



Practitioner's Insight

Battling Organized Crime through Networked Partnerships in the Netherlands: Successes and Challenges

Peter Klerks*

Abstract: The last two decades have witnessed the rise of an intelligence-driven integrated approach to organized crime control in some EU member states. Municipal, tax and immigration authorities have joined traditional law enforcers in a pluricentric security governance system. Departing from theories on security arrangements through networked governance, this article focuses on practical challenges and solutions involved in mobilizing such diverse crime control resources, illustrated by examples from The Netherlands. Although there is much support for multi-agency collaboration, frontline functionaries have also found inter-agency collaboration to be time-consuming and claim that the surplus value of the integrated approach in comparison to 'old-fashioned' single-agency or bilateral operations is not always apparent. Participants in interagency platforms sometimes lack clout or commitment in their own organisation to actually muster the agreed-upon forces or scarce resources. The results of multi-agency efforts cannot usually be attributed to any single agency, however each partner is required to demonstrate its effectiveness as a condition for funding. Also, collaborating on sensitive projects increases the risk of information leaks, and some partners are reluctant to partly relinquish their autonomy.

Keywords: integrated organised crime control, multi-agency security networks, performance contracts.

* Peter Klerks is Lecturer in Crime Control and Investigative Science, Police Academy of the Netherlands, and Advisor to the Board of Procurators General at National Office of the Public Prosecution Service.

Introduction

The last two decades have witnessed the rise of an intelligence-driven ‘administrative’ or ‘integrated’ approach to organized crime control in the Benelux countries and other EU member states.¹ This article reflects on how in Holland, through a combination of criminal investigations with administrative and fiscal interventions, the integrated approach has been applied with considerable success against diverse crime phenomena such as human trafficking, narcotics production and outlaw motorcycle gangs. Departing from theories on security arrangements through networked governance involving traditional investigations and prosecutions as well as modern situational crime prevention, this paper focuses on the practical challenges and solutions involved in mobilizing crime control resources. It also addresses issues of cross-agency collaboration and legitimacy. The integrated crime control approach illustrates the trend towards distribution of responsibilities in the security domain between agencies of law enforcement, public regulatory services, local government and private stakeholders. Organized crime is increasingly understood in terms of networked clandestine entrepreneurial activities involving temporal sets of initiators, financiers, operators and facilitators. It is evident that such complex and fluid phenomena can only be countered effectively through collaborative efforts combining powers, expertise, information and instruments that transcend agency boundaries.

Methodology, Confidentiality and Research Ethics

Professional societies like the ECPR’s Standing Group on Organised Crime, and modern journals in the domains of criminology, policing and security studies such as the EROC encourage collaboration between academics and practitioners. However, it is not immediately apparent how practitioners should collect relevant information and report on their findings.

The data collection for this article has differed from common academic practices. No initial research plan detailing sources and methodology was drawn up. Instead,

¹ An ‘administrative approach’ to organised crime control is often seen as limited to non-penal interventions such as withholding permits (Huisman and Klerks, 2003). An ‘integrated approach’ encompasses all possible sorts of interventions, including administrative, civil, fiscal and penal measures. Spapens et al. (2015: 673) came up with the following definition: An administrative approach to (serious and organised) crime encompasses prevention of the facilitation of illegal activities by denying criminals the use of the legal administrative infrastructure as well as coordinated interventions (‘working apart together’) to disrupt and repress (serious and organised) crime and public order problems. These authors however point to the ambiguity of the concepts ‘administrative’ and ‘approach’.

information was gathered on a continuous basis during the execution of my regular tasks as policy advisor, lecturer and researcher. As a trained and experienced scholar I have been involved in observational fieldwork, interviewing and document studies in the Dutch law enforcement field since the early 1990s. My dissertation was based on a criminal investigation of a narcotics smuggling network (Klerks, 2000), and I have worked in various occupations in government, academia and the private sector as a researcher, policy consultant, team manager and lecturer at the Police Academy of The Netherlands, usually in multiple roles serving several employers simultaneously. Throughout my career, I have conducted and published research (Klerks, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012; Klerks et al., 2001, 2003; Klerks & Eysink Smeets, 2005; Huisman & Klerks, 2003; Kop & Klerks, [2009]; Duijn & Klerks, 2014a, 2014b; Huisman et al., 2016). As a reflective practitioner, I advise senior police leaders, prosecutors and civil servants on policy and methods on both tactical and strategic levels. I have also helped to train hundreds of analysts with various backgrounds. For reasons of confidentiality, many of my reports for Dutch government agencies remain unpublished.

As strategic advisor to the board of procurators general which heads the Dutch Public Prosecution Service, I am mainly involved in organised crime control and policy-making on criminal investigation practices and intelligence matters. This requires me to sit in on meetings, observe operational practices, prepare briefings, give training sessions and produce dozens of memos and reports annually. While such documents are primarily intended to serve the needs of the Public Prosecution Service, some observations could also feed broader debates on policy-making, effectiveness of control measures and the rule of law. The raw material used for this research report therefore consists of observations and inquiries, mostly captured in logs, memoranda and mails, on how crime control policies develop and theoretical concepts and doctrine work out in daily practice.

Nowadays the Dutch authorities are well aware that they cannot single-handedly counter the challenges of organized crime and similarly complex problems; this requires the collective and sustained effort of multiple parties, including corporate and academic entities. Valuing the importance of transparency and accountability in their bid to further improve the effectiveness of crime control, the Dutch ministry of Security and Justice, the Public Prosecutor's office and the National Police encourage collaboration with well-informed experts, journalists and others in the development of better policies. Frank and critical yet constructive academic publications, informed by insider's knowledge, contribute to this goal.

Ethical social science guidelines demand that, in principle, human subjects express their explicit consent before any research can be conducted. Does this prohibit the use of observations made in the course of one's regular work if those present were not explicitly cautioned in advance? Nearly all the professionals I work with are well aware of my 'second life' as an academic researcher. Many consider it a bonus, as my experiences visibly feed back to policy and practice through my writing, consulting and training work. I have been publishing my reflections and observations in monthly columns in a Dutch professional police journal (*Het Tijdschrift voor de Politie*) for nearly a decade, and considerably longer through academic publications. My practical work also provides insights and case material used in teaching advanced analyst and detective classes at the Police Academy. Because my regular duties are carried out under a security clearance, I observe strict confidentiality of everything that I understand to be of a (potentially) sensitive nature.

Additionally, there is the usual tacit agreement of confidentiality among professionals implying that no identifiable details are provided to outsiders of any information exchanged in the course of discussions, mails, presentations and other communications. Consequently, in external publications I restrict myself to generalized impressions based on multiple interactions, without citing specific sources or identifying individuals or agencies except when publicly available information can be used as reference. Wherein the following text observations are made without a reference, these are based on the author's own experiences, and often supported by internal reports and evaluations that cannot be referred to in any detail since this would risk exposing them to release in the public domain. Whether this sometimes awkward but indispensable modus operandi produces useful, valuable and ethical research is for the reader to decide.

Organised Crime Control in Holland

Phenomenology

Like other advanced western societies, The Netherlands has its share of organised crime. Reflecting the national characteristics of trade, logistics and advanced agriculture, Dutch outlaw entrepreneurs are recognised worldwide as large-scale drugs traffickers and producers of indoor-cultivated marijuana and synthetic drugs (Kruisbergen et al., 2012). While most of this merchandise is intended for export, there is a considerable domestic market with hundreds of thousands of regular drug consumers plus many tourists frequenting semi-legal 'coffee shops' to purchase cannabis products (Van der Giessen et al., 2014; Emmet & Broers, 2008; Spapens et al., 2007). In

spite of the easy availability and high quality of cannabis, synthetic drugs, cocaine and heroin, the levels of drug use among the Dutch population are only slightly above European averages (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2015; Van Laar et al., (2015).

Many Dutch organised crime (OC) groups function in an opportunistic manner, trading in multiple illegal markets and sharing smuggling routes and resources with competitors. Most OC groups operating in Holland are flexible and project-oriented 'dark networks' rather than hierarchical and stable 'mafia-type' organisations (Kleemans, 2004: 303-331). Many are multi-ethnic in composition. While most OC groups operate in and around the large urban centres, harbours and airports in the western part of the country, the southern countryside shelters a sizeable cannabis and synthetic drugs industry. Outlaw motorcycle gang membership has bourgeoned since 2011, with new OMG chapters opening all across the country (*Outlawbikers in Nederland*, 2014). In recent years levels of violence and internecine conflicts have risen, resulting in dozens of OC-related shoot-outs and assassination attempts each year (Kruisbergen et al., 2012). Dutch organised crime appears quite profitable, with its financial value somewhat comparable to the pharmaceutical industry (Kazemier en Rensman, 2015: 40-53). Successful mid-level drug producers and traffickers can expect to earn millions of euros annually.

A recent study by regional investigators and Tilburg University researchers on the scale and impact of the cannabis industry in the city of Tilburg (pop. 210,000) served as a call to arms for authorities in the southern Netherlands (RIEC et al., 2013). Based on both law enforcement and other sources, these researchers estimated that about 2,400 people in Tilburg earn an illegal income from the growth of and trade in cannabis, grossing an estimated 800 million euros annually, comparable to the city's entire budget. These figures cover only one city and one clandestine sector, discounting the very profitable production of synthetic drugs and the trafficking of heroin, cocaine and other commodities. Such widespread illegal gains substantially influence the local economy and social structure, the culture and values system, and also the security in the southern Netherlands. This region saw more criminal assassinations than notorious Amsterdam as well as a disproportionate membership in outlaw motorcycle gangs.

Actors of Control

Organisations are structured to execute certain tasks in an efficient and effective matter: that is why they are arranged in functional, often specialised or geographical units, and directed accordingly. Such 'vertical' structures may serve society well in normal

circumstances, such as in delivering most police services. When it comes to tackling complex issues however, these same ‘columns’ can hinder effective horizontal problem-solving efforts. All organisations involved in countering organised crime have certain traditional operating procedures and a specific focus. The police act mostly on an incident-by-incident basis, but tackling organised crime requires a problem-oriented approach. The prosecutor specialises in applying penal law, but other interventions may be more appropriate to prevent or counter organised crime. Municipalities hesitate to consider a tough handling of criminals, as their focus is on client satisfaction. The Tax Office usually has little interest in the tax payer’s particulars, as long as taxes are paid. If functionaries from such different backgrounds are required to collaborate, they face certain inherent challenges (*11 Stellingen*, s.a. [2016]).

The police and the Public Prosecutor’s office have traditionally been the prime actors when it comes to countering organised crime. Both the National Police and the Public Prosecutor’s office in The Netherlands have large national units specializing in top-level and transnational organised crime, as well as ten smaller regional units covering local OC activities.

With the introduction of the asset seizure doctrine in the early 1990s, the fiscal authorities have become increasingly important. As it becomes ever more difficult to investigate and prove organised crime due to the increased professionalization and security awareness of criminal entrepreneurs, combined with the pressure on scarce investigative resources, prosecutors have progressively turned to anti-money laundering legislation to bring criminals to court and seize their criminal proceeds. This has become even more important as law enforcement agencies are required to confiscate an annually increasing amount of crime money (from 70 million euro nationwide in 2014 to 116 million in 2018).

Following pioneering efforts in Amsterdam in the mid-1990s, many local authorities have joined the fight against organised crime in the last decade.² Provocative manifestations of outlaw biker groups as well as the growing presence of drug traffickers in neighbourhoods have drawn the attention of burgomasters and council members not only in major cities, but also in rural areas in the south and elsewhere. Cannabis growers increasingly resort to cultivating their crops in houses and apartments, which causes severe risks of fires and other accidents. In addition, many cannabis growers have been violently robbed, sometimes after cruel torture to reveal the location of concealed plantations. Clandestine synthetic drug labs have been discovered

² For a compact overview of the ‘Dutch approach’ to organised crime control, see: Ayling (2014). A more extensive discussion can be found in Spapens et al. (2015: 266-303).

in housing estates, endangering neighbours with toxic fumes and the hazards of fire and explosion. The dumping of toxic waste has become a regular occurrence in the countryside; producers also simply flush their residual chemicals down the drain, thereby seriously polluting the public sewer system. Drug traffickers and motorcycle gangs have on several occasions tried to intimidate local authorities, setting fire to a town hall and to the automobiles of burgomasters, as well as threatening their families. Such developments have resulted in an increasing awareness that organised crime control is a shared responsibility for authorities on all levels in all domains. Determined and resourceful mayors have stepped to the fore, spearheading crime control initiatives.

Since 2008, Regional Information and Expertise Centres (RIECs), coordinated and supported on the national level, have been established throughout the country to coordinate and facilitate the fight against organised crime and serious fraud (<http://www.riec.nl>, accessed on 4 January 2016). In addition to the police, the Prosecutor's office, municipalities and the tax office, other agencies such as provinces, the *Koninklijke marechaussee* (*Gendarmerie*) and the immigration authorities, have also joined the RIEC system. Although varying in size and reach, the RIECs have substantially changed the enforcement playing field. The different authorities cooperating in the so-called "integrated approach" now routinely pool resources, exchange and combine information, and collectively decide, to some extent, on priorities and interventions. In this sense, they form an 'institutional security network' with horizontal rather than hierarchical coordination of activities.³

Doctrine

The integrated approach has become the leading doctrine of organised crime control in Holland (*Integraal, tenzij...*, s.a. [October 2013]). The central idea behind this is that the combination of penal, public and fiscal measures provides the best opportunities to counter organised crime. The problem of serious organised crime is defined as one of *subversion*: the weakening or abuse of society's structure, affecting its foundations and/or the legitimacy of its protecting system. Such undermining crime is countered by an integrated approach combining theme-oriented (constructing barriers), subject-oriented (targeting key players in criminal networks as well as their facilitators) and opportunity-oriented (removing hotspots and refuges) interventions. Departing from a

³ Dupont (2004: 78) has defined a 'security network' as "a set of institutional, organizational, communal or individual agents or nodes (...) that are interconnected in order to authorize and/or provide security to the benefit of internal or external stakeholders".

common information base and problem analysis, partner organisations orchestrate a spectrum of penal, administrative, fiscal and alternative interventions. Additionally, there are investments in prevention and increasing the resistance capacity of citizens, companies and public parties to act against crime problems while also addressing the underlying social problem (*Wijkenaanpak en Ondermijnende Criminaliteit*, 2015). This model therefore seeks to combine situational crime prevention with a more repressive approach.

The minister of Security and Justice, the mayors and the Board of procurators-general have agreed on a common security agenda for the 2015-2018 period. In this agenda, the fight against “undermining crime” has a central part. On this issue, three common goals have been identified.

1. Further investments in the integrated approach to countering undermining crime, on a regional and national level;
2. Through this approach, criminal groups are fought with subject-oriented tactics, by addressing key enablers and facilitators, and by disturbing criminal operational processes;
3. Drawing up more barriers to prevent undermining crime.

Public Prosecutor Office’s Strategy

As the formal authority over the police in law enforcement matters, the public prosecutor’s office has traditionally been the prime agency responsible for fighting organised crime. Under current doctrine, the prosecutor’s office intends to apply penal law in a situational manner. It adjusts its role and therefore the function of penal law to the societal problem to be addressed, as well as to the position of the network partners involved. Such an interactive position can also mean that the prosecutor’s office’s role may change in the course of the intervention process, e.g., from agenda setting to stimulating other parties, but also to let go once other parties have implemented an effective approach.

A number of lessons have been learned in the course of orchestrating successful interventions:

- Undermining crime is best tackled through networked enforcement;
- Rather than the particular criminal case, it is societal problems involved that are pivotal;

- The application of penal law is directly related to the effect that is sought;
- The public prosecutor’s office has an interactive role, i.e., tuned to the intervention capacities of network parties;
- Confiscating criminal proceeds is an integral element of applying penal law;
- Special attention is given to the victims of crime.

Underlying criminal problems are best addressed through a combination of administrative, civil, fiscal and penal instruments; such combinations have a much stronger effect than mono-disciplinary action. The integrated approach with multiple partners can take shape before, during and/or after a criminal investigation.

Applying instruments based on criminal procedure can be most helpful in at least three different ways. Primarily, it evidently sanctions criminal conduct, demonstrating that certain behaviours are not tolerated, correcting wrongdoing, discouraging potential lawbreakers and encouraging those that abide by the law. Secondly, investigative powers may be needed to collect information on (often concealed) organised crime and its perpetrators. Thirdly, information from police and prosecutors may allow other partners to execute their prerogatives such as withholding permits and subsidies or levying taxes on hidden assets. There is however a limit to applying the investigative powers allowed under criminal procedure. When it is unlikely from the beginning that anyone will be prosecuted due to a lack of resources or on other grounds, but the actual aim is to follow up the penal investigation by levying extra taxes or applying municipal administrative law, the use of such far-reaching powers risks a situation of *détournement de pouvoir*.⁴

The Integrated Approach

Networked Security Governance

The days of tackling society’s problems through single-agency efforts are long gone. Considering today’s complex issues and dynamic political landscape, the traditional territorial orientation of governments is all but obsolete, as is the functional division in sectorial, mono-disciplinary departments. Governance and service-delivery are often organised through intermediary structures involving considerable dialogue and coordination. Arrangements in which multiple parties cooperate horizontally on shared

⁴ The use of legal powers for purposes not intended by the legislators.

security issues are considered examples of networked governance.⁵ The integrated approach discussed here involves a range of public parties such as the police, the public prosecutor's office, local government mostly represented by the mayor, the tax authorities and their investigative and intelligence branch, as well as other partners. Although relations of formal authority exist as the police are governed by the public prosecutor and the mayor, for all practical purposes this constitutes a "pluricentric governance system" (Van Kersbergen & Van Waarden, 2004: 151), because the actors involved are interdependent and interact in order to produce public purpose.⁶ Democratic control is arranged through the governance relations connecting these executive agencies to the elected national government that is ultimately responsible for funding, policy and decision-making. Legitimacy is also drawn from the report on practices and results of the integrated approach published annually by the coordinating national information and expertise centre (LIEC), which the minister presents to parliament (e.g., *RIEC-LIEC Jaarverslag*, 2014).

Integrated projects and programmes can be initiated bottom-up; by locally involved functionaries and parties who seek out allies to gain effectiveness. An example of this is the initiative to clean the Javastraat, a well-known problematic shopping street in Amsterdam, from illegal entrepreneurship. Local shopkeepers, citizens, municipal functionaries and police officers joined forces and learned to put trust in each other's capabilities. In other cases, the initiative came top-down; such as with the improvement programme for Rotterdam's South Bank, a series of problematic neighbourhoods that involved both economic and social as well as law enforcement interventions. No matter where the initiative starts, lasting success can only be obtained by connecting the activities with the formal power structures of the municipality, the police and prosecutor's office. Only then will substantial funds become available and can adequate resources and staff be prioritised (*11 Stellingen*, s.a. [2016]).

Successes

'Modern' ideas about new public management put much confidence in a measurable output of projects. The effectiveness of crime control programmes is preferably

⁵ Boutellier & Van Steden (2011: 461-462) refer to "polycentric" arrangements, which they relate to the Dutch Polder model "in which conflicts and divisions are offset by the existence of accommodation, cooperation, consensus-building and compromise".

⁶ The integrated approach to controlling organised crime discussed here deviates from other governance networks mentioned in the sociological and political science literature, as the participating partners are not operationally autonomous as defined by Sorensen and Torfing (2005).

measured in ‘hard’ statistics such as declining incident rates. Such an approach however may leave little room for experiments and innovation, as an incremental trial and error tactic may take several years to obtain results. There are other ways to indicate success, such as referring to explicit theory to substantiate the plausibility of certain interventions. An example of this would be the efforts aimed against so-called ‘*facilitators*’: individuals that assist criminals in obtaining necessary permits, raw materials (such as precursors for manufacturing synthetic drugs), addresses to house criminal activities, ways to launder criminal proceeds, disguise identities, etc. Studies by the Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek en Documentatiecentrum (WODC) (e.g. Van de Bunt & Kleemans, 2007) and others have extensively documented the vital role of such facilitators for organised crime, and any programme that reduces the opportunities for facilitators has substantial credibility.

Another way to account for success is through storytelling. Telling or visualising stories that illustrate how a programme improves an area or domain can demonstrate its success. An example of this would be the *Fabricius* project in IJmuiden, where a problematic port district was improved. Bona fide entrepreneurs and inhabitants are quoted as saying that they regained trust in the local government and have started to invest again. The aforementioned Javastraat project uses a map of this shopping street to demonstrate changes in the types of businesses that have recently started there. It would seem wise to agree on the objectives of a project or programme at the start: which results would satisfy those in charge (or the ‘client’)? This would also enable mid-term and final evaluations.

The evaluators of an ambitious long-term crime control programme in Amsterdam’s Red Light district recently concluded: “direct results of a project can sometimes be assessed, but assessing the effects on (organized) crime is very difficult” (Kleemans and Huisman, 2015, p. 259). The inherently problematic nature of ‘success’ in the context of organised crime control is also noted and addressed in at least four evaluation efforts that are underway at the time of writing (Summer 2016). Firstly, the Inspectorate of the ministry of Security and Justice plans to produce a report on the state of affairs regarding the integral approach by the end of 2016. Secondly, representatives of all participating organisations were interviewed by departmental researchers in the spring and summer of 2016. With a formal report still under way, it is already clear that many have advocated increased monitoring and effect measurement, preferably by an independent third party. Some have also suggested to attempt constructing an international benchmark to compare and contrast organised crime control strategies and results between EU countries. Thirdly, the Verwey-Jonker Institute currently evaluates the Taskforce Brabant-Zeeland, the lead agency in the fight

against organised crime in the southern Netherlands. Finally, the WODC and Arena Consulting recently started the third periodic evaluation of the administrative approach of organised crime, focusing specifically on the role of the municipalities and burgomasters. These four evaluative efforts combined should shed more light on the effects of these crime control programmes and projects.

The common efforts of partners involved in the integrated approach over the last ten years have resulted in a number of achievements and good practices. Illustrative are: the reduction in human trafficking in Amsterdam's Red Light district, the containment of biker violence in many towns and cities, the increased control over drugs smuggling through the harbour of Rotterdam and several smaller harbours, increased security and transparency in problematic recreational parks, and systematic interventions against some notorious crime families. Consistently in all such projects, the surplus value of integrated interventions compared to classic police/prosecutor operations is recognized in their more durable effect on crime problems. Not only are some of the worst perpetrators removed from the scene; those remaining have learned a lesson and are put in a better position to restructure their lives and businesses along legitimate lines.

One of the benefits of the collaborative line is that responsibility for organised crime control no longer rests solely on the shoulders of the police and public prosecutors. The innately repressive focus of law enforcement agencies would limit anti-crime policy to mostly trying to remove the most visible criminals without addressing underlying causes. With more partners involved, including the municipal governments responsible for local economy, housing, education and welfare, the focus tends to become wider to include root causes and interacting mechanisms. Also, on a more mundane level, sharing the costs and responsibilities for dealing with organised crime between criminal justice and administrative agencies has led to more open debates and transparent policymaking in this domain, which some have found most refreshing.

Obstacles

While establishing the causes of organised crime problems would definitely require a separate article, a common observation in many of the examples mentioned above deserves to be noted. To some extent, it would seem that the government has to spend considerable efforts in trying to solve major crime problems that it may actually have contributed to in an earlier period. It is repeatedly noted that serious crime problems often occur after the (local) government has ignored its supervisory role for a prolonged period of time, looking away from indicative signals that illegitimate entrepreneurs were profiting from a lax administration. Once the government has returned on the

scene, rectifying the worst examples of criminal behaviour through judicial and other interventions, the enduring success lies mainly in the ability to return to adequate levels of governmental presence and involvement. A virtual absence of formal authorities evidently seduces some people to try and make money through fraud, drug trafficking, extortion, fencing stolen goods and other problematic practices. Deficiencies in the proper execution of governmental responsibilities, often caused by severe budget cutbacks, ultimately leads to crime or organised crime. The repair of such policy failures is costly in terms of money and human misery, often suffered by those already living in underprivileged circumstances.

While overall, policy makers are rather content with recent results of integrated crime control through multi-agency collaboration, there is also criticism among those working in the front lines. Three categories (effectiveness, process and power) comprising seven main aspects can be identified.

Issues Affecting Effectiveness

The surplus value of the integrated approach in comparison to ‘old-fashioned’ single-agency or bilateral operations is not always apparent to all. This induces law enforcement agencies and prosecutors in particular to still arrange many interventions among themselves. This goes against the doctrine that mono- or bilateral efforts can only be adequate forms of intervention if all parties involved (including the municipality) have jointly considered the crime problem beforehand and agreed on the best intervention.

Inter-agency collaboration is time-consuming. It is necessary to meet in person on a regular basis, there is an emphasis on procedures and written documents, and reaching consensus on a matter prior to execution may implicate having to organise and attend multiple meetings. Participants do not always have a mandate for decision-making, requiring one or more check-back loops before the go-ahead on a policy decision can be given. At the end, the intelligence allowing for targeted interventions may be months old: the track has gone cold.

Issues of Process

Participants in interagency platforms do not always have the clout or commitment in their own organisation to actually muster the intended forces or scarce resources, as the integrated approach may require investment of resources in suboptimal interventions on sub-priority problems.

Results following from multi-agency efforts cannot usually be attributed to any single agency. This causes problems in the Dutch context, since law enforcement agencies (and even their separate branches and districts) are required to tackle a minimum number of criminal groups annually, as well as confiscate a minimum amount of criminal proceeds.

Law enforcement and other parties, such as municipalities, working together on sensitive crime control projects brings the risks of information leaks. Corruption is always a cause for concern, and in Holland not all parties share a common security-screening regime yet.

Issues of Power and Governance

The Dutch integrated crime control network is organised on a regional level, with ten Regional Information and Expertise Centres (RIEC's) coordinating interagency collaboration. Certain crime problems however require a national approach. Different focus and priorities sometimes cause friction between locally oriented agencies and authorities (such as municipalities and burgomasters), and agencies organised on a national scale, such as the public prosecutor's office, the National Police and tax authorities.

Agencies participating in integrated approach programmes are expected to surrender some autonomy, as effective cooperation requires a certain consensus on goals and means. This may be hard, e.g. for public prosecutors accustomed to making their own decisions. On a more personal level, 'swollen egos' may stand in the way of effective collaboration. Both operational participants and decision-makers on tactical and strategic levels have to be able to think and decide from a 'helicopter perspective', i.e., focused on tackling underlying problems to serve broader societal interests instead of just their own organisation. But also formal issues of hierarchy and authority will be raised sooner or later. In the Dutch context with its strong tradition of local government and electoral power-base, a paramount question is how the powerful burgomasters with their growing directing role in fighting organised crime will be positioned vis-à-vis the regional chief prosecutor, legally the sole authority for criminal investigation and prosecution.

While certain downsides and challenges remain to be solved, some possible solutions are currently explored. Friction between the local/regional and national levels for instance is an essential aspect of Dutch society, with its age-old tradition of locally based governance. A solution may be found in organising thematic collaboration transcending the regional focus. For example, effective crime control in seaports

requires expertise, information and international contacts that are best developed and maintained together, with the large ports of Rotterdam and Amsterdam sharing experiences and resources with smaller regional harbours.

The problem of narrow-focused ‘egos’ unable or unwilling to transcend their own organisation’s scope, may be solved by the initiative of a joint training programme called the ‘Undermining academy’. Offering functionaries from the participating organisations a collective training experience may result in a shared perspective and doctrine, and better understanding of each other’s possibilities and limitations. Tactical and strategic managers usually refrain from participating in such training programmes, but they can make a great difference by stimulating their colleagues working in joint programmes. Their decisions matter, but quite a few senior decision-makers in law enforcement organisations are rather conservative and unyielding in their traditional beliefs. Many traditional police managers and prosecutors have spent their entire professional lives in a single occupational culture, which has shaped their perspective and worldview. They find it hard to imagine a truly networked approach to crime control. Time may solve this, as older functionaries are gradually replaced by new generations more used to working in different environments.

Walking the Walk

Although on a strategic level, participants in the integral approach to combating organised crime agree on the importance of such collaboration, in daily practice it remains difficult to understand and accept each other’s institutional interests and convictions. For one thing, participating organisations differ substantially in the amount of capital (mostly ‘man’ power) they are able and willing to invest in the integrated approach.⁷ This does not remain limited to actual operational deployment in the field. Repeated non-attendance in meetings also calls into question the true commitment of all parties involved.

On the level of social capital, not every participant always cultivates the same level of tact and diplomacy. Multiple and competitive lines of command may occur, with the traditional public prosecutor – police dyad being supplemented by fiscal and administrative counterparts. Powerful and strong-willed mayors have been known to project their authority on the judicial domain, causing annoyance or even outright distrust. Also, politicians and the media display a very active interest in many aspects of crime fighting, which obfuscates professional debate and decision-making on such

⁷ On the notion of capital in security networks, cf. Dupont (2004: 84 ff).

matters. Finally, while official doctrine may emphasise the ambition of optimizing the effectiveness of crime control, in daily routine the need to fulfil performance contracts dictates the short-term decisions. Most of the interventions are therefore aimed at relatively easy targets ('short strikes'), while more complex investigations are often few and far between.

Multi-agency collaboration thus remains a challenge in the security field. While all parties involved now talk a similar talk, not everybody actually works in unison. With conflicts of interest, differing organisational cultures and a rather complex legal framework, the arena could almost be characterised as a "goat rodeo" (Gupta, 2015: 6). In such conditions, critical observations are important; not only from an instrumental point of view (spending tax money efficiently), but also as a reminder that networked security arrangements are not always by definition the most optimal and ever-lasting solution.⁸

Conclusion

Over the last two decades, Dutch authorities have invested heavily in understanding and getting a grip on organised crime. Where such crime fighting was traditionally the exclusive domain of law enforcement, nowadays mayors, tax inspectors, environmental agencies, the immigration department and many other institutes have taken up their responsibility in the integrated approach to countering organised crime.

This integrated approach is a combination of constructing barriers, tackling key players and facilitators in criminal networks, and neutralising hotspots and refuges. Working jointly from a shared security agenda, a common information base and problem analysis, partner organisations have organised a range of coordinated penal, administrative, fiscal and alternative interventions.

It is expected that the integrated approach to crime control will gradually evolve into a 'whole-of-government approach' to countering organised crime. A challenge for the near future is to further engage the private sector, including business corporations, but also private citizens, neighbourhood networks and interest groups in the alliance. Non-institutional stakeholders have played an important role in the anti-mafia movement in Southern Italy, where organised crime is a much more manifest, feared and despised phenomenon compared to The Netherlands. It remains to be seen whether such a broad coalition is feasible in Holland. It may also be noted that the mobilising potential of social network technology is still to be explored in the field of integrated

⁸ See Yar (2011) for a critical discussion of the network concept in security arrangements.

crime fighting. As useful apps are developed and marketed on an ever-larger scale, an anti-mafia app cannot be far away.

As to the crucial aspect of effectiveness of the integrated approach to countering organised crime, it remains to be seen whether the current enthusiasm will last. Participating agents such as some mayors have stressed that while administrative measures can considerably hinder criminal enterprises, they are insufficient in themselves to truly disrupt or put an end to criminal activities. For that, the intrusive and enforcement powers of the judicial system are required. Mayors are no substitute for criminal investigators and prosecutors. The integrated approach has become the dominant doctrine in countering organised crime in The Netherlands, and the capacity of institutions such as local governments to recognise and resist this threat is essential in maintaining a free, just and democratic society. Still, a strong repressive capability by the police and public prosecutor remains indispensable for combating organised crime that may be well hidden and unobtrusive but is still lethal in its effects.

Conflict of Interest Declaration

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