exaggerated. It is as difficult for “them” to get established in the Nordic countries as it is for “us” to keep the police away, make local contacts, and learn how to behave in a new and hostile environment. However, because of its geographic position and close relations, and because Finnish and Estonian are related languages, Finland has elements of Russian and Estonian organized crime groups (Junninen and Aromaa 1999; Viuhko and Jokinen 2009).

Swedish drug trafficking researchers have observed that the police often use ethnic names for different groups, such as “the Poles” (Korsell et al. 2005). Deeper study of these networks showed that the perpetrators were not only from Poland but came also from several other

countries, Nordic ones. One explanation for the police practice is that the police need to have names for these groups in order to keep them separate for analytical and strategic purposes; the names do not necessarily give an accurate picture of the ethnic origins of those involved.

Varese (2006) posed the question whether the Italian Mafia could establish itself outside Italy. He considered their method of recruitment through families an obstacle to expansion. The Mafia do not trust people with whom they do not have strong ties. Alalehto (forthcoming) concludes that Sweden should not fear an invasion of foreign Mafia organizations. Most forms of organized crime result from specific regional and even local conditions; cultural and economic climates are of great importance. Illegal and legal economies can be properly understood only as reflecting the local background and historical conditions. Organized crime groups from Russia, Mexico, Sicily, or other distant places will stand out as, for example, African heroin dealers in Oslo have sometimes done. They attract too much attention and do not know how to conduct business successfully. Foreign groups must also make contact with local criminal networks if they are to do business since these markets are not open, but are gated and closed (Paoli 2002).

III. Organized Crime Activities

Organized crime as a distinct phenomenon must be distinguished from criminal activities that require organization to be carried out. In Scandinavia, activities of the latter kind center on illegal markets—in drugs, alcohol, and human smuggling—and money laundering.

A. The War on Drugs

The complete history of the Nordic war on drugs has yet to be written.⁶ It had similarities to international developments during the same period. The term “war on drugs” was coined by President Nixon four decades ago. It is impossible to understand what happened in the Nordic countries without taking account of American and international influences.

Drugs are nothing new in the Nordic countries. It is said that cannabis seeds were found in the Oseberg ship in a Viking burial mound.

⁶ Important contributions have been made by Christie and Bruun (1985), Tham (1996), and Kassman (1998).

Until the 1960s consumption of different drugs was limited (Lind 1976). Drug use was viewed primarily as a health problem and not as something to be regulated by penal laws, the police, and punishment (Larsson 2009a).

After the mid-1960s, perceptions of drugs and their use changed dramatically. This change was often linked to the emergence of new recreational drugs and their use by youth groups. Something like a moral panic, created by sensational media, focused especially on young people using hash and LSD. In the beginning, much attention was directed toward cannabis; in the 1980s heroin came to be seen as the main drug, followed by ecstasy at the end of the last century and cocaine most recently. The Nordic countries, however, with the exception of Denmark, are at the bottom of European rankings of use and experimentation with drugs, except for alcohol consumption by students (Hibell et al. 2009).

A new element in the Nordic drug market are the marijuana plantations, some on an almost an industrial scale, that have been raided by the police in recent years. The production of marijuana on this scale is something new; rented houses were rebuilt to house fertilizing and heating equipment, and electricity was stolen from the grid. This mode of production is well known abroad (van Duyn and Levi 2005).

One lesson from the war on drugs has been that massive use of police resources and harsh penalties have had unintended consequences. Among them is a professionalization of the market and the actors. Aggressive law enforcement seems to have strengthened the market for illegal drugs and made it more adaptable (Larsson 2008a). The volume of drugs smuggled into the Nordic countries seems to be greater today than ever before. Their use has not grown dramatically and the prices of drugs have dropped so that illegal drugs today are inexpensive, even on the street. Heroin costs a fraction of what it did in the 1980s (Bretteville-Jensen and Biørn 2004). With the high price of alcohol, hash, cannabis, and other drugs may often be cheaper than legal drinks (Larsson 2006, 2008b, 2009b).

B. Alcohol

From November 1916 to 1955, Sweden had restrictions on how much alcohol a person could buy (Björ 1985; H. Andersson 2002). Finland had total prohibition between 1919 and 1931. Denmark chose another way and imposed high taxes on alcohol. Norway, one of the

world's leading shipping nations, partial prohibition from 1917 to 1927 (Johansen 1993). Norwegian companies were heavily involved in smuggling alcohol to America's Rum Row in the 1920s (Johansen 1993, 2004a).

During and after World War I, when prohibition and regulation drained the Nordic countries of legal alcohol, entrepreneurs seized on the opportunity to supply the market with liquor (Björ 1985; Lenke 1985; H. Andersson 2002). Algot Niska, "the king of smugglers," came from Finland and shipped alcohol from Baltic harbors to Finland and Sweden. Small, fast boats ferried cans of liquor to clandestine harbors. From freighters anchored in international waters, with 20,000–50,000 liters of alcohol in their holds; where lorries waited on shore with their headlights switched off. Algot Niska described his adventurous life, playing cat-and-mouse with the customs and making dramatic escapes with support from thirsty and grateful citizens (Niska 1931). In Norway the smuggler Arthur Omre (1935) gives similar description of big-time smuggling in his famous novel *Smugglers*.

Algot Niska's and Arthur Omre's successors continue to provide the market with alcohol (Johansen 2009; Sjöstrand 2009). With the end of prohibition came the Nordic system of state monopolies and high taxes as a weapon against the evil of drink.⁷ Wine, liquor, and to a certain extent strong beer were channeled into state-controlled import and sales systems.

High prices and the use of rationing led to a new market for smugglers who could provide cheaper booze than the state could. Johansen has documented traditions in smuggling; some of the existing networks can be traced back to the Prohibition Era. One of his books has the telling title *The Market That Would Not Die*. Son followed father and new methods were devised to respond to changing markets (Johansen 1993). After the deaths of 11 people in Norway between 2001 and 2002 due to methanol poisoning from drinking smuggled booze, smuggling has switched from 60 or 96 percent spirits to wine and beer (Johansen 2004a). Today, contraband spirits have become unfashionable among the young and consumers prefer exclusive brands rather than cans of hard liquor (Johansen 2009). This change has affected the mode of smuggling.

The Norwegian smuggling networks had traits common with other

⁷ The continental and sinful Danes are the exceptions to this rule.

forms of organized crime (Larsson 2008*b*; Korsell, Skinnari, and Vesterhav 2009). They were small and flexible groups that could rapidly adapt to new ways of doing business (Johansen 2004*a*). Corruption of police or custom officers was unusual. Smugglers were typically white and Norwegian, which was probably the corresponding pattern in Sweden and Finland. There are examples of foreigners, Germans for instance, smuggling, some quite extensively, but Norwegians were predominant.

At times fortunes were made, but most of the time it was easy come, easy go. In Norway some smuggling fortunes were converted into legal business and social status. In recent years, smuggling of alcohol and cigarettes is widely believed to be the most profitable form of trafficking in the Nordic countries (Larsson 2008*b*).

The liberal EU legislation on importing alcohol for “private consumption” has changed the landscape for smuggling and illegal distribution (Korsell 2008). This legislation has made it easier for small-scale smuggling and distribution parallel to the organized crime operations, which use trucks and larger cargos.

C. Trafficking in Human Beings

The Nordic countries are often a destination for trafficked persons but also serve as transit countries (Lehti and Aromaa 2004, 2006). Finland is a transit country for Eastern Europeans and Sweden seems also to play that role. Since the 1990s the volume of trafficking has increased. There is a demand in Western Europe for cheap labor and trafficking from the former Socialist countries can be more easily and economically organized than from Southeast Asia, West Africa, and Latin America (Lehti and Aromaa 2004).

The victims of trafficking for prostitution are not only from economically depressed areas but also often belong to disadvantaged social and ethnic groups. They are often quite young and, seeking better opportunities, fall prey to promises of good working conditions and salaries (Lehti and Aromaa 2004; Forsman and Korsell 2008; Viuhko and Jokinen 2009). The glorification of the Western lifestyle attracts young women looking for adventure and experiences (Englund et al. 2008; Viuhko and Jokinen 2009).

In Finland, women recruited for prostitution come from the Baltic and Eastern European countries, mainly Russia and Estonia (Viuhko and Jokinen 2009). Friends or acquaintances are important for recruit-

ment, but sometimes field hands working for criminal networks play a role. Quite often the trafficked women have been involved in the sex business in their countries of origin. Some women are recruited from brothels in Tallinn and other cities.

The criminal trafficking networks in general are small and not very hierarchical (Viuhko and Jokinen 2009). Still, the criminal activities are often well planned and organized and the perpetrators use diverse forms of control to keep the women in prostitution. The perpetrators are mainly indigenous Finns or come from Russia or Estonia. The closeness to these countries and the influence of Eastern European styles of organized crime makes Finland different from the other Nordic countries. According to Viuhko and Jokinen (2009) there is ongoing debate about how much support and help foreign perpetrators receive from the Finns. Some claim that foreign organized crime networks have acclimatized to the local environment; others stress the importance of the local links.

Eastern Europe is also the main source areas for trafficked women to Sweden (Englund et al. 2008; Forsman and Korsell 2008; Hagstedt, Korsell, and Skagerö 2009). Ferry lines from Poland and Estonia make travel to Sweden easy. Three main types of organizational structures have been identified in Swedish research (Englund et al. 2008). First, international networks can establish a “branch” in Sweden with local connections. Second, perpetrators live in Sweden but have contacts in other countries, where they recruit women to work in Sweden. Third, criminal networks outside Sweden arrange “city tours” for men who have booked their services in advance. The organizational level is in general quite low. The “organization” consists often only of the principal, one or two helpers, and a few women.

The customers have a negative attitude to trafficking, which is described in the media as modern slavery with threats and violence. This form of prostitution is therefore organized with the women as self-employed operators. These more subtle forms of control and repression are not always visible to the sex customers.

D. Money Laundering

Money laundering by organized crime seems to be a minor problem in Scandinavia and there are considerable expenses for security arrangements, losses, and loan losses. The “wage bill” is quite low because there is high reciprocity of favors (Skinnari and Korsell 2006;

Skinnari, Vesterhav, and Korsell 2007; Vesterhav, Skinnari, and Korsell 2007). The lifestyle of many of those involved with organized crime makes pubs, restaurants, car dealerships, apartments, and holiday resorts logical investments (Skinnari and Korsell 2006; Skinnari, Vesterhav, and Korsell 2007; Vesterhav, Skinnari, and Korsell 2007). Bar visits and high restaurants bills are also expenses that are essential in order to obtain useful information and make contacts.

Another question is how much organized crime money needs laundering. One indicator that organized crime does not generate large amounts of money is that little money from organized crime ends up on the gambling tables and in the slot machines in Swedish international casinos (Skinnari and Korsell 2006). There are few criminals of sufficient stature to generate income that is not used or recycled within the illegal economy (Skinnari, Vesterhav, and Korsell 2007). The few who have money to launder can quite easily invest it abroad without questions being asked. Recently in Norway a large case unveiled substantial investments made in Brazilian resorts by Norwegian criminal entrepreneurs from the Pakistani gangs. It is also documented that money has been invested in hotels and real estate in Thailand and Pakistan. There are similar examples from Finland and Sweden with investments in businesses and real estate in Spain and Thailand (Juninen 2006; Skinnari, Vesterhav, and Korsell 2007).

Not much money from organized crime seems to be laundered in the Norwegian securities markets (Ingvaldsen 2006; Ingvaldsen and Larsson 2007, 2009), and there are sound reasons why this might be so. There is no easy access to the securities markets for most organized criminals, their knowledge of these markets is at best limited, and they have few acquaintances who work on the inside.

The regulation of money laundering has been criticized (Örnemark Hansen 1998). It has developed from a narrow definition of money laundering in connection with drugs to today's wide and open definition that focuses more on the act of laundering than on the source of the money. The aims of regulation have changed from catching organized criminals to collecting financial intelligence (Larsson 2008*b*).

The banks spearhead the fight against money laundering in the financial sector and also bear most of the costs of surveillance and control (Larsson and Magnusson 2009). The estimated total annual cost of regulation in recent years is approximately 200 million kroner in

Norway and 400 million in Sweden (approximately \$35 million and \$65 million).

IV. Organized Crime, the Legal Economy, and the Political Sphere

In *Networks in the Grey Zone*, Per Ole Johansen (1996) observed that one aspect of organized crime is its tendency to merge with legal businesses and the social fabric. “The bearing perspective of this book is that organized crime is something more than lawbreakers operating in the periphery of society” (p. 11). Johansen describes what he calls a criminogenic ladder composed of three steps: on the first step there are private businesses that are victims of organized crime; on the middle step organized criminals and legal businesses swap roles or cooperate; and on the third step are alliances between organized criminals and public authorities.

Norway stands with one foot on the first step and the other barely on the second according to Johansen (1996, 2008). The same assessment could probably be made of the other Nordic countries. Legal businesses are involved in fencing, smuggling, and systematic tax evasion through organized forms of unreported and untaxed labor in the underground economy. During World War II, businessmen sold rationed merchandise on the black market (Aubert 1950; Wijk 1992) and they can also supply contraband alcohol and cigarettes. Corporations and the self-employed can hire outlaw motorcycle gangs for debt collection, especially in the case of more shadowy agreements, illegal debts, and commercial conflicts.

The number of cases of extortion in Sweden has increased dramatically and the general message from the police is that organized crime has found a new opportunity for profitable criminality (Rikskriminalpolisen 2007; Wierup 2007; Korsell, Skinnari, and Vesterhav 2009). However, this does not resemble extortion in many other countries, where it often implies territorial dominance of a location. Extortion in the Nordic countries is better characterized as an “ongoing robbery,” but without guns and masks, which results in a high level of police attention and activity. Businessmen who have something to hide from the authorities, and who, for example, have dealt in stolen goods, used untaxed labor, or hired debt collectors from organized crime groups, are vulnerable and can easily become a target. If there is such a trend,

and it appears there is, organized crime has moved to a qualitative level within the business sector that is more than just theft, fencing, and occasional fraud.

The Norwegian authorities have focused on mergers between legal businesses and criminal groups.⁸ Certain businesses are prone to cooperation with or infiltration by such groups—restaurants, automobile-related businesses, trucking, and construction. Profits from organized crime have often been invested in restaurants, pubs, and car businesses. The trucking business has often been associated with the trafficking of illegal or heavily taxed goods and with tax evasion (Lundgren Sørli 2005). There are also examples from more marginal points of the financial sector in the form of cooperation with organized crime groups who act primarily as money and debt collectors. There have been many warnings about the infiltration of the legal economy, but so far this has been mostly at the fringes (Ingvaldsen and Larsson 2009).

Swedish studies do not reveal significant indications that organized criminals aspire to infiltrate the legal business world or to commit crimes there (van Duyne et al. 2003; Skinnari, Vesterhav, and Korsell 2007). Drug entrepreneurs dream of a less risky and more conventionally accepted business as prosperous employers and owners of a restaurant or a construction company. Even a small pizzeria is something to be proud of and to show off to one's children and grandchildren. A company of one's own is therefore an ambition in the overstressed entrepreneur's dreams, and functions as a contrast to the unpleasant side of running a criminal business, and not as a platform for criminal expansion.

There are few signs that Nordic organized crime has succeeded in significant corruption of central authorities (Johansen 2005; Wallström, Skinnari, and Korsell 2005). However, kickbacks do occur and often take the form of private services or help. This sort of corruption is usually economic rather than strictly organized crime, even if the boundaries between them may often be blurred. There are two ways to understand this low level of corruption. One is that police and custom officers have high social standing and are well paid compared with similar officials in many other countries; they are usually viewed as honest and incorruptible. Another is that there has been an excessive

⁸ This topic is always discussed in threat assessments made by the Oslo police and the National Police Directorate.

focus on corruption in the literature on organized crime. Organized crime exists and thrives in many societies without massive corruption of public officials.⁹

V. Responses to Organized Crime

In view of the relatively small scale of organized crime in the Nordic countries, it may come as a surprise that governments have established many initiatives to attack it. These include major national programs, new legislation, and recent reallocations of police resources.

A. When Organized Crime Comes to Town

With the exception of a focus on high level drug distributors in the 1960s, organized crime and economic crime (white-collar crime) became important topics in Sweden only in the 1970s (Lindgren 2000b; Korsell 2006). In the other Nordic countries, the topic did not attract much attention until the 1990s.

In the spring of 1976 the Swedish debate on organized and economic crime became quite heated (AMOB 1977; Svensson 1982). The media revealed the existence of serious covert criminality in Sweden's secure society: tax frauds, organized prostitution, illegal gambling clubs, infringement of currency regulations, and illicit businesses involved with real estate, companies, loans, cars, and supplying labor (AMOB 1977; Heckscher 1980).

The City of Stockholm scrutinized the economic and organized crime situation concerning illegal clubs (Persson and Åström 1978), illegal gambling (Persson and Åström 1979), regulation of alcohol (Griehsel and Warming 1980), prostitution and pimping (Persson 1980), and drug crime (Enroth and Lenke 1980). In Malmö, Larsson and Månsson (1976) studied illegal clubs and prostitution (cf. Månsson 1981). The administrations of Sweden's major cities quickly responded to organized crime in ways that on a very small scale resembled later efforts in New York City and Amsterdam (Jacobs 1999; Fijnaut 2002; van de Bunt and van der Schoot 2003; van der Schoot 2006).

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention was given a remit by the national government to scrutinize legislation against both

⁹ One example from the United States is *Drug Smuggling* by Gross (1992), who observes that you should never try to corrupt police or customs officers in the United States; it will only get you into more trouble.

organized and economic crime and to suggest changes (Lindgren 2000*a*; Korsell 2008). Reports covered receiving stolen goods (Brå 1978), illegal gambling (Brå 1979*a*), stolen vehicles (Brå 1979*b*), drug crime (Brå 1982), and loan sharking (Brå 1983). However, after that ambitious start, attention shifted in the early 1980s to economic crime. Organized crime was largely forgotten (Lindgren 2000*a*; Korsell 2006). Not until the 1990s was organized crime “rediscovered,” largely as a result of EU membership. The growth in outlaw gangs and the Nordic biker war also focused political attention on organized crime (Korsell, Skinnari, and Vesterhav 2009).

From the end of the 1970s until the end of the 1990s, drugs were the most important crime problem in Norway. In the late 1990s, organized crime gradually replaced drugs as the most important issue in Norwegian criminal policy. During 1992 the Hells Angels recruited the motor cycle club Rowdies in Trondheim (Larsson 2008*b*). The resulting media discussions, in which the Hells Angels were labeled criminals by the police chief of Trondheim, demonstrated the widespread use of the term. The chief stated, “Membership, as we know from other countries, is conditional upon purely criminal activities such as theft, robbery, violence, and murder in order to obtain money for the club” (Larsson 2008*b*, p. 13). However, there were other changes as well. One was the widely perceived new “threat” from the East with the fall of the Soviet Union and the Berlin Wall.

In Denmark organized crime was for a long time not a major issue (Cornils and Greve 2004). It became an issue in connection with the biker gangs, which became a problem in Denmark earlier than in the other Nordic countries. There is limited research in Denmark on organized crime other than Bay’s work on the bikers (Bay 1992, 1994, 1998).

In Finland, organized crime became an issue in the 1990s in connection with the biker gangs (Viuhko and Jokinen 2009). The gangs intensified their recruitment and became more powerful. The proximity of Russia and the cultural links to Estonia, in combination with the systematic deregulation of the economy and globalization, made organized crime an important topic. Estonians and Russians play a quite important role in Finnish organized crime. Finland has an external border within the European Union and is also a transit country for, for example, illegal immigration and trafficking.

B. Legislation

“The notion of organized crime and its related policy package has remained until now particularly controversial in Denmark and most other Scandinavian countries,” Fijnaut and Paoli observed in their ambitious survey (2004, p. 5). In some respects this statement remains correct, but there are nuanced differences in the policy approaches in the Nordic countries.

One example of a more reluctant position is the Swedish debate on the government’s proposed use of hidden microphones (bugging) by the police. The legislative process took many years; evaluation of the effects was reduced to a short period. The debate has been intensive on several new items of legislation described by their critics as threats to citizens’ privacy. These new laws are referred to as the “Bodström society,” after a former minister of justice.

There have been discussions in Norway about special police methods against organized crime. One controversial topic is the use of paid informers, which is viewed as an ethically questionable approach.

The statement by Fijnaut and Paoli is not entirely correct. Nordic laws concerning organized crime have, to a considerable extent, been adopted and implemented in imitation of international law, especially EU law, but also of more United States–oriented legislation such as that pertaining to money laundering and follow-the-money regulations (Larsson and Magnusson 2009). There have been few original contributions to the statutory approach for combating organized crime in the Nordic countries. We are typically importers, and the key phrase and activity is the harmonization of laws (Cornils and Greve 2004).

Finland has criminalized participation in criminal groups. Membership in organized crime groups or networks has not been criminalized in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, although a Swedish governmental committee presented such a proposal (Justitiedepartementet 2000). However, Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish criminal courts may assess a criminal act as more severe and deserving a harsher punishment if it was related to organized crime.

In Denmark considerable political attention was, and is still, paid to biker groups and the trade in hashish. This attention resulted in special laws passed against the bikers, such as the “*rockerloven*” from 1996 (Cornils and Greve 2004). The police can ban a member or associate of Hells Angels and Bandidos from particular premises. According to the Hashish Club Act of 2001, the police can prohibit a person from

receiving visitors on such premises and also prohibit visitors from being present there (Cornils and Greve 2004).

C. Special Enforcement Bodies and Activities

Several dramatic events took place in Sweden during the autumn of 2007. The home of a prosecutor was bombed and property was destroyed. The prosecutor, well known for investigating outlaw gangs, was not at home. The police related the attack to her work. A spectacular post office robbery took place in Gothenburg, the second largest city in Sweden, and seven cars were set on fire in the early rush hour in order to confuse the police. In the same city, street gangs armed with guns opened fire on the streets and a police helicopter was shot at. Earlier the apartment of another prosecutor was shot at and hit by bullets. These incidents, attributable to the growth of street gangs and outlaw motorcycle gangs, were recently described in the bestseller *Swedish Mafia* (Wierup and Larsson 2007). Massive media attention forced the government to take action (Korsell 2008).

The minister of justice published a report with the dramatic title “National Mobilization against Serious Organized Crime” (Korsell 2008). The focus on organized crime has had wide-ranging consequences for the police. Eight regional intelligence centers have now been set up (Schoultz et al. 2009). Officials from different authorities (police, customs, tax) using their respective databases are surveying organized crime on the basis of different projects, and there is also a national intelligence center. Another change is the establishment of one national and eight regional task forces to which 200 officials, most of them police officers, have been assigned.

The Economic Crime Authority has established a national unit to work with asset recovery. The “go-for-the-money” approach is also an important aspect of this “mobilization.” The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention has been given a governmental assignment to support local communities in their collaboration with local authorities and organizations (Eliasson et al. 2009). A large number of projects have been started. One example is in the county of Värmland, where the local university is making a survey of local problems with organized crime. The results will be combined with police information to draw up a plan together with the communities to counteract organized crime. In the same county, members of Hells Angels have recently been involved in a large-scale tax fraud in construction businesses.

In Norway the ideals governing the police specify that they be generalists and civilian in style; as a rule, they are unarmed (Høigard, in this volume). To meet the challenges of more complex and cross-border crimes, the police have set up specialist teams devoted to such cases.

“Catch” was established in 2001 and consisted of two investigative teams staffed by personnel from the Oslo Police Department, the National Criminal Investigation Service (NCIS), and the National Authority for Investigation and Prosecution of Economic and Environmental Crime (Økokrim). It specializes in the investigation of organized crime and its mandate is primarily to investigate complex major cases and to monitor figures in the world of organized crime. “The project [Catch] shall fight the top dogs behind serious drug crimes and other forms of organized crime such as smuggling and money laundering associated with this” (Politidirektoratet 2003*a*, p. 7). Catch was an experimental project and has been an integral part of NCIS since 2005. Many of the experts on organized crime who came to work at Catch were from the Oslo Police Department.

The Council for Coordinated Action against Organized Crime (ROK) was established in 2000. Its role was to fund the local police for their investigation of major complex cases, but the local police must first apply for these resources. Many ROK cases have related to the smuggling and handling of drugs and narcotics. In 2005, the ROK secretariat was transferred from the National Police Directorate to NCIS.

The largest team of police experts on organized crime is found in Oslo. There were approximately 240 employees in the organized crime section in 2008, although the total number working with organized crime is higher (Larsson 2008*a*). These figures may look small to foreign readers but remember that the total number of working police officers in Norway is approximately 9,000. The “gang project,” as it is called, has been running since 2006 and involved some 110 police officers; they outnumber the number of gang members. Most known organized crime groups in Norway are in the central southeastern region around Oslo.

In Denmark in 1995, the Ministry of Justice launched an “Action Plan on Organized Crime and Biker Crime” (Cornils and Greve 2004). In 2002 the police announced increased action against the bikers. On a local level, civil society has also taken active part in making it harder

for outlaw motorcycle groups and other gangs to establish themselves and operate (Eliasson et al. 2009). Communities apply legislation on land use to buy properties or reclaim usage. The social insurance offices can review social welfare payments to gang members, the fire brigade has the power to check the safety of gang-owned premises, and the police stop motorcycles and check them according to traffic safety rules. The authorities use administrative regulations to make it harder for outlaw gangs to establish themselves (Horsens Kommune and Horsens politi 2004). Several communities in Sweden have recently followed the Danish example and tried in different ways to get rid of the gangs. Nordic and international police cooperation is strong in relation to “biker crime.”

Nordic cooperation takes many forms, one of which, *Politi, Toll i Norden* (PTN), denotes collaboration among the police and customs authorities. These initiatives have often been described as functioning well in efforts to regulate smuggling and trafficking. The idea behind PTN, which has existed since 1984, is to get the police and customs to work together against smuggling (Bakken 1997).

Since 1992, the Nordic countries have had joint Nordic liaison officers in Spain, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Pakistan, and Russia. Their role is to focus on drug-related crimes, production, and smuggling routes in countries of importance. Since 1996 they have had a generalist role, undertaken intelligence collection, assisted with making connections and contacts in concrete criminal cases, and performed a broad range of other police-related tasks. “The liaison officers are obliged to seek cooperation with all significant regulatory authorities, and they shall on their own initiative gather and pass on relevant information on organized crime. They do not perform operational tasks” (Bakken 1997, p. 10).

VI. The Future

Organized crime remains a limited problem in the Nordic countries (Johansen 1996; Larsson 2008b; Korsell, Skinnari, and Vesterhav 2009). This does not mean that it is not worrisome or does not cause damage to or threaten society. The question is what the immediate future will bring and whether organized crime will cause more damage or pose a greater threat to society.

One obvious trend over the past 20 years has been the proliferation

of gangs: bikers, youth gangs in the suburbs, and prison-based and ethnic gangs. Even if many of these do not look like stereotypical organized crime problems as other countries understand the term, they threaten people, and citizens wonder why the police and other authorities do not stop them. There is a risk that the gangs will undermine public confidence in the ability of society to maintain law and order, and we must ask ourselves whether the number of gangs will increase. The Swedish government, at least, has recently made great efforts to combat organized crime, but it is still too early to say how this will affect the number of gangs (Korsell, Skinnari, and Vesterhav 2009).

Organized crime is to some extent more involved with legitimate businesses than in earlier times as a supplier of illicit workers, often in construction, and as debt collectors and extortionists (Korsell, Skinnari, and Vesterhav 2009). We could ask, with reference to Johansen (1996, 2008), whether organized crime is slowly moving up toward the middle step of the ladder where organized criminals and legal business swaps roles or cooperate. In any case, organized crime operates on a small scale. There are many criminal entrepreneurs with limited resources and ambitions who have no influence over politics, the media, or the business community.

Organized crime is highly adaptive to societal changes. Trafficking of illegal or heavily taxed commodities will always offer opportunities to entrepreneurial individuals and groups with the right connections, as the history of alcohol smuggling proves.

Organized crime is a highly political concept. Changes in legislation and regulation, international agreements, pressure groups, the media, and the economic resources given to the police force are among the important factors that give the content to this concept. The Swedish and Norwegian zero-tolerance line toward drugs has given these substances top priority in the eyes of the police. The vast resources committed to this war have exaggerated the picture of the drug problem in Nordic societies and have increased the numbers of prisoners serving sentences for drug-related crimes.

Globalization and the pressure from developing countries and destabilized conflict-ridden areas of the world, in combination with tightly closed borders surrounding the European Union, motivate trafficking in human beings, especially for the purpose of labor exploitation and prostitution. At the same time, there are obvious problems

inside the European Union and Schengen, with the combination of open borders and vast differences in economic opportunities, also for entrepreneurial criminal groups. Growth in mobile criminal groups is expected, mainly from former Eastern European countries.

How these problems are tackled through criminalization or other political and social measures will affect the future of organized crime in the Nordic countries.

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