

# The representation of organised crime in local police assessments

*A contestation of current assessments and the  
development of a new approach*

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**This thesis is submitted in candidature for the Degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy**

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# Abstract

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Police forces around the UK are now expected to produce assessments of organised crime for their own local areas. These assessments are of significant social scientific interest because they contain hidden assumptions about what “local” organised crime is, what kind of problem it causes and how it should be governed. Yet much of the research on this topic has been overly-concerned with helping police design better assessment models on their own terms. In response, this study sought to work at a deeper-level, uncovering local assessments’ taken-for-granted representations of the organised crime problem. In so doing, the ultimate objective was to *contest* how “organised crime” was framed by local assessments and to develop a new assessment model. Following the tenets of Layder’s “adaptive theory” approach (1998), the study begins with the proposition that local assessments are not actually very “local” in their representation of organised crime. Case studies of three types of local assessment are used to test, develop and refine this proposition. Content analysis of actual police assessments is used to “reverse engineer” each of these types, uncovering their hidden conceptualisations. Contrary to the proposition, it is discovered that many assessments do contain genuine local detail but are nevertheless incoherent in their representation of the organised crime problem. Through cross-case analysis, four fundamental sources of incoherence are identified; 1) a lack of clear problem definitions, 2) a lack of internal cohesion, 3) the infeasibility of assessing administratively-defined local areas and 4) a flawed ontology of organised crime. Based on these criticisms, a new model called the Systemic Crime Problem Assessment (SCPA) is proposed.



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# 1. Introduction

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This is a study of local organised crime assessments in the UK. The police now use a variety of different kinds of assessment, including automated programmes for counting crime gangs, analyses of cross-border criminality, matrices for ranking harm and narrative descriptions of organised crime in local council districts. In spite of their differences, these assessments all share a common concern with registering “organised crime” – however it may be defined – at a *local* level and assessing its scale, impact or threat in some way.

These assessments are interesting for a number of reasons. Embedded within them are whole systems of thought about organised crime, offenders and the governance of social problems; submerged within their language, charts and ranking systems are hidden assumptions which go un-noticed. Their choice of method and data presuppose certain ways of thinking about organised crime (Edwards and Gill, 2002b); their delineation of local boundaries shapes how “localness” is conceptualised, and their implicit focus on certain groups, activities or markets promote certain strategies of response. As such, these assessments hold great potential for those interested in probing official accounts of organised crime; they are a superb locus for those who wish to penetrate beneath the surface of officially-authorized versions of reality.

Beyond intellectual curiosity, the analysis of local assessments helps draw a number of social problems out from the growing shadows of the securitised and secretive governmental complex built around “organised crime”. Recent years have seen organised crime recast as a problem of national security, akin to terrorism (see, for example, the UK government’s Serious and Organised Crime Strategy 2013 and 2018). The subsequent labelling of local drug supply, labour exploitation, human trafficking and other such problems as “organised crime” has led to a risk of them becoming sealed-off from public debate; the sole preserve of those with high-level security clearance within the national security apparatus. By striving to access local assessments, by examining their methods, data and language, and by laying bare their implicit assumptions about organised crime, it becomes possible to pry open a

space for challenge, for debate and for other ways of thinking about so-called “organised crime” problems.

However, this study shows that much of the research into local assessments is constrained by the need to satisfy police and policy-makers (Chapter 2), with few studies penetrating beneath the surface of local assessments. There has been an emphasis on helping police decide which type of assessment they should adopt, or on the technical refinement of their existing models. Though high quality, this research often takes police modes-of-thinking about organised crime for granted; it reifies police expertise and does not contest the deep-seated representations of the problem found in their assessments. Without a contestation of these representations though, social scientists, researchers and practitioners might remain trapped in the same old conceptual paradigms. Indeed, this was the core issue of the study; the need to expose and contest the hidden ways of thinking embedded in local assessments.

In response, this study asks; “*how do local organised crime assessments represent the problem of “local” organised crime?*” - and develops a methodological approach for answering this question (Chapter 3). Beginning with the proposition that these assessments are not actually very “local” in how they represent organised crime, the study selects three different types of assessment as case studies and uses these to “adapt” the original proposition (Layder 1998). The first case study (Chapter 4) examines quantitative data from *Organised Crime Group Mapping*; a system used by police forces throughout the UK. The second (Chapters 5 & 6) focuses on another very common type of assessment called a *Serious Organised Crime Local Profile*, while the third (Chapters 6 & 7) analyses the *Cross-Border Organised Crime Assessment*, which is unique to the border zone between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Within each case, the study aims to “reverse-engineer” the assessment in question; to work backwards from quantitative data-sets and documentary narratives to uncover the implicit assumptions and hidden “governmentalities” contained within each type of assessment.

Contrary to the original proposition, some of these assessments were found to contain genuine insight into their local areas. The more significant finding though, was that these same assessments were largely incoherent in their representation of the local organised crime problem. Detailed content analysis uncovered multiple, rival and sometimes “schizophrenic” accounts within individual assessments. These different “voices” often disagreed over what organised crime actually was, how it

was manifested locally, what sort of problem it posed and how it should be dealt with.

Through cross-case analysis (Chapter 9), the study isolates four specific sources of incoherence in local assessments: 1) a lack of clear problem definitions, 2) a lack of internal cohesion between aims, method and data, 3) the infeasibility of assessing organised crime within administratively-defined local areas and 4) a flawed ontology of organised crime. These findings led to significant “adaptation” of the original proposition.

In moving beyond the deconstruction of local assessments though; the study seeks to make a more constructive contribution to the field by developing a new, theoretically-informed assessment model. Such contributions, it can be argued, are more effective than straightforward critique. Actually demonstrating how organised crime might be re-conceptualised, how “localness” might be re-framed, how underlying assumptions might be altered and, hence, how assessments might be re-designed, helps strip away local assessments’ veneer of authority, showing them to be just one way of thinking about the problem.

The new model - developed in Chapter 10 – is known as the Systemic Crime Problem Assessment (SCPA). Rooted in a critical realist account of the social world, it provides a radically-different approach towards assessing “organised crime”. The SCPA takes socio-economic *systems* as its frame of reference - rather than local areas - and uses policy delphis and focus groups to identify specific “interlocal” crime problems within those systems. The SCPA then selects case studies of such problems and maps out the scripts, conditions and entities that drive them. In so doing, it seeks to move beyond vague narrative-descriptions of “organised crime” and the counting of crime groups, to develop holistic, causal explanations of specific crime problems. Designed for use by research institutes, think tanks, NGOs and universities, it provides a way of challenging prevailing official accounts of organised crime.

The study concludes in Chapter 11 by exploring the implications of the research findings and outlining how the SCPA model might be used to provide alternative accounts of local organised crime.

## 2. Asking different questions: a review of research into local organised crime assessments

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### 2.1. Introduction

The first step in exploring this topic was to identify what research already existed on local organised crime assessments and to make sense of that body of work as a whole. Many of the threads of this study's argument could be traced back to this initial review; it served as an intellectual point of origin for much of the theoretical work that followed. The review helped identify deficiencies and potential in different bodies of work, leading to the generation of some specific research questions. This chapter describes the extant literature on local organised crime assessments, makes an argument regarding its limitations and explains how this review led to a set of research questions.

Reviewing a body of literature inevitably involves “constructing” some subject or topic and then drawing together material from a variety of sources. This can be a messy process. The main topic of this review was defined as *research into local organised crime assessments*. From the outset, this topic included a diverse range of studies from an equally diverse range of sources.

A list of relevant academic fields was drawn up, including criminology, public policy, international relations, policing, drug control policy, sociology, the politics of crime control, strategic intelligence studies and “organised crime” itself. Major journals within these fields were searched using combinations of keywords (e.g. local+organised crime+assessment), as well as variations on this such as “assessing organised crime”, “local threat assessments”, “serious and organised crime assessments”, and so on. Further searches were then carried out on search engines such as Google Scholar, on university publication repositories and on university library systems.

Predictably, it was criminology and policing studies which had produced most research on this topic, but there was also a significant body of “official” and “semi-official” grey literature, constituted of reports by Ministries of Justice or Public Safety Departments. Studies from other fields were poorly represented. It is



important to note that actual organised crime assessments were not included in the review. Such assessments formed the *object of study* of this thesis while the literature review was concerned with *research* into this object of study.

The listed publications were tracked-down and studied individually. Basic details of each publication were recorded in a spreadsheet, including their main aims, research questions, method, data-use and conclusions. This provided a useful overview of the field, allowing the whole body of literature to be systematised and structured in a coherent way. 59 relevant publications were identified, most of which were either critical analyses of local organised crime assessments themselves or publications describing the development of new assessment models. Several publications did not fit into either category. Table 1, below summarises the results of this review:

Table 1. Number of local assessment studies by their main orientation

Critical analysis of local assessments	Development of new assessment models	Critical analysis <u>and</u> assessment development	Others
21	17	6	15

Those classified in the first category included reviews of different types of local assessment, critical commentaries on their methods and data, empirical studies of police-use of local assessments, and the like. Those in the second column tended to be less empirical and focused on arguments for adopting new assessment models. Sometimes there was a cross-over between the two, where, for instance, a publication would review current assessments and then propose how they might be done differently. Some of the literature did not fit into either category, including broader discussions of the “localness” of organised crime, articles exploring the local policing of organised crime which did, nonetheless describe local assessments, and so on.

Publications in each category were studied in more depth. Across all of the categories, much of the research was found to be sophisticated, insightful and rigorous. Yet there was also something frustrating about many of these studies. They seemed limited, as if they had stopped short of uncovering meaningful insights into the topic. Over time, these initial impressions developed into a longer and more

substantial argument. As will be explained in the following section, it was found that many (but not all) of the reviewed studies had implicitly adopted or “bought-into” police frames of reference on organised crime, and subsequently did not examine or question the deep-seated modes of thinking about crime and its governance inherent within those frameworks.

## **2.2. Following the official line: the problems of adopting police perspectives**

### *Helping police and policy-makers*

As suggested above, a significant proportion of the literature on this topic was embedded within “official”, often police-dominated, perspectives on organised crime. Many such studies were explicitly oriented toward helping police and policy-makers, either by evaluating different assessment methodologies or by developing new ones for them to use. While there is nothing inherently wrong with this sort of research, it can lead to studies which are rather narrow and driven by the demands of the “customer”. High-level policy-makers and senior police officers are not always amenable to having their conceptualisations of the organised crime problem questioned by contracted researchers, especially when they are the ones footing the bill. Understandably, there is an emphasis on more narrowly-defined questions and immediately practical outcomes. What this sometimes means though, is that those undertaking such research may have to accept the topic as it is presented to them by police and policy-makers; they may be limited in the extent to which they can move beyond the conceptual confines placed on their research. It seemed that similar factors had shaped many of the studies encountered in this review.

For example, one of the most important studies in this field was that undertaken by Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie in 2008 (published 2010). They used documentary analysis as well as interviews with police officers and analysts to explore the ways in which organised crime was “risk assessed” in local areas (Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie, 2010). They reviewed several different types of assessment, including the Canadian “Sleipnir” approach (which examines the attributes of crime groups (*ibid*)), the Metropolitan Police’s crime group assessment

tool and ACPO's crime group mapping system (*ibid*). Their ultimate objective was to advise authorities in Scotland on the merits of different types of assessment and to help devise a new assessment tool for the Scottish Police (*ibid*, pg 260). The researchers engaged in a sophisticated discussion of the conceptual issues surrounding the notion of "organised crime" and stressed the importance of its "locality" (pg 259). They explored questions over whether assessments should focus on the characteristics of criminal organisations or the characteristics of criminal activities (*ibid*). Ultimately though, they were forced to admit that the scope of their analysis was limited by the demands of their sponsors:

Our remit in this research, however, was to focus specifically on considering how to assess the risks posed by criminal groups...  
(Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie, 2010, pg 263)

Such restrictions are, of course, inevitable and understandable when conducting research for police and policy-makers, yet these enforced limitations were a frustrating aspect of their work. The authors touched-upon interesting questions about the deep-seated ways of thinking about crime implicit within different local assessments - and seemed willing to pursue these questions further - but stopped short of doing so, presumably because of a need to stick to their remit. As such, their analyses of different local assessments were more oriented toward what police officers and analysts thought about using them, rather than their implicit conceptual and ontological features:

...our interviews with analysts in England and Wales... highlighted that the 19 variable matrix is still considered too long to be of utility in a law enforcement environment.  
(Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie, 2010, pg 265)

...analysts interviewed for this research were uniformly positive about the basic utility of the ACPO RA matrix. It was considered simple and practical...  
(Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie, 2010, pg 269)

This study was seminal in many ways, especially in relation to its breadth, depth and rigour but it left many interesting research questions unanswered; it hinted that different types of assessment might embody fundamentally different conceptualisations of organised crime but could not pursue this further. In no way was this work flawed, but it could have provided even greater insight if its authors had been allowed to investigate at a deeper level.

Similar issues were encountered in Tusikov (2011). She compared local organised crime assessment models from three different countries, including ones developed by ACPO, the Metropolitan Police, Australian authorities and the Dutch Police (*ibid*). The study addressed a number of important points regarding the multiplicity, complexity and inadequacy of organised crime definitions, and also provided a valuable contextual insight into the notion of police as “knowledge-workers” (Tusikov, 2011, pg 102). As with Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie’s work though, the overall orientation of the study was toward finding an assessment which could help police “decision-making” (Tusikov, 2011, pg 99). Implicit in this was the idea that local assessments exist to serve police ends; relegating social scientific researchers to the role of technicians whose job is merely to evaluate assessment models on the police’s own terms and tailor them ever more finely to the goals of law enforcement – a standpoint rarely stated but implied, nonetheless. As a result, the main “critical questions” (Tusikov, 2011, pg 112) identified were;

...whether measuring and ranking organised-crime related harms... are empirically feasible and if so can be undertaken in a manner that meaningfully informs law enforcement’s decision-making...

(Tusikov, 2011, pg 112)

This orientation toward helping police obscured other interesting questions about local assessments; the emphasis placed on refining local assessment methodologies for the police left deep-seated questions over ontology, conceptualisation and styles of governance unanswered.

Similar issues were identified in a significant study of local strategic intelligence assessments (SIAs) undertaken by Chainey and Chapman (2013). The methodological rigour, clarity and insight of the researchers is second-to-none in this field. Through content-analysis, they examined a large sample of local intelligence

assessments and identified two fundamentally different orientations within them; those structured around “crime-types”, and those based on pre-existing local priorities (*ibid*, pg 474). Much of their paper was concerned with evaluating these contrasting stand-points. They subsequently made a strong case for the adoption of a “problem-oriented approach” (*ibid*, pg 474). Again though, the study stopped short of exploring the deep-seated ways of thinking about crime and its governance implicit within the sampled assessments. The orientation was, instead, toward satisfying police and policy-makers; toward making the assessments more useful for their purposes. Hence the paper tended to evaluate the assessments based on how well-received they would be by local policy-makers:

...the crime-type approach... typically produces long SIAs that are unlikely to be read in full by the audience it is designed for...  
(Chainey and Chapman, 2013, pg 479)

They even go so far as to provide a page of “practitioner” quotes commenting on the usefulness of their recommended approach. The study was largely embedded within an “intelligence-led policing” conceptual framework and it did not venture beyond the confines of its own field; it did not question some of the deeper representations implicit within the sampled assessments. Despite its immense value, the failure to pursue such avenues of research represented a missed opportunity - especially given the researchers’ direct access to local assessments. As with the Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie study, and the Tusikov study, there was frustration that the research could not penetrate further; that the analysis could not compare what these different assessments actually “thought” about local organised crime. All of the above studies were rigorous, insightful and interesting. The point though, was that their orientation toward helping police and policy-makers meant that they had to “buy-into” pre-existing ways of thinking about organised crime and its governance; they had to limit the kinds of questions they asked.

#### *The reification of police expertise*

Breaking down these general observations of the literature – highlighted by the three studies discussed above – several more specific criticisms could also be made. For instance, the acceptance of official perspectives on organised crime meant that there

was a noticeable *reification of police expertise*, with police and policy-maker opinion frequently being used as part of the research process and treated as an unquestionable source of evidence. This was apparent in both the Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie, and Chainey and Chapman studies, where police analysts were effectively asked which assessment model they thought would be best. It became clear that many studies oriented toward developing new assessment models made especially heavy use of police opinion in this way.

An interesting example of this was a study undertaken for the New Zealand police which evaluated several extant assessment models and subsequently proposed a new one that could be applied at local levels; the “Criminal Group Risk Assessment Model (CGRAM)” (Alach, 2012, pg 491). The study included a well-informed discussion of the definitional and methodological issues involved in assessment practice, but the evaluation itself was largely based on the opinions of the New Zealand police force and “subject matter experts” (Alach, 2012, pg 497). Here then, police opinion was used as a straightforward methodological *tool* of research (Edwards and Gill, 2002b). This valorisation of police opinion meant that interesting lines of thought about alternative assessment practices were circumscribed because they did not fit with police expectations. For much the same reason, the study prioritised “user-friendliness” (Alach, 2012, pg 497) of assessment models over almost any other criteria. Perhaps as a result, the CGRAM, while logically coherent and perfectly reasonable in itself, is so engineered toward satisfying police practitioners that it is best described as an internal bureaucratic mechanism, rather than any sort of representation of a complex social reality.

Police and policy-maker opinion was used in a similar way by a study which explored the potential of an index for assessing organised crime locally and regionally within Canada (Landsdowne-Technologies-Inc, 2010). Empirically, the report was based on surveys, interviews and focus groups with law enforcement and other “experts” from both the private and government sectors (*ibid*). The aim was to ask them what they thought would be the best way to assess organised crime. As with Alach’s study, “expert” opinion was treated as a reliable analytical tool; not an object of study in itself. Again, this derives from an implicitly-held assumption that the police are the experts on organised crime. As a consequence, the research was insufficiently critical of practitioner “wisdom” on the topic and placed too much emphasis on policy-maker satisfaction when evaluating different assessment models,

with comparatively little consideration given to whether such approaches were capable of grasping a complex reality.

When police opinion is deployed as a tool in this way, researchers risk “buying in” to a whole complex of assumptions, including a belief that the police are the problem-owning experts on organised crime. While this sort of belief is noticeable in many studies, it does not detract from the validity of their respective findings. It does mean that too much emphasis is placed on deciding what is best for local practitioners, rather than on what is best for understanding organised crime problems.

### *Helping set priorities*

As well as reifying police expertise, much of the literature implicitly assumed that local organised crime assessments are little more than tools for helping police set strategic priorities. A study by Albanese, for example, led to development of the “Organised Crime Risk Assessment Tool” (2004, pg 43), which was explicitly oriented toward helping police allocate resources most effectively (*ibid*). There is nothing inherently wrong with helping police in this way but doing so means that a number of assumptions are taken for granted – most obviously, that it is *the police* who should govern local organised crime and that their strategies of governance are self-evidently the most appropriate. Such assumptions also mean that the “governmentality” underlying local assessments is not explored; it is taken for granted and does not form part of the object of study. In the Albanese study, despite a number of well-argued points – such as the need to focus on specific geographic and temporal zones - this led to the development of an assessment model based almost solely on prioritisation (*ibid*), without much subsequent consideration of the actual nature of the local organised crime problem.

In a similar way, Sullivan *et al.*'s study for the New Zealand Police (2018) surveyed police officers to establish what they believed to be the best criteria for ranking organised criminals. Despite using a rigorous and transparent approach, the study was so heavily-embedded within police-dominated mentalities that it risked becoming completely self-referential; police opinion was used to develop a police assessment model so the police could rank criminals according to police priorities. As with the Albanese study, this kind of perspective renders assessments into little more than technical tools for police prioritisation.

Much the same could be observed in the research project which produced the “Organised Crime Harm Assessment and Prioritisation Model” (Dorn and van de Bunt, 2010, pg 1). Predicated on the assumption that assessments should be for priority-setting, it utilised a complex set of quantitative scoring mechanisms and formulas to rank the harms of organised crime (*ibid*). The “Crime Group Risk Assessment Model” (Alach, 2012, pg 491), developed for the New Zealand police, was also based on prioritisation and the scoring of local crime groups (Alach, 2012).

The point here is simply that much of the literature is underpinned by the assumption that local assessments are for helping set police priorities, and this has implications. Specifically, it leads to the development of assessment models based on comparison, measurement, ranking and quantitative scoring.

#### *Ranking, measurement and quantified scoring*

An orientation toward priority-setting implies a need to *compare* different criminal entities against one another – be they crime groups, illegal activities or local illicit markets - so that the most harmful, costly or threatening entities can be prioritised for response. This ranking process, in turn, creates a need for a common scale against which these things can be compared – a form of “measurement”.

The assumption that local assessments should be comparative - with the associated emphasis on ranking and measurement is now heavily embedded within the research literature. Indeed, it has become so prevalent that it is no longer justified on the grounds of helping police prioritisation – it is just assumed to be the way assessments are done. One of the best examples of this can be found in Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie (2010). In their words - “assessing the threat or risk from OC inherently involves – however imprecise – some element of measurement” (2010, pg 260).

It is worth reflecting here on the precise meaning of the word “measurement”. In relation to organised crime, Von Lampe describes it as the mapping of criminal phenomena onto numbers which subsequently permits comparison (von Lampe, 2004b). Therefore, the presumption underlying Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie research– expressed in only one line and with no real justification – is that local organised crime assessments must use quantified scores in order to make comparisons. The fact that this idea is encapsulated in just one word – “measurement” – means it easily slips under the radar, and yet its use implies a



whole methodology. For some, “measurement” is closely affiliated to “objectivity”, and this reinforces the mistaken idea that quantitative scoring prevents any subjectivity from “tainting” assessment models. Some of the more cynically-minded scholars in this field suggest that the emphasis on measurement comes from a desire to gloss over the deeper ontological problem of organised crime and shift the debate toward the seemingly more “objective” realm of numbers (von Lampe, 2004b, pg 86, van der Heijden, 1996). Young has made a similar point about quantification being used in criminology more widely to “tackle ontological insecurity” (2011, pg 73).

In the study described above then, the belief in measurement meant that local assessment models were evaluated largely on the basis of how precise their scoring mechanisms were (Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie, 2010). As a consequence, models which presented the “cleanest” and simplest accounts of organised crime were rated highly, while more nuanced and complex models were deemed to contain too many “ambiguities” (*ibid*).

The tendency toward “measurement” has been reinforced by a mistaken belief in some of the literature that quantitative assessments are inherently more “objective” than qualitative ones. A recent critical review of assessment models from Europe, Australia and North America, for example, building on an earlier suggestion by Dubourg and Pritchard (2007), argued that only “uncontroversial” numerical variables (such as financial cost) should be used when trying to assess organised crime as this would prevent anyone from having to make “normative judgements” (Zoutendijk, 2010, pg 83). Similarly, a study of the potential for comparative, national-level assessments, bemoaned the lack of statistics on organised crime and proposed a new model - the “Composite Organised Crime Index” (Van Dijk, 2007, pg 39)– which was largely based on the rate of unsolved murders in a country (Van Dijk, 2007, pg 42) - the justification being that quantitative data is “objective” and not based on mere “perceptions” (Van Dijk, 2007, pg 42). Alach, in presenting his own score-based model, argued that;

Criminal risk assessment is often particularly difficult, as there is seldom any easy way to quantify variables (often an essential element of risk assessment), and thus a need to use a more qualitative, subjective and relative approach.

(Alach, 2012, pg 494); referencing (Di Nicola and McCallister, 2006) and (van Duyne and van Dijk, 2007)

This simplistic faith in quantitative data has been refuted by many social scientific thinkers (see, for instance, Sayer 1992; Young, 2011), but such modes of thought remain firmly entrenched in much of the literature on local organised crime assessments. This position mistakenly assumes that quantitative data provide unproblematic “real” facts about the world. In actuality, of course, such data are inherently “theory-laden” (Bottoms, 2008, pg 100, Sayer, 1992, Layder 1998), having already been shaped by pre-existing concepts and theorisations (Sayer, 1992, pg 47). More significantly though, quantified scoring tells us little about “organised crime” in-and-of-itself; it cannot explain the nature of the problem, it cannot identify causes and it cannot explore unique local manifestations.

This implicit belief in measurement – i.e. numerical comparison - is now widespread in the research literature; Tusikov’s evaluation of assessment methods is centred around how best to *measure* harm (Tusikov, 2011); Albanese’s research into the potential of assessing local criminal markets focuses on *measuring* variables (Albanese, 2008); van Dijk’s study sought to *measure* organised crime levels around the world (Van Dijk, 2007) – the list goes on. Research concerned only with measurement implicitly limits itself to forms of assessment based on comparison, ranking and quantitative scoring. While this may be useful for the police, it often leads to the meaningless comparison of “conceptually discrete” (Edwards and Gill, 2003, pg 266) phenomena and provides little insight into the entities themselves.

Implicit acceptance of these perspectives has meant that research has not been directed at understanding the “governmental rationalities” (Foucault, 1991, Gordon, 1991, O'Malley, 2009) behind local assessments, but toward how measurement, ranking and scoring might be more effectively achieved. Much of the literature has thus “bought-in” to the hidden governmentality behind assessment practice, leading to a widespread failure of imagination in considering fundamentally different ways of assessing organised crime.

### *Leaving problem-definition to the police*

Perhaps the most important consequence of adopting “official” police and policy-maker perspectives on organised crime though, is that researchers often overlook the *problem-definitions* embedded in such perspectives. Police and policy-makers will often hold particular, taken-for-granted assumptions about what organised crime is, what offenders are like and what kind of problem they pose for society (Edwards and Gill, 2003, pg 265). When researchers implicitly accept these same assumptions, they can close-off the possibility of seeing or researching “the problem” from other perspectives (Edwards and Gill, 2003, pg 265; Bacchi, 2009).

For example, in his reflections on the local assessment of organised crime, Gilmour argues that organised criminals should be identified by “asking police officers... who they think should be on the list” (Gilmour, 2008, pg 25). The police, he goes on to suggest, should utilise their “common sense” in identifying likely suspects (Gilmour, 2008, pg 25). Yet an individual living in a neighbourhood affected by organised crime may frame the problem differently to the police, as might a participant in criminal activity, or a community activist, or a local business owner. This issue was recognised in a recent article by Rønn, which raised a number of objections to prevailing organised crime assessment methodologies (2013). In trying to avoid narrow-minded police perspectives on organised crime, it called for a “democratisation” (Rønn, 2013, pg 53) of the assessment process through the inclusion of multiple parties (*ibid*). Despite this excellent suggestion, the paper presents organised crime assessments – when done properly - as neutral representations of reality which subsequently leave the “interpretation of the provided facts” (Rønn, 2013, pg 59) up to the policy-makers. At a deep level this still presupposes that the police and their partners should be trusted – as apolitical and neutral “experts” on organised crime – to provide an authoritative definition of what the organised crime problem is.

Research into the reality of police assessment practices has shown the dangers of such a position. Innes’ ethnographic study of intelligence analysis in British police forces, for example – though not focused specifically on “organised crime” – showed how local intelligence assessments often become little more than the products of police conceptualisations and data-use, rather than any direct accounts of an external reality (Innes et al., 2005, pg 39). Furthermore, studies which implicitly adopt police definitions can be at risk of reproducing, or even legitimising,

bias and discrimination. Several researchers have commented on the tendency for authorities to become fixated on peripheral, lower-class milieus in their search for organised crime (von Lampe, 2015) and two studies in particular have highlighted the role that ethnicity sometimes plays in official assessments.

The first explored the inner-workings of police intelligence units in Canada (Gill, 1998) and found that ethnicity was a prevalent means of categorising crime groups during local assessment (*ibid*). The second studied the “Organised Crime Notification Scheme” used in Britain during the 1990s and also found that ethnic background was a major means of distinguishing between offenders (Gregory, 2003). If researchers were to implicitly adopt conceptual frameworks of this kind - on the belief that the police should ultimately decide what is satisfactory in terms of assessment methodology – then their studies might lean dangerously close to ethnic profiling or the targeting of marginal groups. Worse still, they might legitimise such practices by developing “scientific” assessments which nonetheless retain discriminatory modes of thought (Gill, 1998).

Of course, this is not to say that police expertise is worthless. Experienced detectives and analysts hold valuable knowledge about local organised crime, but such expertise is likely to be embedded within certain governmentalities of the problem, which need to be brought into the light and acknowledged for what they are, rather than simply being taken-for-granted. Researchers need to be mindful of the risks of unconsciously aligning themselves with police perspectives on this topic and should avoid deferring important questions to police expertise.

### **2.3. Deeper questions: an exploration of other fields**

Reflecting on these issues and in seeking a way forward, the literature from a number of other, seemingly un-related fields was reviewed. The aim was to identify alternative perspectives which, if applied to the study of local organised crime assessments, might unlock new possibilities for research; perspectives which might provide the conceptual and analytical machinery to explore the topic at a deeper level.

### *The public policy literature*

The first field encountered in these explorations was that of *policy-analysis*. In particular, there was an interesting body of work centred around the so-called “problem-definition” phase of the policy-making process (Knill and Tosun, 2012, pg 97-98). Typically, this has involved research into how certain issues become policy problems (*ibid*, pg 100) or how problems are framed by certain policies (*ibid*, pg 102). Researchers within this field have examined a whole host of topics. Weiss, for instance, explored the role of problem-definition in policy-making through a case study of a government initiative to reduce paperwork (1989). Wood and Doan examined sexual harassment as a policy problem and developed a “threshold model” to explain how and why problem-definitions change (Wood and Doan, 2003). Two of the most prominent researchers in this field though, are Rochefort and Cobb. In their work they have shown how problem-definition can be broken-down into several different elements, including claims over the “causality”, “severity”, “proximity” and “incidence” of certain problems (Knill and Tosun, 2012, pg 103, referencing; Rochefort and Cobb, 1994).

Most of these studies share a common perspective; a refutation of the view that policy-making occurs in a “natural logical sequence” (Rochefort and Cobb, 2005, pg 151) and that “problems” exist in a self-evident way (Bacchi, 2009). If these points could be applied to local organised crime assessments, rather than just policies, then this perspective held great potential for addressing the limitations identified in the literature.

Building on the insights of other researchers in the policy-analysis field, Bacchi developed a systematic methodology for researching problem-definitions. Known as the “*what’s the problem represented to be?*” approach (2009), her essential argument was that government policy (in whatever field) is not just a response to some straightforward, pre-existing “problem” that exists in isolation; but rather, that specific policies embody particular representations of these “problems”; that the “problems” are, in a sense, framed or partially-constructed by the policy itself (Bacchi, 2009, pg 1).

While at first sight this might seem to veer toward full-blown social constructivism, this need not be the case. Social phenomena such as the trading of illegal drugs or the trafficking of human beings have their own “real” sets of internal relations that exist independently of our registering of them, but their framing as

particular kinds of problem is very much a fallible interpretative process embedded in specific policies. Bacchi's approach then, was to examine government policies with the aim of uncovering the *problem representations* implicit within them (*ibid*, pg 3). This meant not accepting official perspectives, not taking common conceptualisations for granted; it meant, as she has put it, "working backwards" (*ibid*, pg 3); asking a number of questions of policies, such as "*what is the problem represented to be?*", "*what assumptions underlie this representation of the problem?*" and "*can the problem be thought about differently?*" (*ibid*, pg 2).

This analytical approach held great promise for the study of local assessments. If, in the above paragraph, "policy" was to be replaced by "local organised crime assessment" then a number of interesting avenues of inquiry become possible. Local assessments could be analysed with the aim of "working backwards" (*ibid*, pg 3) to uncover the hidden problem representations they contained. Further questions could then be asked of their pre-given assumptions and taken-for-granted conceptualisations. For the purposes of the study, this approach was called "reverse-engineering" and is described more fully in section 2.7. Importantly, this kind of approach would address the limitations encountered in the literature, as discussed previously.

### *The governmentality literature*

At a deeper level, these questions were redolent of those posed by the "governmental" school of criminology. The governmentality literature seemed a natural extension of the policy-analysis work of Bacchi and others. As such, the review moved on to include a number of key texts from this field. Through a process akin to "snowball sampling", useful studies were selected from reference lists and assessed for their relevance.

Descending from the work of Foucault and his nebulous notion of "governmentality", this school – although divided along several fault-lines – is concerned with understanding:

...how government is thought into being in programmatic form, how the practitioners of rule ask themselves the question of how best to govern, what concepts they invent or deploy to render their subjects governable in certain ways...

(O'Malley et al., 1997, pg 502; referencing Miller and Rose, 1990)

It seeks to access the:

...schematic theories or “imaginaries” of society which map out the nature of problems, how they are to be identified, what their causes are, what kinds of subjects are involved and what the ideal outcome of intervention would be.

(O'Malley, 2009, pg 10)

Applied to the governance of crime, such studies tend to focus on questions such as:

How have authorities understood their role in relation to the problem of crime? How has the problem of governing crime been problematised and rationalised?... Using what forms of knowledge have authorities exercised governance in this area?

(Garland, 1997, pg 184)

When focused on a specific topic, like drug addiction, youth offending or domestic violence, the governmentality approach seeks to understand how authorities have conceptualised such issues as problems of government, typically by analysing policies, strategies and interventions. This sort of approach held great potential for uncovering the deep-seated ways of thinking about organised crime embedded within local assessments, and yet the governmentality approach also contains a number of fundamental divisions (Edwards and Gill, 2003, pg 276) that had to be negotiated.

Edwards and Gill (2003, pg 276) characterise these divisions as a debate over whether governmentality research should limit itself to identifying abstracted “systems of thought” and “principles of governing” (Garland, 1999, pg 31, Rose and Miller, 1992) or whether they should engage in “realist” (Stenson, 2005, Rose and Miller, 1992, pg 177) research which examines how governmentalities are actually enacted in real life (Edwards and Gill, 2003); how “...they are implemented, their corruption in practice (and) the unforeseen consequences they produce...” (Garland, 1999, pg 31).

Adherence to the first position suggests analysis of local assessments in-and-of themselves, as well as associated manuals, handbooks, data-sets, strategies and policies; it would seek to map-out how these assessments conceptualise organised crime as a problem, and what they suggest should be done to govern it.

By contrast, the latter “realist” perspective would demand a grounded, perhaps ethnographic study of the real, messy processes by which local assessments are produced and the extent to which their proposed governmentalities are negotiated, implemented or rejected in practice. In such a project, local assessments could not be studied in isolation; rather, they would need to be situated within a much broader programme of research, to include the internal dynamics of police organised crime units, the politics of police hierarchies, the imposition of – and resistance to – national directives on organised crime, the impact of HMIC inspections, and so on.

This kind of sociologically-grounded, “realist” approach is seen by some as a critical response to the limitations of focusing only on the more “ideal”, abstract governmentalities contained in official policies, strategies and assessments (Garland, 1999, pg 31, Edwards and Gill, 2003, pg 276). Yet the study of these more abstract governmental ambitions and projections is still a worthwhile undertaking, as Rose *et al.* have argued:

The orientation of governmentality work... is not ideal typification, but an empirical mapping of governmental rationalities and techniques. Further, there is no assumption that the mere existence of a diagram of government implies either its generalized acceptance or implementation.

(Rose et al., 2006)

While a sociologically-oriented, “realist” governmentality approach toward local assessments would be of substantial value, it would also detract from the main impulse behind this study, which was to explore the projection of an official “documentary reality” (Atkinson and Coffey, 2011, pg 66) in local assessments; to expose the taken-for-granted ways of thinking about governance embedded within them and, in so doing, to open them up for *contestation*. Indeed, “contestation” was the crucial point here. The governmentality approach has been accused of “...an avoidance of critique and political engagement” (O’Malley et al., 1997, pg 503) and “...a lack of interest in transferring knowledge beyond the limits of academic audiences” (*ibid*, pg 504). In avoiding the esoteric tendency of some governmentality work, this study sought to follow the lead of O’Malley et al. (1997), and to use the governmentality approach as a means for *denaturalising* official accounts of local



organised crime; as a way of revealing them to be but one of many ways of thinking about the organised crime problem (Edwards and Gill, 2003), thereby creating space for new, perhaps better, conceptualisations and assessment models.

The value of opening-up such space is demonstrated by the work of Levi and Maguire (2004). Their detailed and exhaustive review of organised crime prevention breaks with traditional police preoccupations, showing how the adoption of “situational” perspectives can lead to alternative strategies of control (*ibid*). They highlight the potential of “community-based approaches”, “regulatory measures”, “civil injunctions” and “private sector involvement” (*ibid*, pg 411), among others. Similarly, Vander Beken, in thinking beyond official preoccupations with criminal organisations, re-conceptualises “organised crime” using Dwight-Smith’s “spectrum of enterprise” perspective (1980, Vander Beken, 2004). In so doing, he reveals the limitations of focusing only on the ethnic and structural qualities of offenders and highlights the importance of particular socio-economic contexts for generating crime (*ibid*). Through this, he was able to develop a new, theoretically-sound and sophisticated assessment model which takes into account the systemic, embedded nature of organised crime.

The importance of this sort of “re-framing” should not be underestimated. Edwards and Gill (2002b) have shown how the implicit framing of the organised crime problem in official policy, strategy or assessments leads to the empowerment of some institutions and the exclusion of others (*ibid*). Contestation of local assessments is not, therefore, just some kind of independent audit; it is the essential starting-point for improving crime control strategy. Thus, it was decided that contestation and critique of local assessments should take precedence over ethnographic, “realist” analyses of the minutiae of their production and use. In this way, time and energy could be directed towards constructive criticism, re-conceptualisation and the production of a new assessment model.

The implication here though, was that local assessments could not be treated as some kind of “window” into actual local organised crime control practices; it could not be assumed that the governmentalities present within local assessments would necessarily equate to how organised crime was actually thought about and governed in particular local areas. Instead, local assessments “constitute a distinctive level of representation, with (their) own autonomy from other social constructions”

(Atkinson and Coffey, 2011, pg 66). They are, in other words, an object of study in their own right, not simply a means of accessing others' perspectives.

Given this alignment with contestation over the sociological, "realist" approach, three specific governmentality studies became of particular interest. The first, by Pavlich, explored historic changes in the governmentality of local crime control in New Zealand (1999). The actual findings of the Pavlich study were of minimal significance for this review; of greater importance was the overall *orientation* adopted. Through analysis of official government documents, Pavlich uncovered fundamental shifts in the way local crime was conceptualised over time. By paying attention to these "deeper" ways of thinking, the study established what official strategy and policy documents suggested about "who, or what, is (being) governed?" (*ibid*, pg 117), "who should do the governing"? and "how should the situation be governed?" (*ibid*). Such questions held potential for elucidating the hidden schematas of governance contained within local organised crime assessments.

Drawing on a similar perspective to Pavlich, Sheptycki's study of the governance of organised crime in Canada (2003) explored how "organised crime" itself was constructed by police agencies (*ibid*, pg 490). Through an embedded, empirical research process incorporating interviews and analysis of police assessment practices, the study isolated the governmental "mentalities" implicit in "police intelligence systems and their knowledge products" (*ibid*, pg 490). It was discovered, for example, that organised crime was inherently represented as exogenous to society in police assessments (*ibid*, pg 498) - as something committed by socially-marginal mafias rather than socially-embedded corporations and businesses (*ibid*, pg 498). As with the Pavlich study, Sheptycki was able to penetrate beyond the superficial features of official police accounts to access the taken-for-granted ways of thinking built-into them; an approach that could be replicated in the study of local assessments.

Two papers by Edwards and Gill most clearly encapsulate the value of this "governmentality" research orientation. Although predominantly focused on *transnational* organised crime, they articulate the limitations of research which simply accepts police and policy-maker perspectives:

The contribution that social scientists can make to policy change and learning is... restricted by work that accepts as axiomatic prevailing definitions of the scope and

dynamics of a governmental problem... the ways in which policy-oriented learning is organised presuppose certain technologies... whilst obfuscating, if not negating others.

(Edwards and Gill, 2003, pg 265)

This neatly summarised many of the frustrations encountered in the local assessment research literature; the presumption that problem-definition should be left to the police; the failure to question or challenge the ways of thinking implicit in local assessments; the assumption that researchers are little more than technicians who should simply tinker with police assessment tools without examining their taken-for-granted assumptions. As Edwards and Gill argue, this acceptance of official perspectives obscures the possibility of thinking differently, of conceptualising the problem differently and, hence, of developing better assessment models.

In their work, Edwards and Gill set out to “explicate the underlying governmentality of policy responses” to organised crime (2003, pg 265) and aim to show how the problem might be conceptualised in different ways (*ibid*). They identify three rival governmentalities of organised crime; “external threat”, “increased opportunities” and “internal challenge” (*ibid*, pg 267-273), each of which embody different representations of the problem and provide different accounts of how it should be governed. This three-fold categorisation was an interesting starting-point for thinking about local organised crime assessments. It seemed possible that a similar approach could be used to identify, compare and evaluate the governmentalities of local assessment models.

These three studies encapsulated the potential of a governmentality perspective for the study of local organised crime assessments. They provided a route-map towards a deeper understanding of the “documentary realities” (Atkinson and Coffey, 2011, pg 66) embedded within local assessments. They represented, in some ways, a continuation of the questions posed by the policy-analysis literature, but went further, seeking to uncover broader, more systematic ways of thinking beyond any one single problem-definition.

Applied to local assessments, it seemed that a governmentality perspective could isolate the deep-seated representations implicit within them, exploring for instance, embedded presumptions about the nature of offenders, whether articulated in terms of “rational actors”, “deviant others”, “moral failures”, “subcultural groups”

or some other such conceptualisation. The governmentality perspective could investigate the strategies of crime control implied by local assessments; whether that took the form of situational prevention, police crackdowns, regulation, securitisation or something else. It could direct attention to the kinds of language used to articulate the problem of local organised crime; “threat” versus “harm”, for instance; it could highlight where local assessments implicitly locate the consequences of the problem – community safety, perhaps; or local infrastructure, or national security. It could, in other words, serve as a kind of intellectual supplement to the deficiencies of the local assessment research literature.

#### **2.4. Conclusions**

Having explored both the strengths and limitations of existing research into local assessments, and having seen the potential of other perspectives, there was clearly scope to undertake a hybridised form of research. The fundamental impulse was to replicate the kinds of study undertaken by Hamilton-Smith, Chainey and Chapman, and Tusikov, but to go deeper; to ask, not which type of assessment the police should adopt, but what sort of deep-seated problem representations reside within local assessments; to ask questions of ontology and governmentality, not functionality; to develop a new assessment model based on conceptual soundness rather than on police approval ratings.

This was viewed as a process of augmentation. The aim would be to design a research study which replicated the systematic reviews and content analyses of Chainey and Chapman, or of Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie, but to then adopt an analytical approach similar to that of Bacchi; to ask, “*what is the problem of local organised crime represented to be in this local assessment?*” (*ibid*, 2009). Such problem representations could then be explored at a deeper level, with the aim of isolating the governmentalities embedded within them. As well as addressing the limitations of the extant research literature, this would provide a sound basis for questioning the conceptual and ontological validity of local assessments, thus allowing intellectual space for the development of a new assessment model.

The main argument of this review was reduced to a set of research questions which are outlined below:

- 1. How do different types of local organised crime assessment represent the problem of local organised crime?*
- 2. What governmentalities of local organised crime are embodied by these assessments?*
- 3. How might local organised crime be otherwise represented and assessed?*

It was intended that these questions would work together as a logical, progressive sequence. Once the problem representations of local assessments had been identified, it would become possible to understand the kinds of governmentalities they embodied. Once these were understood, it would be possible to build a constructive argument as to their validity and, from this, develop a new assessment model.

The challenge of course, was to translate these questions into a theoretical and methodological approach; to find a way of reproducing the work of Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie, of Tusikov, and of Chainey and Chapman, but to do so through the prism of policy-analysis and governmentality. In so doing, the following chapter explains how the study was actually conducted; how it was designed, what methods were used, what data was collected and the process through which theory was applied and developed.

## 3. Methodology

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### 3.1. Introduction

Developing a methodology for this study required the synthesis of several different perspectives. There was a general desire for the study to be comparable with pre-existing research into local assessments, but there was also a need to apply Bacchi's "*what's the problem represented to be?*" approach (2009, pg 1), and to do so in a way conducive to identifying "governmentalities". Building on the principles outlined in the previous chapter, the following sections explain how this was achieved, with specific detail on the study's philosophical and theoretical basis, its research design, choice of data and method of analysis.

### 3.2. The researcher as outsider

Choices over method and data are inevitably shaped by the politics of doing research in a given field. The field of organised crime control is a particularly difficult one to enter, having become increasingly securitised in the UK over recent decades (Edwards and Gill, 2003, Hobbs and Woodiwiss, 2009). Unlike in other, less-securitised domains of policing, it is exceptionally difficult to gain access to organised crime units or their data in the UK. For understandable reasons, such units operate under conditions of strict protective security. Researchers often face a stark choice between being "onboard" with an organised crime unit or being an "outsider", with few options in between.

Gaining access to official data on organised crime is often dependent on a researcher's willingness to enter into an official relationship with law enforcement; a relationship which places certain obligations and constraints on the researcher. In order to gain access, researchers may be expected to pass security vetting, to sign non-disclosure agreements and, quite understandably, to show how their research will benefit the law enforcement agency providing the access. This can put the researcher in a difficult position. It can mean that the researcher finds themselves as the dependent party within the relationship; it can mean that the researcher ends up working *for* the police as part of an officially-sanctioned project; it can mean researchers have to adhere to official definitions of "organised crime" and accept the governmentalities and frames of reference of their hosts (Edwards and Gill, 2002b).

On a broader level, it can lead to the researcher becoming “enveloped” by the organised crime policing apparatus. It is easy for a researcher to be swayed by the status of having security clearance; easy to believe they have been inculcated into some higher truth when given access to top secret data; and easy also, to abandon the goal of dragging local organised crime problems out from the shadows and back into public view.

During the course of this study, for example, the author developed contacts with an organised crime unit in a UK police force, the aim being to explore possible research collaboration. After some delays and cajoling, the unit agreed to this partnership but only on the condition that the author and his colleagues were vetted. The vetting forms were subsequently completed and returned. Five months later, the author and his colleagues were offered the chance to evaluate a local organised crime prevention initiative on behalf of the police force, with the expectation that randomised controlled trials would be used.

This is not to criticise the police *per se*. Of course researchers should be vetted before accessing sensitive data; of course the police have more urgent priorities than research collaboration, and of course they want research that is relevant to their own objectives. Yet this example demonstrates the disparity of power in the relationship. From hopes of collaboration between equals and a critical, open dialogue, the relationship changed to one of a fixed-term job offer within pre-defined conceptual and methodological constraints. This, it is argued, is the reality of doing research into organised crime policing in the UK.

As was made clear in Chapter 1, there is a real need for research which penetrates beneath the surface of local assessments and uncovers the hidden problem representations implicit within them. If local assessments are to be re-imagined, then their current governmentalities first need to be contested. The sort of “contestation” envisioned by O’Malley et al. (1997), necessitates the *denaturalisation* of deep-seated conceptual and political assumptions, not just the shallow critique of scoring mechanisms or the evaluation of threat indicators. While official access might provide researchers *themselves* with individual, “behind-the-scenes” insights, the limitations of doing research *for* an organised crime unit would stymie attempts to denaturalise and contest governmentalities at a deeper level.

This implied a need for critical distance and autonomy. It meant avoiding doing research *for* law enforcement on their own terms, although this did not imply

an anti-police stance. It did mean, however, that the researcher remained an “outsider”, without privileged access – a decision which comes at a cost. Being an outsider precluded the use of certain research methods – such as direct observation or ethnography – and suggested the need to use other approaches – such as Freedom of Information requests – to conduct the research. These approaches have their limitations, but these limitations were preferable to those involved in achieving privileged police access.

### **3.3. Philosophical foundations of the study**

Questions of research design and method also depend on prior assumptions about the social world and how (or if) it can be known. The majority of studies into local assessments do not openly consider such issues, let alone share a common perspective, yet social scientific research into this topic requires some meta-theoretical foundations.

This study adheres to a critical realist account of the social world. Critical realism combines a realist ontology with a fallible epistemology (Sayer, 1992, pg 5, Easton, 2010, pg 119-120); it argues, in other words, that social phenomena do have their own existence independent of our conceptualisation of them but that we can only perceive and know these phenomena in a partial, indirect way (*ibid*). It thus rejects full-blown social constructivism, as it does naïve realism (Easton, 2010, Sayer, 1992). In relation to local organised crime assessments, this view would suggest that there are certain socio-economic activities, processes and structures - labelled as “organised crime” - which do exist independently of our conceptualisation of them, but that the knowledge presented in local assessments – and indeed the very act of labelling them as “organised crime” – is constructed and fallible.

There is a great deal that can be said about critical realist philosophy, yet the aim here is to describe the ways in which it informed and shaped the study as a whole. This was not a “pure” critical realist study; such research seeks to identify the underlying “generative mechanisms” (Easton, 2010, pg 122, Sayer, 1992) that cause specific events or patterns. Rather, critical realism provided an ontological and epistemological standard against which the study’s methods, data collection strategy, analysis and conclusions could be compared. At each stage of the research process, the question was asked: “*is this in agreement with critical realist principles?*”



Critical realism was thus an “under-labourer” (Sayer, 1992, pg 4, referencing, Bhaskar, 2011) for the study as a whole; a guide which could direct the research in meaningful directions, but also a check on the study; a means of ensuring its internal and external validity.

Critical realism was also used to inform the development of a new assessment model. It provided the ontological and epistemological foundations upon which the new model was built. Of particular importance was the critical realist notion of “theory-laden data” (Bottoms, 2008, pg 100, Sayer, 1992, Layder 1998); a refutation of the idea that data can be a direct and neutral representation of the social world. This had significant implications for the study’s research design.

An important consideration was the extent to which critical realism was compatible with Bacchi’s “*what’s the problem represented to be?*” approach (2009, pg 1) and those elements of the governmentality school that lean toward a “constructionist” view of society (Bacchi, 2009, pg 33). On close examination though, Bacchi’s position is mostly a refutation of naïve realism; hers is an argument against the idea that social problems simply exist “out-there” in a self-evident way (*ibid*). Critical realism is in agreement with this, with both positions stressing the fallible, interpretivist and “theory-laden” (Bottoms, 2008, pg 100, Sayer, 1992, Layder 1998) nature of our perceptions about, and knowledge of, the social world.

### **3.4. An adaptive theory approach**

Building on a critical realist underpinning, the next issue for the study to grapple with was the “theory/data relationship” (Bottoms, 2008, pg 108); the nature of the relationship between collecting / using data about local assessments and using / developing theory on the other (*ibid*). Bottoms has outlined three basic versions of this relationship; 1) “hypothetico-deductivism”, which uses data and hypotheses to test theory; 2) “grounded theory” - originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1999) – in which theory “emerges” from data (*ibid*) and, 3) “adaptive theory” – in which theory is used to guide data collection but can itself then be modified in line with the findings (Layder 1998, Bottoms, 2008).

Here, the principles of critical realism were used as a basis for selecting the most appropriate option. Hypothesis-testing was an unsuitable way of researching local assessments because of its tendency to assume that “hypotheses can be tested

directly and unproblematically against the real world” (Bottoms, 2008, pg 96), implying that data can be theory-neutral. It thus strays too close to naïve-realism. The control of extraneous variables, which is often associated with hypothesis-testing, is also largely impossible in the “open system” of the social world (Sayer, 1992).

Grounded theory’s assumption that theory should just emerge from data also ignores the problem that theory is *already embedded* in such data (Layder 1998, pg 51, Bottoms, 2008, pg 100). Local assessments cannot be studied as a data source without some prior ideas about what counts as data and what exactly is being looked for. Neither hypothesis-testing nor grounded theory were therefore appropriate for this study.

The “adaptive theory” approach (Layder 1998) however, does take such issues into account and has a strong affinity with critical realist philosophy. The approach – as outlined by Derek Layder (*ibid*) – is to choose a proposition or some theoretical “orienting concepts” at the beginning of a research project and to use these to guide data-collection (*ibid*, pg 101). These initial propositions are then modified and “adapted” in line with findings (*ibid*). This avoids a naïve-realist conceptualisation of data, and is far more flexible than a hypothetico-deductive, verificationist stance toward proving or refuting theory (Bottoms, 2008, Layder 1998).

In following the logic of Layder’s “adaptive” approach, this study began with an initial proposition about local assessments and how they would represent the problem of organised crime. Over the course of the study, this proposition was elaborated on, refined, added-to and reduced. Details of this proposition are outlined in section 4.1.

### **3.5. A multiple case study research design**

The adaptive theory approach outlined above provided an overarching structure and coherence to the study; yet there was a need to develop a more specific research design which could serve as a vehicle for adaptive theory, but which was also congruent with Bacchi’s “*what’s the problem represented to be?*” approach and analyses of governmentality.

Several options were considered although most were found to be unsuitable. A cross-sectional design, for example, despite having been used successfully by some studies in this field, would not have provided the depth of insight needed to get beneath the surface of local assessments. A longitudinal study would place too much emphasis on changes over time – something which was not really related to the research questions. An ethnographic approach - such as that used by Innes *et al.* (2005) in their study of police intelligence analysis - could have provided contextually-rich, micro-level, sociological insights into the reality of actually producing local assessments, but this would have inevitably involved a shift of emphasis away from the perspectives embedded in local assessments themselves and onto the idiographic context, working practices and culture of the unit undertaking the assessment.

This last point boiled down to a distinction - discussed in the previous chapter – between a “realist” (not in the “critical realist” sense) governmentality programme of research which seeks out the messy ways in which governmentalities actually play out in real life (Garland, 1999, Stenson, 2005, Edwards and Gill, 2003), and an alternate research agenda which attempts to isolate, in a more abstract, ideal-type way, how issues such as organised crime are officially represented as a problem of governance (Garland, 1999, Rose and Miller, 1992, Edwards and Gill, 2003) and how they might be contested. In pursuing the latter objective, this study intended to focus on local assessments in and of themselves – as “official” documentary or quantitative attempts to represent the problem of local organised crime.

The most appropriate research design for achieving these objectives was the case study. In fact, most studies of local organised crime assessments found in the literature effectively used a case study approach, with different types of local assessment constituting the “case”. There were a number of other good reasons for adopting a case study approach:

- The first research question – *how do local organised crime assessments represent the problem of local organised crime?* - implied a need for in-depth research capable of penetrating beyond the superficial features of local assessments to the implicit, underlying modes of thought that produced them. Of the more traditional research designs, it was the *case study* that best encapsulated this kind of research orientation.

- The case study research design has (or at least, *can* have) a strong affinity with the adaptive theory approach (Layder 1998). Proponents of case studies, such as Robert Yin, extol the value of using theory in a provisional way to design and structure research projects without excluding other perspectives (Yin, 2014, pg 38). Case studies could thus be used to develop the initial proposition in a sequential way.
- Examining how local assessments represent the problem of organised crime involves close attention to the details of assessment methodology; including such things as the kinds of data used, the language “built-in” to the assessment, the implicit reasoning behind its conclusions, and so on. Case studies are well-suited to extracting such fine detail.

### *Defining the case*

The next consideration was how exactly to define or “bound the case” (May, 2011, pg 228). One option was to take particular *organisations* as “cases” and then examine how each organisation went about assessing organised crime. However, this would have subtly shifted the object of study away from particular types of assessment - as documentary or quantitative representations of reality - and onto the governmentalities of a particular police force or agency. The distinction is an important one since the same kinds of assessment can be undertaken by different organisations, and the same organisation can use multiple forms of assessment simultaneously; they are not one and the same.

Another option was to define the “case” in terms of specific *localities*, such as an inner-city district or a rural county, and then examine how organised crime was assessed within each area. Again though, this would have shifted the emphasis onto the characteristics of the locality in question and its prevailing governmentalities and away from the assessments themselves.

Instead it was decided that the “case” should be defined as particular *types* of local assessment. This served to focus attention on the assessment itself and the problem representations contained therein, rather than on the governmentalities of specific organisations or localities. It was this delineation of the “case” that corresponded most closely with Bacchi’s “*what’s the problem represented to be?*” approach (2009) and the expectations of the first research question.

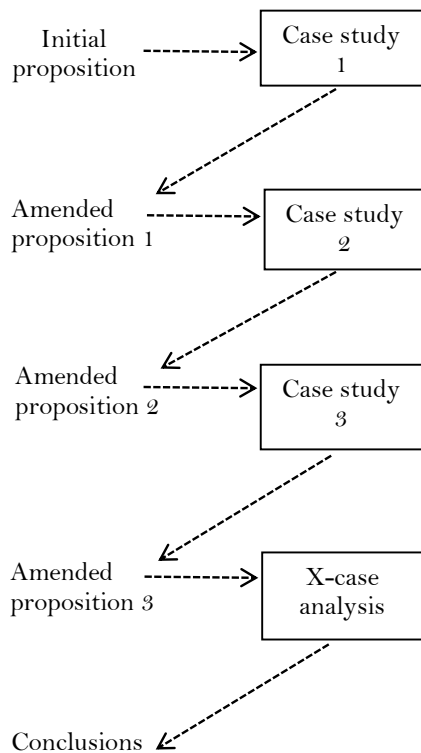
### *Type of case study*

A further question regarded how the case studies were to be used. Exponents of the case study design have outlined a range of possible types of case study (Yin, 2014, Thomas, 2016) each suited to different research objectives. It was clear in the first instance that *multiple* cases would be needed if an adaptive theory approach were to be used, so that the initial proposition could be developed and exposed to different types of local assessment. Since the cases were to be used to provide an insight into how local assessments constitute the organised crime “problem”, rather than being of substantive interest in and of themselves, the cases were best described as being *instrumental* (Thomas, 2016) with both *descriptive* and *explanatory* elements (Yin, 2014).

### *Case selection*

There was the further question of which types of local assessment to select as case studies. It has been argued by Yin and others that the cases for a multiple case study research must be selected either through a form of “literal” or “theoretical replication” (Yin, 2014, pg 57). However, there was discord between this and the adaptive theory approach. Yin’s case selection logic veers close to a “light” form of hypothetico-deductivism that seems more intent on prediction and testing, than on the iterative and adaptive development of theory. That is to say, it is too rigid to fit comfortably with an adaptive theory approach. Furthermore, it became clear during preliminary research that only a small number of different types of local organised crime assessment were in use in the UK (see Appendix A), limiting the extent to which cases could be selected in the sort of predictive way advocated by Yin. As a consequence, cases were selected in a more exploratory, step-by-step way – not to “test” or “prove” a theory, but to aid the development of a theoretical proposition. This approach is depicted in Figure 1, below.

Figure 1. The study's framework for using theory and data



Such an approach fit more comfortably with the core principles of Layder's adaptive theory approach (1998). This does not mean that cases were chosen arbitrarily. The following criteria had to be met for an assessment to be considered for selection in the study:

- the assessment had to focus predominantly or wholly on organised crime (including derivations of this such as *serious* organised crime)
- the assessment had to be oriented (implicitly or explicitly) toward the local level
- the assessment had to be in use in the UK

Selecting local assessments for inclusion in the study required an existing knowledge base from which they could be identified. It therefore became necessary to conduct a preliminary review of local assessments and to produce a sampling matrix (after Richie and Lewis, 2003) to guide case selection. The review was based on a systematic analysis of publicly-available documents, in particular the "PEEL" reports produced by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) during their annual police inspections, but also included documents produced by non-police

agencies such as customs and border control, local government, NGOs, regulatory bodies, think-tanks, institutes and multi-agency partnerships.

The outcome of this review was a classificatory table of the different local organised crime assessments in use throughout the UK with a breakdown of which agency or organisation was using that form of assessment and a brief summary of what it entailed. This can be seen in Appendix A. Actual decisions over the sampling of cases were made as the study progressed, based on prior findings and the initial proposition. Each of these decisions are explained in-depth in subsequent chapters.

### **3.6. Data collection**

Having elected to focus on case studies of particular types of local assessment, there was a need to consider what actual data could and should be collected about these assessments. The study's main interest was the assessments themselves – as official documents and data-sets – and the implicit ways of thinking embedded within them. As such, the emphasis had to be on directly accessing local assessments, rather than asking others what they thought about them, or observing how they were put together. Several studies in this field have successfully relied on documents for their research - most notably Chainey and Chapman's analysis of local *Strategic Intelligence Assessments* (2013) and Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie (2010). This sort of direct access would be important if Bacchi's "*what's the problem represented to be?*" approach were to be used successfully (2009, pg 34).

Implicit in this was a need to collect and handle documentary data and possibly also to work with the sort of quantitative data sets produced by certain types of assessment. Use of such data raises important issues. Local assessments could not be treated as some kind of direct window into what local police actually think or do in relation to local organised crime; that was not the aim of the research. Rather, local assessments were considered to embody their own "documentary reality" (Atkinson and Coffey, 2011, pg 66) separate from what may actually happen "on the ground". They represent an official, rubber-stamped version of social reality fixed in textual or numerical form; they embody an attempt to frame crime problems in a specific way and to promote certain strategies of governance. It was important for the study to bear this distinction in mind; for it to avoid any kind of "slippage" between the two.

The aim then was to access actual local assessments of organised crime. Yet such documents and data-sets do not exist in isolation (Atkinson and Coffey, 2011, pg 66). Local assessments can relate to a range of other documents, such as local or national policy papers, assessment handbooks or guides, reports, and so on. The study aimed to collect a broad range of such documents in order to better appreciate the local assessments themselves and their “intertextual” context (*ibid*).

The study faced significant challenges in accessing local assessments. As might be expected, they sometimes contain sensitive information. A number of different approaches were used to access local assessments, and these are detailed in each of the case studies. In more general terms, Scott has identified key issues of “authenticity”, “credibility” and “representativeness” (Scott, 1990, pg 19-27) when working with documents. There were also questions over how to sample local assessments and how many should be collected. Each of these issues are addressed in detail within each of the case studies themselves.

Serious consideration was given to the use of interviews as a complimentary form of data collection. However, this was not pursued for a number of reasons. First, given the study’s emphasis on local assessments as an object of study in their own right and as official accounts of social reality, there was a limit to what interviews could provide. They could perhaps have supplied additional detail on the methodology or use of particular types of assessment, but the aim was not to produce a sociological analysis of how assessments are constructed and used. Rather, the objective was to uncover the problem representations implicit in local assessments themselves.

Second, the study was not interested in finding out what police officers and analysts thought about these assessments in terms of their usefulness. This was not a narrow evaluation exercise. Within the research literature, those studies which did use interviews mostly asked analysts which assessments worked best for them and why. In distancing itself from this kind of research orientation, the study did not seek to ask such questions nor use police opinion as a data source.

Thirdly, and linked to the previous point, were the power dynamics involved in gaining access to police analysts as interviewees. Organised crime has become noticeably “securitised” in recent years with a subsequent increase in security restrictions and secrecy. Gaining access to a sufficient sample of police analysts working on organised crime is, therefore, not a simple matter. Neither is persuading



them to speak about their work. Gaining this level of access would have meant making formal applications to many separate police forces. An important requirement of such applications is that the applicant demonstrate how the proposed research will directly benefit the police force in question. Gaining access through such means would, almost inevitably, have meant changing the scope and focus of the study as a whole to make it more “useful” to the police. Probably, this would have entailed a shift towards researching how police local assessments can be made more accurate or efficient; it would, in other words, have led to a loss of independence and to a research project which abandoned its own arguments about the need to critically examine the problem representations and governmentalities implicit in local assessments. This issue is discussed further in section 4.3.

Weighing up these options – with the time, cost and loss of independence involved in gaining access to analysts across multiple police forces compared with the limited details they could provide about assessment methodology and use, it was judged as not worthwhile.

Following Yin’s guidance (2014), all data was stored in an electronic filing system, ordered by case study and by document type. Details of each document or data-set collected were recorded in a directory. This took the form of a spreadsheet which included information about when the document was obtained, where it was stored and whether it had been analysed. A simplified version of the three case study databases can be seen in Appendix B.

### **3.7. Reverse engineering: a strategy for data analysis**

In accordance with the research questions, the aim of this study was to identify the deep-seated “problem representations” and governmentalities implicit within local assessments. This called for a general analytical strategy best described as “reverse engineering”. Broadly defined as “the process of extracting knowledge from a human-made artifact” (Samuelson and Scotchmer, 2001, pg 1577), it is commonly used in computer science to describe the deconstructive analysis of others’ software. For software experts, the aim is to increase one’s own knowledge of how things work behind the scenes and to use this knowledge to design better software. The term was particularly apt for this study given the stated intention to penetrate beneath the surface of local assessments and then use those insights to design a better model.

In the context of this study then, “reverse-engineering” meant examining local assessments with the aim of systematically working *backwards* (Bacchi, 2009) to uncover the hidden presumptions about local organised crime contained in those assessments. Bacchi’s “*what’s the problem represented to be?*” (*ibid*) approach toward policy analysis provided much of the inspiration for this.

### *Content analysis*

The actual process of reverse-engineering took the form of content analysis. Some consideration was given to a purely semiotic analysis – a technique which could have uncovered the symbolism and subtext of the assessments, but this would have deviated from a focus on their implicit problem representations. Of course, “content analysis” is now a diverse field incorporating a range of different techniques. A purely quantitative form of content analysis was considered as a means of reverse-engineering. This could have provided a useful numerical comparison of how local assessments represent the problem of local organised crime. It could, for instance, have allowed the number of references to “drug gangs” be compared with that of “under-regulated business” or “ethnic mafias”, for example. Yet, sole reliance on the counting of references would obviously have left out too much. There was a need to access what local assessments actually said in a more qualitative way. However, some of the more common forms of qualitative content analysis adopt what is essentially a “grounded theory” approach (after Glaser and Strauss, 1999) in which themes “emerge” from the data (Bryman, 2012). This is commonly known as “open-coding” (Layder 1998, pg 54). As mentioned earlier in this chapter though, this sort of approach places too much faith in the possibility that data (and researchers themselves) can be devoid of pre-existing theoretical perspectives (*ibid*, pg 54).

Instead, building on the points made in section 3 above, this study used what might be called an “adaptive theory” (after Layder 1998) approach to content analysis. This involved starting with some “orienting concepts” (*ibid*, pg 5) or preliminary categories taken from pre-existing theory which could help direct the analytical process (*ibid*, pg 54-55). Importantly though, these concepts and categories could then be modified, expanded, refined or broken-down in line with empirical findings (*ibid*). The advantage of such an approach was that a) it avoided the naïve-realism of “open-coding” - while still retaining analytical flexibility (Layder 1998, pg 55); b) that it made use of pre-existing theory (*ibid*) and c) that it

sat much more comfortably with the basic tenets of critical realist philosophy. In more specific terms, this meant deciding on some preliminary *coding categories*, but being prepared to adapt them as the study progressed. Somewhat confusingly, this bears a strong similarity to what Altheide has called “ethnographic” content analysis (1996). It was ultimately decided that the first coding exercise for each assessment would be quantitative – to provide a comparative, numerical overview – but that this would be followed by a more comprehensive and detailed qualitative analysis of what the assessments actually said.

Since this study sought to reverse-engineer local assessments, it was not enough to use content-analysis to simply “read-off” what local assessments said about organised crime and its governance. There was a need to go deeper; to examine the presumptions that sat behind the text or data itself. It would not be enough to show, for example, that a particular assessment referred extensively to organised crime as a kind of “ethnic mafia” – there would be a need to draw inferences from this, to extricate the assumptions and governmentalities bound up with this way of thinking – and also to consider its implications. This was achieved through *retroduction*; a form of logic used in critical realism to ask “what must be true for a particular thing to be possible?” (Easton, 2010, pg 123, Sayer, 1992). If, for example, content analysis had identified an “ethnic mafia” representation of organised crime in local assessments, analysis would then proceed by identifying which governmentality or way of thinking made this representation possible – in this case, for instance, an implicit “alien conspiracy” (Hobbs and Woodiwiss, 2009, pg 14) model of organised crime which, in turn, depended upon a “criminology of the other” (Garland, 1996, pg 446).

### *Coding categories*

To aid the coding process, the main research question – *how do local assessments represent the problem of local organised crime?* – was broken-down into three parts or sub-questions and these became preliminary coding categories. The first sub-question was “*what do these assessments actually consider organised crime to be?*”, or, put another way: “*what is their ontology of organised crime?*”. The second related to the way in which the assessment rendered “organised crime” into a specific kind of social problem; how it *problematized* organised crime. The third related to what the assessment implied about how this organised crime problem

should be governed or responded to. These sub-questions were translated into the following primary coding categories:

Coding category 1: the assessment’s ontology of organised crime.

Coding category 2: the assessment’s problematisation of organised crime

Coding category 3: the assessment’s implied mode of governance of the problem

Within each of these, a number of more precise coding categories were generated.

Coding category 1, for instance, was broken down into the following secondary categories.

Coding category 1: the assessment’s ontology of organised crime.

- a: Organised crime as “an organisation of criminals” (von Lampe, 2015)
- b: Organised crime as types of crime requiring a high degree of organisation
- c: Organised crime as a form of “extra-legal governance” (ibid, pg 186)

These three rival definitions of “organised crime” were outlined by von Lampe (2015). A summation of each is provided in table 2, below:

Table 2. Rival definitions of organised crime

<b>Concept of organised crime</b>	<b>Sub-types</b>
An organisation of criminals	Organised crime groups, criminal networks, criminal hierarchies, criminal enterprises, gangs, cartels
Crimes requiring a high degree of organisation	Drug trafficking, weapons trafficking, money laundering, waste trafficking
A form of “illegal governance” (von Lampe, 2015, pg 186)	Protection / extortion, take-over of legitimate businesses, monopolisation of illicit economies

*Source: Table created by the author based on von Lampe’s categorisation (2015, pg 31)*

Any text or data which referred to, or implied that, organised crime was essentially one of these three things would be coded to the appropriate sub-category. For example, material within a local assessment which sought to describe the threat of different “mafia” organisations, would be coded under “1a: An organisation of criminals” because it implied as much. Of course, these were only very rough categories and it was quite possible that new or more refined categories would need to be created as analysis progressed. These categories were simply a set of theoretical “orienting concepts” (Layder 1998, pg 5) – some broad categories which could be used as a starting point for coding local assessments.

Coding category 2 meanwhile, was broken-down into the following simple secondary categories:

Coding category 2: the assessment’s problematisation of organised crime

- a: Harm
- b: Risk
- c: Cost
- d: Threat
- e: Vulnerability

These sub-categories were deliberately kept simple since they served only as a starting point for content analysis. Coding category 3 was divided into the following secondary categories.

Coding category 3: the assessment’s implied mode of governance of the problem

- a: Prevention
- b: Criminal justice
- c: Securitisation
- d: Administrative

Again, these were only intended to represent some very broad strategies of governance. “Prevention” refers to attempts to prevent organised crime from happening in the first place, or to stop offenders from becoming involved in crime groups. “Criminal justice” refers to those responses based on the punishment of offenders after the law has been broken. “Securitisation” involves attempts to secure society, the economy or a local community against criminal infiltration and

exploitation. “Administrative” relates to regulatory measures used to impede organised crime, outside of traditional criminal justice institutions (von Lampe, 2015).

Once these coding exercises had been completed, the different elements were combined to provide an overall answer to the research question. This answer was to take the form, for example, of: *local assessment A represents the problem of local organised crime as that of ethnic mafias controlling certain neighbourhoods requiring a police crackdown.*

This coding strategy served as the basis for analysing local assessments in documentary form. In some instances though, local assessments take the form of quantitative data sets. Analysis of such data followed the basic principles of “reverse engineering”; questions were asked of the data itself – questions such as “*what is the data about?*”, “*what is the unit of analysis?*”, “*what categories, concepts and problems are implicit in the data itself?*”. As will be seen in subsequent chapters, this sort of data was used in a more exploratory way than the documentary evidence.

### **3.8. A case study protocol**

The above points about research design, data collection and analysis were condensed into a “case study protocol” (Yin, 2014, pg 84). The protocol is essentially a guide or blueprint for carrying out a case study (*ibid*). It summarises the research questions, data collection strategy, analytical procedure and structure of the case study, helping to promote regularity, comparability and reliability when using multiple case studies (*ibid*, pg 84). This study’s protocol is outlined in Figure 2, below:

Figure 2:

## CASE STUDY PROTOCOL (after Yin, 2014)

### Case study research questions:

- 1) What is the historical context of the assessment?
- 2) Who produces the assessment?
- 3) What is the assessment for?
- 4) What data does the assessment use?
- 5) What method does the assessment employ?
- 6) How does this type of local assessment represent the problem of local organised crime?
  - a) What is this assessment's ontology of local organised crime?
  - b) How does this assessment problematise local organised crime?
  - c) What is this assessment's implied mode of governance of the problem?
- 7) What governmentality of local organised crime is embodied by this assessment?

### Data collection procedure:

- 1) Identify what form this assessment takes e.g. is it documentary or quantitative? Is it long or short? In what format is it produced? How many are produced?
- 2) Identify who produces and holds these assessments
- 3) Establish how these assessments might be accessed
- 4) Decide on a sampling strategy
- 5) Collect assessments
- 6) Store assessments in case study database
- 7) Identify other key documents or data linked to the collected assessments (guides, handbooks, policies)
- 8) Collect and store these in case study database

### Data analysis procedure:

- 1) Review the collected data to establish its completeness, legibility and format
- 2) Upload documents and data into NVivo
- 3) Create preliminary "nodes" in NVivo based on the coding categories outlined in Section 6
- 4) Read through the documentary data, coding any relevant material to each of the three primary codes
- 5) Re-examine coded material and re-code it to secondary codes
- 6) Produce quantitative summary of coding results
- 7) Produce qualitative break-down of coding results
- 8) Adapt and refine coding categories as required
- 9) Review and re-code material using new categories as necessary
- 10) Use the coded data to identify the problem representations implicit within the assessment

### **3.9. Validity and reliability**

There were a number of threats to the validity and reliability of the research design outlined above. One initial concern was the extent to which findings could be generalised beyond individual case studies; in other words, were different types of local assessment commensurate with each other? Three key factors were deemed necessary for commensurability; 1) that the sampled assessments regarded themselves as “assessments” and not as policy or strategy documents or as purely administrative data-sets; 2) that they explicitly focused on “organised crime” – even if they had different interpretations of what “organised crime” actually was; and 3) that they focused on a relatively local area – again, accepting that “localness” might be conceptualised in different ways. As long as the selected case studies met these criteria, then they were regarded as being commensurate with one another.

A secondary concern related to the reliability and replicability of the results. Crucial to achieving this was a) being systematic when coding data, b) applying the coding schedule in a rigorous way and c) being explicit about each stage of analysis. However, there is inevitably a degree of mutability built-into the adaptive theory approach (Layder, 1998); there is an expectation that initial coding categories will change in line with findings and that preliminary theory may need to be modified. As such, different researchers may notice different things in the same data and may decide to venture in different directions. This need not be a flaw in the research though, so long as it is acknowledged and the researcher’s journey through theory and data is carefully charted for others to follow.

### **3.10. Ethical issues**

This research presented several ethical issues. These could be divided into concerns about potential harm and concerns about consent. In thinking about the former, there were a number of risks associated with accessing and using local assessments of organised crime. Such assessments can obviously contain sensitive information and deal with serious social problems like sexual exploitation, human trafficking, prostitution, drug abuse and so on. The inadvertent release of this information – especially if it contained the personal details of offenders and victims – could have caused harm in many ways. Most obviously and most importantly, it could have led to discrimination, harassment or violence against those named in the assessments.



Additionally though, it could have led to reputational damage for those individual police officers or analysts who produced or released the assessment, not to mention for the police force as a whole.

A number of measures were taken in response to this risk. Only assessments which had been “sanitised” by the police were included in the study. Such “sanitisation” included the removal of the names and personal details of suspects, offenders, victims and police officers. This was undertaken by the police themselves. Upon receipt, all local assessments and associated documents were reviewed to ensure they contained no identifiable personal information. Furthermore, local assessments were anonymised with all place names and police force names removed. Sensible data security precautions were followed to prevent sanitised local assessments from being inadvertently released; electronic versions of the assessments were stored on secure servers within Cardiff University.

Informed consent is also clearly an important element of ethical research. Some documents and data-sets relating to local assessments were already publicly available – thus avoiding most issues with consent – but, as will be explained in more depth in subsequent chapters, Freedom of Information (FOI) requests were used to access other sources of data. Public organisations (with a few exceptions) are legally *obliged* to respond to FOI requests, although they can refuse to release information on the grounds of cost or sensitivity. This means that there is, in some senses, an element of coercion in the use of FOI, which obviously contradicts the principle of informed consent. However, FOI requests are only ever directed at publicly-accountable organisations, not at individuals, and they cannot be used to access individual personal data. FOI legislation is, arguably, a key part of maintaining and promoting an open society. The decision to use FOI requests – which is outlined in much more detail in the relevant case study chapters – was linked to the notion of “outsider” research, discussed in section 3.2, above. The use of such data collection techniques was essential for shedding light onto areas of government activity which are very much closed-off from public scrutiny. This was one of the only ways in which local organised crime problems could be dragged from the shadows of securitised policing and into public light.

### 3.11. Conclusion

The various elements of this study’s research design and methodology are summarised in Table 3, below.

Table 3. The study’s theory, method and data

<b>Ontological and epistemological foundations</b>	Critical realism
<b>Theory / data relationship</b>	“Adaptive theory” (after Layder 1998)
<b>Research design</b>	Multiple case study
<b>Data collection</b>	Documents, quantitative data
<b>Data analysis</b>	Reverse-engineering through “adaptive” content analysis

By applying this research design, it was hoped that the study could be comparable to the work of Chainey and Chapman, Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie, Tusikov and others, yet could also go further. It was the ambition of this study to use the “reverse engineering” of local assessments as a way of denaturalising their implicit governmentalities and, through “contestation” (O'Malley et al., 1997), to develop a new assessment model. This ambition is realised in Chapter 10.

In more immediate terms, the study required some kind of theoretical starting-point if it were to follow the tenets of the adaptive theory approach (Layder 1998); it would need an initial proposition – even if loosely-held or unsubstantiated – from which to begin answering the research questions. In the following chapter, some early suspicions about local assessments are outlined and an exploratory case study is used to develop a firmer theoretical proposition.

## 4. Developing initial theory: an exploration of Organised Crime Group Mapping

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### 4.1. Introduction

In following an adaptive theory (Layder 1998) approach towards research, there was a need for the study to develop an initial proposition about how local assessments represented local organised crime. This proposition, even if loosely-defined, could then be used to direct data-collection while itself being modified, refined and developed in line with that data (*ibid*). Such a proposition would traverse the various case studies, hopefully leading to some broad, over-arching insights.

Early explorations of official government strategy, NCA assessments and policy documents gave rise to a particular suspicion about local assessments; a suspicion that they would not be very “local” at all. Organised crime was overwhelmingly presented as a *national* problem in official accounts; it was regarded as a nationwide issue requiring the mobilisation of the UK’s national security apparatus. The UK government’s organised crime strategy 2013, for instance, begins with the proclamation that “serious and organised crime is a threat to our national security” (Home Office, 2013a, pg 5) while the National Security Review of 2015 lists organised crime as a priority threat. (HM Government, 2015). If anything, the rhetoric grows even stronger in the government’s 2018 Serious Organised Crime Strategy with organised crime described as “...the most deadly national security threat faced by the UK” (HM Government, 2018, pg 3). NCA assessments follow the same line, categorising organised crime as a “national security threat” (2018, pg 8). These official representations of the organised crime problem begged the question; *what room is there for the “local” in this account? – and - if organised crime is a national problem, then how can it be represented in local assessments?*

Ethnographic work in British cities by Hobbs suggests that local context is important in shaping “organised crime” (1998, 2001); he shows how criminal structures can be fragmented by underlying demographic changes in some places, while surviving in others (*ibid*). Yet his work also emphasises the complex “ever mutating interlocking networks of locally-based serious criminality” (1998, pg 419)

that constitute the organised crime landscape in the UK. Given such findings, the question was; how would official police assessments handle such complexity? How would they grapple with the “localness” of organised crime?

The implication in official strategy and policy was that local assessments - if adhering to the official line - might be devoid of real local content; they might simply replicate the same national picture regardless of the characteristics of their local area. This seemed an interesting point-of-departure for the study; an idea which might lead in a theoretically-promising direction. As such, this suspicion became the following very straightforward and tentative proposition: *that local assessments would represent the local organised crime problem in a way that wasn't really local at all*. These early explorations also made it clear that one type of assessment in particular sat at the heart of these local / national issues – an assessment known as “Organised Crime Group Mapping” (OCGM).

#### **4.2. An exploratory case study**

Beyond merely “reading-around” the subject, the best way to further develop the proposition was to start looking at some actual local assessments – even if only in a fairly unstructured way at the outset. As suggested above, OCGM was heavily implicated in questions over the “localness” of organised crime; there seemed to be a lot “going on” with OCGM; it had several elements which seemed relevant to the initial proposition. For example, data from OCGM was used repeatedly in public NCA assessments and official strategies to present a nationwide picture of organised crime - yet, it was undeniably a local assessment, primarily used to assess organised crime within very localised areas. It also seemed a rigid type of assessment which limited local autonomy.

Given these interesting qualities and its widespread use across the UK, it was clear that OCGM would need to be included in the study; there would be a need to understand how OCGM represented the problem of local organised crime and explore the extent to which these representations were actually “local”. It was therefore decided that the best way of expanding the initial proposition was by undertaking an exploratory case study of OCGM.

While selecting a case in this way - because it appears to confirm an initial impression - is usually a recipe for self-confirmation bias, it was in fact the best way

of expanding the proposition. In other words, choosing a case which seemed highly relevant to the area of interest would probably lead to the generation of better ideas and more theoretical refinement. More critical case studies could (and would) be selected for analysis at a later point in the study.

There was another reason why OCGM was a good choice for an exploratory case study. Unlike many other types of assessment, OCGM is not *documentary* in form— it does not result in the production of a document which can be read and analysed. Instead, its output is largely quantitative. This meant there was less qualitative “substance” to the assessment; less possibility for unpicking the language used to describe local organised crime. OCGM would, therefore, have been less suitable for “fine-tuning” theoretical propositions about local assessments, but *was* appropriate for more exploratory research. Furthermore, many details of the assessment process were not available for external critique or analysis. Nevertheless, there was enough significant data for an exploratory study aimed simply at generating ideas.

The objectives of this exploratory case study were as follows:

- describe the historical development of the OCGM assessment and its main features
- understand how the OCGM assessment represents the problem of local organised crime
- explore the extent to which the OCGM assessment captures and represents the “localness” of organised crime in different areas
- develop the proposition into a more tangible theoretical idea

### **4.3. Data collection and analysis**

The data for this case study took a variety of different forms and was collected from a variety of sources. Each source of data used in this case study is discussed below.

#### *Quantitative data on OCGM*

OCGM does not result in the production of an assessment in documentary form; hence there were no written assessments available for traditional content analysis. Instead, OCGM produces quantitative data. As such, one of the most meaningful ways of exploring OCGM was to study its quantitative outputs and then attempt to

“reverse-engineer” such data to uncover the concepts, categories and mentalities implicit within it.

Data from OCGM is released by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) on an annual basis. Taking the form of large Excel spreadsheets, the data provides a breakdown of the number of organised crime groups mapped by individual police forces across the UK. This data is, in turn, broken-down by the type of crime those groups are believed to be involved in. Clearly, this data is not the whole story; it is not a comprehensive overview of all the data generated by OCGM. However, the available data provided a valuable insight into the conceptualisations built into the assessment process; it was, like all data, “theory-laden” (Bottoms, 2008, pg 100, Sayer, 1992, pg 51, Layder 1998), meaning that through “reverse-engineering”, it became possible to trace the implicit theories of those who produced and used the assessment. This was achieved by simply extracting the column and row headings from the data-sets and then analysing those headings as categories; as ways of ordering things; as ways of thinking about the organised crime problem.

#### *HMIC police inspection reports*

Beyond looking at OCGM data itself, there was a need to gain a broad understanding of its use as an assessment across the UK. Given the difficulties of gaining access to police organised crime units and the impracticality of interviewing officers from all UK forces, an innovative new data source was identified. Every year, police forces in England and Wales are inspected by HMIC (Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own, equivalent inspectorates) across a number of areas. In recent years this has come to include “serious and organised crime”. As part of these reviews, HMIC inspectors examine how effective and efficient local police forces are at using the OCGM assessment. Their findings, often including details of the assessment process itself, are then published in annual “PEEL” reports for each police force. Content analysis of these reports provided substantial insights into how OCGM works within each police force, what it is for, and how police forces actually use the assessment. Importantly, because these “PEEL” reports are generated from an inspection process, they do not “gloss-over” flawed or negative aspects of how the assessment is produced. A total of 129 HMIC inspection reports were collected for every police force in England and Wales for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 and analysed using Nvivo. Initially, any reference to OCGM was coded for future analysis.

### *Official reports, reviews, policy documents and strategic documents*

A number of other official documents were able to provide an insight to OCGM. A number of key repositories were searched for material relating to OCGM, including the College of Policing's Police Library, online publication repositories of the National Crime Agency, the Home Office, the National Police Chief's Council (formerly the Association of Chief Police Officers – ACPO), the Police Foundation, Police Scotland and HMIC. This produced an eclectic but useful range of documents which are listed in Appendix B. These included articles in police publications, reviews of strategic policing arrangements, project reports, organised crime strategy papers and evidence reports to the Parliamentary Home Affairs Committee, amongst others. This evidence was analysed using Nvivo, with relevant material coded to loose categories such as “historical background”, “use”, “method” and “unit of analysis”. Such a coding process was somewhat unsystematic, but the purpose of this analysis was to identify relevant material and then use it to generate new ideas. In other words, the aim in this case was not to draw highly reliable conclusions, but to prompt original theoretical insights which could be refined and tested later.

### *Freedom of Information requests*

Following analysis of the material described in the above sections, a number of key knowledge-gaps were identified – particularly in relation to how and why OCGM was introduced in the first place. In order to fill these gaps, targeted Freedom of Information (FOI) requests were made to the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) with the aim of securing the release of further information. The NPCC was the subject of these requests since it was deemed that they would be most likely to hold the relevant information. These requests were largely successful and resulted in the release of documentary records which provided more detailed insight into the origins of the OCGM assessment.

Each different item of data – whether it be a document, a spreadsheet, or information released through a FOI request – was given a unique reference number, stored electronically and then recorded in a case study database. A simplified version of this database can be seen in Appendix B. Using the protocol as a guide, the data was

systematically reviewed using NVivo. A set of simple, pre-defined categories were used to code relevant material. These codes can be seen in Table 4, below:

Table 4: Coding categories for the OCGM case study

<b>Coding category</b>	<b>Description</b>
USAGE	Material relating to the use of OCGM
DATA	Material relating to the data used in OCGM
METHOD	Material relating to the method used in OCGM
UNIT OF ANALYSIS	Material relating to the unit of analysis upon which OCGM is focused
CONCEPT OF OC	Material relating to OCGM's underlying conceptualisation of organised crime
PROBLEM OF OC	Material relating to OCGM's underlying problematisation of organised crime
MODE OF GOV	Material relating to the mode of governance implied by OCGM
HISTORY	Material relating to the "backstory" of OCGM; it's history and development

The material coded under these categories forms the basis of the following sections.

#### **4.4. Organised Crime Group Mapping: an overview**

*[Paragraph redacted]*

##### ***A brief history of OCGM***

The origins of OCGM can be traced to 2005 and the publication of a report called "Closing the Gap" by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Customs (HMIC) (O' Connor, 2005). The report reviewed policing arrangements in England and Wales, with a particular emphasis on the policing of organised crime at what is known as "level 2" (*ibid*). Since the introduction of the National Intelligence Model (NIM) in the early 2000s, law enforcement agencies in the UK have conceptualised crime as existing on three "levels". Level 1 refers to highly localised crime problems restricted to one



area within a police force; level 2 refers to crime which affects a whole police force area or multiple forces within a region, while level 3 crime is that which is national or international (NCIS, 2000, pg 8). One of the major arguments of the HMIC report was that so-called “level 2” policing capabilities were under-developed – especially when compared to local and national policing arrangements (O' Connor, 2005, pg 3-4). Combined with this, there was significant concern that organised crime was “widespread, vibrant and growing” (*ibid*, pg 4), yet remained poorly understood at “level 2” (*ibid*);

The limited understanding of the problem posed by Level 2 criminality has led to a situation whereby few devote a proportion of their resources to combating serious and organised crime that is commensurate with the scale of the challenge they are facing.  
(O' Connor, 2005, pg 25)

This criticism was taken on board by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) (since reformed into the “National Police Chief’s Council” (NPCC)) – a body with responsibility for co-ordinating local police forces and developing police practice across England and Wales (ACPO, 2007). In 2006, ACPO created the role of “national co-ordinator of serious and organised crime” (NPCC, 2016), and the new post-holder began developing ways to remedy the problems identified in “Closing the Gap” (*ibid*). One of the main proposals to emerge was for the development of an organised crime group mapping project (Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie, 2010, Gilmour, 2008).

The ACPO co-ordinator for organised crime oversaw the development of the OCGM assessment in the early part of 2007 (Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie, 2010, ACPO, 2007). By the summer of that year, the first crime group mapping “sweep” of England and Wales had been completed (HMIC, 2009), with most police forces providing data on what they knew about crime groups in their area (ACPO, 2007).

By 2008, Scottish authorities had decided that they needed their own equivalent assessment, which they duly developed and called Serious Organised Crime Group Mapping (SOCGM) (Fife Constabulary, 2009, Scottish Government, 2013). The first Scotland-wide mapping assessment took place in the summer of 2008 (Fife Constabulary, 2009) and was developed further by a special unit in the

now abolished, Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency (SCDEA) (Scottish Government, 2013).

*[Paragraph redacted]*

### ***Who uses OCGM?***

OCGM is used primarily by police forces in England and Wales (Creedon, 2014, pg 7). Police in Scotland have developed their own similar assessment known as “Serious Organised Crime Group Mapping” (SOCGM) (IDMG on human trafficking, 2012, pg 25, HMICS, 2015). Some other, non-police agencies do also use OCGM, including the National Crime Agency (NCA), Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and some border agencies (van Staden et al., 2011, HMIC, 2016a, pg 75). As mentioned above, there is now growing pressure from HMIC for Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU) to take ownership of OCGM on behalf of police forces (HMIC, 2015, pg 6).

***What data and method does it use?***

The core method of OCGM is described by HMIC in the following way:

When a police force identifies a group of individuals whom it suspects may be involved in organised crime, it goes through a nationally standardised mapping procedure. This involves entering details of the group's known and suspected activity, associates and capability into a computer system, which assigns a numerical score to each OCG

(HMIC, 2016b, pg 38 - also quoted in several other HMIC reports)

*[Paragraph redacted]*

(OCGM)... places each OCG into one of several bands which reflect the range and severity of crime in which a group is involved as well as its level of capability and sophistication.

(HMIC, 2016b, pg 38 - also quoted in several other HMIC reports)

*[Paragraph redacted]*

#### **4.5. Reverse-engineering: the representation of the problem of local organised crime within OCGM**

In moving beyond simple description, there was a need to get beneath the surface of OCGM; to understand the implicit ways of thinking embedded within the assessment itself. Specifically, the goal was to identify how OCGM represented the problem of local organised crime and to explore the extent to which this representation was “local”. This kind of analysis depended on “reverse-engineering” the quantitative data produced by OCGM; a process of asking - not what the data might tell us about organised crime itself - but what it might tell us about the underlying “governmentality” of the assessment; asking, in other words, what does this quantitative data *presuppose* about local organised crime? - an analytical perspective which takes advantage of the inescapably “theory-laden” nature of data (Bottoms, 2008, pg 100, Sayer, 1992, Layder 1998) by asking; *what “theory” is this data laden with exactly?*

##### ***OCGM’s implicit ontology of organised crime***

The first step to answering this question was to explore what OCGM actually considered “organised crime” to be. Of course, organised crime has been conceptualised in a number of different ways. As was explained in Chapter 3, a useful starting point for thinking about these rival conceptualisations are the three “basic dimensions of organised crime” identified by von Lampe (2015, pg 31).

As can be seen in Table 2 in section 3.7, organised crime can be broadly conceptualised in terms of organised offenders, organised activities or forms of illegal governance (von Lampe, 2015, pg 31-32). Within each, of course, are more specific sub-types. These concepts were used as a starting point for the analysis of OCGM’s own implicit conceptualisation of organised crime; they formed a set of basic “orienting concepts” (Layder 1998, pg 5) which could be modified in line with findings.

Analysis began with the quantitative OCGM data released by HMIC as part of their annual inspection programme. Produced in Excel spreadsheets, the data is a national-level aggregation of OCGM for the years 2015, 2016 and 2017. Raw data from the different Excel worksheets was formatted and then combined into a single spreadsheet so that it could be viewed more clearly. Since this was an exploratory

case study oriented toward the creative generation of new theoretical ideas, a significant amount of time was spent “exploring” the data, orienting it one way and another, producing different tables and charts to highlight different aspects.

Initially, the most useful way of representing the data was to compile a composite table. Table 5, overleaf, summarises the OCGM data for 2015. While displaying such data in a large table makes it difficult to identify patterns and trends in the traditional sense, it was a useful starting point for “reverse engineering”. By paying close attention to the categories and concepts implicit in table 5’s data, it became possible to isolate some underlying presumptions.

The most obvious implicit assumption in the data is that “OCGs” exist as discrete, identifiable units and that they can be counted as such. The data within the table are frequency-counts of “OCGs” – not of individual offenders, criminal networks or recorded offences – but separate groups of offenders. It is taken for granted in this data that “OCGs” can be used as a variable; they are the counting-unit - the means by which organised crime levels can be measured. Put simply, the number of crime groups “mapped” by a local police force was clearly meant to say something about organised crime in that locality.

The question though, was what made these groups definable as “OCGs”? What was it about them that made them into “organised crime”? Returning to table 5, it can be seen how the OCGs are categorised by their involvement in particular *types of crime* – as represented by the top row of the table. There are, of course, several other ways these OCGs *could* have been classified. For example, they could have been ordered by their organisational characteristics (network, hierarchy, prison gang, family, etc.), by ethnicity, by nationality or by their size. Yet it is “crime type” which is used to categorise OCGs. The categories present in table 5, include:

- Drugs
  - Human trafficking / immigration crime
  - Organised theft
  - Counterfeiting
  - Economic crime
  - Environmental
  - Sexual offences
  - Cyber
  - Violent crime
- (HMIC, 2016c)



Table 5. OCGM data for England and Wales as of mid-2015 (HMIC, 2016c)

TABLE REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

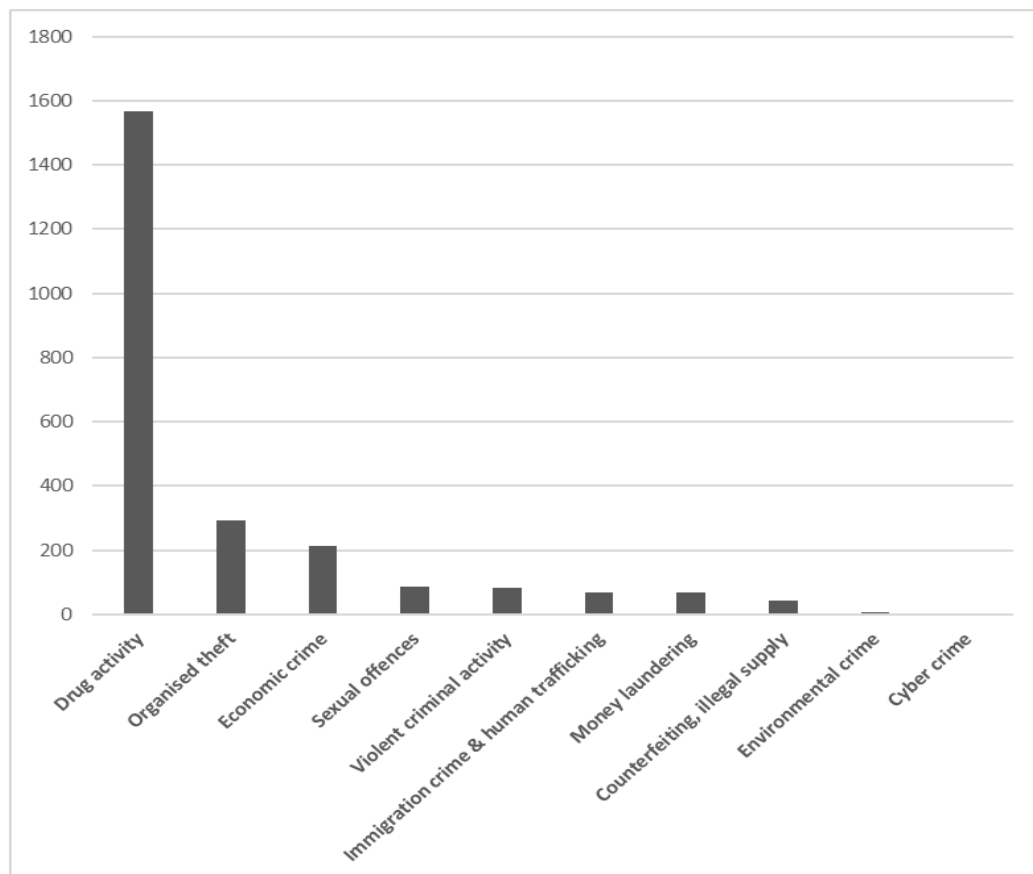




For a group to become an OCG, it had to fit into one of these categories. OCGM therefore has a built-in conceptualisation of what kinds of illegal activity a group has to be involved in for it to be regarded as “organised crime”.

Further exploratory analysis suggested that crime groups involved in certain kinds of criminal activity were being mapped much more frequently than others. See Figure 3, below. As the graph shows, there is an overwhelming focus on crime groups involved in drugs, with a corresponding lack of emphasis on groups engaged in areas such as environmental or cybercrimes.

Figure 3: OCGs mapped in England and Wales by crime type as of June 2015 (excludes the Metropolitan Police)



Source: Graph compiled by the author from the HMIC Police Effectiveness dataset 2015 (HMIC, 2016c), Crown Copyright. Published under the Open Government License.

While this data is limited to 2015 only, it does suggest that the “organised crime” represented by OCGM data is somewhat synonymous with “drug crime”; that OCGs involved in drug dealing constitute a population of the “usual suspects”.

Reverse-engineering of the 2016 OCGM data set revealed much the same information, yet there was an interesting addition to the 2017 data. Table 6, below, is

a summary of the OCGM data from England and Wales 2017 and was extracted from the larger data-set.

Table 6. A summary of OCGM data for 2017

	England and Wales
Identified Urban Street Gangs	538
Mapped Organised Crime Groups per 1,000,000 population	47
Mapped Organised Crime Groups	2,738
Mid-2016 Population data from ONS	58,381,217

Source: Table compiled by the author from the *HMIC Police Effectiveness dataset 2017 (HMIC, 2018)*, Crown Copyright. Published under the Open Government License.

Of interest here was the addition of a new category – “urban street gangs”. Within the larger 2017 data-set, each police force provided a frequency-count of these street gangs in addition to “OCGs”. This implied that the two were distinct from each other; they represented two different kinds of social group, although the data-sets were silent on exactly how or why they differed.

The primacy afforded to “OCGs” and urban street gangs in these data-sets implied an underlying conceptualisation of organised crime as “an organisation of criminals” (von Lampe, 2015, pg 31). Within this broad conceptualisation, it is self-evidently the notion of the “group” which comes to the fore; it is the “group” that is deemed to be the fundamental organisational structure of organised crime – not the “network”, “gang”, “cartel” or “family”. Of course, the concept of a “group” contains a great deal of flexibility in terms of size and internal structure, but it is suggestive of a collective which is fairly stable, and which may distinguish between members and non-members in some way.

However, the data could say little about what OCGs - and their individual constituent members - were presumed to be *like*, in terms of their motivations, characteristics, qualities, values and so on. Attention shifted therefore to what was actually said about OCGs and offenders in the HMIC inspection reports and other collected documents in relation to OCGM. It was found that, in order to be labelled as an OCG within the assessment, the group in question had to adhere to a standard police definition in terms of:

...individuals, normally working with others, with the intent and capability to commit serious crime on a continuing basis, which includes elements of: planning / control / co-ordination / structure / group decision-making.

(HMIC, 2016a, pg 75)

Beyond this though, the OCGM data makes few assumptions about the characteristics of individual offenders. No real judgements are made regarding their morality, their rationality, or the causes of their offending. It is enough for OCGM that they exist in the form of groups, can be counted as such and placed in rank order. For the OCGM data then, “organised crime” is essentially a collective noun for OCGs; an actor-centric conceptualisation of organised crime. OCGM’s ontology of organised crime is thus stripped of context, culture and causation; OCGs simply “are”; they exist, but remain simple, quantitative entities drained of local colour.

### ***OCGM’s articulation of the organised crime problem***

Given the above points, it was important to establish what the OCGM data said about the sort of problem these OCGs posed. Yet this question proved difficult to answer. [Line redacted] The quantitative data-sets produced from OCGM provided little insight into these kinds of question. The data limited itself to counting the number of crime groups within each local area, or per million of the population, and within each domain of criminal activity. At no point was there an attempt to register or measure the *actual problem* these OCGs were believed to represent. The data’s silence on this issue suggested that the mere *existence* of these OCGs was a problem in their own right, regardless of what crimes they might actually commit.

This notion was explored further by reviewing the documentary material collected for the case study. [Line redacted] This implied an emphasis on the latent potential of OCGs, and not just on the crimes they actually commit; it supported the idea that the organised crime “problem” is considered to reside in the very *existence* of an OCG – not necessarily just in the things an OCG might do, like corrupt officials or supply drugs. In other words, an OCG is taken to be a self-evident problem in its own right.

[Redacted]

The actual concrete impact of OCGs is not fully traced within the OCGM data. Table 5, above, shows how OCGs are registered at the level of a local police territory, but that territory is a “black-box”; the means by which an OCG affects that locality is not included in the assessment process.

### *OCGM's implied mode of governance for organised crime*

Beyond simply describing or explaining organised crime in some way, local assessments also embody certain strategies for responding to the problem. Beginning with the quantitative OCGM data, it was clear that the main *object* of governance was the “OCG”; it was OCGs – not illegal markets, individual offenders, at-risk communities or specific economic sectors - that required governance. Also implicit within this data is the notion that OCGs are “owned” by specific police forces. As table 5, above, shows, OCGs are categorised by the force which has responsibility for dealing with them. This suggested that OCGM was underpinned by a police-dominated mode of governance.

This was supported by the documentary evidence. The below excerpt from a Merseyside Police strategy document explains how they use OCGM:

The OCGM process drives tactical activity... to identify current and emerging OCGs that require tactical intervention and appropriate allocation... for covert and overt investigations. These investigations effectively remove those OCGs that cause the most harm to our local

communities, thereby reducing the levels of criminality and violence and providing a safer place to live and work.

(Merseyside Police, 2012, pg 10)

It is taken-for-granted in this that local organised crime is *the domain of the police*; an object of governance which the police alone have (and should have) responsibility for. In other words, it is the police who should do the governing – not local councils, regulatory bodies, NGOs or anybody else. It is an assessment firmly embedded within law enforcement; within its system of territorial-hierarchical organisation, running from local Basic Command Units (BCUs), to police forces, to Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU) and up to the National Crime Agency (NCA). This implies that – as far as OCGM is concerned - the governance of crime groups is the domain of law enforcement alone.

Initially, it was thought that this implied an underlying “criminal justice” mode of governing, based on traditional law enforcement processes of identification, apprehension and conviction. This, however, was found to be an over-simplification. Within the data, there is more of an emphasis on the “management” of, or “intervention” against OCGs, than on the conviction of individual group members. For instance, one police force has described how OCGM is used to “identify current and emerging OCGs that require tactical intervention and appropriate allocation...” (Merseyside Police, 2012, pg 11). Similarly, Police Scotland use crime group mapping to “...provide a basis for early collective agreement on the best interventions” (Serious Organised Crime Taskforce, 2009, pg 12). Within senior police management, the ambition for OCGM was that it would help to “ensure every single group is subject to some form of activity...” (Creedon, 2014, pg 8). The onus then, is not necessarily on obtaining convictions or on deterrence, but on ensuring that OCGs are being appropriately *managed* – that somebody within the police is intervening; that somebody has “ownership” of that particular group. [Line redacted] It would, however, be a mistake to label this mode of governance simply as a “criminal justice” response. Instead, it is more accurately described as the removal of organised crime groups through effective police management and operational activity.

### *The “localness” of the organised crime problem*

One of the main theoretical concerns of this case study was to explore how OCGM conceptualised the “localness” of organised crime. There was a lingering suspicion that, despite being used by local police forces to map local crime groups, OCGM was not actually very “local” at all; that it did not really make a serious attempt to understand organised crime as it is manifested locally.

Within the quantitative OCGM data, the “local” was implicitly defined in terms of *police force territories*. This can be seen in table 5 where OCGs are categorised based on which police force they “belong” to. Given this use of administrative boundaries to delineate the “local”, the question became; *to what extent does OCGM capture variation between these different local areas?* – and - *is the organised crime problem the same in every locality or does it vary?*

To explore these questions, the quantitative OCGM data seen in table 5 was analysed in more depth. A histogram was used to chart variations between different localities across England and Wales. The results can be seen in Figure 4, below. Clearly, there was a substantial amount of variation between local police areas in terms of *how many* OCGs they identified. Of course, this does not take population differences into account. As might be expected, areas with a large population - such as Greater Manchester – tend to have more OCGs than sparsely-populated areas like Dyfed Powys and Wiltshire. There are anomalies though. In the below histogram, rural Cumbria has more OCGs than Avon and Somerset (which includes the large city of Bristol) - and the West Midlands.

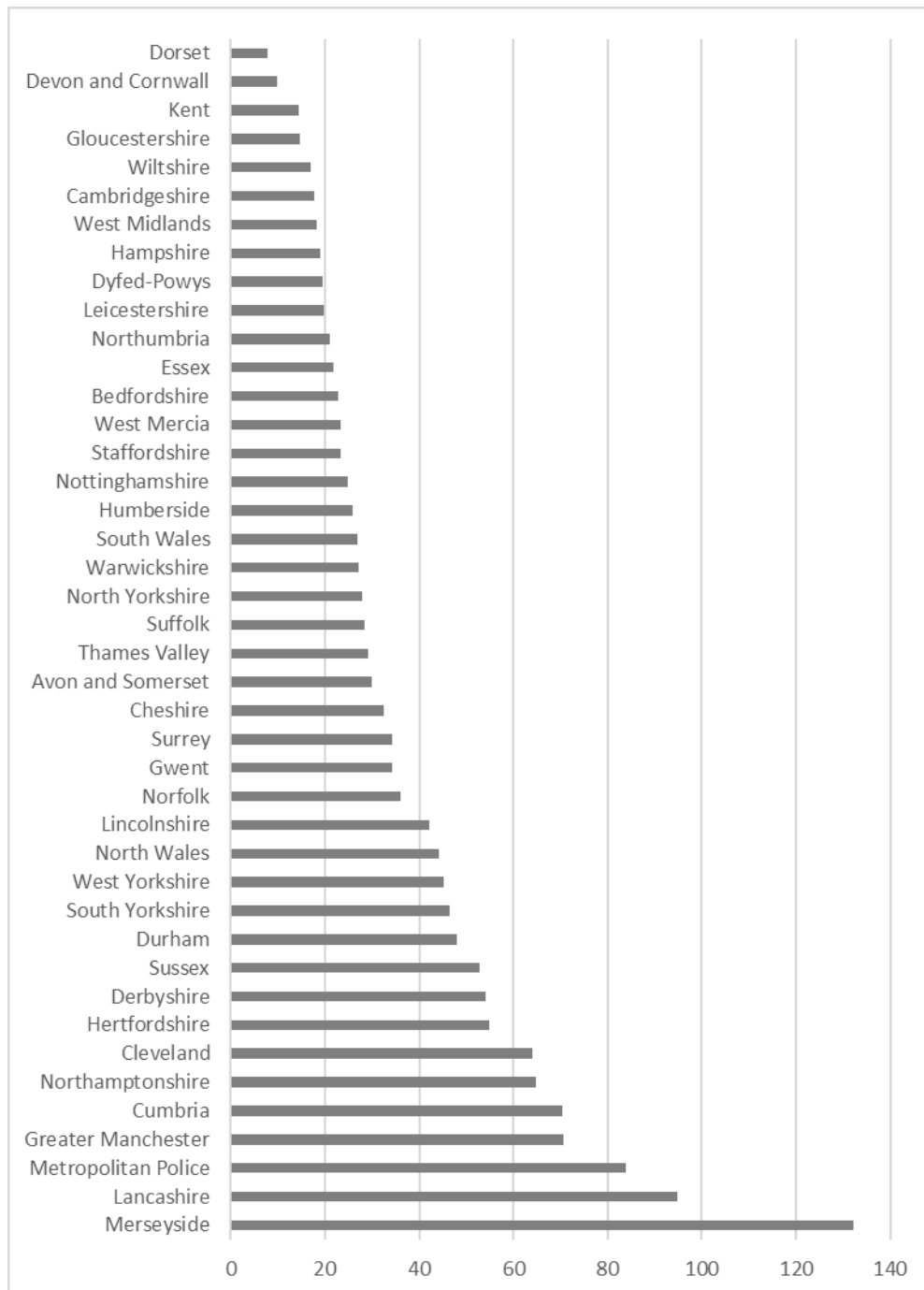
Figure 4: The number of OCGs mapped by each police force as of June 2015 (for clarity, this excludes Metropolitan Police [redacted])



Source: Graph compiled by the author from the HMIC Police Effectiveness dataset 2015 (HMIC, 2016c), Crown Copyright. Published under the Open Government License.

The 2016 OCGM data-set included demographic statistics for each police force territory (something not included in the 2015 data) and this allowed the above trends to be explored in more detail. The below histogram depicts the number of OCGs in each locality per million inhabitants.

Figure 5: The number of OCGs mapped per million inhabitants in England and Wales 2016 (excludes City of London police)



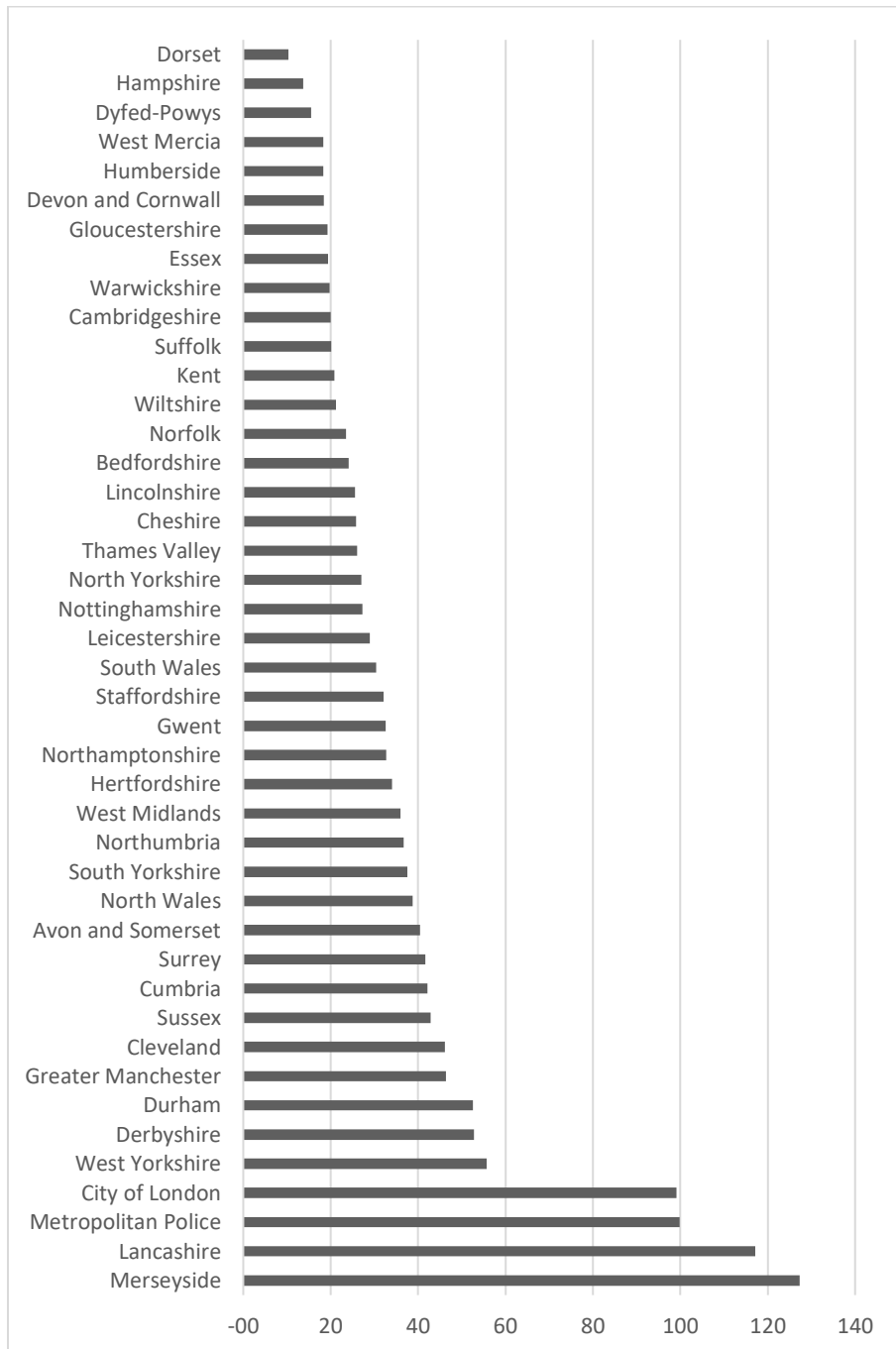
Source: Graph compiled by the author from the HMIC Police Effectiveness dataset 2016 (HMIC, 2017c), Crown Copyright. Published under the Open Government licence.

This effectively shows the number of OCGs *per capita* across England and Wales. Clearly, there is variation between local areas, with rural Dyfed-Powys containing more mapped OCGs per capita than the West Midlands, and Lincolnshire containing



more than Nottinghamshire. The same analysis was repeated for 2017. See figure 6, below.

Figure 6. The number of OCGs mapped per million inhabitants in England and Wales 2017



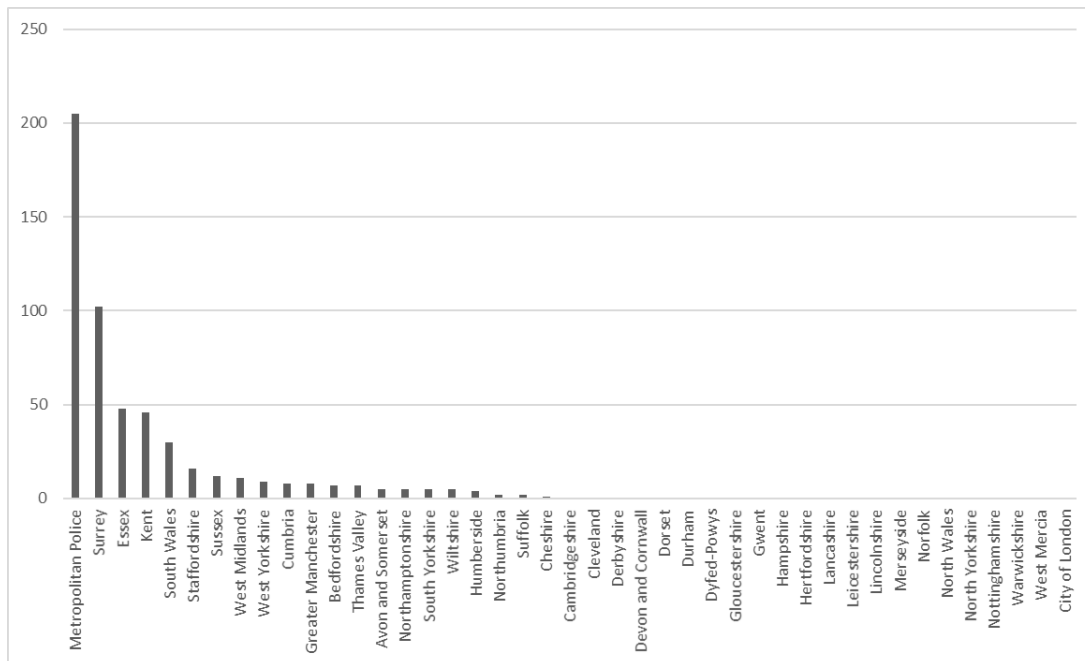
Source: Graph compiled by the author from the HMIC Police Effectiveness dataset 2017 (HMIC, 2018), Crown Copyright. Published under the Open Government licence.

This data showed some changes to the previous year, with West Midlands mapping significantly more OCGs per capita than before, and other forces dropping down the

list. A number of factors could explain this inter-force variation; perhaps it is easier to gather intelligence on organised crime in a sparsely populated area with greater community solidarity than in an anomic urban setting. The most likely explanation, however, is that different police forces put different amounts of effort into mapping OCGs.

In exploring these histograms though, the more significant point is that local areas do vary significantly in the number of OCGs they map, even when population is taken into account. This was also found to be true for urban street gangs, although there were a large number of police forces which did not map any gangs at all. See figure 7, below.

Figure 7. The number of urban street gangs mapped across England and Wales



Source: Chart compiled by the author using the HMIC Police Effectiveness dataset 2017 (HMIC, 2018), Crown Copyright. Published under the Open Government License.

As might be expected, the Metropolitan Police mapped the most street gangs, followed by those forces which border the London metropolis, such as Surrey, Essex and Kent. Surprisingly though, South Wales, Staffordshire and Sussex all mapped more street gangs than the West Midlands, Avon and Somerset and Greater Manchester.

These preliminary analyses showed there was some variation between local areas. Most obviously, this took the form of variation in the *number* of OCGs

mapped to each locality. However, since the data also provided a break-down of OCGs by their crime-type, it was also possible that local areas varied in the *types* of OCG they mapped. For example, it might have been possible that rural forces mapped OCGs involved in “niche” forms of organised crime found only in rural settings, while urban forces mapped large numbers of OCGs involved in night-time drug economies. Such a pattern would have suggested that OCGM *does* capture local variation, thereby contradicting the initial proposition.

In order to explore this possibility, greater resolution was needed. A sample of 8 local areas was selected from the broader data-set and compared against each other in more detail. These localities were sampled purposively in order to produce a sample with as much diversity as possible. “Diversity” here was conceptualised in terms of the type of locality covered by a particular force; especially in relation to rural / urban, densely populated / sparsely populated, core / periphery divides. While there are a number of other more sophisticated ways of differentiating local areas – especially given the questionable binary between “rural” places and “urban” places – this was deemed sufficient for what was essentially an exploratory analytical exercise.

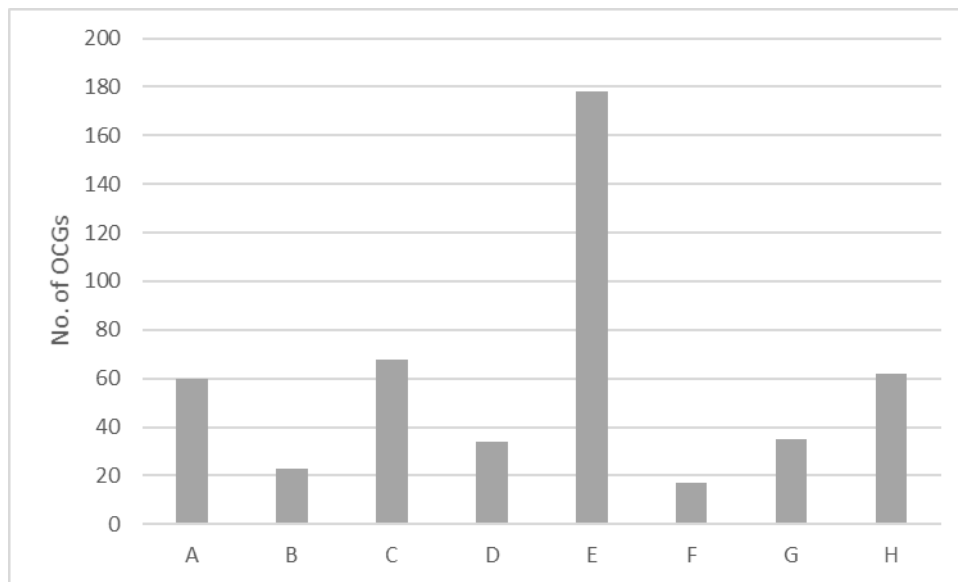
The forces selected for the sample were anonymised, but a summary of their basic features is provided in table 7, below:

Table 7. Characteristics of the sampled police force areas.

Police force	Description of locality
A	Medium-sized city
B	Large rural area with long coastline
C	Large urban conurbation
D	Rural area
E	Large urban conurbation
F	Rural area with a long coastline
G	Multiple small-medium sized cities and several industrial towns
H	Small cities and towns interspersed with rural areas

The number of OCGs mapped by each of these forces in 2015 was extracted from the quantitative data-sets and analysed in Excel. Figure 8, below, shows how many OCGs were mapped within each location.

Figure 8. The number of OCGs mapped to each sampled police territory

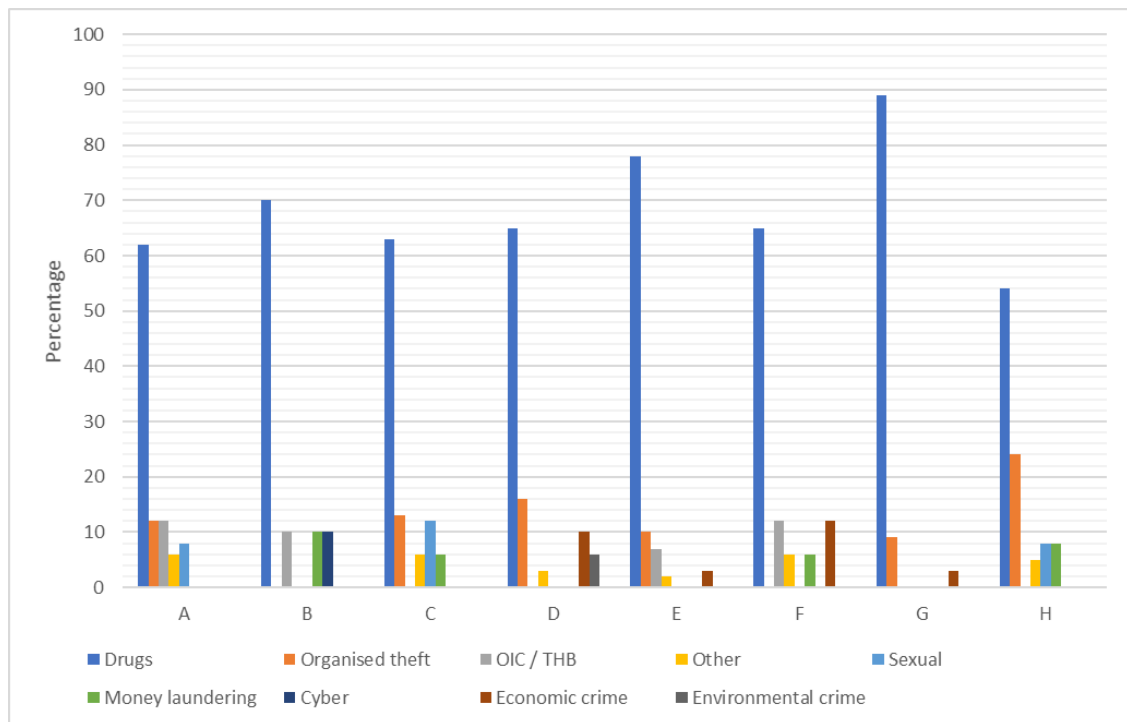


*Source: Graph compiled by the author from the HMIC Police Effectiveness dataset 2015 (HMIC, 2016c), Crown Copyright. Published under the Open Government License.*

As the chart shows, there is a significant amount of variation between local areas in terms of the number of OCGs mapped within them. Generally speaking, the more populated urban areas – such as police force “E” - contained more OCGs than the rural areas, such as police forces “B”, “D” and “F”; a pattern which would, of course, be expected. In this way then, OCGM could be seen to represent the “localness” of organised crime in terms of how much of “it” is present in a local area, as measured by counting local crime groups. From this perspective though, the “local” essentially became little more a counting-category; a blank frame within which OCGs could be “tallied-up”.

To explore variation in the *types* of OCG mapped across these areas, the quantitative OCGM data was pivoted in an Excel spreadsheet to provide a breakdown of the OCGs mapped to each crime type. The results can be seen in figure 9, below.

Figure 9. Number of OCGs mapped for each sampled area, broken-down by primary crime type



Source: Produced by the author using data extracted from HMIC PEEL inspection reports for 2015. Crown Copyright, published under the Open Government license.

This chart showed that across all of the sampled forces (A to H) the overwhelming majority of OCGs were categorised as being involved in drugs. In other words, no matter how different one local area was from another, the local organised crime problem was always largely synonymous with drug crime. A small degree of variation was found in the extent to which OCGs engaged in other types of crime were mapped, with some forces mapping a significant number of OCGs involved in “organised theft”, while others mapped none. Significantly though, these differences did not correlate with changes in the type of locality represented by the force in question, they were instead random.

This suggested that local organised crime was broadly represented to be the same kind of “thing” regardless of a local area’s specific characteristics; and this “thing” was reducible to OCGs involved in drug supply. There were a number of possible explanations for this emphasis; including perhaps a traditional police fixation on drug suppliers as “usual suspects”, a high amount of media or local political pressure to deal with anti-social drug-use problems, and so on. However, explaining this pattern was not an important aspect of the study; it was enough to

observe that such a pattern existed. The point to be taken from this analysis was that different local areas did not display much variation in their representation of the “localness” of their organised crime problem.

Beyond looking for “localness” in the quantitative data-sets though, it was clear from the OCGM data that the assessment made no real attempt to understand local areas. There was no attempt to explore how a local area might provide the conditions for the emergence of OCGs involved in some types of crime, but not others; of how factors like housing, drug demand, cultural values, patterns of deprivation or the routine activities of the local economy might help to generate OCGs and shape their activities. Instead, the “local” was simply defined as a police force territory; a contentless background which served only as a useful category for counting crime groups.

This observation led to a broader point. The OCGM assessment was not a stand-alone local assessment. OCGM feeds “local” data into the NCA where it is collated and used to produce national-level statistics on organised crime (HMIC, 2015, pg 38).

*[Lines redacted]*

Organised crime was not something actually grounded in, or bounded by, a particular locality – it was the same thing across all places; a phenomenon that traverses the local and exists nationally.

#### **4.6. Discussion**

Drawing together the threads of the above analyses, it became possible to isolate OCGM’s implicit representation of the local organised crime problem. The assessment rests upon an ontological conceptualisation of local organised crime as locally-existing “OCGs”. It renders the vague notion of “organised crime” into a concrete local form by conceptually-isolating a number of linked offenders and labelling them as “OCGs”. Local organised crime is then defined as the sum-total of OCGs found within a police force territory.

Analysis of OCGM's quantitative data-sets has shown that the vast majority of these OCGs (for the years 2015 to 2016, at least) were involved in drug dealing; implying that local organised crime is somewhat synonymous with local drug gangs; a trend found across all local areas. It has also been seen how the OCGM assessment presumes that the very existence of these OCGs is self-evidently a problem in its own right, but also uses the notion of "harm" to articulate a causal relationship in which OCGs have the potential to inflict harm on a local area.

Built-in to OCGM is an implied strategy of governing this problem through police operational activity, with police forces taking ownership of specific crime groups and then seeking to "manage" them - the ultimate goal being their removal from the locality in question. For the assessment though, "localness" really has little meaning. Local organised crime is simply that which can be categorised as existing within a specific police territory; a place which has no colour, no context, no economy and no history; a place which is merely a subdivision of the national. Reduced to a single statement, this representation of the problem can be summarised as: *organised crime groups, primarily involved in drug supply, causing harm within a local police force territory and requiring ongoing police management through operational activity.*

### ***Underlying governmentalities***

It was difficult to access the deeper assumptions that underpinned this representation of the problem. This was primarily a consequence of the OCGM data not existing in documentary form, making it difficult to analyse the kinds of language used when discussing local organised crime. Furthermore, OCGM data made few assumptions about what offenders are like, or about what drives them; it provided no consideration of how particular localities might generate or shape organised crime. The data is unconcerned with such issues. It is enough that organised crime exists in the form of crime groups that can be counted, scored and then prioritised for police intervention.

Nevertheless, a few points could still be made. Firstly, in constituting the problem of local organised crime in terms of "OCGs", the assessment conceptually-isolates certain individuals within the local populace and labels them as inherently problematic. By applying the "organised crime" label, these suspected offenders are further differentiated from other kinds of criminal; they are afforded a special status.

To some, this representation of the problem would suggest a process of “othering”; of constructing and isolating a social group as being outsiders to a locality and the source of its crime problems (Edwards and Gill, 2002b). However, OCGM does not go this far; there was no evidence to suggest that it isolates groups on the basis of their ethnicity, nationality, age or sub-cultural identity. While OCGs – in the process of being labelled as such – are presented as being identifiably-separate from the local populace, they are not exogenous in the sense of being foreign outsiders. The representation of the problem cannot therefore, be classified in terms of an “alien conspiracy” (Hobbs and Woodiwiss, 2009, pg 114) mentality. Neither though, are OCGs regarded to be a normal part of the “routine activities” of a local area; they are not “normal”; they are not made-up of everyday people breaking or bending the rules; of individuals who flit in and out of legal, grey and black-market activities – instead they are a fixed and definable population requiring ongoing management.

Underlying all this, of course, is a concern with criminal *actors*; OCGM presents a fundamentally actor-centric representation of the problem.

[Line redacted]

It is implied by OCGM that their existence as a group gives them potential; that it is better for the police to act against the group itself than try to prevent specific crimes from being committed.

A further significant assumption of the OCGM data is that the *blame* for the local organised crime problem rests with local OCGs in and of themselves; not with any risk-factors introduced into the “lifecourse” of their members, not with distorted subcultural values, not with relative socio-economic deprivation. From this perspective, crime groups are the causal agents of local harm and the “buck” stops with them. Collectively, OCGs are thought of as “active-subjects” (Garland, 1999, pg 23) with their own agency. Responsibility for crime therefore resides in them and their choices. This was somewhat reminiscent of classical criminological perspectives on crime, although OCGM lacks any explicit consideration of offenders as “rational actors”.

In thinking about these deeper governmentalities, it became useful to apply a categorisation scheme developed by Edwards and Gill (2003) in their work on the governmentality of transnational organised crime. They identify three possible narratives of the problem, including; organised crime as an “external threat”, as a



problem of “increased opportunities” and as an “internal challenge” (*ibid*, pg 267-273). Of these three, the OCGM assessment bore closest similarity to the “external threat” narrative, described as a “problematization... in terms of pyramidal groups and their “kingpins” or “core nominals” (which)... presupposes control strategies of enforcement, punishment, containment, disturbance and dismantling...” (Edwards and Gill, 2003, pg 269). As mentioned previously though, OCGM does not “demonise” particular social or ethnic groups or veer toward an “alien conspiracy” (Hobbs and Woodiwiss, 2009, pg 114) perspective. Thus it only represented a “light” or partial version of the “external threat” narrative (*ibid*, pg 267); a narrative in which a local area is harmed by OCGs which are conceptually-external to the local populace, but not explicitly “alien” in ethnic or social terms. In view of this, the “external threat” category was re-defined as “localised external actors”.

This way of thinking about the organised crime problem implies certain responses. If OCGs are taken to be the problem, then the obvious solution is to remove, incapacitate or manage them. In so doing, OCGM promotes and embeds a police-dominated governmentality; it empowers the police to govern the problem. At a deeper-level, it is implied that organised crime is a phenomenon that transcends specific local areas; it is not uniquely manifested in particular localities as a discrete, bounded “thing”; it is the same object of governance across all places, meaning that the “local” is little more than a governmental subdivision of the national.

#### **4.7. Conclusions**

The key purpose of this case study was to understand how OCGM represented the problem of local organised crime and to explore the “localness” of this representation. Analysis has shown that OCGM represents the problem as *organised crime groups, primarily involved in drug supply, causing harm within a local police force territory and requiring ongoing police management through operational activity*. This problematisation is inherently actor-centric; a way of thinking in which offenders are regarded as “active subjects” (Garland, 1999, pg 23, Bottoms, 2008) and directly responsible for crime in and of themselves. This representation can be classified as a “light” or partial version of the “external threat” narrative (Edwards and Gill, 2003, pg 267).

There was an initial suspicion that OCGM's representation of the problem would not be very local at all and this was well-founded. While local areas can be distinguished from one another through variation in the number of local OCGs present, there is a heavy emphasis on drug-supply groups, regardless of the locality in question. More importantly, the local was defined as a contentless police territory; as a subdivision of the national and not as a unique area in its own right. There were no locally-distinguishable crime "problems" in the OCGM data, beyond the implicit assumption that the very existence of crime groups is self-evidently a problem in its own right.

The implication in this is that organised crime is a "national" phenomenon; something which traverses local areas and transcends them; something which exists on a higher plane, but which can nevertheless have local dimensions and local effects. In these terms, OCGM represents local organised crime as if it were a jigsaw piece in a broader, national picture. From such a perspective, local context does not really matter; it does not matter if an assessment relates to a rural area or an urban area, whether an area is culturally-homogenous or diverse, whether it is rich or poor, whether there are subcultural groups with pro-crime or pro-drug values; it does not matter because organised crime is regarded to be the same thing everywhere and therefore, "local" organised crime does not really exist at all. These insights allowed the initial proposition to be expanded to the following:

Local organised crime assessments represent "local" organised crime as an arbitrary subdivision of "national" organised crime and, hence, are not truly local at all.
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This argument remained (for the time being) little more than a proposition that could be used to direct further research. It was not a hypothesis to be tested in the hypothetico-deductive sense, but a theoretical idea that could be refined, modified and adapted in line with more empirical data.

In order to build on the findings of this case study, there was a need to find out whether other types of local assessment in the UK represented organised crime in the same way; whether they too adhered to a "nationalised" model of organised crime or whether they conceptualised "localness" differently. It was anticipated that the "reverse engineering" of other types of assessment might result in a typology of

different governmentalities, or perhaps prove that they all shared the same one. More importantly, research into other types of assessment would help to further develop the proposition. In the following chapter a second type of local assessment is selected as a case study, its main features are explored, and its implicit representation of the problem is identified.

## 5. A case study of the Serious Organised Crime Local Profile

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### 5.1. Introduction

The exploratory case study of OCGM helped to generate a number of ideas about how local assessments represent “local” organised crime. In that specific case, it became clear that organised crime had been conceptualised in actor-centric terms, as a kind of criminal organisation that took the form of “organised crime groups”.

These groups were at the very core of the problem as represented by OCGM; as was an implied mode of governance based on police management. Thinking beyond the OCGM case study though, a number of interesting questions could be posed, such as; would this representation of the problem be replicated in other types of local assessment? Would different types of assessment all share an underlying ontology of local organised crime? Would other assessments also put OCGs at the centre of their problem representation? Or would different types of assessment actually represent different – perhaps even rival – governmentalities of local organised crime? As well as exploring these questions, there was also a desire to test the proposition that emerged from the OCGM case study, which is stated below:

Local organised crime assessments represent “local” organised crime as an arbitrary subdivision of “national” organised crime and, hence, are not truly local at all.
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What was needed then, was a second type of local assessment to use as a case study.

The overall objectives of this case would be to:

- identify how the assessment represents the problem of local organised crime and explore the “localness” of this representation
- understand the implicit governmentalities underlying this representation
- compare these representations and governmentalities with the OCGM case
- test, develop and refine the initial proposition

The next task was to decide on an appropriate type of assessment to select as a case. It quickly became clear there was one assessment above all that demanded attention; the *Serious Organised Crime Local Profile*. These “profiles” had come to be used by almost all police forces across England and Wales, making them one of the most common types of local assessment in use, alongside OCGM. By comparison, other kinds of assessment were only used by individual forces in a bespoke way. OCGM and local profiles were found to be *the* predominant forms of local assessment in use in the UK and it would have been unthinkable not to include them within this study. While case selection should, of course, be done on a systematic basis, the limited number of types of assessment used in the UK simply meant that there were not very many assessment-types that could rival local profiles in terms of relevance.

There was a possible argument to be made though, that these more common types of assessment would represent local organised crime in a different way to less common, bespoke assessments. This issue was addressed later in the study when one of these bespoke local assessments was selected as a third case to explore this very point. Despite this, decisions over case selection were quite straightforward. It would have been more difficult to explain *not* selecting local profiles, than actually selecting them. Initial research also showed that local profiles were documentary in form and quite suitable for content-analysis and “reverse-engineering”, provided they could be accessed.

This case study has been divided into two separate chapters. This chapter describes how the case study was undertaken and then explores the main features of local profiles. The next chapter moves on to “reverse-engineer” these features in order to identify how local profiles represent the problem of local organised crime.

## **5.2. Sampling and data collection**

### *Access*

Local profiles are protected documents, often containing sensitive material and are not released to the public. Gaining access to them was, therefore, problematic. As was described in section 3.2, a fundamental decision had to be made over whether to undertake officially-sanctioned research that “helped” the police in some capacity with their assessment process – in return for access – or whether to retain a more critical distance. There was a risk of losing autonomy with the former option, while

the latter would restrict access. Ultimately it was decided that the main aims of this study were largely incompatible with the idea of helping police design better assessments – not because helping the police was a bad idea, but because it would have meant “buying into” some of the deeper governmentalities implicit within their assessments. It may have meant, for example, helping to design a better scoring mechanism for OCGs – rather than questioning the need to focus on OCGs in the first place. It would have nullified many of the important ontological and conceptual critiques that needed to be made and it would have bounded the scope of enquiry.

This left the problem of access. Several options were considered. There was the possibility of approaching police forces individually and negotiating access to their profiles, but this was found to be a slow, unsystematic and painstaking process – especially since it would have to be repeated many times over in order to collect enough profiles for a reasonable sample. It eventually became clear though that an official process for requesting such material already existed in the form of “Freedom of Information” (FOI) requests. After reading much of the methodological literature on the use of FOI for research, it was apparent that this provided a feasible, cost-effective and reliable mechanism for collecting local profiles. While FOI requests would effectively compel police forces to respond – and might thus be seen as a somewhat “hostile” method of data-collection, akin to the probings of investigative journalists – it was actually something police forces seemed more comfortable with; it was an established process with clear guidelines, dedicated staff and a right to refuse to release certain material. Accessing local profiles through FOI requests was therefore the most feasible means of data-collection for this case.

### *Sampling*

Given that almost all police forces produced local profiles, the next issue was whether to attempt to do a census of all these profiles, or to select just a sample for analysis. Enquiries suggested that some forces actually produced more than one local profile for their area – and sometimes as many as five or six. With 43 police forces in England and Wales, this meant that a census could have potentially resulted in 70, 80 or maybe even 90 local profiles to analyse – a number which was unmanageable and probably unnecessary. A sampling approach was therefore needed.

The sampling strategy used for selecting local profiles was driven by the aims of the case study. One of the primary concerns was to explore how “local” these

assessments were, and what exactly made them “local”. The initial proposition was that they would not be very local at all because organised crime would be represented as an inherently *national* phenomenon, not a local one. The key to testing and developing this idea was to compare local profiles from very different kinds of locality and identify what – if anything – made them different from each other. If a profile from a peripheral, rural county represented organised crime in exactly the same way as a profile from a deprived inner-city district, then it might support the proposition. Meaningful local variation, on the other hand, might disprove it. Sampling would therefore aim to achieve the maximum amount of variation. A randomised sampling strategy, by contrast - aimed at providing a representative sample of local profiles – would have been less useful, given the aims of the case study. While it would have allowed firmer conclusions to be drawn about the local profile population as a whole, it probably would not have given as much insight into the differences between the profiles of very different local areas. There was also concern that a randomised sample would have been difficult to achieve and may have, in fact, masked some significant bias. For instance, as will be explained at a later point, some police forces refused to provide their profiles. It may have been the case that there was some underlying factor that explained this – perhaps those forces which produced highly-detailed profiles were less willing to release their assessments than those who produced more contentless ones – or urban forces may have been more reticent than rural ones. Such issues could have seriously undermined the representativeness of a random sample. Purposive sampling though, could avoid some such problems by deliberately targeting different kinds of locality and different size forces to ensure they were represented.

Local policing areas can be differentiated from one another in a number of ways, any of which might be important in shaping the local organised crime problems found there. Given this inherent complexity, any sort of straightforward divide between rural localities and urban localities, or between relatively deprived areas and relatively wealthy areas – for example – would have been too simplistic. Therefore, local areas were selected for inclusion in the sample based on differences across a range of factors. These factors are outlined in figure 10, below, and should be thought of more as a spectrum between poles.

Figure 10. Factors for differentiating local areas

Rural-----Urban  
Large police force-----Small police force  
Coastal-----Inland  
Relatively wealthy-----Relatively poor  
Large geographical area-----Small geographical area

Few local policing areas can be defined as purely rural or purely urban, purely wealthy or purely deprived – these places are complex and not reducible to simple binaries between one or another. It was all but impossible therefore, to select a strictly-defined number of local areas based on categorisations such as “rural” or “urban” – for example. Instead, as local areas were selected, they were plotted onto the spectrums that can be seen in figure 10 in order to achieve as much variation as possible. Consideration was also given to sampling profiles based on political variation, rather than just geography. It might have been the case, for instance, that profiles from locations with Conservative Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) might embody a different governmentality of crime control to those with Labour PCCs. However, the best way of testing the proposition was to sample local areas that might be expected to have very different organised crime problems; to compare rural Mid-Wales, for example, with inner-city Birmingham. Based on preliminary reading about local profiles, it was also clear that PCCs are not directly involved in the production of the profiles; it is a task that falls to the police. So while politics is an important way of defining local areas, it was the economic, the topographical and the demographic that took precedent, and so the focus remained on *geographic* variation. A target sample of 12 local profiles was decided upon, as this amount of data would be both manageable and provide coverage of enough different local areas.

#### *Data collection*

Freedom of Information (FOI) requests were initially sent to a small number of different police forces. These requests stipulated that each profile obtained through FOI would be treated anonymously, in the hope this would encourage the police to share their profiles. This also mitigated the risk of sensitive information being inadvertently released and linked to a particular locality. Some forces agreed to



provide their local profiles in redacted form, while other forces refused to release them at all. When a FOI request was rejected, a replacement police force was selected, and another FOI request was submitted, in line with the aim of achieving as much variation as possible. The reasons given for rejecting the request were typically the same; the argument being that the material fell under a so-called “Section 23” absolute exemption which relates to “security matters”, meaning that the police force in question was not required to provide evidence on why it would be harmful for the material to be released or provide any other sort of explanation. While, of course, it is perfectly understandable that police forces need to protect sensitive information, the *basis* for these rejections, i.e. in terms of a catch-all “security matters” argument was interesting in itself. It hinted that a different governmentality of organised crime was perhaps at work, a point which became relevant later in the case study. In total, FOI requests were submitted to 22 police forces. The full results of this data collection phase are outlined in table 8, below:

Table 8. FOI responses

<b>Response to FOI request</b>	<b>n</b>
Rejected	10
Local profile not yet produced	2
Redacted profile released	12

The use of FOI requests to obtain this data proved to be efficient and relatively successful – certainly more so than the other possible options for accessing local profiles. This is the first time that local profiles have been accessed outside of law enforcement and the data provided a real insight into their predominant representations of organised crime. Two concerns arose at this stage of data collection though. The first related to whether or not the sample would be biased by the differential response rate, and the second related to the redactions made to those profiles that were released. Both these issues are discussed in the below section on data limitations.

The 12 local profiles represented a diverse range of local areas, as per the aims of the sampling strategy. Table 9, below, provides a summary of each (anonymised) local area that was sampled.

Table 9. A summary of the sampled localities

<b>Local profile</b>	<b>Description of locality</b>
1	A medium-sized city with a rural periphery
2	A rural, mountainous area with small coastal towns
3	A rural, mountainous area with small towns and a coastline
4	A rural, coastal area with small towns and villages
5	A small city surrounded by former industrial towns
6	A large urban conurbation surrounded by large former industrial towns
7	A small, purely urban district within a medium-sized city
8	A large urban conurbation
9	A small town
10	A small rural area with small villages on the outskirts of a large city
11	A small rural county with small villages
12	A medium-sized town

This sample was diverse in a number of ways. It included both rural and urban areas, large conurbations and small towns, coastal areas and inland areas, small county districts and large police force territories, places with excellent transport links and places with very few; it included post-industrial zones and leafy suburbs, ethnically-diverse populations as well as homogenous ones – a sample, in other words that satisfied the aims of the sampling strategy. The profiles were received in electronic PDF format and saved in a secure case study database before being uploaded to Nvivo for future analysis.

#### *Other data sources*

Beyond the sample of local profiles though, it quickly became clear that other data sources would be useful for the case study. In particular, there was a need for material relating to the history and development of local profiles. Of importance here were administrative, policy and strategy documents. It became clear that local profiles were part of a nationwide programme of sorts; they were not developed unilaterally by each police force but introduced to them by a central body. It thus

became necessary to access guides, handbooks, strategy papers and other material that might have guided or influenced the police in the production of their profiles.

These documentary data sources were collected in a step-by-step way, in a process similar to “snowball” sampling. Initial reviews of the sampled local profiles, for example, made it clear that a local profile “guide” had been produced by the Home Office. This guide was then tracked down and obtained through the Home Office online data and publications portal. The guide heavily referenced the 2013 organised crime strategy and other strategic documents, and so these publications were also tracked down.

Through this process, it became evident that HMIC’s annual “PEEL” inspections specifically examined police forces’ local profiles and provided commentaries on who does them, how they are done, and so on. These reports therefore had the potential to provide a general overview of local profiles, beyond the sample selected. In total, 131 “PEEL” inspection reports for the years 2015, 2016 and 2017 were downloaded from HMIC’s online repository and saved in the case study database. A simplified summary of this database can be found in Appendix B.

This resulted in the collection of a number of inter-related documents. The search for relevant documents did not cease until all the key references in the local profiles, organised crime strategies and Home Office guides had been tracked down. Essentially, these documents provided contextual background to the local profiles themselves, or they provided verification for some of the features observed in the local profiles.

#### *Data limitations*

Inevitably, the collected data had important limitations. The local profiles in particular, had to be analysed with caution. As mentioned above, there was a risk of sampling bias; specifically, that those forces which refused to provide their local profiles were somehow different to those which did. It may have been the case, for example, that some forces produced only shallow “token” local profiles with no real detail – and were therefore more prepared to release them, or that rural forces had much less to write about and so were less concerned about supplying their profiles. Analysis of the profiles that were obtained allayed many of these concerns though. As can be seen from table 9, above, the local profiles do represent a real diversity of local areas; they are not all from one kind of place, they are not all from small police

forces, or only relate to rural areas. Instead, they include some of the largest and smallest police forces in the UK and range from urban sprawls containing millions of inhabitants to sparsely populated rural counties. In this respect at least, there was no evidence of bias in the sample. As to whether or not the sampled profiles would be of lesser quality somehow, or be relatively contentless or lack real detail, analysis of the profiles revealed real diversity. Some of the profiles were fairly straightforward, running to 20 pages or so, others were elaborate and extremely detailed, running upwards of 50 pages in length. It certainly could not be said, therefore, that all of the sampled profiles were somehow lacking in real content. Importantly, those 10 forces which refused to provide profiles were not all of one “type”; they were not all large urban forces, for instance, or all small rural ones. The most likely explanation for the variable response rate then, was differences in the interpretation of the FOI guidelines and / or the preparedness of FOI officers to spend time checking and redacting local profiles before release.

A second issue related to the redactions themselves. While by definition, it was not possible to say exactly what had been redacted from the local profiles, it was usually clear that certain kinds of information in particular had been removed. Based on the paragraphs and sections within which redacted lines were found, it seemed that most redacted material related to the names of known criminals, specific locations frequented by criminals, specific tactics or methods used by criminals to commit crime, the names of specific areas vulnerable to organised crime and the actual number of OCGs known to be active in a particular location. The risk here was that through redaction, the profiles would have been stripped of the very details that made each one unique. In other words, redacted profiles might appear bland and indistinguishable from one another precisely *because* their individuating details had been removed – thereby giving a false impression of uniformity across local areas. Obviously, this had implications for testing the study’s proposition. Initial reviews of the sampled profiles showed that many of them contained fairly significant amounts of “local” detail, and it certainly could not be said that the redactions had stripped them of meaningful content. In many cases, where a redaction had been made, it was still possible to understand the significance of the overall paragraph or section within which it was found. The best way of mitigating the effect of the redactions was to augment the local profiles with other data, in particular, presentations delivered by police forces about their local profiles, administrative documents produced by local

authorities and CSPs, and the HMIC inspection reports. A redacted local profile which seemed to lack detail or insight, for example, could be compared with the HMIC inspection report for that police force. Where the HMIC report complained of a lack of progress in producing a detailed profile, and where administrative documents lamented the brevity of the profile received by the council, then firmer conclusions about the contentlessness of a profile could be drawn. Nevertheless, the overall limitations of the data had to be kept in mind when drawing conclusions about the case study.

### **5.3. Serious Organised Crime Local Profiles: an overview**

The first stage of data analysis involved some basic descriptive work. Using the case study protocol as a guide, a number of simple questions were posed of the collected data, including “what method do local profiles use?”, “what kinds of data do they collect?”, “what is the unit of analysis?”, and so on. Both the sampled local profiles and the other case study data were analysed using Nvivo. A number of simple, pre-determined categories were used to code relevant material, including “DATA USE”, “METHOD”, “HISTORY”, “UNIT OF ANALYSIS”, and so on. These codes were derived from the case study protocol. This descriptive work provided the building-blocks for the analyses of the next chapter, which focuses on how the profiles represent the local organised crime problem, and their implicit governmentalities. In the following sub-sections, each of the main features of local profiles are explored.

#### ***The historical context of local profiles***

Local profiles were introduced in 2014 by the Home Office. Their development and implementation were set against a changing strategic background. In 2013, a year before the introduction of local profiles, there was a policy-shift of sorts, with the UK government launching a new serious organised crime strategy. The strategy officially labelled serious and organised crime as a threat to the UK’s national security (Home Office, 2013a, pg 5). It explicitly adopted “CONTEST” as a means for governing organised crime; an approach used in counter-terrorism which sought to “pursue”, “prevent”, “protect” and “prepare” (Home Office, 2009, Home Office, 2013a). At the same time, responsibility for organised crime policy was transferred within the Home Office from the “Crime and Policing Group” to the “Office for Security and Counter-terrorism” (OSCT) (FOI request to Home Office). Created in

2007, the OSCT - as the name suggests - is responsible for matters of national security and for counter-terrorist strategy (Home Office, 2009). With a new responsibility for organised crime control, the OSCT embarked on a number of new “programmes of government” (Rose and Miller, 1992, pg 181) inspired by their pre-existing counter-terrorism strategies. Local government agencies were required to form “local organised crime partnership boards” (Home Office, 2013a, pg 10). Police and their partners were compelled to adopt the “4 Ps” of counter-terrorism strategy (Home Office, 2013a). Members of the OSCT travelled the country visiting local agencies and delivering presentations on the “threat” (Home Office, 2015, Home Office, 2013b). The point here then, is that there was an attempt in 2013 to “re-brand” serious and organised crime at a national level; it became conceptualised in a new way; there was a clear attempt to absorb it into counter-terrorism. It was against this backdrop that local profiles were developed.

Local profiles were based on a pre-existing type of local assessment used for counter-terrorism, known as a “counter-terrorism local profile” (Home Office, 2014, pg 9). The application of this type of assessment to the field of organised crime, was clearly seen as beneficial:

*We have seen the difference such profiles have made to efforts to counter radicalisation and terrorism. Just as Counter-terrorism Local Profiles can help demonstrate the threat, vulnerability and risk from radicalisation within a local area, so too Serious and Organised Crime Local Profiles can outline those areas in relation to organised crime.*

(Home Office, 2014, pg 5)

In a nationwide review, it was found that the counter-terror profiles were “generally well-received” and “a catalyst for closer partnership working” (Home Office, 2014, pg 9). Based on their perceived value, the profiles were adapted for the problem of organised crime (*ibid*).

By 2014 it had become a requirement for police forces to produce one or more organised crime local profiles for their own local areas (Home Office, 2014, pg 11). The Home Office provided a guide on how to complete a local profile, as well as an “illustrative” profile as an example (Home Office, 2015; Local Profile 2).

Analysis of HMIC's inspections reports showed that by the middle of 2015, 33 out of 43 police forces (77%) had produced a local profile (HMIC, 2016a) and by 2016, every single force in England and Wales had done so (HMIC, 2017b, pg 93).

### ***Who produces local profiles?***

Primary responsibility for local profiles rests with the police forces of England and Wales. Examination of the sampled profiles showed that, within each police force, local profiles are authored by one or more intelligence analysts. Various other portions of the police service are supposed to contribute to local profiles. At an intra-force level, the commanders of specific policing zones (such as a town or city within the force territory) and Neighbourhood Policing officers are expected to participate in the process to some degree (Home Office, 2014), as are those operating across multiple police forces, such as officers within Regional Organised Crime Units and the National Crime Agency (*ibid*).

Despite police ownership of the assessment itself, a range of non-law enforcement agencies have also been brought into the production process (Home Office, 2014) – or at least they should have been, according to the Home Office's original intention. These agencies include:

- Members of local council authorities
- Local safety collaborations
- Social, educational and health services
- Regulatory bodies such as Trading Standards

(Home Office, 2014)

However, the extent to which these agencies are *actually* involved in the assessment process is questionable. The HMIC inspection reports suggested that in many local areas non-police agencies played a passive role, if they played a role at all. Of the 33 police forces which did produce profiles in 2015, HMIC criticised 12 of them for not including input from anybody outside the police (*analysis by the author based on a review of all HMIC inspection reports for 2015*). By 2016, this same problem had become one of the predominant national-level issues raised by HMIC in their inspection, with at least 19 profiles relying solely on police information (HMIC, 2017b, pg 94).

### ***What are local profiles for?***

Analysis of the Home Office's local profile guide showed that local profiles are meant to have a highly-specific function and a clearly-identifiable audience. Their core purpose is to convey knowledge about the local features of organised crime to a variety of local government agencies (Home Office, 2014), specifically, the new "local organised crime partnership boards" (Home Office, 2013a, pg 8).

The same objectives were apparent in the sampled local profiles themselves. Local Profile 2, for instance, explains that the purpose of the document is to "inform local multi-agency partnerships" (pg 3). Local Profile 4 aims to "inform Chief Officers and PCCs of the threat from organised crime" (pg 3), while Local Profile 9 sets out to "develop a joint understanding amongst partners" (pg 2). In fact, almost all of the sampled profiles replicate the exact same passage found in the local profile guide:

*Local profiles should inform local multi-agency partnerships, in particular police and crime commissioners, policing teams, local authorities... of the threat from serious and organised crime....*

(Home Office, 2014, pg 10)

The sampled local profiles also contained specific recommendations for action against organised crime locally – a feature that will be discussed in detail later. The point here is that local profiles are *actionable*; not merely an informative read for local council members or heads of social services. The expectation is that they should be used as an integral part of a local system of organised crime control planning and response.

### ***What data do local profiles use?***

The ambition outlined in the Home Office guide was that local profiles should exploit a hugely diverse range of data-sets, ranging from crime group mapping, to data on deprivation, demographics and housing, to immigration statistics, and just about everything in between (Home Office, 2014, pg 23-24). To test the extent to which this ambition was actually realised, the 12 sampled profiles were analysed in Nvivo. Every different data source used within the assessments was coded and



allocated to specific categories. The number of uses of that particular data source were then calculated for both the sample as a whole, and for each individual profile. The main categories of data used in the profiles are described below.

#### *Drug use data*

Some profiles incorporated data relating to drug abuse within their local area. For example, Local Profile 3 used statistical data on the number of drug-related deaths and the number of registered drug users to explore the harms and risks of the local drug problem (pg 12). Similarly, Local Profile 9 provided data on needle exchanges and drug users within the local community (pg 8).

#### *Economic data*

Some of the sampled profiles used economic and socio-economic data in making their assessments. Most frequently, this related to levels of unemployment in the locality. Local Profile 5, for example, used statistical data on those labelled as “NEET” (not in employment, education or training) within each local authority as a way of identifying populations that may become involved in organised crime (pg 8). Similarly, Local Profile 2 provided a narrative account of the distribution of unemployment within its local area, supported by statistical data on employment levels, wages, house prices and welfare payments (pg 7-8). Certain profiles also used data on poverty and deprivation. Local Profile 9, for instance, provided a breakdown of the local population using an “Index of Multiple Deprivation” (pg 5). Local Profile 2 also used ACORN data (A Classification of Residential Neighbourhoods) to explore socio-economic conditions in different parts of the local area (pg 8).

#### *Education data*

A small number of profiles used data on education levels as part of the assessment process. Local Profile 5, for example, used data taken from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to identify the proportion of the population without qualifications in the local area (pg 8). Local Profile 12 – rather inexplicably – provided data on local schools and the number of pupils within each, as did Local Profile 9.

### *OCGM data*

All of the sampled profiles made use of Organised Crime Group Mapping data. Specifically, this data was used to describe the number of known OCGs operating within a local area, as well as provide a breakdown of these OCGs by crime type. Local Profile 7, for example, used OCGM data to explore changes in the number of OCGs operating within the confines of its policing district, and to describe the operational activity of specific OCGs (pg 8). Local Profile 8 used OCGM data to show how the region which it covers has become a “hotspot” for certain kinds of organised crime, and a “hub” for others (pg 12).

### *Police intelligence*

All of the sampled profiles used police intelligence reporting as a data source. Such data was typically used as part of a narrative review of a particular area of criminal activity and was prefaced with statements such as “our intelligence indicates...” or “police intelligence suggests...”. This data took the form of what might be called local “reporting”. Local Profile 3, for example, stated that;

*From intelligence... it is assessed that the greatest threat from organised acquisitive crime in [local place name] is from groups committing burglary dwelling (sic).*

(pg 13)

Similarly, Local Profile 8 explains that:

*Intelligence reveals a complex and intricate network of victims and offenders within the [local place name] area... Intelligence highlights that when certain victims are rehoused within other Force areas by Local Authorities, they will form new networks with new offenders...*

(pg 23)

Police intelligence reporting was clearly an important data source for all of the sampled profiles, but given the breadth of data-usage, the profiles could not be described purely as police “intelligence products”.

### *Demographic data*

Some of the sampled profiles made use of demographic data to describe the local populace. Local Profile 1, for example, used survey data from the Office for National Statistics to provide a breakdown of population size in different towns and districts within the area (pg 5). Local Profile 2 used similar data to explore population distribution, and to highlight the rural nature of the locality (pg 6). Local Profile 5 used statistical data to provide a detailed analysis of the local populace in terms of its ethnic composition, age, religion and languages spoken (pg 7).

### *Recorded crime*

Almost all of the sampled profiles made at least some use of recorded crime data. Typically, this data was used as part of an overall narrative about local organised crime, rather than as a standalone data source. For example, Local Profile 8 used recorded crime data to highlight trends in so-called “modern slavery”:

*In the first quarter of 2017, [local police] recorded 100 offences relating to Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking across the force. Three-quarters of these (73) were recorded as “Hold a Person in Slavery or Servitude”... The most common offence types were labour exploitation (59), sexual exploitation (18) and criminal exploitation (6).*

(pg 19)

Other profiles used recorded crime data to discuss overall levels of crime in their localities, or to describe changes in crime levels over time.

### *Transport data*

Approximately half of the local profiles used data on local transport systems. This included statistics on the rates of car ownership in local areas (Local Profile 5), descriptions of the local rail and road network (Local Profile 8), information on local airports and sea ports (Local Profiles 12 and 2), and even average driving times to reach major road junctions (Local Profile 2).

### *Miscellaneous data*

A diverse range of other data sources were found across the sampled profiles. These included data on the local prison estate (Local Profile 2), on local “Troubled Families” programmes (Local Profile 6), on homeless within the local area (Local Profile 9) and on the availability and use of social housing (Local Profile 12).

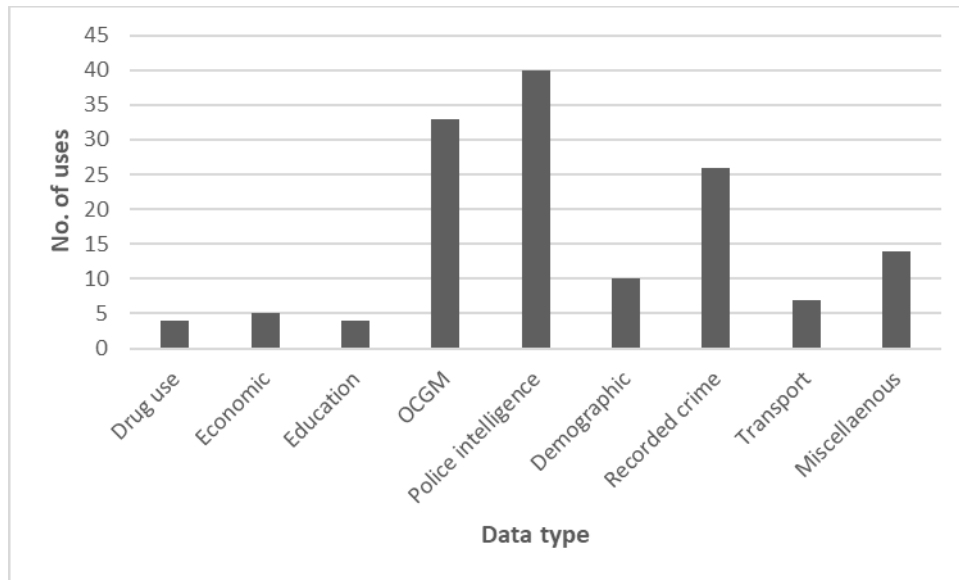
The frequency of use of these different data sources varied considerably across the sample of local profiles. Table 10, below, shows the total number of uses of each data source across all of the profiles.

Table 10. Total number of uses of each data source across all the sampled profiles

<b>Data type</b>	<b>No. of uses</b>
Drug use	4
Economic	5
Education	4
OCCG	33
Police intelligence	40
Demographic	10
Recorded crime	26
Transport	7
Miscellaneous	14

This was represented in a bar chart. See Figure 11, below.

Figure 11. Total number of uses of each data source across all the sampled profiles



Clearly, the most frequently used data sources were OCGM and police intelligence, followed by recorded crime data. Data on local drug use, local economic factors and local transport were the least used. However, this analysis only showed the overall *number of uses* of each data type. It did not show how much emphasis was placed on each particular data source. It became clear, for example, that while economic data was used fairly infrequently across the profiles, it also accounted for quite large sections of analysis which, in the coding process, was only coded as one use of that data source. Local Profile 2, for instance, included a two-page discussion of the local economy using the same kinds of data source throughout. By contrast, police intelligence was used frequently across the profiles, but only in brief, truncated statements rather than whole sections. Upon review then, it can be said that Figure 11, above, somewhat under-represents the use of local economic and demographic data, and slightly exaggerates the use of police intelligence.

Overall, this analysis revealed that local profiles take a broad but eclectic approach toward data use. As a way of verifying this analysis, the HMIC PEEL inspection reports for all forces in England and Wales were also reviewed. It quickly became clear that HMIC inspectors had, in fact, been critical of many police forces' use of data for their profiles. Of the 33 police forces which had completed profiles by mid-2015, 12 were specifically criticised for relying solely on police data (*analysis by the author based on a review of all HMIC inspection reports for 2015*). In 2016,

19 out of 43 forces were identified as only using police data in their profiles (HMIC, 2017b, pg 94). More broadly, the oft-repeated criticism was that:

*In many forces, local profiles are based solely on police data and lack information from partner agencies... Forces should include relevant data from partner organisations in their local profiles to improve their accuracy and usefulness.*

(HMIC, 2016a, pg 73)

While several forces were commended by HMIC for making good use of non-police data, it is clear that the original aspiration for broad data usage is not yet matched by the reality. The gap between an expectation of broad, inclusive data use and the reality of a narrower, more exclusive use of police intelligence needs to be borne in mind though. If it were to persist, then local profiles could mutate into a different kind of assessment altogether; an assessment in which a one-dimensional police appraisal of their own intelligence records is handed out to passive “consumers” in the local council under the guise of joint-working – a situation which would run counter to the ambitions expressed by the Home Office.

### ***What method is used to produce local profiles?***

As was explained at the outset, the orientation of this case study was towards analysing actual local assessments in and of themselves, rather than towards directly observing the process through which they were produced or accessing the opinions of local police who might use them. This orientation somewhat limited what could be learnt about the “real” method used to produce local profiles though. A full understanding of the production process would have required participant-observation of the sort carried out by Innes (2005) but developing this sort of detailed understanding was not relevant to the main objectives of the study.

Nevertheless, a number of points could still be made about methodology from examining the sampled profiles and official guides. Discussions of methodology within the official Home Office guide are brief but describe a “cycle”, reminiscent of the “intelligence cycle”, in which the assessment is commissioned, produced, shared and delivered (Home Office, 2014, pg 22). While the guide goes into some detail about this, what it is really explaining is best described as the

organisational “life-course” of a local profile; the bureaucratic system through which the profile passes, rather than any sort of in-depth methodology. A brief section on “production” simply provides a list of data sources and encourages authors to cooperate with partners to make sure the finished document is tailored toward those who will read it (Home Office, 2014, pg 25). The implication is that the list of data sources should be brought together into one documentary account – although this guidance stops well short of advocating any kind of data synthesis. The main orientation then, is clearly toward a rather straightforward collation of information and effective data presentation.

9 out of the 12 sampled local profiles provided no explicit description of their methodology, while those that did were both brief and vague. Local Profile 2 simply states that the assessment was “produced at force level” and is a “strategic document which should be read in conjunction with other available information” (pg 4). Local Profile 4’s method section describes the data sources used, with a particular focus on OCGM data, and Local Profile 6 does the same, listing its information sources.

It is clear from reading the profiles that the overall approach is one of *collation*; the compilation of different data sources into one document without much in the way of methodological process. There is no hypothesis-testing framework, no system for ranking crime groups, no matrix for prioritising the harmfulness of criminal activities, no significant attempt to predict future trends, no process of scanning-analysing-responding *a la* problem-oriented policing. There is simply an aggregation and description of data.

At a smaller-scale, it is clear that some profiles use specific analytical techniques and make some effort at synthesising data. Local Profile 6, for instance, used firearm discharge data to map shootings and attempted shootings within its area, allowing “hotspots” to be identified (pg 10). Similarly, Local Profile 8 included an analysis of child exploitation “hotspots” within its local area, along with “OCGs” associated with these locations (pg 23).

It is clear therefore that fairly advanced analytical techniques are used *within* local profiles, but importantly, none of these constitute an overarching methodology. They are tools for analysis and presentation within a relatively straightforward attempt to compile and collate information.

#### **5.4. Conclusions**

The purpose of this chapter was to explain how the case study developed, how data was collected and analysed, and to describe the basic features of local profiles. It has been seen that local profiles emerged out of a context in which organised crime was being re-branded at a national level and that they are an adapted version of an earlier counter-terrorism assessment. Analysis has shown that local profiles are produced by analysts within local police forces; that they are used to inform local policing and government agencies about local organised crime; that they use a broad and somewhat eclectic range of data but lack any explicit methodology beyond simple data-collation. This descriptive analysis served as a foundation for “reverse-engineering” local profiles. Drawing on these insights, it became possible to work backwards to uncover the problem representations and governmentalities implicit within these profiles. It is this objective which is taken forward in the next chapter.



## 6. Reverse-engineering local profiles

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### 6.1. Introduction

In identifying how local profiles represent the problem of local organised crime, it was necessary to move beyond their superficial features to uncover the deep-seated ways of thinking about crime implicit within them. Through a process of “reverse-engineering” it became possible to isolate specific conceptualisations, governmentalities and problematisations embedded within the profiles.

Traversing the whole case study though was a more general concern with understanding the “localness” of these profiles, especially given that they were sampled from very different kinds of locality. It was important to identify if and where they differed from one another in their representation of the “local” in “local organised crime”. The proposition, of course, was that local assessments such as these would not be very local at all; that they would display contextless uniformity, primarily because of an in-built assumption that organised crime only exists nationally, and that the local is merely an arbitrary sub-division of the national.

Section 6.2, below, begins by exploring local profiles’ ontology of organised crime. Section 6.3 describes their articulation of the problem, while section 6.4 discusses their implied mode of response. Section 6.5 deals more explicitly with the “localness” of the profiles, before there is a broader discussion of the case study findings in section 6.6. A number of broader conclusions are drawn in section 6.7.

### 6.2. Local profiles’ ontology of organised crime

The key questions to be answered in this portion of the case study were; *what do local profiles actually think organised crime is? How do they conceptualise it? What do they think those involved in “it” are like?* These – and similar questions – were built into the case study protocol and used to direct analysis. Given the sheer volume of material available in the local profiles, and given their complexity as a data source, it became necessary to adopt a pre-existing theoretical framework at the outset to help direct the analytical process.

As explained in Chapter 3, the framework chosen for this analysis originated with von Lampe. He argued that “organised crime” could be conceptualised in three very basic ways; as “an organisation of criminals”; as “organised criminal activities”

and as a form of “illegal governance” (von Lampe, 2015, pg 31). Each of these can be further differentiated into sub-types as can be seen in Table 2, in section 3.7. It was this basic framework that served as a starting point for analysis, and a basis for coding the content of the sampled local profiles.

*A tale of two ontologies*

The profiles (n=12) were uploaded to NVivo and reviewed with the aim of identifying any content in which there was an attempt to define or explain the concept of “organised crime”, or in which there was an implicit conceptualisation of it as a particular “thing”. Any such material was coded under the category of “CONCEPT OF OC”. This initial coding exercise identified a total of 71 relevant references across all of the sampled profiles.

Each of these 71 references were then analysed in more depth and re-coded based on whether they stated or implied that organised crime was; a) a kind of criminal organisation, b) a set of “organised criminal activities” or, c) a form of “illegal governance” (von Lampe, 2015, pg 31). The results of this exercise can be seen in table 11, below.

Table 11. Coding results for the local profiles

<b>Coding category</b>	<b>No. of references</b>
Criminal organisation	24
Crimes requiring a high degree of organisation	27
Illegal governance	0
N/A	20

The results showed that organised crime was most frequently referred to as a kind of *criminal activity* (27 references), but that it is also commonly referred to in terms of *criminal organisations* (24 references). There were no meaningful references to organised crime as a form of illegal governance. As can be seen in table 11, there were also a large number of references (20 out of 71) which could not be coded to these categories and were instead classified as “N/A”. Many of these un-classifiable references described what organised crime or offenders were like, in terms of their rationality, aetiology, motivation, *et cetera*. Such references were discounted for the time being and examined in more detail later.

The picture presented by the data at this stage then, suggested some kind of mixed conceptualisation of organised crime as both “criminal organisations” and “organised criminal activities”. One potential explanation for this, was that different local profiles within the sample conceptualised organised crime in different ways, with some focusing on criminal organisations and others primarily on activities. To test this idea, the aggregated coding results presented in table 11, above, were broken down for each local profile. The results can be seen in table 12, below.

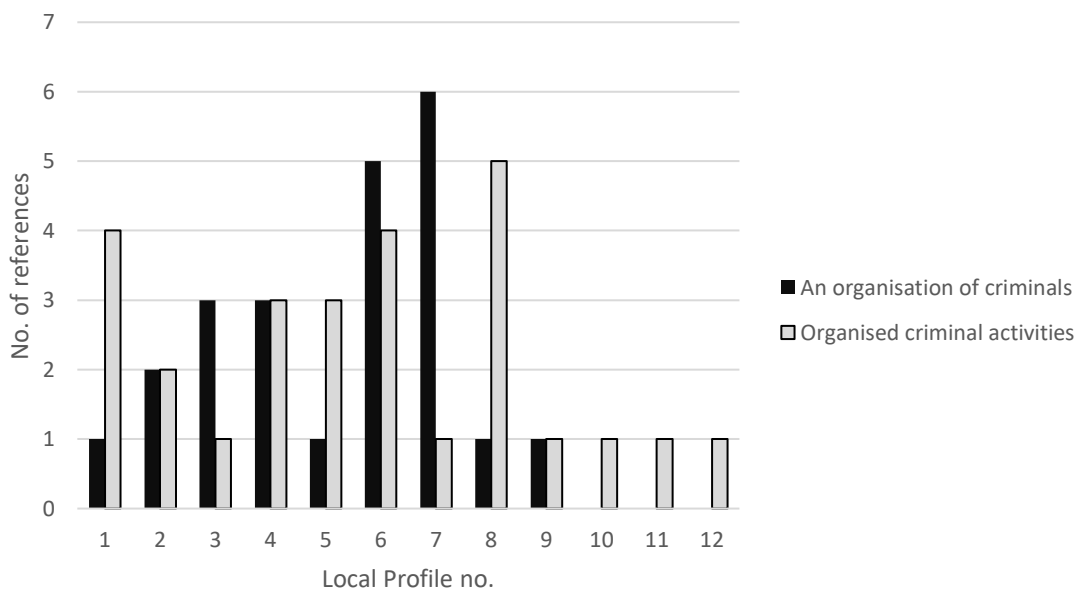
Table 12. Coding results for each local profile

<b>Local profile</b>	<b>No. of references to “criminal organisations”</b>	<b>No. of references to “organised criminal activities”</b>
1	1	4
2	2	2
3	3	1
4	3	3
5	1	3
6	5	4
7	6	1
8	1	5
9	1	1
10	0	1
11	0	1
12	0	1

*Note: the coding categories of “illegal governance” (n=0) and “N/A” (n=20) were excluded from this table for clarity*

This data was presented as a bar chart, which can be seen in Figure 12, below:

Figure 12. Coding results for each local profile



This analysis showed that most of the sampled profiles referred to organised crime as *both* a kind of criminal organisation and a set of organised criminal activities – although, clearly, there was variation in the extent to which each profile discusses organised crime at all, with some providing little more than single-line definitions (which explains the lack of variation in Profiles 10, 11 and 12), and others discussing “it” at length (for example, Profiles 6, 7 and 8). This meant that the mixed conceptualisation of organised crime evident at an aggregated level for all of the sampled profiles was also present within many of the individual local profiles, albeit to varying degrees. For the sampled profiles then, “organised crime” seemed to be conceptualised as some kind of *combination* of organised actors and organised activities. In teasing out this conceptualisation further, it was necessary to move beyond the counting of references to examine their content in a more qualitative, meaningful way.

The coded references were studied again – but this time in the context of the rest of the document and not as isolated scraps of text. When viewed as part of a broader narrative about organised crime, it became clear there was indeed a mixed conceptualisation of organised crime within the profiles. It seemed, however, that primacy was afforded to “organised criminal activities” over “criminal organisations”. For instance, most of the profiles explicitly adhered to the formal definition of organised crime as laid down by the Home Office:

*The accepted interpretation of organised crime is; serious crime, that is planned and co-ordinated, and is conducted by people working together on a continuing basis...*

(Local Profile 4; quoting (Home Office, 2013a, pg 14))

This definition – replicated almost word-for-word across the sampled profiles – gives primacy to *crimes of a particular type*, rather than criminal organisations. Here, organised crime is a type of action, not a structural configuration; its ontology resides in the characteristics of the act committed, not the characteristics of a particular group of offenders. This perspective also surfaced when the profiles came to discuss their own objectives, in terms of being able to:

*Provide information on serious and organised criminal activity...*

(Local Profile 2 and Local Profile 5)

*Describe local serious organised crime activity...*

(Local Profile 7)

Furthermore, this orientation toward activities clearly shaped the overall structure of the profiles. As was described earlier, the profiles were organised around specific types of criminal activity, with different sections on drug dealing, immigration crime, child exploitation and the like – rather than sections on specific criminal organisations. Thus, it is crime-types or thematic areas of crime that serve as an organising principle for the local profiles, implying a more activity-based ontology of organised crime.

However, a more detailed, in-depth analysis revealed some interesting patterns. It was found that within this activity-oriented structure much of the actual content of the profiles was concerned with *organised crime groups* - how many of them were present in the locality, where they operated, how they were constituted, what they were involved in, and so on. There were also lengthy discussions of the characteristics of so-called “urban street gangs” (USGs). For example, Local Profile 7, in a section titled “Demographics”, explained that:

*The locally managed OCGs are made up of local individuals who are resident within the geographical local of the BCU. When group members are not based in the BCU they typically reside within the neighbouring police force area...*

(Local Profile 7, pg 16)

Local Profile 3, in a section called “Organised Crime Overview”, explained that:

*There are [REDACTED] mapped OCGs in the area. These represent the groups we know about and is probably an underestimation.... Nearly all OCGs mapped... focus on a single crime type (such as drug supply or burglary)... Even accounting for the historical police focus in this area, supplementary evidence from other agencies still indicates that drugs is the primary business area for most groups.*

(Local Profile 3, pg 4)

*Urban Street Gangs (USGs) in [local place name] operate across all four Districts and are primarily involved in drug supply and related drug offences as well as violent criminal activity.*

(Local Profile 6, pg 7)

Despite adhering to an activity-oriented definition of organised crime then, and despite being structured around thematic areas of criminal activity, the local profiles devote much of their actual content to talking about crime groups and street gangs – suggesting an underlying, rival conceptualisation of organised crime as “criminal organisations”.

It was interesting to compare these findings to the Home Office’s official guidance on local profiles. The guide clearly exhorts police forces to focus on describing “local serious and organised crime activity...” (Home Office, 2014, pg 11), as well as “priority locations, vulnerabilities...” (*ibid*, pg 12) and a range of other factors. It certainly does not call for a focus on criminal organisations.

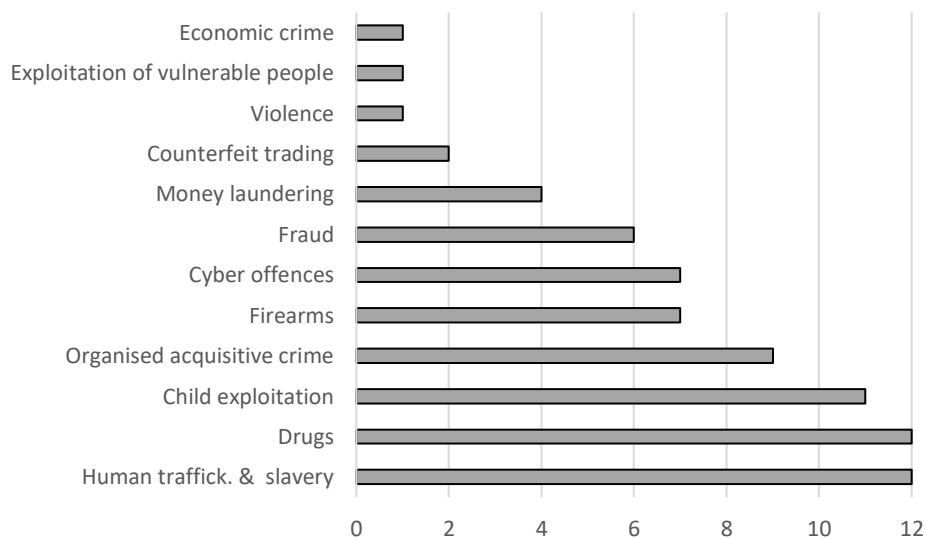
It is possible that the co-existence of two ontologies within the profiles was the result of their authors having to adopt the Home Office’s official definition of organised crime as a *type of crime or activity* – as well as the Home Office’s guidelines on how to structure a local profile around thematic areas of crime - while

also having to rely heavily on OCGM data which, of course, is concerned with counting and ranking *crime groups*. Without a more in-depth, participant-observation approach, this could not be confirmed, but it could plausibly explain the somewhat mixed conceptualisation of organised crime found within the profiles. More significant for this case study though, was the simple fact that these two ontologies could be said to exist within the profiles, regardless of how such a situation came to be. Given this bifurcation of ontology, it became necessary to explore both in more detail.

*Ontology #1: Organised criminal activities*

This ontological conceptualisation clearly took precedence in the local profiles. The question though, was: *what activities are considered to be “organised crime” and what is the basis for labelling them as such?* In order to answer this question, details of the main crime-types covered by each of the 12 samples local profiles were coded. The results can be seen in Figure 13, below.

Figure 13. The number of sampled profiles with a section on each crime type



As can be seen, some criminal activities were covered by almost all of the sampled profiles – in particular; human trafficking, modern slavery, drugs and child sexual exploitation - while others, such as counterfeiting and violent activity were found less frequently. Of course, some of these crime-types over-lapped one another – “economic crime” and “fraud” for instance, but these categories were left as they were found in the profiles.

The next question though, was; *what is it about these activities that makes them “organised crime”*? Most of these crimes were relatively “organised” in the sense that they required a degree of planning and multiple phases of enactment to be successful (von Lampe, 2015, pg 27); although the truth of this depends heavily on where the line is drawn regarding what counts as “organised”. Such characteristics could have been used by local profiles to differentiate “organised” forms of criminal activity from “less-organised” forms, but neither the profiles themselves nor the official guidance explained what makes some criminal activities “organised” and others not. Of course, many other criminal activities *could* be included under such a conceptualisation – waste trafficking, for example, or organised poaching, or illegal commercial fishing – but these do not appear in the sampled profiles.

An important observation was that all of the sampled profiles replicated, fairly consistently, the exact same list of crime types provided to them by the Home Office guidance, which included:

- *the trafficking of drugs, people and firearms*
- *organised illegal immigration*
- *modern slavery*
- *... fraud*
- *counterfeit goods*
- *organised acquisitive crime*
- *cyber crime; and*
- *child sexual exploitation*

(Home Office, 2014, pg 11-12)

Indeed, it is this same list which appears in the National Organised Crime Strategy 2013 as “organised crime types in the UK” (pg 16). This implied that the classification of certain crimes as “organised” was the result of a nationally-driven “labelling process” (Levi, 1998, pg 336) with its own dynamics and impulses. It was, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this study to further explore why and how these activities became national priorities. The main point was that this same list of officially-designated types of organised criminal activity were replicated across all the sampled profiles.



### *Ontology #2: Criminal organisations*

As intimated earlier, this rival ontology of organised crime was based on the notion of the “organised crime group” (OCG) and, less frequently, the “urban street gang” (USG) – both of which can be described as criminal organisations. The sampled profiles were found to be largely consistent in their conceptualisation of OCGs. For them, these crime groups have a “durable core” with connections to a looser, broader and more diverse offending population (Local Profile 2, pg 5); they have a discernible set of group dynamics through which they can collectively plan crime (Local Profile 4, pg 6). Several profiles described these organisations as “fluid” and “dynamic” (Local Profile 6, pg 4).

For the most part, the same terms were used to describe urban street gangs. Local Profile 6, for example, discussed OCGs / USGs interchangeably – as did other profiles. The profiles do, however, make some slight differentiations between the two, with urban street gangs said to be more involved in “street drug dealing and associated acts of violence on behalf of OCGs” (Local Profile 6, pg 53). It was also said that urban street gangs have the potential to morph into organised crime groups, especially where they “become more structured and organised in their criminality...” (Local Profile 6, pg 46). The implication here was that street gangs are less sophisticated than organised crime groups; that they operate on a “lower” street-level but have the capacity to expand into something more serious. There were also occasional references to urban street gangs having a particular “culture” (Local Profile 6, pg 53), although none of the profiles elaborated any further on this. In several of the profiles, urban street gangs were explicitly linked to a phenomenon known as “county lines” – a system of drug supply in which a group based in a large city channels illegal drugs into more rural or peripheral areas (NCA, 2017). Local Profile 7, for instance, devoted significant space to identifying the various street gangs involved in trafficking drugs from a large city into its own smaller urban district (pg 14).

Across the sampled profiles, it was almost universally accepted that money-making is the major motivation for these organisations, even if other motives do sometimes exist. This implied a view of organised criminals as rational, calculating actors – as “active subjects” (Garland, 1999, pg 23; Bottoms, 2008) - engaging in crime for instrumental reasons. In contrast to this though, a small number of the

sampled profiles presented offenders in a more passive light. Local Profile 6, for instance, discussed the so-called “pathways” through which people might become involved with criminal organisations. The language used in this section was suggestive of a view in which external forces push or pull individuals into crime groups and street gangs:

*...individuals can also be groomed, exploited, coerced into involvement, or be debt-bound to a group.*

(Local Profile 6, pg 42; quoting NCA, 2016, pg 18).

*Young people brought up in deprived neighbourhoods can be particularly vulnerable to approaches from OCGs or forming a street gang themselves.*

(Local Profile 6, pg 43; quoting NCA, 2016, pg 7)

A similar perspective was apparent in Local Profile 8:

*Within the [local place name] there are a number of complex pathways that lead individuals into organised crime...*

(Local Profile 8, pg 10)

The profile goes on to discuss the various mechanisms through which people might be “manipulated” into helping an OCG; how this can lead to their “entrapment” within a group and how this might be facilitated by their “vulnerabilities” (pg 10). Throughout such sections, offenders are portrayed as passive, not active; they are tricked or forced or drawn into involvement with criminal organisations; it is something that happens *to* them, not something they do themselves.

When the so-called “pathways” sections of Local Profiles 6 and 8 were examined more carefully, it became clear that other, more specific criminological theories were also implicit within them. There were, for instance, echoes of Sutherland’s (1995) differential association theory in certain excerpts:

*An individual's upbringing and lifestyle, local environmental and social factors can have a serious impact on their identity which can increase their vulnerability to participating in organised crime.*

(Local Profile 8, pg 10)

*Individuals may be more likely to be drawn into serious and organised crime if they have access to criminal networks through familial links, intimate relationships or associations through peer groups (including prisons), friendship or employment.*

(Local Profile 6, pg 43; quoting NCA, 2016, pg 5)

There was also an attempt to identify risk factors and patterns of offending that lead to involvement with criminal organisations – a perspective somewhat similar to that of lifecourse criminology:

*Individuals displaying certain offending patterns may progress into organised criminality...*

(Local Profile 6, pg 43; quoting NCA, 2016; pg 5)

*Upbringing, lifestyle and attitude can also influence progression, with family life, gang culture and attitude to power all being significant factors.*

(Local Profile 6, pg 43; quoting NCA, 2016; pg 6)

Both differential association (Sutherland 1995) and lifecourse perspectives tend to contrast with the idea of offenders as purely rational, calculating subjects whose behaviour can be explained simply through financial incentives. Within the “pathways” sections of Local Profiles 6 and 8, offenders are characterised in a way reminiscent of the “passive-subject, socially-oriented” criminologies discussed by Bottoms (2008, pg 88), in which social factors beyond the control of the individual drive them into crime. However, this was not typical of the sampled profiles as a whole which instead tended to limit themselves to statements on the financial motivation of offenders.

*A third ontology of organised crime?*

Beyond the emphasis on organised criminal activities and, to a lesser extent, criminal organisations, it was also possible to detect a conceptual shift of sorts when close attention was paid to the language used within the profiles. It seemed that organised crime was not just thought of as a categorical term for certain types of crime, or certain types of criminal organisation, but as a cumulative force with its own emergent capabilities. Profile 8, for example, explained that:

*The national level impact of SOC has been reinforced over the past two years by the evolution of a number of threats...*

(Local Profile 8, pg 8)

It later concluded that:

*The serious and organised crime threat within [local place name] is significant, impacting all areas of the force...*

(Local Profile 8, pg 45)

Similarly, Local profile 6 stated in its introduction that:

*Serious and organised crime is a national security threat, one which continues to evolve... Whilst the origins and networks of serious and organised crime stretch to national and international arenas, it has a significant detrimental effect on local communities.*

(Local Profile 6, pg 6)

In such passages, through a kind of conceptual slippage, a range of crime types and criminal organisations become homogenised and spoken of as if they have a collective existence. While some may see this as rhetoric, it does have ontological implications. Instead of being a category for types of crime or for types of criminal organisation, “organised crime” instead becomes a thing in itself, an object with its own ontology which can express itself in a variety of guises. What start out as discrete types of crime – drugs, child exploitation, fraud, people-smuggling – or discrete crime groups - instead become different manifestations of the same thing. In

logical terms, what start out as objects with some possible “formal relations of similarity” (Sayer, 1992, pg 88) – i.e. types of crime with some element in common – become the *same thing*; a logical error akin to arguing that crows, lumps of coal and panthers are all different forms of the same thing because they are all black.

Discernible also was the suggestion that organised crime primarily exists at a *national* level. Within the sampled profiles, there was an urge to situate local findings within a national perspective. Many of the profiles began, for instance, with a quote or excerpt taken from the National Organised Crime Strategy or the Home Office guidance on local profiles. Local Profile 6, for example, began with:

*Serious and organised crime is a national security threat...*

(Local profile 6, pg 6)

Similarly, 9 of the 12 sampled local profiles replicated the same sentence in their opening paragraphs:

*Serious and organised crime costs the UK at least £24 billion a year.*

(Local profiles 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12)

Many of the profiles included a section on “the national picture”, before providing a breakdown of this in local or regional terms. This tendency toward a national conceptualisation of organised crime is encouraged in the Home Office guide where the emphasis is on local agencies – through their profiles – contributing to a *national* effort against organised crime;

*Like other threats to our national security, serious and organised crime requires a response across the whole of government...*

(Home Office, 2014, pg 7)

The tone of the guidance issued to those producing local profiles implied that organised crime is a phenomenon which occupies a “national” stratum of existence, but one which also has some local effects.

Bringing together the above points, it was possible to see that the sampled profiles rested on a dual ontology of organised crime as both a form of criminal

activity and as a kind of criminal organisation. Beyond both of these though, organised crime was sometimes also spoken of as if it had emergent properties that could exert a collective force on a national scale. This was, at its core, a complex and sometimes chaotic ontology of local organised crime – an ontology with important implications for the profiles as a whole.

### 6.3. The articulation of the local organised crime problem

Given the above ontological conceptualisations, it became important to understand how the profiles rendered local organised crime into a particular kind of problem. It was important to ask questions such as; *for whom or what does local organised crime pose a problem? In what ways is that problem supposed to be manifested? What kind of impact is local organised crime said have?* The first step in answering these questions was to review the 12 sampled profiles, as well as other key documents and to code any material which attempted to explain, measure or describe the kind of problem that organised crime posed. This initial “sweep” identified 196 relevant references. As before, some basic “orienting concepts” (Layder 1998, pg 5) were then used as a way of organising this data into coding categories. These categories can be seen in table 13, below:

Table 13. Coding categories for different problem definitions

<b>Coding category</b>	<b>Problem definition</b>
Harm	Organised crime causes harm
Threat	Organised crime represents a threat
Risk	Organised crime poses some kind of risk
Cost	Organised crime incurs financial or economic costs or losses
Vulnerability	Organised crime exploits vulnerabilities in communities, society or the economy

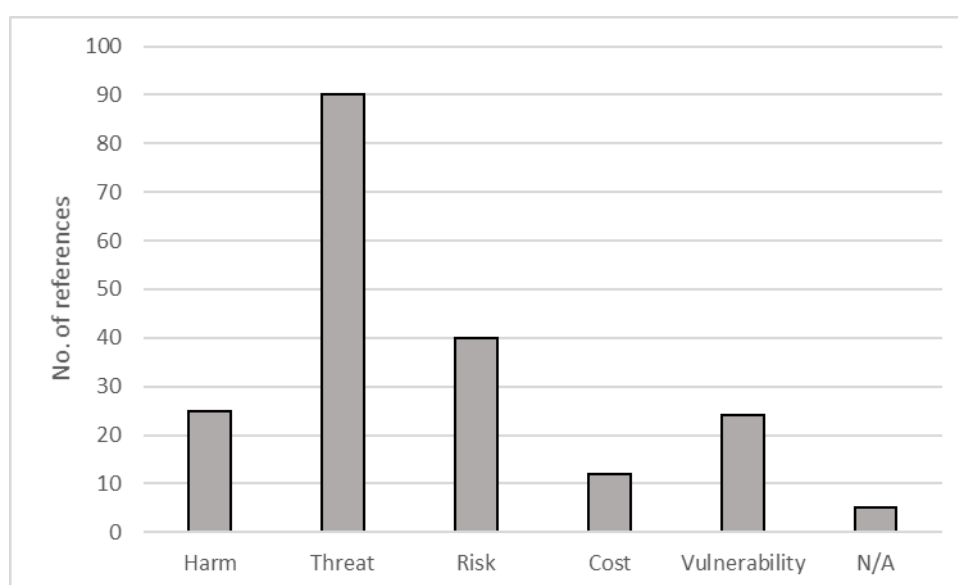
Once again, as per the “adaptive theory” approach (Layder 1998), these categories were open to refinement and modification in line with the findings. The 196 references identified in the first sweep were re-coded based on whether they primarily regarded the problem of organised crime to be one of harm, threat, risk, cost or vulnerability. The aggregated results of this analysis can be seen in table 14, below.

Table 14. Coding results for the local profiles

Coding category	Aggregated no. of references across the sample
Harm	25
Threat	90
Risk	40
Cost	12
Vulnerability	24
N/A	5

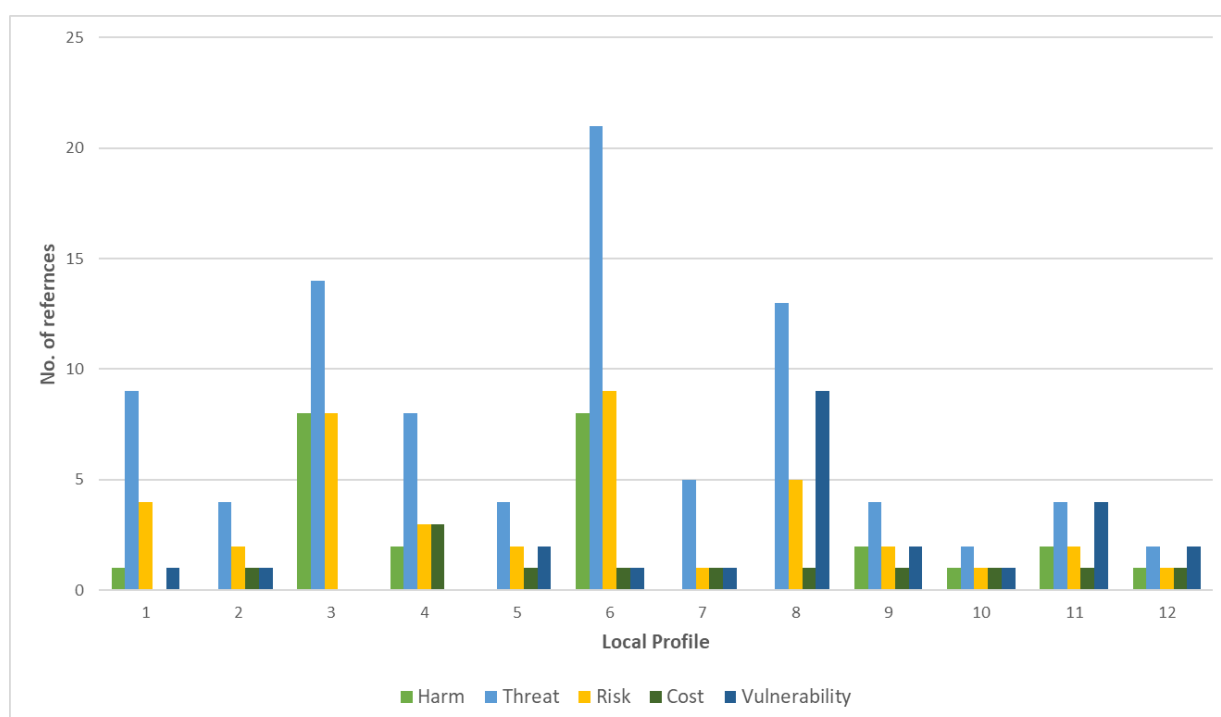
These results were then presented in a bar chart. See figure 14, below.

Figure 14. Coding results for the sampled local profiles



This analysis showed that across the sampled profiles, organised crime was most frequently referred to as a “threat” of some kind – although there were also a significant number of references to “risk”, “harm” and “vulnerability”. It was important however, to move beyond an aggregated view of the sample, and to establish whether the same pattern was replicated within individual profiles. As such, the coding data was broken-down for each profile, and the results can be seen in figure 15, below.

Figure 15. Coding results broken down for each sampled profile



This break-down showed that organised crime was most frequently referred to as a “threat” across each individual profile, with the exception of profiles 11 and 12 where it is referred to the same number of times as “vulnerability”. This suggested that the aggregated results are largely replicated within each local profile and that “threat” is the most common way of framing the organised crime problem.

Of course, it was important to move beyond quantitative analysis and to study what these coded references actually said, and how this related to the overall narrative context of each profile. A number of points emerged from the data when the coded references were reviewed in context. “Harm”, for instance, was often spoken of as part of Organised Crime Group Mapping data (which primarily conceptualises organised crime in terms of harm), while “cost” tended to only appear with reference to the overall financial cost to the UK as a whole. “Vulnerability” meanwhile, was mentioned only in passing by most of the profiles – the exception being Profile 8, which provided a more sophisticated analysis of vulnerability in terms of the characteristics of particular local areas:

*Areas of high deprivation and unemployment... are vulnerable to a wide variety of organised criminality. These areas provide marketplaces for the sale*



*of illicit substances... These areas also pose the greatest risk in terms of individuals becoming involved in crime.*

(Local Profile 8, pg 3)

The same profile also attempted to “map” these vulnerabilities within the local force area. As suggested by figure 15, above, there was a degree of interchange and overlap between these different concepts within the profiles. Almost every profile, for example, included a similar line, based it seems, on the official Home Office guidance:

*There is a need to highlight and develop understanding around the threat, harm and vulnerability relating to serious and organised crime within localised communities...*

(Local Profile 6; partially quoting Home Office, 2014, pg 10)

*The local profile aims to inform local partnerships... of the threats, vulnerabilities and risks relating to serious and organised crime.*

(Local Profile 2; partially quoting Home Office, 2014, pg 10)

Here then, the profiles sought to examine the organised crime problem from multiple perspectives; as “threat”, “harm”, “risk” and “vulnerability” simultaneously. Some of the sampled profiles did follow-through on this ambition. Profile 3, for instance, provided sub-sections for “harm”, “risk” and “threat” for each area of organised criminal activity. Profile 8 also spent significant amounts of time discussing the manifestation of “harm” – for example in terms of drug-user deaths and reputational damage – alongside “vulnerability”. Despite this, organised crime was regarded, first and foremost as a “threat” – it was the “threat” narrative that took primacy across the sample.

The question though, was; *for whom or what is organised crime supposed to be a threat?* The sampled profiles were noticeably vague on this issue. Seldom was there any attempt to specify what exactly was being threatened by organised crime, with most profiles limiting themselves to general statements such as:

*The threat from these groups varies...*

(Local Profile 5, pg 5)

*Continued work in this area is key, working collectively to develop a more comprehensive intelligence picture as the threats from serious and organised crime continue to evolve.*

(Local Profile 6, pg 6)

*Within [local place name], specific threats have been identified around car washes, nail bars and the use of Vietnamese nationals in cannabis factories...*

(Local Profile 8, pg 19)

As can be seen from these excerpts, the profiles labelled various things as “threats” but then rarely elaborated on what was actually being threatened. There was, however, a noticeable tendency in some of the profiles to describe organised crime primarily as a threat to national security. Local Profile 8, for example, in its introduction, explained that “SOC is a national security threat” (pg 6) with Local Profile 6 repeating the same line. Similarly, Local Profile 7, quoting the National Organised Crime Strategy, claimed that “serious and organised crime is a threat to national security” (pg 1). Indeed, many of the profiles began with a section on “the national threat picture” before attempting to situate their own local “threats” within it.

In exploring this “national security” narrative further, it became clear that the Home Office Local Profile guide was itself oriented toward such a perspective, repeatedly stating that “serious and organised crime is a national security threat” (Home Office, 2014, pg 7). The tone of the guidance makes it clear that local profiles are part of a national, “cross governmental” (Home Office, 2014, pg 7) effort, that they are a way of drafting as many agencies as possible into the protection of the nation state. The means by which organised crime is supposed to threaten national security though, was not explained.

In addition to this “national security threat” conceptualisation of the problem, the sampled profiles did also occasionally refer to vaguely-defined “local impacts” of organised crime. Local Profile 4, for instance, identified the specific crime groups deemed to have an impact within the local area (pg 6) – although without articulating

the nature of this impact. Local Profile 5 explained that organised crime has an “impact on local communities” (pg 11). Similarly, Local Profile 6 suggested that organised crime has a “significant detrimental impact on local communities” (pg 6). In none of these cases though, were such impacts explained in more detail.

Based on the above analysis, the articulation of the problem of local organised crime was found to be both chaotic and vague within the sampled profiles. Organised crime was discussed in terms of “vulnerability”, “harm” and “risk”, although it was a “threat” narrative that dominated. While a range of things – from crime groups to specific criminal activities to the infiltration of nail bars and car washes by offenders (Local Profile 8, pg 19) were labelled as “threats”, never was there any serious attempt to specify what these things actually threatened; except that is, for vague mentions of “national security”.

#### **6.4. Local profiles’ implied mode of governance of local organised crime**

Given the above articulation of the local organised crime problem, the question became; *what mode of governing organised crime is implied by local profiles? What kinds of response to the problem are advocated?* The sampled profiles were analysed once again in Nvivo. Any sections, lines or paragraphs referring to how organised crime should be governed were coded as relevant. A total of 61 relevant references were identified. In order to make sense of these references, 4 general strategies of crime control were used as preliminary coding categories. These included: “Prevention” – where the aim is to prevent crime from happening in the first place, or to stop offenders from becoming involved in crime; “Securitisation” – where the objective is to secure or protect society or the economy or a local community against criminal infiltration and exploitation; “Administrative” – where regulatory measures are introduced to impede organised crime, out-with traditional criminal justice institutions (von Lampe, 2015) and “Criminal justice” – where the response is based on the conviction of offenders after they have broken the law.

The 61 references were reviewed, and an attempt was made to recode them to the above categories. However, this task proved all but impossible. The coded references simply did not fit into these pre-defined categories; they represented too complex and too different a mode of governance. Each coded reference seemed to

fall between the gaps of each category or occupy more than one simultaneously. For example, Local Profile 5, in just one paragraph, proposed that law enforcement should collaborate with local government agencies to variously “protect communities”, “use local regulation to disrupt crime groups”, target those “selling illicit goods” with criminal justice responses and safeguard those “exploited by OCGs” (pg 12; partially quoting (Local Government Association, 2015, pg 5) – effectively combining elements of preventative, criminal justice, administrative and securitised modes of governance.

It was apparent that the coded references did display a set of common features, but these would not fit into the pre-defined coding categories. As such a new strategy was adopted. “Theoretical memos” (Layder 1998, pg 58) were used as a way of isolating the profiles’ common features and for subsequently refining them. As described by Layder, these memos are essentially “notes to oneself” (*ibid*, pg 59) and were compiled into themes or ideas about common features of the profiles. The first cross-cutting feature identified across the sampled profiles was the adoption of a counter-terrorism governance strategy called “CONTEST”. Launched in 2011, one of the core elements of this strategy is the so-called “4 Ps” approach; “Pursue”, “Prevent”, “Protect” and “Prepare” (Home Office, 2011, pg 6) – each of which represents different, but supposedly complementary ways of responding to terrorism. In order to explore the adoption of this strategy within the local profiles, references to “CONTEST” or the “4 Ps” approach were coded in Nvivo. A total of 37 such references were found. Analysis of these results showed that 10 out of the 12 sampled profiles explicitly adopted the “4 Ps” strategy for governing their own local organised crime problems. Local Profile 1, for example, used the 4 Ps as a basis for organising its “action plan” of recommendations (pg 36). Local Profile 12 interspersed its narrative with text-boxes containing recommendations relating to each of the 4 Ps, an example of which can be seen below:

*Recommendation – Pursue / Prevent*

*Partner agencies should regularly collate and share demographic information/knowledge to support early and accurate identification of enablers &/or indicators*

(Local Profile 12, pg 9)

Local Profiles 9, 10 and 11 also used the same format for making recommendations. The below, provides another example of this:

*Recommendation – Pursue/Prevent/Protect/Prepare*  
*Partner Agencies are to ensure that they are fully briefed on Courier Fraud, CSE, Modern Slavery and County Lines criminality*  
(Local Profile 9, pg 9)

Traces of each of the individual “4 P” modes of governance could be found throughout the sampled profiles. In line with the “pursue” workstream, the profiles identified known OCGs within their locality subject to police investigations and operations. Following the “prevent” programme, many of the profiles identified means by which organised crime could be stopped from occurring in the first place; an example of which could be seen in Local Profile 6:

*Early identification and support for at-risk families is key to prevent intergenerational pathways into serious and organised criminality.*  
(Local Profile 6, pg 51)

Concrete examples of how local areas might be “protected” and “prepared” in relation to organised crime were more difficult to come by, although the sampled profiles certainly stated their intention to achieve both such objectives.

It quickly became clear that the adoption of a CONTEST strategy in the sampled profiles was the primary reason that they could not be categorised as embodying any single mode of governance, such as “criminal justice”, “administrative” or “securitisation”. Instead, the “4 P” approach traversed each of these, meaning that the profiles represented a highly complex, sometimes even chaotic, blend of governance strategies. There was an emphasis on preventing people from becoming involved in organised crime, but also on prosecuting crime group members; there was an impulse to protect vulnerable individuals, but also to change local regulations to make crime more difficult to commit. This was essentially a *multi-faceted* response to local organised crime; one that borrowed elements from diverse strategies of crime control.

Underlying this use of “CONTEST” within the sampled profiles, was an emphasis on what might be called a “dispersed” and “collaborative” mode of governance; an attempt to distribute responsibility for governing local organised crime across a broad range of actors, and for those diverse actors to work together. For example, Local Profile 5 argued that:

*An effective local response... depends on relationships... between law enforcement agencies and governmental departments, regulators, local authorities, the voluntary sector and the private sector.*

(Local Profile 5, pg 4)

Another good example of this was be found in the recommendations section of Local Profile 8:

- *Develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Gambling Commission to establish joint working and intelligence sharing*
- *Liaise with the Illegal Money Lending Team and other relevant stakeholders to understand the current threat, risk and harm posed by loan sharks operating in the local authority area*
- *Development of a partnership-wide intelligence collection procedure to improve understanding of the prevalence of counterfeit goods in the local authority areas*

(Local Profile 8, pg 48)

Each of these action-points involved co-operative working with other, non-police agencies; they involved making connections with those who have their own discrete areas of governance – whether that be the Gambling Commission, the Illegal Money Lending Team or local councils more broadly – and then combining those efforts.

Evidence for a “dispersed” and “collaborative” mode of governance could also be seen in the sheer breadth of agencies supposed to be involved in producing and using local profiles. These ranged from social services teams, education departments and healthcare providers to Regional Organised Crime Units and the National Crime Agency (Home Office, 2014). Even the act of producing a profile

implied collaboration because, as was seen earlier, a local profile is supposed to make use of a hugely eclectic range of data sources, many of which are held by councils or social services departments.

The kind of response implied by the profiles is thus not limited to the operations of the police. Nor is it not the sole preserve of the criminal justice system, as the Home Office local profile guidance makes clear:

*...the police and NCA cannot tackle serious and organised crime alone. They will need a close and collaborative relationship with local partnerships.*

(Home Office, 2014, pg 17)

There was a repeated emphasis in the profiles and the official guidance on the police's inability to deal with organised crime unilaterally; a partial withdrawal of police responsibility for organised crime control and a subsequent redistribution of it amongst non-law enforcement actors.

To bring these points together, it could be said that the adoption of the CONTEST counter-terrorist strategy within the sampled profiles represented a mode of governance which was *multi-faceted*, *dispersed* and *collaborative*. Based on the "4 Ps" model, local profiles recommend that local agencies "pursue" those involved in OCGs, "prevent" both victimisation and recruitment into organised crime, "protect" those vulnerable to crime, and "prepare" for contingencies. According to the profiles, responsibility for such responses should be dispersed amongst a diverse array of local actors who may only achieve their goals through multi-agency collaboration.

### **6.5. The "localness" of local profiles**

In line with the theoretical proposition developed earlier in the study, one of the primary concerns of this case was to explore the "localness" of the sampled profiles; to identify what, if anything, was "local" about their representation of the organised crime problem. The proposition, of course, was that local assessments are not very "local", largely because they represent organised crime as a national phenomenon, not a local one.

In applying this proposition to the case of local profiles, the first step was to identify how exactly the profiles defined their local areas. In the Home Office guidance, police forces are given the option of producing a single profile to cover their entire territory, or to develop profiles for smaller locales, such as individual towns, counties or regions within the boundaries of their force (Home Office, 2014). Table 15 below, provides a breakdown of police forces by the level of the profile they produced.

Table 15 : The scope of the local profiles produced by police forces in England and Wales

Level of profile	No. of forces (2015)	No. of forces (2016)
Single, force-wide profile	21 (64%)	25 (58%)
Multiple, highly localised profiles within one police force area	9 (27%)	14 (32%)
Both	3 (9%)	4 (9%)

*Source: Data compiled by the author from HMIC's PEEL inspection reports for 2015 and 2016. Crown Copyright, published under the Open Government licence.*

Regardless of whether a profile was produced for a whole police force territory, or for a particular district, county or BCU, “localness” was always defined in terms of administrative boundaries. For the profiles then, “localness” is not a particular kind of place, or a particular kind of population, it is an arbitrarily-defined zone of governance.

In order to explore the representation of “localness” in more detail, pairs of profiles representing two very different kinds of locality were selected from within the sample and compared side-by-side. Using Nvivo, material which described organised crime in unique local terms was coded as “LOCAL”, while material which was more generalised and replicated across the profiles was coded as “NON-LOCAL”. The same exercise was repeated with different pairs of profiles from within the sample, the question always being: *what makes this profile “local”?* or *what differentiates this profile from others in the sample?* In this way, a profile of a large, rural and mountainous locality could be compared with that of a geographically small but densely-populated urban district; a profile of a large,



populous urban conurbation could be compared with a post-industrial town. It was useful throughout this process to conduct thought-experiments in which all the place names were removed from the profiles and an attempt is made to draw conclusions about each locality; i.e. whether it was a populous urban conurbation with a serious gang problem, a deprived rural area with labour exploitation issues or a small town with a big drug problem.

As a result of the original sampling process, the collected profiles represented areas with very different local economies, social histories, rates of recorded crime and variable ethnic compositions. The degree to which each area was integrated into national and international systems also varied substantially. Some of these locales were host to global corporations, thriving night-time economies and a multiplicity of cultural-linguistic communities, all densely packed into a few city districts. Other locations were characterised by tightly-knit, homogenous farming communities dispersed over hundreds of square miles where international immigration is low and it may take as much as four or five hours to drive to anything resembling a metropolis.

Through such analytical exercises, it became apparent that the sampled profiles did contain real local detail. For example, Local Profile 2 provided a narrative description of its locality, highlighting its rurality, dispersed population, economy and limited transport infrastructure:

*Over 50% of the... [local place name] ... population live in rural communities spread across the county which brings diverse and unique challenges...*

(Local Profile 2, pg 6)

When compared against the large and densely-populated locale represented by Local Profile 8, the differences between the two are quite clear:

*The... [local place name] ... is one of the most densely populated areas in the United Kingdom and is home to a large number of diverse communities, some of which live within some of the most deprived areas of the country... (the area) has a well-developed transport infrastructure, including good road connections... and a large international airport.*

(Local Profile 8, pg 11)

Similarly, Local Profile 3 described the OCGs operating within its rural / coastal area in local terms:

*The greatest number of mapped groups resides in the [local place name] area, closely followed by [local place name]. Most known OCGs in [local place name] are engaged in drug supply... drugs is the primary business area for most groups. Acquisitive crime, primarily burglary, is the second highest area of criminality.*

(Local Profile 3, pg 4-5)

Local Profile 7, by comparison, which represented an urban policing district, spoke in particular of its own problems with so-called “urban street gangs” (USGs) and “county-lines” drug supply:

*Within [the city] there is a clear distinction within the USGs identified where the individuals concerned are in the main, indigenous to [the city] although non-indigenous groups exist... They relate to a group of males from the [local place name] area that were running the drug line, and a group of local males that were running the (other) drug line...*

(Local Profile 7, pg 14)

Such accounts were undeniably “local”. There were problems with urban street gangs in the city district represented by Local Profile 7, but not in the rural / coastal area covered by Local Profile 3. Similar distinctions could also be found in the other sampled profiles. This suggested that the initial proposition might be wholly inaccurate – in this case at least.

However, analysis of the material coded as “NON-LOCAL” provided an interesting counter-point to this. In the first instance, there were significant amounts of text replicated across the sampled profiles. Such sections had either been copied word-for-word or paraphrased from the National Organised Crime Strategy, the Home Office guidance on local profiles, or other official documents. This material was most frequently found in the introductory sections of the profiles and tended to present a nationally-oriented, more general depiction of organised crime.

Of far greater significance though, was the discovery of what could only be described as a conceptual ordering scheme underlying the sampled profiles. In-depth analysis of the “NON-LOCAL” material showed that certain specific features could be found across the profiles, regardless of the locality represented by each. The first of these commonalities was an adherence to a “national security” narrative of organised crime; a feature already examined in section 3 of this chapter. Briefly reiterated, it was evident that the vast majority of the sampled profiles articulated the problem of organised crime in terms of a threat to national security, albeit one that also had some local impact.

The second common feature was an emphasis on the same types of organised criminal activity; specifically, drugs, cybercrime, human trafficking, child exploitation, acquisitive crime, fraud and firearms. As Table 16, below, makes clear, these areas of activity were the primary focus of almost all the local profiles.

Table 16. Number of profiles with a section on each crime type

Type of criminal activity	No. of profiles focused on this crime-type (n = 12)
Human trafficking & modern slavery	12
Drugs	12
Child exploitation	11
Fraud / economic crime	11
Organised acquisitive crime	9
Firearms	9
Cyber offences	8
Counterfeit trading	2
Violence	1

In other words, no matter whether a local profile sought to describe organised crime in a rural hinterland, an inner-city district, or a coastal town, the emphasis was always on finding the same types of criminal activity. While some of the profiles did also examine more peripheral crime-types, such as forms of acquisitive crime, these

were more of a secondary consideration when compared to the space and effort devoted to exploring the crime-types shown in Table 16.

This became a highly-significant point. It meant that only officially-sanctioned types of “organised crime” were being included in the profiles, regardless of the locality in question. These types were the same as those found in the Home Office local profile guide and the National Organised Crime Strategy 2013:

- the trafficking of drugs, people and firearms;
- organised illegal immigration;
- modern slavery;
- large-scale fraud...
- counterfeit goods...
- cyber crime; and
- child sexual exploitation;

(Home Office, 2014, pg 11-12)

Indeed, this official list mapped neatly onto the priorities of the sampled profiles. What is more, the local profile guide exhorted the authors of local profiles to focus their attention specifically onto these crime-types (*ibid*, pg 11) since these are national priorities. Other illegal activities – such as waste trafficking, organised poaching, food fraud, illegal commercial fishing, livestock theft, extortion, and the like – were excluded from the same classification and generally did not appear in the sampled profiles.

Essentially, it became clear that the local profiles were following a national “blueprint” of what organised crime looked like; a nationally-derived classification scheme that defined what could be called “organised crime” and what could not. While there was genuine local detail in the sampled profiles, they also had an in-built rigidity; their “localness” existed only within the confines of this national ordering scheme; their “localness” was bounded by the classifications they adopted; ways of thinking that pre-determined what could be identified as organised crime locally. Significantly, this ordering scheme was based on national priorities and represented organised crime as a threat to national security. Organised crime was being imagined as if it were a field that spread across the country; appearing stronger in some places

than others, penetrating into variable locales, but always acting as one “thing”. The “localness” of organised crime was just the manifestation of this national field in a particular locality; the local becoming little more than the demarcation of a piece of the national and a rendering of “it” into local terms. In this way, the “national” threatened to pervade the local; it threatened to obscure idiosyncratic manifestations of local organised crime, submerging the unique qualities of organised criminality in East End London - so vividly described by Hobbs (2013) – and conflating it with that found in rural North Wales, or inner-city Birmingham.

The sampled profiles therefore represented something of a contradiction; their sense of “localness” was, in fact, a kind of hybridisation of the local and the national; a construction of local organised crime built using a standard national blueprint. Their localness was “bounded”. Importantly though, the tension between the local and the national meant that local profiles were incoherent in their representation of local organised crime; a point that had important implications for the theoretical proposition and for the study as a whole.

## **6.6. Discussion**

In bringing together the findings of the previous sections, it became possible to build a picture of the problem representations and governmentalities implicit within the local profiles. This, in turn, led to the adaptation and development of the initial proposition. In the following sections, each of these elements are discussed in detail, before some general criticisms are made.

### *The representation of the problem of local organised crime*

The sampled profiles embodied a highly complex and sometimes chaotic representation of local organised crime. As became clear in section 6.2 of this chapter, the profiles contained at least two, and possibly three, different ontologies of organised crime. There was a perspective in which organised crime was taken to be *organised criminal activities* - such as drug dealing, human trafficking and cybercrime. When the content of the sampled profiles was examined in detail though, it was clear that organised crime was, instead, most frequently described in terms of local crime groups and street gangs – types of *criminal organisation*. Above and beyond these two different perspectives though, there was an over-arching

discourse in which organised crime was said to be some kind of cohesive force, as if those different crime types and crime groups labelled as “organised” had emergent properties beyond the sum of their parts.

In section 6.3, it was shown how the sampled profiles articulated the actual problem of local organised crime in a number of ways, including “harm”, “risk” and “vulnerability”, but that the predominant language used was that of “threat”. Beyond mentions of “national security” and “local impact” though, the profiles were somewhat vague in explaining for whom or what organised crime actually threatened.

In section 6.4, it became apparent that the profiles implied a rather unique and complex mode of governance of local organised crime. Adopting the counter-terrorist “CONTEST” strategy, they sought to cleave the problem into separate governmental objects through which existing offender groups could be “pursued”, potential offenders “prevented” from becoming involved in crime, communities and the nation state “protected”, and governmental agencies “prepared” (Home Office, 2013a, pg 7-11). As well as being multi-faceted, this strategy implied a dispersal of governing responsibility amongst an incredibly diverse range of local actors.

Synthesising these complexities into a cohesive picture was a significant challenge. It seemed as if there were, in fact, two - if not more - problem representations, which did not always agree with each other; a situation described by Bacchi in her own work on policy analysis:

Policies often contain tensions and contradictions. There is seldom a single voice lying behind them... (researchers should) acknowledge contesting positions within a document when they are apparent.

(Bacchi, 2009, pg 20)

She also describes how, sometimes, “problem representations “nest” or are embedded one within the other” (*ibid*, 2009, pg 21). This certainly seemed to be the case with the sampled profiles, and the task, therefore, was not necessarily to find *the* one fundamental, all-encompassing problem representation within them, but to highlight the competing accounts that they embodied.

Revisiting the case study data and, in particular, the memos and notes made during analysis of the “localness” of the profiles, it became clear that one of the main

conceptual fault-lines was between the “national” and the “local”. On the one hand, the “national” account depicted organised crime as officially-defined forms of criminal activity; drugs, firearms, cybercrime, human trafficking, child exploitation. It attributed these activities with combined, emergent properties which allowed “organised crime” to act as a cohesive force and thus threaten national security. It proposed to deal with the severity of this threat by implementing counter-terrorist strategies of governance. In this view, specific local areas are but jigsaw pieces of the national picture – not idiosyncratic places with their own, locally-unique forms of organised crime.

On the other hand, the subsidiary “local” account represented organised crime in terms of specific, locally-embedded crime groups and street gangs with named members, known haunts and well-understood methods of operation. While there was some attempt to re-configure this local ontology into the language of threat, most profiles clearly had difficulty in identifying what exactly – beyond national security – these groups were supposed to threaten. Some of the sampled profiles made serious attempts to re-think the governance of their local organised crime in terms of the CONTEST counter-terrorist strategy, although others focused more simply on managing their local crime groups. The “national” and the “local” then, constituted two fundamentally different problem representations – both of which existed within individual local profiles. The main differences between these two problem representations are summarised in table 17, below:

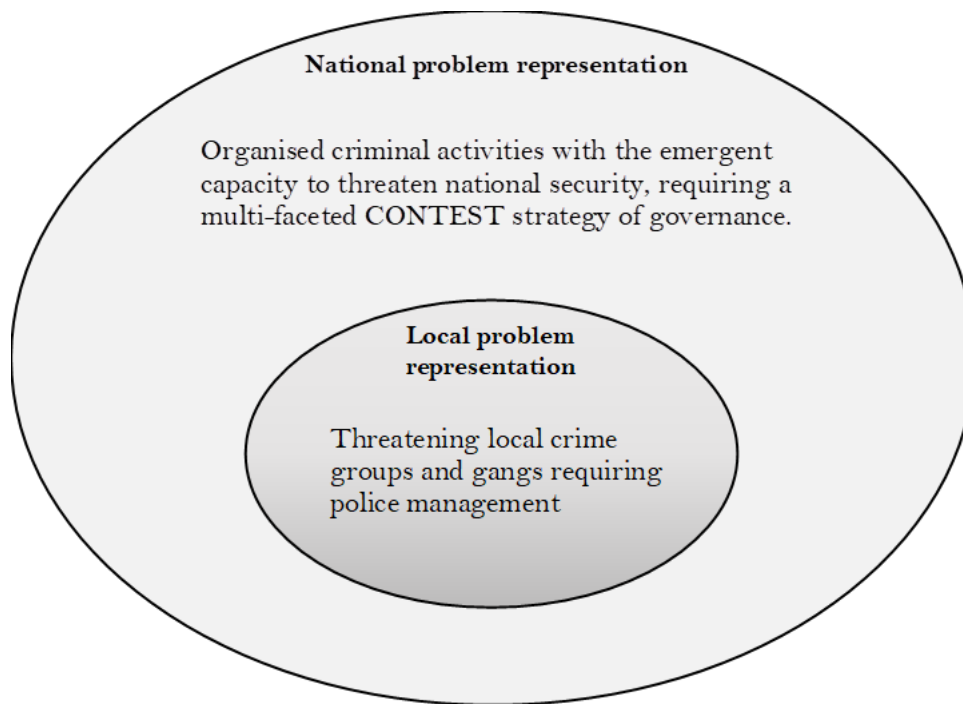
Table 17. Characteristics of the two problem representations found in local profiles

<b>National problem representation</b>	<b>Local problem representation</b>
An emphasis on organised criminal activities	An emphasis on crime groups and street gangs
Organised crime as a national security threat	Organised crime having local impact
Governance through CONTEST strategy	Some adoption of CONTEST, but also an emphasis on managing local crime groups

The “national” problem representation took precedence in the sampled profiles; it was the official account described in the opening paragraphs and the basis for the

structure of their content. The “local” account was thus nested within the “national”. Figure 16, below, attempts to depict this idea:

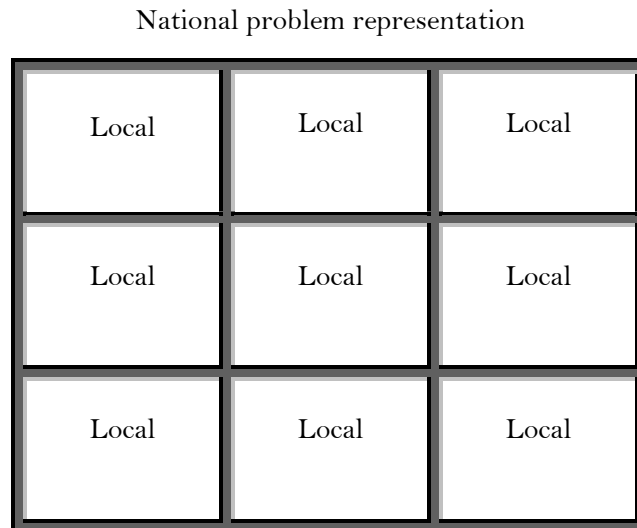
Figure 16. Co-existing problem representations within local profiles



With this visualisation in mind, the sampled profiles were re-examined to see if this helped to make sense of their complex content. It was clear that the profiles certainly did contain both “national” and “local” representations of the problem – evidence for which was provided in section 6.5 - but Figure 16, above, was most definitely an over-simplification of this evidence. In reality, there was not such a clear-cut boundary between the two representations; in many of the profiles one representation would “leak” into the other, and this would occur to a different extent depending which profile was looked at. For example, as was observed in section 6.5, the “national” problem representation provided a conceptual ordering scheme of sorts for the profiles, specifically in terms of what types of activity could be called “organised crime”. In following this, the profiles were organised into sections covering each of these types, but the actual content of these sections related to their well-known local crime groups. Thus, the two problem representations were not really “nested” within one another, as suggested by Figure 16. Rather, they overlaid one another. This re-conceptualisation is represented by Figure 17, below:



Figure 17. Local problem representations within a national representation



From this perspective, the national problem representation is seen as a conceptual grid or matrix within which more localised problem representations exist. This visualisation was found to be a much more accurate way of conceptualising the sampled profiles.

Given the sheer complexity of the profiles though, it was also possible to define other, much smaller-scale problem representations within this broader picture. For instance, Local Profiles 2 and 3 wrote extensively about so-called “county lines” drug trafficking in their area. This is, of course, a problem representation in its own right; one in which the “problem” is framed as that of large, sophisticated gangs from big cities predated upon and exploiting rural counties. Needless to say, there will be other potential ways in which this problem might be framed - in terms of rapidly increasing rural drug markets for instance, or in terms of a rapid increase in the number of people participating in the drug trade in big cities, forcing some to seek new markets. These smaller problem representations existed within those outlined in Figure 17, above, but added further complexity to an already complex picture.

Bringing these points together, it was possible to see that there were multiple problem representations implicit within the sampled profiles. At a deep level, there existed a “national” problem representation of organised crime which underpinned and structured the profiles, delineating what was and was not “organised crime” and seeking to frame “it” as a threat to national security. This account represented the

problem of local organised crime as: *specific types of organised criminal activity that collectively threaten national security and require dispersed, collaborative and multi-faceted governance through the CONTEST strategy.*

Occupying the spaces of this conceptual matrix though, were more “local” problem representations in which organised crime was synonymous with local crime groups and street gangs. This account primarily represented the local organised crime problem in terms of: *local OCGs and street gangs requiring management.* Traversing all of this were smaller, self-contained problem representations, such as that of “county-lines”. The exact combination of these problem representations varied across the sample, with some profiles adopting more of the national account and others adopting less. Significantly, the complex combination of these perspectives meant that local profiles were incoherent in their representation of local organised crime.

#### *Underlying governmentalities*

The different problems representations found within the sampled profiles typified different ways of thinking about, and responding to, organised crime. For this reason, the two representations had to be treated separately, even if they did in fact merge to form a kind of “hybrid” governmentality within the profiles themselves.

The governmentality embodied by the so-called “national” problem representation isolated specific criminal *acts* as the entities requiring governance. As has been seen, these include drug dealing, child exploitation, human trafficking, cybercrime and the like. It is, therefore, an *activity* or *crime-centric* governmentality. “Governing” the organised crime problem then, does not equate to the governance of particular offending populations, or types of offenders, or segments of society; it does not create outsiders or blame foreign conspiracies for the problem, as per the “alien conspiracy” (Hobbs and Woodiwiss, 2009, pg 114) perspective. Instead, the problem is taken to reside in the enactment of certain illegal activities, regardless of who is enacting them. It is the acts themselves which are inherently deviant and problematic. This orientation has a certain affinity with those areas of criminology which are also crime-centric rather than offender-centric, especially “script-analysis” and “the organisation of serious crimes” (Edwards and Levi, 2008, pg 365). Given such a position, it might have been expected that the profiles would explore the processes, “scripts” or sequences through which crimes are enacted locally, though

this never actually materialised. Using a narrative borrowed from counter-terrorism, this governmentality ascribes these criminal activities with the emergent capacity to threaten national security, thus creating a larger, nationalised object of governance.

Within this governmentality, a diverse range of local actors are identified as responsible for governing. The traditional police unilateralism in the “fight” against organised crime is replaced with multilateral governance by councillors, regulators, social workers, firemen and others; each with their own “bit” to do. It is a strategy of governance based on “responsibilisation” (Garland, 2001, pg 124). It is:

...a way of thinking and a variety of techniques designed to change the manner in which governments act upon crime. Instead of addressing crime in a direct fashion by means of the police, the courts and the prisons, this approach promotes a new kind of indirect action, in which state agencies activate action by non-state organizations and actors.

(Garland, 2001; pg 124)

The sampled profiles, through their action-points, seek to “responsibilise” local actors in just such a way; to “govern at a distance” (Garland, 2000, pg 349), using their recommendations to encourage the development of broad coalitions; to join up efforts locally in the hope that they can contribute to a national effort. It is a governmentality that reaches out into the capillaries of local government and seeks to activate the latent crime control potential of those beyond law enforcement.

The means by which these multiple governors should govern is articulated through the “4 Ps” approach. Here, the primacy of traditional police tactics is displaced; it becomes only one of many styles of governing. Others include preventative work aimed at stopping the poor and vulnerable from being drawn into organised crime, and the protection of victims from exploitation. Each of these forms of governance have their own mentalities. Elements of the “Prevent” workstream can be said to embody quasi-social welfarist modes of governance in which vulnerable youths from poor backgrounds require positive intervention in their lives to divert them from gang culture and back toward mainstream society; in some cases, the “Protect” workstream aligns itself with situational governance through regulation, while “Pursue” represents more traditional criminal justice forms of governance based on incapacitation, punishment and deterrence.

By contrast, the “local” problem representation embodies a very different governmentality. It imagines that which is to be governed in terms of crime groups and street gangs; an *actor-centric* perspective in which the police do most of the governing. Ascribed with rational, financial motivations, offenders within this governmentality most resemble those imagined by classical criminology; contextless, rational beings, dislocated from social structures, subcultures and values.

These two different governmentalities co-exist within the sampled profiles, with the “national” governmentality dominating the narrative, but with discrete “local” governmentalities emerging within the substantive content of each section. The sampled profiles thus embodied a hybridised governmentality; a complex fusion of narratives about local organised crime and its governance.

## **6.7. Conclusions**

It was clear from these findings that the initial proposition could be developed in a number of ways. To begin with, the notion that “*local organised crime assessments would not be very local*” was shown to be an over-simplification. The sampled local profiles did contain real local insight; they described population dispersion, pockets of deprivation, transport infrastructure, the characteristics of indigenous crime groups and the nature of the local economy, among other things. Secondly, it was also too much of a simplification to say that local profiles represented organised crime only as a national phenomenon. Instead, as was explained in the previous sections, the sampled profiles were a complex mix of national *and* local problem representations.

However, a fundamental tension existed between these two different representations of local organised crime. The “national” account represented the problem as a threat to national security from a cohesive, emergent “force” which could nonetheless be broken down into different types of criminal activity, while the “local” account focused on problematic local crime groups and gangs. For the national account, a given locality was little more than an arbitrary sub-unit of national governance, while for the local account, a locality is host to unique crime groups and gangs. These two versions of local organised crime were largely incompatible. Their fusion and hybridisation within local profiles resulted in what

can only be described as an incoherent representation of local organised crime; a schizophrenic depiction of the problem.

This realisation was a turning point for the study. Instead of identifying a neat, elegant representation of the problem which could then be compared and contrasted with OCGM, there was instead a complex incoherence. Indeed, at some points in the case study, the reverse engineering process had run the risk of doing the profiles' work for them; there had been a temptation to clarify what the profiles said and to resolve their self-contradictions in the interests of obtaining a clear answer to the research question. Yet this temptation had to be resisted.

Such reflections were pertinent to a broader debate within the governmentality literature. O'Malley et al., in particular, noted long ago that some governmental analyses have the tendency...

...to see programmes as if they are written by one hand, rather than multi-vocal, internally-contested and thus, in a sense, always in change and often internally contradictory.

(O'Malley et al., 1997, pg 513)

In assuming that specific types of local assessment would present a unified, coherent picture of organised crime, the study had somewhat fallen into this trap. The "multi-vocal" and "internally contradictory" (*ibid*) nature of local profiles shattered this assumption, however.

The first question prompted by this insight was whether or not the OCGM case study had glossed-over important contradictions or over-simplified the data. As a quantitative assessment there had been less scope for identifying internal contradictions within OCGM but, on reflection, a number of similar issues did also exist. For instance, the idea that cocaine-trafficking networks, child exploitation rings, cyber fraudsters and cannabis-farmers could all be collapsed into the notion of the "OCG", then become registered within a geographically-defined locality before being given a score - contained its own set of potential contradictions. These, and other issues with OCGM, are re-visited in Chapter 8.

The second question related to the overall direction of the study. If local assessments were not cohesive, but fragmented, in their representation of organised crime; if their governmentalities were not whole, but contradictory, then what sorts

of comparison and analysis were possible (or desirable)? Those who have argued for grounded, sociologically-informed governmentality research (see, for example, Garland 1997) would perhaps call for ethnographic observation as a way of complementing content analysis of local profiles. Through this, the internal political and bureaucratic dynamics that shape local assessments could be unpicked, leading to a detailed account of how different governmentalities elbow their way into official narratives of organised crime and how exactly local assessments *become* incoherent. Notwithstanding problems of ethnographic access and the constraints placed on researchers who “sign-up” to officially-sanctioned projects, the objective of this study was to *denaturalise* local assessments and their implicit governmentalities, and in so doing, *contest* their accounts of organised crime so that intellectual space might be created for new ways of thinking and new kinds of assessment. Thus, building a detailed sociological picture of how local assessments become incoherent was beside the point. It did not really matter *how* local assessments became incoherent or self-contradictory, only that they demonstrably were so. This would be enough for the purposes of denaturalisation and contestation.

In more specific terms, it was clear that the proposition needed to change direction; it needed to take into account the complexity and incoherence found within local assessments, not gloss-over them. There needed to be a shift of emphasis; away from considerations of what made local assessments “local”, to questions over the conceptual coherence of their local problem representations. The initial proposition – as developed out of the previous case study - had outlived its usefulness. It had served to direct attention to “localness” within the sampled profiles, resulting in the discovery of incoherent representations of local organised crime. Following the tenets of the adaptive theory approach (Layder 1998) then, the proposition was adapted to the following:

Local organised crime assessments are incoherent in their representation of local organised crime due to a fundamental tension between the “local” and the “national”
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In moving forward, the study would need to actively seek-out the internal contradictions, schizophrenic voices and “rough-edges” of local assessments; in making a broader contribution to the field it would need to identify any generalisable

patterns – any common sources of incoherence across local assessments. It might have been the case, for example, that the inconsistencies found within local assessments all stemmed from flawed underlying conceptualisations of organised crime, or from incoherent definitions of “localness”, or from both. The objectives of the study thus shifted; away from developing a neat theoretical typology of local assessment governmentalities, to seeking out conceptual flaws and contradictions.

Reflecting on the findings of this and the previous case study though, it became apparent that both OCGM and the local profiles shared an important common feature. Although they were both used locally to assess local organised crime, they had also both been introduced by national bodies (ACPO and the Home Office, respectively); they had both been imposed on local police forces from the centre. It was perhaps not surprising then, that both were found to contain tensions between the national and the local. Furthermore, one of the main justifications for selecting these two types of assessment as case studies was their ubiquity – the fact that they were used by almost all police forces across England and Wales; they were *the* main types of assessment in use. The reason for this ubiquity though, was the fact that they were mandatory. There was a risk therefore, of self-confirmation bias in these two case studies; a risk that in selecting only the most prevalent, nationally-imposed types of local assessment, the study would keep finding evidence of tension between the local and the national. It could plausibly have been the case, for example, that less-prevalent, bespoke types of local assessment did not fit this pattern; that they were truly local and conceptually coherent. It was important therefore, to examine a third type of assessment; an assessment which had not been nationally-imposed; one that was unique to a particular local area. In so doing, the modified proposition could be tested more thoroughly, and some broader conclusions drawn.

## 7. A case study of the Cross Border Organised Crime Assessment

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### 7.1. Introduction

The key insight of the previous case study was that local profiles represented the problem of organised crime in an incoherent way. Although they did contain some genuine, unique descriptions of local areas (contrary to the expectations of the original proposition) there existed a fundamental tension between a “national” account of the problem and a more “local” one. The profiles drew together criminal groups, illegal activities, street gangs, local demographics, “pathways” into organised crime, vulnerabilities, threat, national security and counter-terrorist strategies of governance into a complex, eclectic and sometimes confusing narrative. The crucial point then, was not the lack of “localness” in their problem representation, but the lack of conceptual-coherence.

It was noted, however, that one possible explanation for this was the fact that local profiles had been *centrally-imposed* on local police forces by the Home Office. Local forces were provided with a “local profile guide” to follow (Home Office, 2014); their profiles were also reviewed by HMIC inspectors on an annual basis – there was, in other words, a strong *national* influence on the production of local profiles, and this could have accounted for their dual problem representations and, hence, their conceptual confusion.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there was a subsequent need to examine a type of local assessment which had not been centrally-imposed on different local areas, but which was instead unique to one particular area. The expectation was that such an assessment might have a better grasp of “localness”; that without any national-level direction or interference it might be more conceptually-coherent. This sort of finding would be highly significant for the theoretical proposition but could also have significant policy implications. It might have meant that centrally-imposed assessments are currently too rigid in their insistence that local authorities focus only on national priorities. It might have meant that such assessments need to take more account of different kinds of local area if they are to be coherent.



In examining a locale-specific type of assessment though, there was a need to actively seek out areas of discord or conflict; to feel for rough edges. This ran against the impulse to find an elegant, parsimonious answer to the question; “*how do local assessments represent the problem of local organised crime?*” Rather than endlessly reducing the complexities of local assessments; instead of doing the assessments’ work for them by clarifying what they meant, there was a need to lay their conceptual superstructures bare; to highlight where important elements might be missing, or where things did not fit. On a broader level, this third case study would be oriented towards corroboration rather than theoretical exploration; it was a way of testing the proposition, of seeking confirmation (or contradiction) of the local profile case study findings.

Upon reflection, it also became clear that the local profile case study had really only examined one particular dimension of “localness”; namely, the local as a particular *geographical place*. In other words, by sampling profiles from very different places, the previous case study had only examined spatial variation. “Localness”, however, is not only about place, but also about time. The “local” is, in actuality, a particular place at *a particular time*; if this were not so then police forces could produce just one assessment of their local area and never update it. This presented the interesting possibility of examining *temporal variation* in local assessments rather than just spatial variation; of studying if and how priorities change over time. It might have been the case, for example, that local assessments always recycled the same old problems year-after-year. Or perhaps they were sensitive to changes in local demographics, economics, politics and crime-trends. Perhaps they would recognise when the present “local” was no longer the same as the past “local”. There was an ambition therefore, to introduce a longitudinal dimension to this research; to investigate these issues by examining assessments from one particular local area over a period of time.

These two aspirations fitted-together neatly. A case study could be undertaken of an assessment produced for just one specific local area and that assessment could be analysed for variation over time. This would help to verify the proposition by testing whether or not locale-specific assessments were more conceptually-coherent than centrally-imposed, “national” ones, but would also explore the extent to which assessments capture temporal “localness”. The challenge was to identify a type of assessment suitable for just such a case study.

### *Case selection*

The key criteria for this case study was as follows:

- a type of local assessment which had not been centrally-imposed on different local areas and was instead specific and unique to a local area
- a type of local assessment which had been produced repeatedly over a number of years for the same area
- a type of local assessment which could be accessed and was feasible to study

It became clear that very few local assessments were in fact “locale-specific”; most had been centrally-imposed on local areas at some point in time. The sampling pool was therefore small. Consideration was given to selecting unique “problem profiles” of organised crime developed by local police forces, or individual “strategic assessments” and bespoke local organised crime harm / risk assessment tools.

However, there were problems with each of these options. Some were fairly recently developed, for instance, and could not therefore be studied over any length of time.

Others were all but impossible to research without privileged access. There was one particular type of assessment though, that seemed to fit all the required criteria.

Known as the *Cross Border Organised Crime Assessment*, it focused on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It was accessible, seemed amenable to analysis and had been produced every two years since 2004. Of particular interest though, was the uniqueness of the border-locality it covered. The border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland has a long history that includes violent conflict, political dispute and paramilitary activities; it is a place unlike any other and the Cross Border Organised Crime Assessment (henceforth referred to as “CBOCA”) had been designed and used *only* for that locality. It therefore seemed the ideal choice for a third case study. Reduced to its key elements, the purpose of this case study then, was to:

- explore the basic features of the CBOCAs
- explore temporal variation in the CBOCAs
- understand how the CBOCA represented the problem of local organised crime
- identify the governmentalities underlying this representation

- explore the conceptual coherence of its problem representation, seeking verification or contradiction of the proposition

The case study itself is comprised of two chapters. This chapter describes what the CBOCA is, how it works, what data it uses and so on. Chapter 8 seeks to reverse-engineer the CBOCA to identify its implicit representations of the problem and its underlying governmentalities.

## **7.2. Notes on data collection**

Of key importance to this case study was accessing and directly analysing the CBOCAs in and of themselves. This sort of direct access was crucial for the process of “reverse-engineering”. Preliminary research showed that the CBOCAs were readily accessible from the publication repository of Northern Ireland’s “Organised Crime Task Force”. In total, 7 CBOCAs were obtained, covering the years 2004 to 2016. This constituted the total number of CBOCAs actually produced. In other words, the assessments analysed in this case were not a *sample* of a broader population but *were* the entire population. Hence there were no significant issues regarding sample size or sampling logic.

A range of other sources of evidence were also collected with the aim of filling in some of the CBOCA’s history, development and context. An approach similar to that of “snowball sampling” was used to identify key data sources. References in the CBOCAs to key strategies / policy documents, as well as to political agreements, were identified and the corresponding documents tracked-down. Searches were also made of Hansard records, parliamentary records of the Irish government, publication releases by Northern Ireland’s Organised Crime Taskforce and by the Irish Department of Justice. In some cases, where key items of information could not be located, targeted Freedom of Information requests were sent to the relevant public bodies. This resulted in the collection of a series of interlinked documents which are listed in Appendix B.

As with the other case studies, consideration was given to interviewing those who produced and used the CBOCAs. Although obtaining such accounts was not crucial for the process of “reverse-engineering” nor for uncovering the CBOCA’s implicit problem representation of organised crime, such interviews could have

elucidated certain details of their methodology and context. The all-too-familiar issue was that of access. Given the history of paramilitary attacks on police in Northern Ireland and the sensitivities of policing a politically-charged border region, authorities are, quite understandably, guarded about their work – especially in relation to cross-border organised crime. In short, gaining enough access to conduct a meaningful number of interviews in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland would have been an excessively long and resource-intensive process that may have only provided some extra fine detail to the case study. The emphasis, therefore, was on reverse-engineering the assessments themselves.

The “snowball” sampling of key documents is an open-ended process, but the documents described above were found to be the key sources needed for this case study. While more and more documents could have been collected, these were deemed sufficient to satisfy the requirements of the case study protocol.

#### *Data limitations*

The CBOCAs themselves met all of Scott’s criteria for documentary sources (Scott, 1990); they were obtained directly from one of the organisations responsible for producing them and can therefore be considered authentic and credible; they were certainly representative, since the CBOCAs obtained constituted the whole population of CBOCAs produced. Similarly, the other documentary sources were collected straight from their source, such as the Hansard records or the repositories of police forces and government agencies.

### **7.3. The Cross Border Organised Crime Assessment: an overview**

The CBOCA takes the form of a document, typically running to around forty pages in length, produced every two years. There is some slight variation between each CBOCA, but the general pattern is for the document to begin with a foreword written jointly by the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the Commissioner of An Garda Síochána. Typically, there follows a section describing “organised crime gangs” in terms of what they are, their motivations, how many of them are known to the police, their nationalities, and how they are thought to operate on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic. The remainder of the CBOCA is broken down into sections focusing on separate areas of organised

criminal activity, such as drugs, human trafficking, cybercrime, agricultural crime and so on. While mostly comprised of text, the CBOCA is interspersed with photographs of seized drugs, bundles of cash, illegal waste dumps and counterfeit goods. In addition, the assessment includes numerous “case studies” which describe specific police operations against crime gangs and usually emphasise the amounts of drugs, guns, cash, tobacco or counterfeit goods seized, and the number of convictions obtained. Less frequently, there are tables of data and the occasional pie-chart. Taken together, the overall impression given by the CBOCA is one of “glossiness”. With the use of eye-catching fonts, dramatic images and case study boxes, a reader could be forgiven for thinking they were reading a promotional brochure of some kind. Even from the outset then, the CBOCA seemed substantially different from both organised crime group mapping and from local profiles. As became clear, it also had a unique historical background.

### ***The historical context of the CBOCA***

As a local area, the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland has a long and complex history. It is a rural locale interspersed with villages and small towns, yet, in the past, it has been the site of violent conflict between British armed forces and Republican paramilitaries. Military watchtowers once occupied hill-tops and IRA operatives stalked the countryside. Although the violence has subsided since the Good Friday agreement of 1998, and the soldiers are now gone, the border remains politically-charged. It is a locale with extensive political, international and historical dimensions. In recent years, concerns have grown in both the media and in government about organised crime along the border, with some pointing to the involvement of former paramilitaries as a key part of the problem. Of course, the existence of an international border cutting-across the Irish countryside, devoid of checkpoints or passport controls, also presents a set of more mundane opportunities for tax evasion and smuggling. All of these unique factors had to be taken into consideration when thinking about how the CBOCA represented the problem of organised crime.

The CBOCA itself emerged in the early 2000s. It developed under conditions of increasing pressure for cross-border police collaboration between Northern Ireland and the Republic. From 2002, police forces from both nations began meeting at an annual cross-border organised crime seminar (An Garda Síochána and PSNI,

2016a). These seminars included workshops and presentations on topics of current interest to law enforcement; the 2012 seminar, for instance, featured workshops on human trafficking and the trade in counterfeit drugs (Department of Justice, 2012), while in 2014 there were presentations on emergent crime trends and forced labour (*ibid*). The seminars were also used to plan joint police activity for the future (An Garda Síochána and PSNI, 2012, pg 3), highlight emerging trends or patterns and “share ideas” (*ibid*, pg 3). Far from being purely functional and bureaucratic meetings behind closed doors, the seminars are highly-publicised; always accompanied by press-releases and glowing statements by senior government ministers, such as the following by the then Irish Minister for Justice and Equality, Deputy Frances Fitzgerald:

*I jointly hosted... the Annual Cross Border Organised Crime Seminar... with over 100 delegates... It is one demonstration of the close and ongoing co-operation between the two jurisdictions in this regard... Joint working of all the law enforcement agencies involved on both sides of the Border will be crucial to combating criminality successfully.*

(Parliamentary Questions - Department of Justice and Equality, 5th Nov 2015)

The CBOCA emerged out of these seminars (British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, 2015). Over time, the assessment became more and more integral to the seminars themselves, to the extent that by 2015 the CBOCA was described as being the “main output” of the seminar (*ibid*, pg 4). Little information is available regarding the means by which those at the seminars contribute to the assessment but, when complete, the end-product is ratified by parties from both sides of the border. In this way, the CBOCA can be seen as a form of agreement; a common acceptance of knowledge-claims about organised crime.

The pace of cross-border police collaboration accelerated over time. In 2010, law enforcement agencies from Northern Ireland and the Republic agreed upon and published a Cross-border Policing Strategy (British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, 2015, pg 3). This included arrangements for sharing equipment, exchanging forensic information on suspects and keeping track of sex offenders (An Garda Síochána and PSNI, 2016b, pg 3). The most notable agreement though, was the pledge to create a joint “tasking and co-ordination group” (*ibid*, pg 3) – a structure common to most

UK police forces which makes decisions about operational priorities and the allocation of policing resources. This effectively created an overarching police command-structure for the border – a form of co-operation that began to move beyond the sharing of information and annual seminars.

The culmination of this growing collaboration came in 2015 with the publication of *A Fresh Start, The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan* (Northern Ireland Executive, 2015, Joint Agency Task Force, 2016). Amongst a raft of new measures, the Fresh Start agreement set forth plans to create a “Joint Agency Task Force” (Northern Ireland Executive, 2015, pg 15) to respond to organised crime on the border (Joint Agency Task Force, 2016). This task force brought together law enforcement personnel from Northern Ireland and the Republic and demarcated them as a holistic police unit; it developed and embedded the proto-command structures previously established, leading to the creation of both a “Strategic Oversight Group” and an “Operations Co-ordination Group” (Northern Ireland Executive, 2015, pg 16) - formal systems of police direction and accountability. The task force launched a number of joint operations from early 2016 onwards, targeting organised burglars, human traffickers and a range of rural offenders operating along the border (Joint Agency Task Force, 2016).

Above all, this historical analysis showed there had been sustained pressure on Irish and Northern Irish police to collaborate ever more closely in the governance of organised crime on the border. From annual seminars and information-sharing agreements, to joint policing strategies and assessments, to the formation of a joint task force with its own command structure – the organised crime problem has been a vehicle for the integration of cross-border policing in Ireland.

The CBOCA emerged out of this collaborative governmental project. It therefore had a much more politicised history than either Organised Crime Group Mapping or local profiles. Most significantly though, it was only ever meant to be used for assessing organised crime on the border; it was not developed by a central body and then imposed on many different local areas. The CBOCA therefore mirrors the uniqueness of the border region itself.

### ***Who produces the CBOCA?***

The CBOCA is jointly produced by the PSNI and An Garda Siochana (Obokata et al., 2014). As mentioned above, the production of the assessment is closely associated with a seminar programme (British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, 2015, pg 4) which takes place every year, in which the PSNI, Garda and a host of other British and Irish agencies come together to discuss organised crime along the border (British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, 2015, pg 3).

A range of other agencies actually contribute to the assessment. These include the UK's Border Force, HMRC, immigration teams and the National Crime Agency, as well as the Irish Revenue Commissioners (An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2012, 2014, pg 6). The CBOCA is jointly published and released by the PSNI, Garda, Northern Ireland's Department of Justice and the Republic of Ireland's Department of Justice and Equality (An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2012); it is "owned" and agreed upon by all four of these organisations.

The CBOCA is clearly the result of a highly collaborative effort, primarily between police agencies in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, with some additional input and support from other UK and Irish law enforcement agencies.

### ***What is it for?***

The stated purpose of the CBOCA is to produce "an overview of organised crime" (An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2012, pg 3) and to "provide an insight into organised crime activities seen on both sides of the border" (An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2014, pg 5). Beyond such general statements though there is little specific detail on how the CBOCA is meant to be used, or what it is meant to do. In contrast to both Organised Crime Group Mapping and local profiles – both of which had a strictly defined purpose – the CBOCA performs a much vaguer function. It was clearly meant to inform, to offer up insights, but the question was; for whom are these insights intended? While there was no explicit discussion of such points in the assessments themselves, there was a strong argument to be made that the intended audience was, in fact, the public at large. The CBOCA's publication is usually announced in an official press release and included within many of the CBOCAs in a brief section entitled "*The role of the public*" which exhorts the general public to provide information on organised crime and which also lists several phone numbers through which tips can be called in. Furthermore, the fact that much thought and



effort has gone into producing an assessment which is so carefully laid out, interspersed with dramatic photographs, broken up with coloured text and case study boxes, suggests that the assessment is intended for a public audience; an audience which needs to be engaged and cajoled into reading it through the use of attractive fonts and eye-catching images. To all outward appearances, the CBOCA is not intended as a way of providing privileged and confidential intelligence to senior policy makers and police officers; it is not meant to forecast the future or “scan the horizon”; nor is it for ranking the seriousness of crime groups. Instead, it’s orientation – even if not spelt out in detail - is largely toward informing the broader public about the nature of organised crime along the border.

***What data does it use?***

The CBOCAs are not always explicit about the data sources used in the assessment process. They explain that information is provided by a number of agencies from both Ireland and the UK, and that data is also obtained through open sources (An Garda Síochána and PSNI, 2008). Beyond this, there is little further comment on what data is used and why. In order to build a better understanding of data use within the CBOCA, every reference to, and use of, specific data sources were coded across all seven assessments. For instance, whenever an assessment made a claim about a trend in some organised criminal activity and supported that claim with data on, say, commodity prices or drug seizure statistics, then that data source was coded as such. The same applied to data tables, graphs and charts, whenever they were encountered. It should be said however, that in many cases the assessments made claims without reference to specific data or evidence. For example, the 2014 CBOCA stated, without evidence, that;

*...indigenous organised crime groups often incorporate other nationalities into their network...*

(An Garda Síochána and PSNI, 2014, pg 8)

While the 2012 assessment argued – also without providing evidence - that;

*...higher level organised crime gangs on both sides of the border appear to co-operate rather than compete over territories.*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2012, pg 5)

It is certainly possible that such claims are based on information which the authors simply do not wish to reveal – sensitive police intelligence, for instance. It is also possible that such statements are the result of opinion, anecdotal accounts or commonly held beliefs within the PSNI and / or the Garda. The point though is that claims such as these were not coded as a data source, meaning that if indeed they are the result of something such as police intelligence, then that “shadow” data source would not show in the coding results. In total, 116 separate uses of data were coded across the CBOCAs. This data was broken down into the following categories:

*Data on drug consumption / addiction / treatment rates and drug-related deaths*

The CBOCAs made heavy use of drug abuse statistics in their sections on the illegal drug trade. They use such data to comment on the prevalence of certain drugs when compared to others, and to explain which drugs are becoming more or less of a “threat”. The data is sourced from external bodies such as the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction and the Global Drug Survey.

*Data on commodity seizures*

The CBOCAs made significant use of commodity seizure statistics in their assessment. This includes data on the amount of illegal fuel and oil recovered, the number of counterfeit cigarettes seized, the amount of drugs confiscated, and the quantity of smuggled alcohol discovered during the course of the last year. Within the CBOCAs, seizure statistics are sometimes used as part of a descriptive narrative – for example, in the 2012 assessment, data on the amounts of cannabis resin seized is incorporated into a broader account of market fluctuations in Northern Ireland (An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2012, pg 8). At other times, seizure statistics are presented as stand-alone items of information and there is no attempt to infer any meaning from them.

#### *Data on the estimated financial cost of criminal activity*

The CBOCAs often cite the estimated financial cost of a particular criminal activity. For example, the 2016 CBOCA provides a table of data showing the various cost implications of organised waste crime, both in terms of clean-up expenses and loss of tax revenue (An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2016a, pg 18). Such data is also used to show the estimated tax losses incurred by the UK due to alcohol smuggling (An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2008) and to Northern Ireland through oil smuggling (*ibid*).

#### *Data on the number of convictions and disruptions made*

The CBOCAs sometimes make use of data on the number of convictions, raids and disruptions that have taken place over the previous year for specific areas of crime. In a section on organised crime involvement in fuel smuggling for instance, the 2008 CBOCA provided data on the number of laundering facilities raided by law enforcement along the border and the number of convictions obtained through subsequent investigation (An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2008, pg 12). However, little effort is made to show how such information relates to the current organised crime situation along the border. There is no serious attempt to assess how police interventions might have altered criminal methods, or displaced offenders, for example. Instead, the inclusion of such data suggests an orientation toward displaying competence or showing that police agencies are “cracking down” on the problem.

#### *Data on the number of recorded offences*

For certain areas of criminal activity, such as so-called “tiger kidnaps” and highly-organised robberies, the CBOCA relies quite heavily on recorded offence data. As with conviction statistics, this data is simply used to report on changes in the number of crimes over the last year or so.

#### *Miscellaneous data*

A diverse array of other data sources also find their way into the CBOCAs. These range from statistics on the number of new legal highs discovered (An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2012), changes in metal market prices (*ibid*), drug market prices and the countries of origin for counterfeit goods (*ibid*). In later CBOCAs, especially

the 2016 assessment, there is a tendency toward using more data that relates to human trafficking and child exploitation. While earlier assessments provide broad, sweeping accounts of such activities, it is only in the 2016 assessment that more concrete data on, for example, the number of victims identified or the number of referrals made (An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2016a, pg 33).

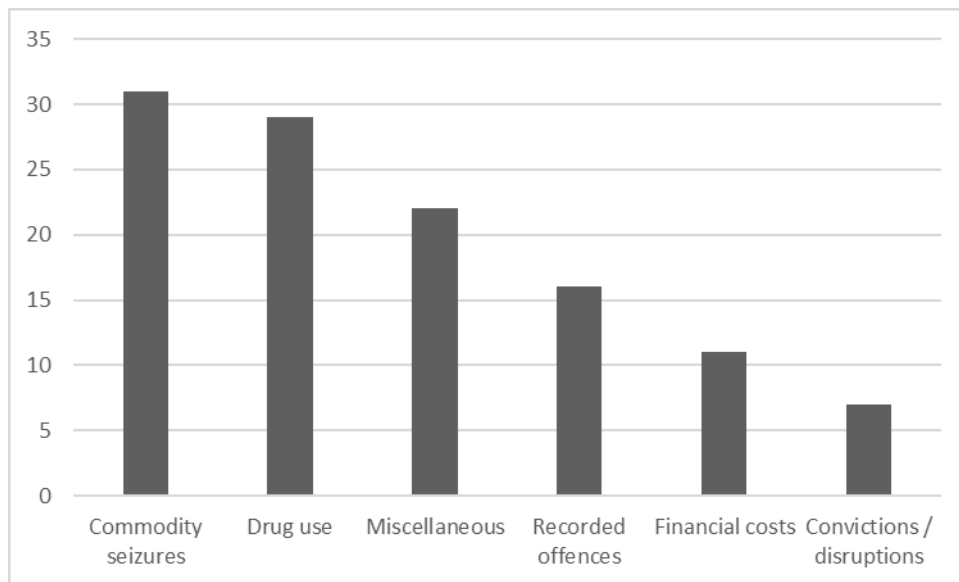
The different data sources described above are not used equally, however. Table 18, below, shows the number of times each type of data was used across the CBOCAs.

Table 18. Data use within the CBOCAs

<b>Data type</b>	<b>No. of references</b>
Drug use / addiction / treatment rates / deaths	29
Commodity seizures (total)	31
Oil / fuel	5
Alcohol	4
Cash	1
Cigarettes / tobacco	2
Drugs	18
Counterfeit goods	2
Financial costs of crime	11
Convictions or disruptions	7
Recorded offences	16
Miscellaneous (total)	22
Metal prices and market	1
Detection of new psychoactive substances	2
No. of “head shops” selling legal highs	1
Drug market prices	3
Origin of counterfeit goods	1
Amounts of laundered money	1
Fuel markets	1
No. of OCGs known to police	1
Human trafficking referrals	4
No. of child abuse incidents / victims	3

These results showed that, in purely numerical terms at least, the CBOCAs were quite heavily dependent on drug abuse data and on commodity seizure statistics (in particular, drug seizures), as well as recorded offences and a fairly eclectic miscellanea of other sources. This can be seen more clearly in the below chart.

Figure 18: The frequency of use of different data sources across all 7 CBOCAs



The CBOCAs then, rely quite heavily on reporting what has been seized, and by whom, over the last year or two, and whether this is up or down on previous time periods. One other noticeable trend in this coding exercise was the predominance of data on drug crime. Of the material coded as “commodity seizure data”, the majority related specifically to drug seizures (18 out of 31 references). Combined with the large amount of data on drug use, this certainly gives the impression that drugs are of implicit importance within the CBOCA as an area of organised criminal activity.

Finally, analysis of the list of references for each CBOCA provides a somewhat revelatory insight into the origins of much of the assessment’s data. The CBOCAs’ references and footnotes originate from an eclectic range of sources, a substantial proportion of which are publicly released reports by agencies such as the UN, Price Waterhouse Coopers, health boards, drug survey bodies, Europol and even newspapers. This gives the impression that the CBOCAs are at least partially derived from a synthesis of open sources which are incorporated – rather uncritically – into the assessments’ narrative.

The overall impression given by the use of data within the CBOCA, was that the assessments had a fairly retrospective orientation; that they sought to provide a summation of what *had* been happening along the border, in terms of drug prevalence, market prices, notable robberies or kidnaps. The heavy use of seizure data and the occasional use of conviction / disruption data also suggests there may be an underlying impulse toward displaying police effectiveness in the CBOCA.

***What method is used to produce the CBOCA?***

The CBOCAs generally include a brief paragraph on their methodology. Indeed, the same paragraph is reproduced almost exactly in several of the assessments. It stated:

*This report draws on information provided specifically for this undertaking by the agencies listed here as well as material already held to inform other strategic projects and open source research.*

(An Garda Siochana / PSNI, 2006, pg 4, 2008, pg 5, 2010, pg 5, 2012, pg 5, 2014, pg 6)

Of course, this does not say very much. Studying the assessments themselves in depth though, it is reasonably clear that the CBOCAs – much like the local profiles examined in the previous chapter – are oriented toward the simple collation of information into a retrospective and descriptive narrative. For example, in its section on the illegal drug trade, the 2016 CBOCA describes each particular drug (cannabis, heroin, cocaine, amphetamines) in terms of its prevalence – as measured by treatment and addiction rates – its harmfulness, an estimate of the market conditions, and a summary of how much of that particular drug has been seized by law enforcement in the preceding year (An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2016a, pg 10). Similarly, in a section on fuel smuggling and fraud, the 2014 CBOCA provided an explanation of how fuel fraud works and what the market conditions are like, before describing the harms and costs incurred by such criminal activity (using data provided by HMRC) and detailing the number of illicit plants raided as well as the amounts of illegal fuel seized over the last year (An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2014, pg 30).

These sections are typical of those found throughout the CBOCAs and they strongly support the notion that the implicit method is one of retrospective and descriptive narrative, supported and interspersed with data. The methodological

orientation is toward the recent past; almost as if the aim is to review the previous year, especially in terms of displaying what police agencies have achieved.

The main point to be made though is that, beyond providing a descriptive narrative, the CBOCAs do not have a strictly definable methodology. They do not seek to test hypotheses, make predictions, contemplate future scenarios, assess the relative harms of some crimes over others, or rank crime groups against some predefined criteria.

#### **7.4. Conclusions**

Through this basic, preliminary analysis, it became clear that the CBOCA was a unique form of local organised crime assessment. It was focused on a rural border-zone with distinct political, international and historical dimensions; it emerged in a context of growing pressure for cross-border police collaboration and was produced by multiple agencies at a cross-border crime seminar. These features made the CBOCA particularly interesting; neither organised crime group mapping nor local profiles had to contend with this kind of political complexity. It raised the possibility that the CBOCA would have to “think through” the organised crime problem on the border in a much more thorough way, perhaps considering more nuanced local perspectives than those assessments which had been centrally-imposed on local areas. There was also scope to examine if and how the problem might have changed over the course of 12 years. In the following chapter, these initial insights are built upon and the CBOCAs are “reverse-engineered” to uncover their implicit problem representations and to examine their conceptual-coherence.

## 8. Reverse engineering Cross Border Organised Crime Assessments

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In moving beyond the basic features of the CBOCA, it was possible to discern some deep-seated ways of thinking about organised crime within the assessments themselves; ways of thinking that are embedded into their language, choice of data and units of analysis. The following sections will attempt to uncover some of these implicit ways of thinking and thereby elucidate the underlying governmentality of the CBOCA. As with the previous case study, the first phase of analysis sought to identify how the CBOCAs conceptualised organised crime itself, before proceeding to examine how they articulated the problem of organised crime and what modes of governance they implied. Longitudinal analysis is then used to explore variation in the CBOCAs over time.

### 8.1. The CBOCA's ontology of local organised crime

The content of each CBOCA was analysed using Nvivo. In the first coding exercise, every passage or paragraph which attempted to define organised crime, or to provide an account of what organised crime was or what it was like, was coded under the label "CONCEPT OF OC". Across all seven CBOCAs, a total of 91 such references were coded. These references varied in length from a single line to half a page. Most were found in the introductory parts of the assessments, particularly in sections titled simply as "Organised Crime Gangs".

These 91 references were then analysed in more detail. Each reference was coded into one of three pre-defined categories depending on what it said or implied about the nature of organised crime. As with the previous case study, the categories were; a) an organisation of criminals (von Lampe, 2015, pg 32), b) crimes requiring a high degree of organisation (*ibid*, pg 31) and c) "illegal governance" (*ibid*, pg 32). These categories mirror the three "basic dimensions of organised crime" described by von Lampe (2015, pg 31) (see Table 2, section 3.7) and represent three very general ways of conceptualising organised crime.

Of the 91 references initially identified, 50 referred to, or suggested that, organised crime was essentially "an organisation of criminals" of one kind or



another. There were far fewer references to organised crime being a type of crime requiring a certain amount of sophistication or organisation (6), and no references to “illegal governance” (von Lampe, 2015, pg 32). Table 19, below, provides a full breakdown of the results.

Table 19. Number of references coded to each category of organised crime

<b>Coding category</b>	<b>No. of references</b>
Organisation of criminals	50
Crimes that are organised	6
Illegal governance	0
N/A	35

*Table produced by the author based on von Lampe’s categorisation (2015)*

These preliminary findings suggested that the CBOCAs had an actor-centric ontology of organised crime; an in-built presumption that organised crime itself is a kind of criminal organisation. This sort of perspective could be seen in many of the coded references. For example, the very first line of the 2014 CBOCA stated that:

*Cross border cooperation... continues to play a key role in our fight against organised crime groups... Organised crime groups often operate on a cross border basis... it is essential that authorities on both sides of the border cooperate... in order to thwart the threat posed by these groups.*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2014, pg 5)

Right from the beginning then – in the 2014 CBOCA at least – organised crime was framed in terms of organised crime groups. The same orientation is also evident in the opening lines of the 2012 CBOCA:

*Cross-border cooperation remains a key factor in the successful investigation of organised crime gangs... In general, organised crime gangs by their very nature, will work across borders; whether through the existence of a large network, or through partnership working and mutual assistance with other criminal groups.*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2012, pg 3)

However, a more in-depth examination of the coded material suggested that the initial coding categories used in this analysis had, in fact, obscured certain aspects of the CBOCA's ontology. Many of the 91 references initially coded did not clearly fall into one or other category, as can be seen in the high number of references coded as "N/A". The picture then, was rather more confusing than a purely quantitative content analysis suggested.

It was observed, for instance, that the introductory sections of the CBOCAs defined "organised crime" very much in terms of crime gangs, but that the thematic sections only rarely mentioned them. Instead, much of the substantive content of these sections described the dynamics of different illegal markets and illicit activities without reference to criminal actors at all. For example, the below passage was taken from "drugs" section of the 2014 CBOCA:

*The cannabis market continues to dominate the drug scene on both sides of the border... at least a quarter of the population report using this drug at least once in their lifetime... survey results from 2010/2011 indicate that 9% of recent cannabis users would be classed as cannabis dependent...*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2014, pg 16)

Here, the emphasis of the assessment has been pivoted away from crime gangs in themselves and onto the dynamics of the cannabis market. Similarly, in the following excerpt, the 2012 CBOCA explores developments in the counterfeit-goods market:

*The growth in online shopping has also led to a significant expansion in the types of goods available both north and south of the border.*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2012, pg 14)

Within substantial portions of the CBOCAs then, “organised crime” was implicitly represented in terms of different illegal activities and markets without the need to include crime gangs. This pattern failed to appear in the quantitative coding results it seems, because there was no explicit attempt to define organised crime in such a way within these sections. It was only when the CBOCAs were viewed holistically, and in a more qualitative way, that it became clear that much of their content was actually *about* activities and markets, not organised crime gangs – despite what was said in the introductory sections. In the CBOCAs then, there was clearly some interplay between criminal organisations on the one hand, and organised illegal activities / markets on the other.

Looking more closely at the language within the CBOCAs, there was a noticeable tendency to use business-terminology when describing organised crime; gangs and offenders were said to have a “core business” (An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2012, pg 12) and “side ventures” (*ibid*), they sought to generate “maximum returns” (An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2010, pg 20) and to “diversify” (An Garda Siochana / PSNI, 2004, pg 6); they took advantage of “lucrative business opportunities” (An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2008, pg 16). Most prominently though, was the notion of the “enterprise”.

In light of this, the CBOCAs were coded again based on whether they referred to, or implied that, organised crime was a form of illegal enterprise. Following the tenets of an adaptive theory approach (Layder 1998), this was a modification of the initial coding categories; an attempt to partially-collapse the “criminal organisations” and “organised criminal activities” categories together in a way that better reflected the actual content of the CBOCAs. References to “illegal enterprise” were found to be pervasive throughout the assessments, underlying many of their attempts to define or conceptualise organised crime. In numerical terms, 46 such references were coded, but the significance of the illegal enterprise concept is only apparent when attention is paid to the details of the references themselves. Take, for instance, the below extracts:

*Some organised crime gangs operate on both sides of the border, with its existence having little or no impact on their criminal enterprise.*

*(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2010, pg 5)*

*Whilst the prescription drugs market would not feature as the core business of the major organised crime gangs in either jurisdiction, OCGs will endeavour to exploit this market as a side venture when the opportunity arises.*

*(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2012, pg 12)*

*Equally there exist many larger enterprises – criminal businesses that rely on a network of individuals each with different skills and abilities. These larger enterprises are often referred to as “criminal gangs”*

*(An Garda Siochana / PSNI, 2006, pg 5)*

*Cannabis cultivation as a criminal enterprise has a ripple effect... Profits can be reinvested into other criminal activities allowing diversity and increased resilience. As with legitimate businesses, competition between rival gangs exists...*

*(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2014, pg 17)*

These and other extracts suggested that “organised crime” is, to all intents and purposes, a form of illegal enterprise or business. It was noticeable though, that the CBOCAs discussed “illegal enterprise” in two ways simultaneously; as singular and concrete enterprises synonymous with specific “crime gangs”, and as general areas of business or types of business-model, such as “the cannabis trade” or “illegal waste dumping”. Sometimes, these different notions merged in an almost seamless, but confusing way:

*OCGs across the island continue to profit most from the traditionally known drugs and many features of the criminal enterprise in terms of the importation and distribution of these drugs remain unchanged.*

*(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2016; pg 8)*

Only criminal enterprises involved in specific, pre-defined types of activity were actually labelled as “organised crime” within the CBOCAs. There is some year-on-year variation between the assessments in terms of which activities are included, as well as variation in the amount of space and text each activity is afforded within the assessment, but there are also some core activities which appear across all the CBOCAs. These are; drugs, vehicle-related crimes, the smuggling of alcohol and tobacco, waste crime, immigration-related offending and intellectual property theft (An Garda Siochana / PSNI, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010). In later versions, cybercrime, child abuse, armed robbery and “rural crime” are added to the frame. Needless to say, those gangs involved in harmful or criminal activities *not* included in this list – such as illegal commercial fishing or weapons trafficking – remain largely free from the “organised crime” label. Analysis of the data used by the CBOCAs (see “*What data is used?*” section above) showed that most attention had been directed towards drug crime, although this may just reflect data availability, rather than operational priorities.

For the CBOCAs, illegal enterprises are almost entirely motivated by financial gain. This is made clear in a number of references:

*It should not be forgotten that criminal gangs exist in the most part to make money. Organised crime offers greedy individuals a way of earning vast amounts of money...*

(An Garda Siochana / PSNI, 2006, pg 4)

*An organised criminal gang’s main objective is to make money...*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2012, pg 4)

*In many ways criminal enterprises operate in much the same way as legitimate businesses with the main goal being to generate profits.*

(An Garda Siochana / PSNI, 2006, pg 5)

Further to this, organised criminals and their enterprises are presumed to operate *rationally*, and to make calculations in pursuit of financial gain. For example, in the below extract, the 2014 CBOCA explains how crime enterprises involved in robbery diversify their activities based on considerations of risk and reward:

*It may be the case that increased security measures and successful interventions have resulted in groups moving into other areas of criminality that they perceive to be more profitable and lower risk.*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2014, pg 12)

In another example, the 2010 CBOCA described how oil-smuggling gangs make rational choices to adapt their criminal operations in response to market changes:

*The narrowing of price differentials between Northern Ireland and Ireland has led to organised criminal gangs diversifying into the “stretching” of fuel oils in order to increase profit margins.*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2010, pg 14)

The 2012 assessment makes similar arguments regarding why some crime gangs become involved in the large-scale cultivation of cannabis:

*Due to low start-up / running costs and the potential profits, there is strong interest amongst organised crime gangs in this area of business.*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2012, pg 8)

This emphasis on the economic rationality of offenders and gangs is, of course, strongly suggestive of rational choice theory. For the CBOCAs, organised criminals are not pathological “others”; there is no presumed essential difference between them and the general public, whether in terms of subcultural values, ethnic composition or “foreign-ness”. They are not invasive outsiders or conspiratorial infiltrators. They are rational actors seeking to maximise their gains and minimise their risks. In many senses, they are simply businessmen gone bad:

*Often the “brains” behind these operations could have been successful legitimate business owners had they not turned to a life of crime.*

(An Garda Siochana / PSNI, 2006, pg 10)

Implicit within this rational choice model of organised crime is the important notion that offenders are “active-subjects” (Bottoms, 2008, pg 90); they are not inexorably driven to crime by forces beyond their control. Neither social structural pressures, nor a lack of social controls, nor individual pathology are responsible for turning them into offenders. They are individuals who make rational, calculative choices; they are invested with agency, and are thus also individually responsible for their choices; a position which closely resembles the thinking of classical criminology. For the CBOCAs, the only feature which does in fact distinguish organised criminals from “normal” businessmen is their callousness and their willingness to pursue excessive personal gain over the welfare of others.

*...they have no respect or consideration for those who live in their own communities.*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2014, pg 7)

*Organised criminal activity can earn unscrupulous individuals significant amounts of money.*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2010, pg 12)

Criminals are said to pursue:

*... a lavish criminal lifestyle at the expense of the law abiding public*

(An Garda Siochana / PSNI, 2004, pg 4)

In addition to being unscrupulous, they are also “greedy” (An Garda Siochana / PSNI, 2006, pg 4); terms which imply individual moral failings, rather than pathological flaws, warped subcultural values or inexorable social pressures. While organised criminals are thus essentially “normal”, they are distinguishable from law-abiding society by their immorality. Their sins are tied to hedonism and the ruthless pursuit of private gain at all costs. The CBOCAs thus make a moral case, and the deviance with which they label offenders might be called *rational immorality*.

It became clear that the CBOCAs embodied three, somewhat overlapping ontologies of organised crime. There was an explicit conceptualisation of organised crime in terms of criminal organisations; specifically manifested in the form of the

“organised crime gang”, but much of the CBOCAs’ actual content was more concerned with patterns in illegal activity and illicit markets, implying that organised crime was, in itself, an emergent property of such things. Finally, the heavy use of business-logic and a corporate lexicon helped to render organised crime into a kind of “illicit enterprise”; something which, at times, was synonymous with specific crime gangs and, at others, was used to refer to whole areas of criminal “business”, thus overlaying notions of both criminal organisations and illegal markets / activities. It was this “illicit enterprise” conceptualisation which emerged most strongly from the analysis, yet it was inherently complex and, at times, seemed stretched to breaking point between rival ways of thinking about organised crime.

## **8.2. The articulation of the local organised crime problem**

Given the above conceptualisation of organised crime, the question became; what sort of problem is this “illegal enterprise” model of organised crime believed to pose? For whom or what is it a problem? To answer these questions, the CBOCAs were analysed again, this time with the objective of identifying all references to the supposed *problem* of organised crime on the border. Specifically, this meant searching for references to the impact that organised crime was said to have, and the concrete manifestations of this impact; it meant looking for the rationales used to justify intervention against those involved in organised crime, such as risks to community safety, for example, or a threat to national security.

Across all of the CBOCAs, a total of 66 references were deemed to relate to the problematisation of organised crime and were thus coded under the heading “PROBLEM”. These references were fairly evenly spread across the different assessments and ranged from single sentences to half-page sections. Once identified, the 66 references were analysed in more detail and allocated to one of the following pre-defined categories; THREAT, HARM, COST and RISK based on the way in which they described the problem of organised crime, with the proviso that they may need to be adapted or added to at a later point. Table 20, below provides a summary of the results of this analysis.



Table 20: Number of references to each conceptualisation of the problem of organised crime

Category	No. of references
Threat	17
Harm	16
Cost	15
Risk	11
N/A	7

This shows a relatively even dispersion of references between the different categories, with the notion that organised crime is some form of “threat” only marginally more prevalent than the others. These results contrast sharply with those of the local profile case study, where there was an overwhelming emphasis on “threat”, with comparatively little reference to “harm” or “cost”. This suggested that the CBOCAs had a broader, but perhaps less well-defined conceptualisation of the organised crime problem and this was borne-out when specific extracts were examined in more depth. The 2014 assessment, for instance, argued that organised crime:

*...presents a significant threat to the economic prosperity of Ireland and Northern Ireland as well as risks to the safety of the island’s population.*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2014, pg 8)

While the 2016 assessment explained that organised crime can:

*...cause great harm in our communities...*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2016a, pg 5)

A few lines later though, the problem is one of threat caused by illegal activities:

*...developments across both jurisdictions are compared to highlight similarities and differences in the threat posed by certain areas of criminal activity.*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2016a, pg 5)

What these extracts show is that the CBOCAs use a multiplicity of concepts when framing the organised crime problem. Of course, “harm”, “threat”, “risk” and “cost” need not be mutually exclusive ways of thinking about the organised crime problem, and there is no need to be pedantic in the analysis of such extracts. The point is that the CBOCAs are flexible in their overall definition of the problem; there is a regular interchange between “threat”, “harm” and “cost”, without any one of these concepts taking precedence over the others.

This pluralistic way of defining the overall organised crime problem meant that specific impacts were manifested in a hugely diverse number of ways and were said to act on highly variable aspects of society. For example, with reference to organised crime involvement in the cannabis trade, the 2012 CBOCA argued that:

*Alongside organised crime violence and mental health risks, public health risks also exist such as damage to property and the fire hazards associated with the unsafe production methods, e.g. wiring, water installation.*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2012, pg 9)

Within just one domain of “business” then, organised crime becomes at once a health problem, a safety risk and a public order issue. A similar point was made by the same assessment with reference to the illegal fuel trade:

*Alongside the cost to the Exchequer and legitimate trade, laundered fuel can be very damaging to vehicles and there is also an environmental risk posed by these operations in their disposal / dumping of waste toxic by-products... (it can) lead to extensive clean-up costs.*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2012, pg 18)

In this case, organised crime is a problem for government tax revenue, for citizens’ private property and for the natural environment. Taken together, the CBOCAs identify a very broad range of ways in which organised crime manifests itself as a problem. These are summarised in table 21, below:

Table 21: Number of references to the manifestations of the organised crime problem in the CBOCAs

<b>Manifestation of the problem</b>	<b>No. of references</b>
Health and safety	24
Loss of tax revenue	14
Damage to legitimate business	14
Damage to natural environment	10
Damage to personal property	4
Financial costs	3
Consumer rights	2

Interestingly, as the above table shows, the CBOCAs most commonly depicted organised crime as a problem of health and safety. This was followed by an economically-driven problematisation, based on loss of tax income and damage to legitimate companies. There was also significant mention of environmental damage. While there were occasional vague references to such things as organised crime-related violence or the undermining of the economy at large, such statements were all but impossible to code to any definable category.

The diverse range of impacts found in the CBOCAs transcend local, regional and national boundaries. The assessments do not limit themselves to only those issues which impact specifically on the border region; their concern about the effects of organised crime extend to the national economies of Ireland, Northern Ireland and the UK at large, not to mention public health in the broadest sense, and the natural environment as a whole.

The CBOCAs' consideration of such a multiplicity of impacts – potential or actual, local or national – is no bad thing. Criminal acts can, of course, have a wide range of consequences, encompassing anything from individual safety to community cohesion to public health. The point here though, is that there is no evidence for some underlying conceptual framework regarding the problem of organised crime; there is no *one* concept – like “community safety” or “national security” - which unified the disparate impacts mentioned in the CBOCAs. Put another way, the health and safety risks, the public health issues and the financial losses said to be caused by organised crime are not reducible to any single, more fundamental problematisation.

A significant implication of this way of thinking is the notion that organised crime does not exert some unified, aggregate effect on society, but is instead

*disaggregated*. This is to say that it does not act as one single whole but manifests itself in a variety of ways in a variety of places. In contrast to local profiles, organised crime is not deemed to have strong emergent properties which exceed the sum of its parts. Rather, the problems caused by organised crime vary according to the specific area of criminal “business” being considered.

Drawing together these points and observations, it was possible to say that the CBOCAs’ disaggregated way of framing the problem means that organised crime is portrayed as dispersed and multifarious in its effects. It is not integrated as a whole “thing” but manifests itself in many ways and many places; as a risk to health and safety, as a public health issue, as a threat to law and order, as a drain on national tax income – even as a consumer-standards problem. In the simplest terms, organised crime is deemed to *pose a multifaceted range of problems for different aspects of society, none of which are reducible to one single, more fundamental conceptualisation of the problem.*

### **8.3. The CBOCA’s implied mode of governance of organised crime**

The previous sections outlined how the CBOCAs conceptualised organised crime itself and how they subsequently articulated it as a particular kind of problem. In this section, attention turns toward the kinds of responses to organised crime suggested by the CBOCAs; the aim being to understand the implied modes of governance implicit within the assessments themselves.

The CBOCAs were analysed once again with the objective of identifying all references to how organised crime is responded to, or how it should be responded to. A total of 179 such references were coded across all of the CBOCAs. These included long paragraphs outlining the general strategy for counteracting organised crime on the border, as well as numerous “case study” examples detailing specific interventions made in the recent past, and descriptions of the kinds of inter-agency collaborations needed to respond effectively.

These references were analysed in more depth and allocated to one of the coding categories described in section 3.7 (Prevention, Securitisation, Administrative, Criminal Justice). As before, these categories were not meant to be binding, and could be adapted or added-to during the course of the analysis. The results of the analysis can be seen in table 22 below.

Table 22. Number of references to each mode of governance

Type of response	No. of references
Criminal justice	85
Administrative	16
Disruption*	9
Prevention	7
Securitisation	4
N/A	58

\* a category of “disruption” was added during the analysis, see below for more details

This analysis suggested that “criminal justice” – in purely quantitative terms, at least - was the preeminent mode of governance within the CBOCAs, with comparatively little reference made to other strategies of government. There were also a modest number of references to “disruption” as a means of intervening against organised crime. Hence, an additional category named “DISRUPTION” was added to the analysis. It is worth noting the relatively large number of references (58) which could not be coded into these categories – an issue which will be re-visited shortly.

To mention each of these categories briefly; references to “prevention” as a means of governing organised crime were few and far between. Where it was mentioned, it was not in relation to some systematic and cohesive strategy to prevent crime, but in much more general terms as something which police activity might contribute towards:

*Law enforcement on both sides of the border remain committed to working in partnership to prevent criminals from achieving their aim of enjoying a lavish criminal lifestyle*

(An Garda Siochana / PSNI, 2006)

In other words, it formed but one of several ways in which law enforcement can intervene against organised crime. The 2008 CBOCA, for example, explained how law enforcement agencies dealt with organised crime by “using all the powers at their disposal, be it through prevention activity, arrests or seizure of assets” (An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2008, pg 5). There was also mention of rural crime

prevention schemes in the 2016 CBOCA, but such schemes were not applied to organised crime as a whole and they do not relate to some underlying strategy of governance.

“Securitisation” hardly features at all as a governance strategy. With regards to rural forms of organised crime, there was some brief mention in the 2016 CBOCA of securing farm premises and agricultural machinery against theft; the aim being to “improve rural security in Ireland” (An Garda Síochána and PSNI, 2016a, pg 28), though this does not constitute an overall mentality toward governing organised crime.

Once again, despite a number of references to “administrative” tactics of governing organised crime, there was little to suggest that administrative measures formed an overall strategy of crime control. Most references related to such things as waste crime; in particular, to the formation of joint committees which includes regulatory bodies as well as law enforcement (An Garda Síochána and PSNI, 2016a) – but such approaches were not applied to other crime types.

Most references, of course, related to “criminal justice” modes of government. These typically advocated a law enforcement response to the problem of organised crime, as can be seen in the following extracts:

*Cross-border co-operation remains a key factor in the successful investigation of organised crime gangs (An Garda Síochána and PSNI, 2012, pg 3)*

*Law enforcement on both sides of the border continues to enjoy an extremely effective working relationship; one which has resulted in a large number of successful cross border operations and investigations. This relationship is recognised as being a key component in the successful fight against criminal gangs actively involved in serious organised crime on both sides of the border (An Garda Síochána and PSNI, 2008, pg 3)*

The point here is that police investigation – with a subsequent expectation of conviction and criminal sanction – is largely taken for granted in the CBOCAs. There is no formal discussion of the different options for governing organised crime *vis-à-vis* prevention, securitisation, disruption, *et cetera* – it is simply accepted that

police work is, self-evidently, *the* way in which organised crime is responded to. Despite all this, the category of “criminal justice” somehow seemed unsatisfactory in analytical terms. It did not seem to capture certain elements of the mode of governance implicit within the CBOCAs. In many of the coded references, for instance, there was more emphasis on police enforcement operations alone, rather than on the criminal justice system in its entirety; the difference being that such police operations might only result in “disruption”, or the seizure of an illegal commodity, or the dissuasion of offenders, rather than formal convictions involving the courts and prisons. For example:

*...in operations involving law enforcement agencies from both jurisdictions, there were 12 detections of counterfeit spirits... with over 1900 litres seized. In a follow-up operation in 2008, counterfeit spirits were discovered in a further 13 premises.*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2008, pg 6)

Here then, police operational activity is at the very core of the response but is not restricted to the use of formal criminal sanctions or the involvement of the courts. It is the operational prowess of the police in conducting raids, making seizures, detecting illicit activities and arresting offenders through which the organised crime problem is to be governed, not necessarily through the criminal justice system as a whole. Given this, the initial coding category of “criminal justice” was supplanted by what Edwards and Gill have called “enforcement” (2002a, pg 211); a term by which they mean a general strategy of prosecuting offenders, disrupting their operations and recovering their illegal profits (*ibid*, pg 211). This re-coding accounted for a significant proportion of those references initially coded as N/A. For instance, the below extract did not correspond exactly to any of the pre-defined categories during the first coding exercise:

*In 2009/2010, a spate of ATM burglaries occurred on both sides of the border and a parallel investigation was initiated. Following successful law enforcement interventions, OCGs have halted their involvement in this activity...*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2012, pg 6)

It could not be coded as “criminal justice” since it did not relate to the formal conviction of offenders or the use of courts, but it could instead be coded under “enforcement”, as law enforcement was afforded priority in the governance of the problem but used more loosely defined forms of “intervention” and “disruption” as a governance strategy.

More detail on what actually constituted “enforcement” was found in the CBOCAs’ ubiquitous “case study” boxes. Most of these referred to a) the seizure of drugs, cash or counterfeit goods, b) the disruption of illegal plants and facilities (cannabis farms, fuel depots, illegal alcohol factories), c) the arrest of offenders, d) the recovery of stolen property and e) the recovery of assets. These comprised the main elements of enforcement operations against organised crime on the border.

One key addition to this “enforcement” mentality of governance, was the emphasis placed on joint-working. Indeed, close collaboration between law enforcement agencies from both sides of the border was a recurring theme throughout all of the CBOCAs. The governance of organised crime in this locality was not divided by the border between the nations of the North and the Republic, nor was it the unilateral responsibility of individual police forces. Instead, law enforcement agencies from both countries were supposed to govern the organised crime problem collaboratively, and to do so as equal partners, without any over-arching hierarchy or higher body directing things. References to joint-working and police collaboration are too numerous to mention, but the following extracts provide a small insight:

*The existence of a shared land border provides a policing environment where cooperation and partnership working are necessary in order to ensure those involved in organised crime are identified and dealt with...*

(An Garda Síochána and PSNI, 2010, pg 5)

*Law enforcement agencies on both sides of the border maintain an effective working relationship, the results of which are evident through a substantial number of cross border investigations. These partnerships are achieved through efforts such as regular contact, intelligence sharing, parallel*



*investigations and utilisation of new technology that enables further linkage between forces.*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2014, pg 5)

*...it is important that law enforcement agencies continue to build upon this cross-border relationship, forming even stronger partnerships and allowing even more effective investigations into those individuals and criminal gangs involved in serious and organised crime.*

(An Garda Siochana / PSNI, 2006, pg 3)

Importantly, this co-operation is primarily regarded as a foundation for running police operations; a partnership which enables such operations to take place.

To summarise these points, it is possible to say that the CBOCAs embodied a mentality of governance in which police enforcement is afforded centre-stage. This activity is not seen as part of a broader criminal justice response to organised crime; it does not necessarily involve courts, convictions, imprisonment or retrospective punishment. Responsibility rests almost solely with law enforcement, and they use a range of police tactics to govern the problem, including raids of fuel smuggling plants, the seizure of cash and drugs, the recovery of stolen goods, the arrest of suspects, and so on. These operations are not to be conducted unilaterally; they are dependent upon partnerships with other police forces and other nations. Reduced to a single statement, the CBOCAs can be said to imply a strategy of governance based on *joint police enforcement operations to disrupt illegal enterprises.*

#### **8.4. The temporality of the CBOCAs**

As discussed at the beginning of the previous chapter, this case study was particularly interested in the extent to which the CBOCAs varied over time; the extent to which the “local” described in 2006, say, was the same “local” described in 2016. The question was what, if anything, changed year-by-year? Was there uniformity over time? Or did local problems arise and then disappear?

The first phase of analysis involved mapping general changes in the priorities of the CBOCAs over a 12 year period. Nvivo was used to code the headings of the main sections of the CBOCAs. These headings referred to local organised crime

problems such as “drugs”, “human trafficking” and “waste crime” and reflected the main concerns of each CBOCA. The coded headings were then entered into an Excel spreadsheet with a different column for every CBOCA. This was used as a timeline of sorts. A colour-coding scheme helped to identify points in this timeline where certain issues disappeared from the CBOCAs, and points where other concerns took their place. Table 23, below, represents the results of this analysis. Moving from left to right, it is possible to “track” a certain priority (such as “waste crime”) and see if and when it appears or disappears from the CBOCAs.

Table 23. The changing priorities of the CBOCAs

2004-2010	2012	2014	2016
IP crime*	IP crime	IP crime	IP crime
Drugs	Drugs	Drugs	Drugs
Vehicle crime	Vehicle crime	Vehicle crime	
Fuel crime	Fuel crime	Fuel crime	Fuel crime
Waste crime			Waste crime
Immigration crime	Immigration crime	Immigration crime	
Laundering / fraud	Laundering / fraud	Laundering / fraud	Laundering / fraud
Alcohol fraud	Alcohol fraud	Alcohol fraud	Excise fraud
Tobacco fraud	Tobacco fraud	Tobacco fraud	
	Armed robbery / kidnapping	Armed robbery / kidnapping	
	Cybercrime	Cybercrime	Cybercrime
			Human trafficking
			Extortion
			Rural crime
			Firearms
			ATM thefts
			Child exploitation

\*The “IP” in IP crime refers to “intellectual property”

It was found that from 2004 up to 2012 the CBOCAs were highly uniform – at least in terms of their overall priorities. The same list of specific crime problems was replicated year-on-year during this time. There was a slight shift in priorities in the 2012 CBOCA, however. “Waste crime” was dropped as a priority, while “armed robbery”, “kidnapping” and “cybercrime” were included for the first time (An Garda Síochána and PSNI, 2012). In 2014, the priorities remained relatively stable. The most significant shift in priorities though, occurred in 2016. In that year, a whole raft of new problems was added to the CBOCA, including “extortion”, “child

exploitation” and “firearms” (An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2016). It was interesting to see that certain areas of criminality disappeared from the CBOCAs, only to reappear in later years. “Waste crime”, for instance, was dropped from the 2012 CBOCA but then made a reappearance in 2016. “Armed robbery” appeared in 2012 but had gone again by 2016.

On a basic level then, it was clear that the CBOCAs were not completely uniform over time. While there was some uniformity in their priorities for the first six years, this began to change after 2010, with some areas of criminality being excluded and others included. In order to explore these changes in more depth, a content analysis exercise was undertaken to focus on those CBOCAs with the biggest shifts in priorities; namely, 2012 and 2016 – the aim being to identify any justifications or explanations made for their major priority changes.

In the 2012 CBOCA, there was no overarching change of narrative or discussion of strategic shifts, but when more attention was paid to the newly-added “Armed robbery” and “Kidnap” section, it was possible to see some of the rationale for their inclusion. It was noted, for instance, that there had been a “spike” in so-called “tiger-kidnappings” the previous year (An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2012, pg 6), as well as a substantial increase in “cash-in-transit” robberies (*ibid*, pg 6), prompting greater attention from law enforcement. The other major inclusion that year was “cybercrime”. However, there was no specific “local” rationale provided for its addition to the assessment. Instead, the CBOCA spoke more generally of the growing cybercrime problem:

*Cybercrime poses a threat to both society in general and also to international security.*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2012)

In other words, there was no real representation of the cybercrime problem in local terms; more an acknowledgement of broader societal concerns over cyber security. Of course, this need not be a criticism; cybercrime almost always traverses borders and negates much of the geographic “localness” of crime. The other major change in the 2012 CBOCA was the removal of “waste crime” as a priority. However, there was no justification provided for this shift.

A whole range of new priorities were added to the 2016 CBOCA. It quickly became clear, however, that some of these were not entirely new additions, but were instead the result of the re-naming and re-categorisation of existing problems. “Human trafficking” for instance, appeared as a stand-alone priority in the 2016 CBOCA for the first time, but had also been discussed under the title of “immigration crime” in earlier assessments. “Child sexual exploitation” also first appeared as a major section in the 2016 CBOCA but had been discussed previously in the 2014 assessment as part of “exploitation” more generally, and also within the section on “cybercrime”. A substantial proportion of the “new” priorities identified in 2016 then, were in fact, explicable in terms of shifting conceptualisations and the supplanting of outdated labels with newer ones. It was also interesting to note that “waste crime” reappeared in the 2016 CBOCA, despite not being included in the assessments since 2010. No explicit rationale was provided for this, although the problem is treated seriously and analysed in some highly “local” depth.

Some of the other 2016 priorities were genuinely new additions though; “extortion”, for example, and “rural crime” were not simply re-branded versions of issues covered by earlier assessments. Typically, there was little discussion of why these areas of criminality had now become priorities despite being absent in earlier assessments, although in relation to “rural crime”, there were some indications that it was perceived as a growing problem:

*Recent incidents and press coverage indicate there a number of OCGs involved in crime types traditionally seen in rural locations...*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2016a, pg 26)

In essence, the 2016 CBOCA was somewhat opaque in explaining why some problems had become prioritised that year, while others had not.

Beyond changes in the main, “headline” priorities of the CBOCAs, it was also possible that temporal variation was taking place *within* the well-established sections repeated year-on-year across the assessments. In other words, there was a need to explore how those priorities appearing in every CBOCA - such as “drug crime”, “IP crime” and “fuel crime” - were discussed year-on-year. Using Nvivo, these three sections were analysed across all of the CBOCAs. Any “temporally-unique” details were coded and then reviewed. The essential question underlying this

analysis was; what, if anything, differentiates this material from earlier and later assessments?

It was found that these sections did contain substantial amounts of time-specific detail. Using the “drugs” section as an example, there were year-on-year attempts to explain how drug markets, trafficking routes and consumer demand had changed. The 2014 CBOCA, for instance, identified a recent trend from police intelligence:

*Interest in domestic cannabis cultivation has accelerated amongst all levels of organised crime groups in recent years, with variances in size and sophistication of cultivation attempts.*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2014, pg 16)

The same section noted other changes in drug markets:

*A significant development in the cannabis market is the emergence of synthetic forms of cannabis in both jurisdictions...*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2014, pg 17)

*...amphetamine seizures have seen a dramatic reduction since 2010 and seizures in 2013 were approximately 60% less than the number recorded three years earlier.*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2014, pg 19)

Similarly, the 2016 CBOCA makes its own specific observations of the drug trade and its implications for the border:

*The illicit drugs market on both sides of the border has changed in recent years and has become more diverse. The emergence of a new range of psychoactive substances has altered the dynamic of drug misuse among young people in terms of how they source drugs in open and closed markets.*

(An Garda Siochana and PSNI, 2016a, pg 8)

Interestingly, the 2016 CBOCA also noted a more general shift in the organised crime landscape along the border:

*There has been a substantial increase in the number of foreign national OCGs known to be involved in organised crime... These groups bring new methodologies and can be more challenging to investigate... These groups often commit offences in both jurisdictions.*

(An Garda Síochána and PSNI, 2016a, pg 7)

Similar amounts of temporal specificity were also observed across other sections of the assessments. When viewed holistically over the entire 12 year period, the temporal “localness” of the CBOCAs essentially took the form of a narrative describing seizures, police operations, drug purity levels and perceived shifts in criminal business strategy since the publication of the last assessment.

It was noticeable though that many of the changes and developments described in the CBOCAs related to large-scale trends not limited to the border zone itself. In a paradoxical way, this meant that the CBOCAs did not feel particularly local; they did not give the impression they were actually *about* a highly-specific locality over time – they did not, in other words, provide a real sense of place. By focusing on macro-level changes – such as the emergence of so-called “new psychoactive substances”, or society-wide patterns of drug abuse, or shifts in the total amount of illegal fuel seized by authorities in Northern Ireland and the Republic – the CBOCAs understated the border as an actual place. Instead of being a locality with a specific landscape, a specific economy, and a specific populace defined by culture, history and politics, the border was represented in more straightforward terms as just *a border*; an international dividing line; an abstract place. Throughout much of the CBOCAs’ content, the border was just a site at which illicit markets, drug addiction rates, contraband seizure statistics and the like, could be compared between the North and the Republic; the border was, in essence, a kind of user-interface for the Gardai and PSNI, rather than a locality to be understood in-and-of-itself. The below extract is an exemplar of this:

*In the 2008/9 financial year, HMRC in Northern Ireland seized 1.09 million litres of oils and disrupted five laundering plants... In Ireland, in the 2009 calendar year, Revenue Commissioners made 23 detections of laundered fuel totalling 283,817 litres.*

(An Garda Síochána and PSNI, 2010, pg 14)

Quite obviously, this sort of year-on-year cross-border seizure comparison says very little about temporal changes in organised crime on the border itself. In other parts of the CBOCAs though, there were more insightful attempts to understand how the border is actually exploited by illegal enterprises and crime gangs. The 2016 CBOCA, for instance, identified a new trend whereby waste was being transported from the Republic of Ireland by organised criminals, across the border and into Scotland for illegal disposal (An Garda Síochána and PSNI, 2016a, pg 20). In this case, the characteristics of the border itself and its transport infrastructure were shown to provide unique opportunities for criminal exploitation. Such accounts provided a much more meaningful insight into the “localness” of the border zone and its criminal opportunities. Of course, the cross-national dimensions of the border zone are very significant and would always need to be taken into account by a local assessment – especially where there are price differentials between goods (legal or otherwise) on either side of the border – but the border locality is more than just a site for cross-national comparison.

The temptation in this analysis was to further explore the underlying processes by which certain crime problems became included in the CBOCAs; to study, in other words, the “agenda-setting” process. While this was an interesting topic, it was not integral to the main concerns of the study as a whole. As such, pursuing this line of enquiry further would have been a detraction; one which would have led to a different kind of study. The more significant point was that the CBOCAs did display significant temporal variation; they were specific to particular points in time. Their emphasis on cross-border comparison though, rather than on the border locality itself, obscured the “localness” of their insights. This was especially apparent when the CBOCAs were compared to the local profiles of the previous case study. The profiles explored local demographics, employment levels, ethnicity, pockets of deprivation, education levels, characteristics of local crime groups, transport infrastructure and local pathways into crime – albeit in something of a

chaotic way – but this helped to isolate some of the unique features of particular localities. The CBOCAs, however, did not attempt anything on a similar level.

## **8.5. Discussion**

Having examined the different facets of the CBOCAs, including their implicit ontology of organised crime, their articulation of it as a particular kind of problem, and their implied mode of governance, the challenge was to draw these elements together to understand the assessment's deep-seated problem representations. As was discovered in the previous local profile case study, there was the possibility that the CBOCAs would contain multiple, perhaps even contradictory, representations of the problem. In the following sub-section, these issues are unpicked in detail. The discussion then moves on to address the CBOCAs' underlying governmentalities and their overall conceptual coherence.

### *The representation of the problem of local organised crime*

Synthesising the above observations into one problem representation was a complex task. It had to be borne in mind that, following Bacchi's advice, there might be fundamental disagreements within the CBOCAs; areas of conceptual discordance. The challenge was to avoid glossing-over such fault-lines in the search for a single, elegant answer to the research question. In fact, seeking out and identifying such conflicts was a key objective of this case study. Following the insights of the local profile case, the proposition to be tested was that local representations of organised crime would be incoherent. Hence, there was a need to actively trace the rough edges of the problem representation.

Reviewing the content analyses of the previous sections and using "theoretical memos" (Layder 1998, pg 58) to extract and combine specific points, it became possible to see that the CBOCAs embodied a general, over-arching representation of the problem; one which dominated across all of the assessments. This representation could be summarised as follows:

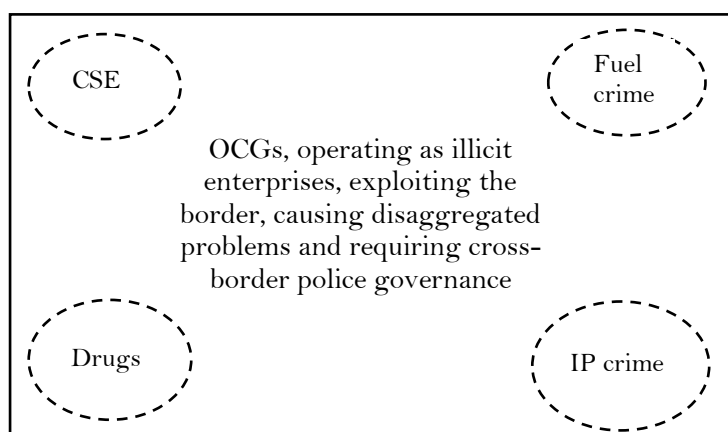
*Organised crime gangs, operating as illicit business enterprises, which exploit the border, cause a multifaceted and disaggregated range of problems throughout society, and which require governance through cross-border joint police operations.*



The CBOCAs were re-read with this representation in mind, and it was clear that this did encapsulate their fundamental way of thinking about the problem. There was a clear emphasis on crime gangs as the source of the problem, but also ubiquitous use of business terminology to describe them; there were lengthy passages detailing how these gangs exploit the border, as well as discussions of the eclectic range of problems they cause. Of course, there was also a deep-seated, implicit assumption that joint, cross-border police operations were the means by which the problem could be governed.

However, the CBOCAs were also more complex than this. Not everything within their pages could be reduced to this one representation. As was discussed earlier, despite ostensibly focusing on organised crime gangs, the CBOCAs actually dedicated most attention to charting shifts in different illegal markets and activities – whether in terms of the emergence of new drugs, new methods for smuggling alcohol, changes in addiction rates or the effect of online retailing on the availability of counterfeit goods (An Garda Síochána and PSNI, 2012). These different markets and activities were organised under different section headings, such as “drugs”, “intellectual property crime” and “waste crime”. Each of these sections embodied their own smaller-scale, unique problem representations, albeit in a vague and implicit way. The problem of “drugs”, for instance, was often represented in quasi-medical terms, with reference to bio-chemical effects, treatment rates, addiction rates and mental health; the problem of counterfeit goods was frequently represented in terms of a health and safety risk to naïve consumers; the fuel crime problem as one of environmental damage and tax losses from exploitation of routine activities; and so on. Organised crime groups were mentioned, on occasion, within such sections, although not often. Instead the emphasis was predominantly on market-dynamics and general modes of operation. The boundaries between these smaller-scale, self-contained, specific problem representations and the overarching one described previously, were porous. They did not constitute rival accounts, but neither were they in full accordance with each other; rather, they were “nested” (Bacchi, 2009) one within the other, as figure 19 attempts to show:

Figure 19. The different problem representations within the CBOCAs



\*For clarity, not all of the smaller-scale problem representations have been included here

It was interesting to note that, in some ways, this was a reversal of what had been observed in the local profiles. In that case, there was an overarching “national” account which represented the problem in terms of organised criminal activities, but with a subsequent emphasis on local criminal organisations within each section. By contrast, within the CBOCAs there was a general account of the problem in terms of OCGs, but with an actual emphasis on markets and activities.

In addition to these observations, within the 2016 CBOCA, there was a noted concern with an increase in so-called “foreign national OCGs” (pg 7). These groups were deemed especially problematic since they imported new methods for committing crime and were insulated by their own language and culture against law enforcement penetration (*ibid*, pg 7). Similarly, the same assessment defined “mobile OCGs” as a specific problem in its own right, particularly in relation to their frequent movements around the island of Ireland (*ibid*, pg 24). Essentially, these were two smaller-scale versions of the main problem representation outlined above; they were variants on the main narrative with a distinctive colouring of the problem in terms of “foreignness” and “mobility”. These sat quite comfortably within the overall narrative of the assessments; there was still a deep-seated emphasis on organised crime gangs as illicit enterprises, even if there was sometimes a differentiation of these into other forms, such as “foreign” or “mobile” OCGs.

The review process also helped to bring to the fore a particular dimension of the CBOCAs’ problem representation; namely, the role of the border in generating unique opportunities for organised crime. As borders go, it is an anomaly; open and

largely un-policed, yet still a dividing line between two nations. The border occupied a central position in the CBOCAs' problem representation; but not as a kind of geographical place with its own "localness" in terms of population, economy, history and politics, but instead as an abstract place; a line where cross-national differences in law, regulation, prices and markets meet, creating a rich source of potential for criminal exploitation.

The CBOCAs' representation of the problem did not significantly change over time. Despite the shifts in priorities identified in 2012 and 2016, at no point was there a fundamental reformulation of the organised crime problem. Comparing the earliest CBOCAs from the mid-2000s with the 2016 assessment, it was not possible to detect any deep alterations in ontology, problematisation or governance. Interestingly, the UK government stance on organised crime did shift significantly during this same time period; first in 2006, with the introduction of the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), and then again in 2013 when organised crime was aligned with counter-terrorist strategies of governance. The CBOCAs, it seems, were insulated against such policy shifts. Unlike the local profiles, there was no adoption of counter-terrorist strategy, and no rhetoric about national security.

Beyond simply deconstructing the CBOCAs' problem representation, it was also worthwhile following Bacchi's advice and exploring what had been left out or obscured (2009). In fact, a number of significant factors were conspicuously absent from the CBOCAs. The first was a meaningful consideration of the role of paramilitaries in cross-border organised crime. For several decades the border region was an arena for armed conflict between Irish Republican paramilitaries and the British Army. In particular, the border county of South Armagh was notorious for killings, ambushes and snipers; an almost ungovernable locality (from a British / Northern Irish perspective, at least). The possibility of former paramilitary networks embedded in local communities - and with access to formidable arsenals - mutating into a kind of organised crime structure is a highly-unique dimension of this locality which will not be found elsewhere in the UK. There were occasional, fleeting mentions of paramilitary organisations, yet this perspective was largely missing from the CBOCAs' problem representation. Given the history and politics of the border region, it would have been quite plausible for the CBOCAs to represent the organised crime problem in a very different way; for example, in terms of *former paramilitary organisations mutating into illicit enterprise networks and exerting*

*control over border communities in a post-conflict society.* This may not have been the best way in which to represent the problem, but it helps to show what has been left out of the CBOCAs' problem representation, and it helps to show how the problem might be rendered differently. For the CBOCAs though, organised crime gangs were contextless and cultureless entities; they were businesses estranged from history and politics.

Developing this point further, the CBOCAs' account of the problem was – more generally – devoid of politics, history and culture. Yet these dimensions must inevitably influence the nature of organised crime on the border. Absent from the CBOCAs' problem representation is an understanding of how underlying political, historical, economic and cultural factors lead to the generation (or prevention) of specific crime opportunities and specific crime problems. For instance, if certain sections of the border community remain somewhat un-cooperative toward Northern Irish (UK) authorities, then this might create potential space for unofficial forms of governance by organised crime figures or former paramilitary networks; perhaps leading to the facilitation of criminal activity. Cultural-historical values tied to resistance against British rule in Ireland may also help to legitimise such illegal activity. There are likely many reasons for not including such factors in the CBOCAs. Quite obviously, the police cannot be seen to be targeting particular Republican or Loyalist communities, and by limiting themselves to discussions of a-political and a-historical organised crime gangs they can avoid such issues.

Also absent was any consideration of illegal or extra-legal forms of governance by organised crime groups. There were no references at all within the CBOCAs to organised crime as illegal governance. Indeed, this seemed to be a noticeable trend across all of the case studies examined so far. Again though, because of the fractured governance of border localities such as South Armagh and the historic struggles between paramilitaries, the police and British armed forces for control over the border region, there seems to be significant potential for the emergence of extra-legal governance by crime gangs or former paramilitaries. Yet, considerations of which criminal actors might have the capacity to govern outside of the formal state apparatus are missing from the CBOCAs account of the problem. There is, in other words, no room for the analysis of power and governance in the way the problem is framed.

Finally, it was interesting to note that the CBOCAs did not represent the problem in terms of the *border itself*. Clearly, much of the organised crime described in the CBOCAs was structured around the opportunities provided by the border and its lack of guardianship. It would have been quite plausible for the assessments to represent the problem in terms of an unguarded border. This would have shifted the narrative towards a more “situational” account in which the problem was not the organised crime gangs themselves, but the opportunities available for exploitation. Followed through to its logical ends, this would perhaps have led to the development of a “vulnerability” type assessment, of the sort created by Vander Beken (2004). Despite extensive descriptions of how organised crime gangs exploit the border though, this “situational” account of the problem is not developed in the CBOCAs. Instead, the way the problem is framed always directs attention back onto crime gangs themselves and their “business activities”.

It was not possible to fully explore the underlying political and policing decisions that shaped how the organised crime problem was framed in the CBOCAs. Any further analysis of the “agenda-setting” process would have required a very different kind of study with a different kind of focus. The important point was that several important dimensions were missing from the CBOCAs’ problem representation, particularly in relation to politics, history, situational opportunities and paramilitary organisations. Building on these insights, it was possible to move to a deeper conceptual level, and to explore the governmentalities implicit in the CBOCAs problem representation.

#### *Underlying governmentalities*

The CBOCAs’ problem representation typified a certain way of thinking about, and governing, organised crime. This governmentality took its object of governance to be organised crime gangs operating as illicit enterprises; it invested these gangs with the animating logic of legitimate business, implicitly locating them within the theoretical orbit of those such as Dwight-Smith and his “enterprise theory of organised crime” (1980). Thus, despite using the nomenclature of the “gang”, the CBOCAs represent their object of governance as a continuation of “normal” socio-economics; the illicit enterprise activity of crime gangs is not an inherently exogenous phenomenon, alien to society, but an extreme end of an otherwise normal “spectrum” (*ibid*). Those individuals involved in illegal enterprises were deemed to be rational and motivated

by financial gain; they were calculated decision-makers, assessing risk and reward, moving from one criminal activity to another depending on profit margins and the perceived threat from law enforcement. They existed on a continuum within the general population – albeit on the morally-repugnant, callous and selfish end of that continuum but, significantly, they were not essentially different in any fundamental way from more law-abiding citizens. The CBOCAs’ governmentality bestowed agency upon these offenders; it considered them as “active-subjects” (Bottoms, 2008, pg 90); not compelled by inexorable social forces, pathological impulses or warped subcultures to commit crime, meaning that they alone were culpable for their actions. These ways of thinking were, quite obviously, reminiscent of rational-choice theory, but also of classical approaches to crime. The deviance of organised criminals was not articulated in terms of their ethnic or cultural origins; they were not considered as truly exogenous to society; not classed as some invasive foreign entity. Deviance was, instead, situated at the level of individual morality – something for which offenders themselves are responsible. They are variously described as “unscrupulous” (An Garda Síochána and PSNI, 2010, pg 12) and “greedy” (An Garda Síochána / PSNI, 2006, pg 4); they pursue their own selfish interests over those of their communities.

Within this governmentality, it was police forces on either side of the border who were deemed responsible for governing. While occasionally there was space for the involvement of non-law enforcement actors, the burden of governance always sat with the police. Of significance here, was the joint-allocation of responsibility to PSNI and the Garda; there were constant, explicit accounts of their shared governance responsibilities. This meant that the problem had, on the one hand, been categorised as demanding police enforcement – in an abstract sense – but that two police agencies from two different nations were more specifically responsible for carrying this out.

The means through which the police should govern was articulated in terms of generalised “enforcement activity”. Importantly, this was not synonymous with the functioning of the criminal justice system as a whole. It was not just through the conviction and incarceration of offenders that the problem could be governed; it was not retributive punishment or deterrence that could provide the solution; police operational activity was not simply the preliminary phase of a broader criminal justice governance strategy; rather, police enforcement was an end in itself. By

employing broad enforcement strategies, including the “disruption” of criminal businesses, the seizure of commodities, the confiscation of assets, the closure of illegal facilities and the arrest of suspects, it was imagined that the illicit enterprises run by crime gangs would cease to function effectively.

### *Conceptual coherence*

One of the main objectives of this case study was to examine the conceptual coherence of the CBOCAs’ problem representation. Unlike organised crime group mapping and local profiles, the CBOCAs were not imposed on multiple local areas by a central authority; they were bespoke; unique to one particular place. This presented the possibility that they would be more “local”, and more coherent in their understanding of the local organised crime problem.

However, there were various points in this case study where indications of incoherence began to emerge. Over time, these fault-lines were traced, refined and brought more clearly into focus. Ultimately, they were reducible to the following conflicts. In the first instance, there was discord between the explicit depiction of the organised crime problem as that of “crime gangs”, and the subsequent, implicit emphasis on market-dynamics and patterns of criminal activity. If the CBOCAs had followed through on their initial emphasis on crime gangs, then there would have been a need to examine the structural qualities of these gangs, their resources, areas of operation, political affiliations, “social embeddedness” (von Lampe, 2004a, pg 227), subcultural values, and “conditions of existence” (Edwards and Levi, 2008, pg 384); elements which are absent from the assessments. If the CBOCAs had, instead, explicitly defined organised crime as complex criminal activities and illicit markets – rather than crime gangs - then their subsequent focus on the dynamics of these markets would have made more sense. This however, would have also required a shift away from a police enforcement governmentality toward more generalised strategies of demand-reduction, situational prevention and perhaps market-regulation. Yet the CBOCAs melded together these two differing accounts of the problem in an unsystematic way. Criminal actors are claimed to be the problem, but attention is only directed toward police seizures and the dynamics of illegal markets. These can be described as two different “voices” within the assessments; two different problem representations sitting awkwardly alongside one another, leading to a sense of incoherence.

Secondly, there was a degree of incongruity surrounding the concept of the “crime gang”. The notion of a “gang” brings about connotations of a small group of people held together through a form of “mechanical solidarity” (Durkheim, 1997, pg 31), who share collective values and a collective sense of identity usually reinforced by symbols, colours or slang; a grouping who may engage in “organised” criminal activities, but are far more than just a rational enterprise. Yet, the CBOCAs animate these crime gangs only with the logics of economic rationality; they cast them as “illicit enterprises” and “businesses”; instrumental entities stripped of all culture, values and norms. On an individual level, while it may be fair to say that those involved in organised crime *do* act rationally and *are* motivated by financial gain, this sort of account leaves out too much; it excludes too many other important, causal factors in its representation of offenders. Organised criminals – like all people – are embedded in multiple socio-cultural settings; they have workplaces, families, friendship networks, social lives – they may identify with a particular class, a particular community or a particular cultural group. Their lifecourse is shaped by structural factors often beyond their control; factors sometimes as banal as local housing policy, deindustrialisation or the disintegration of rural communities (see, for example, Hobbs 2013). These elements – cultural, economic, political and structural – can all influence who exactly becomes a “rational” offender, as well as the quantity and quality of criminal opportunities available for them to exploit (Edwards and Levi, 2008). Failure to consider these more “distal” factors, “obviates a concern with the social antecedents of serious crimes” (*ibid*, pg 378). Described in other terms, the CBOCAs’ implicit rational choice perspective is too heavily reliant on an “active-subject, individually-oriented” (Bottoms, 2008, pg 90). By contrast, a broadening of this perspective to include “active-subject, *socially*-oriented” (*ibid*, pg 90) frames of reference, would lead to a re-conceptualisation of organised offenders as socially-embedded actors rather than just individuals, thereby bringing into consideration the sort of socio-cultural factors described in the previous paragraph. The CBOCAs hollow-out the “crime gang”, ignoring many of the key characteristics that make it what it is. In realist terms, this amounted to the exclusion of integral aspects of a crime gang’s internal structure.

Further adding to the confusion, the CBOCAs often used “illicit enterprise” to refer to whole areas of criminal business, or general business-models, not just crime gangs. Significantly, the “crime gang” concept also obscured a more complex



social reality. Those engaged in illegal waste dumping will, in all likelihood, be organised differently than that trafficking cocaine, and will be different again from those smuggling people, exploiting children or committing armed robberies. The monolithic “crime gang” concept collapses these differences into one another, resulting in conceptual confusion (Edwards, 2016). A more disaggregated set of concepts are instead needed to distinguish between, for example, fluid cocaine trading networks and cottage-industry cannabis farmers; between criminally-mutated waste management companies and ethnically-embedded human trafficking rings, and between paramilitary extortion rackets and teams of ram-raiders. Flaws such as these in the CBOCAs’ cornerstone notion of the “crime gang” served to weaken their overall conceptual structure.

Thirdly, many important “local” dimensions were absent from the CBOCAs’ problem representation. By ignoring politics, history, culture, landscape and social relations, the border locality was rendered into little more than a one-dimensional boundary, stripped of the many things that made it a unique place for organised crime. The border was, in other words, relatively contentless. Incoherence, it should be noted, is not merely the result of conflating incompatible things; it can occur when the crucial elements of an entity are obscured or ignored. Missing from the CBOCAs then were considerations of such things as; the routine activities of cross-border economic activity; the pattern of social relations straddling the border which might facilitate crime; hostile attitudes towards Northern Irish authorities in some border communities as a result of historic conflict; the reputation of former paramilitaries within specific border communities and their potential as extra-legal governors; the remote, rural qualities of the border landscape; narratives of resistance to British rule; the existence of residual logistical networks and arms supplies left over from the “troubles”, and so on. Localised factors such as these will undoubtedly shape the nature of organised crime along the border. There were, of course, a number of understandable reasons why such elements might not have been included in the CBOCA, but their absence meant that the “local” dimension of the problem representation was little more than a “contentless abstraction” (Sayer, 1992, pg 67).

## 8.6. Conclusion

The proposition outlined at the beginning of this case study was that local organised crime assessments would represent the problem of local organised crime in an incoherent way, largely because of a tension between the “local” and the “national”. This helped direct attention toward exploring the complexities and incongruities of the CBOCAs, rather than glossing-over such fault-lines in the search for a single, elegant answer to the research question. It had been anticipated that the CBOCAs might be different to both OCGM and local profiles because, unlike the latter assessments, they had not been centrally-imposed by a national authority; they were unique and bespoke to one highly-specific local area, meaning they had the potential to be more local and more coherent.

The CBOCAs were found to represent the problem in terms of *organised crime gangs, operating as illicit business enterprises, exploiting the border, causing a multifaceted and disaggregated range of problems throughout society requiring governance through cross-border joint police operations*. Nested within this were smaller-scale problem representations such as “drugs”, “vehicle crime” and “waste crime” which were implicitly focused more on market dynamics and patterns of activity than crime gangs.

When examined closely though, this representation of the problem did indeed contain several conceptual fault-lines. In particular, there was a conflict between an explicit narrative in which “crime gangs” were blamed as the source of the problem, and a more implicit emphasis on the market dynamics and crime patterns of discrete thematic areas. Despite displaying some degree of temporal variation, the “localness” of the assessments was one-dimensional, lacking any sense of politics, culture, history or landscape; a contentless husk, hollowed of the unique conditions which might shape and enable organised crime problems.

This suggested that the proposition was correct in claiming that local assessments are incoherent in their representation of local organised crime. The CBOCA case study showed that even bespoke local assessments, tailored toward understanding just one local area without any national interference, were still incoherent in their representation of the problem. However, the inconsistencies found within the CBOCAs could not be reduced to a simple conflict between the “local”

and the “national”. This suggested that the latter part of the proposition needed some re-thinking.

On reflection, it seemed wrong to argue that the inconsistencies of local assessments would all be reducible to a tension between the “national” and the “local”. Certainly this had been a key issue within the local profiles and OCGM, but it was evident that a number of other factors had the potential to undermine the coherence of local assessments. For instance, it was possible that different types of local assessment all rested upon a flawed ontology of organised crime, or that they defined “localness” in a nonsensical way, or perhaps that their methods were incongruent with their goals. More fundamentally, there was the possibility that the very idea of assessing “local organised crime” was inherently unfeasible in some way – any or all of which could lead to the inconsistencies found within local assessments.

In further developing the proposition then, there was a need to establish if there existed common, underlying causes of incoherence across different types of local assessment. The ambition was to identify any such causes, understand how and why they undermined local assessments before developing a new model which could circumvent such issues. This implied a need for a broader perspective; a need to view the case study findings in their entirety so that common features might be detected. In doing so, the next chapter focuses on a cross-case analysis of the three case studies.

## 9. A cross-case analysis

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### 9.1. Introduction

The most valuable insight to emerge from the case studies was that local assessments tended to be incoherent in their representation of the local organised crime problem. It had been hoped that “reverse-engineering” of these assessments might reveal clear-cut rival governmentalities between the different assessments or, alternatively, that it might uncover a single underlying problem representation articulated differently in different localities. Yet these ambitions were thwarted by the internal conflicts and conceptual inconsistencies of the assessments themselves. They were not cohesive wholes amenable to dissection and comparison; they were the hybridised descendants of competing narratives and rival problem representations.

Slowly though, it became clear that this frustrating lack of clarity was itself an important insight. Rather than patching-over the assessments’ fault-lines in the search for elegant, parsimonious answers to the research questions, the aim became to seek out such fault-lines and to subject them to scrutiny. This was valuable for a number of reasons. It helped to isolate the different narratives and governmentalities found within individual assessments and tie them to different, perhaps competing, centres of governance. It also helped to dispel any remaining illusions that local assessments could represent local organised crime in a direct, “naïve-realist” way. Exposing their contradictory governmentalities helped to denaturalise them, opening them up to contestation of the sort imagined by O’Malley et al. (1997). In turn, this provided a firm basis for developing a more coherent assessment model – an ambition realised in the next chapter.

In moving forward, the task was to establish whether there were common causes of this incoherence; whether these different types of local assessment all rested upon some common conceptual flaw; to develop, in other words, *a more generalisable account of how and why local assessments tend to be incoherent in their representations of local organised crime*. This would allow the proposition to be refined and developed into a finalised form.

## **9.2. Comparing cases**

This search for underlying sources of incoherence began with a broad, open and exploratory comparison of the three cases before progressively narrowing to focus on potential root causes. The initial aim was to “overlay” the three assessments, one on top of the other, in order to accentuate their areas of conformity and variation. The ambition was to create a kind of conceptual “Venn” diagram in which the intersections between each problem representation could be visualised more clearly. This analysis became fairly abstract; it entailed revisiting earlier case study findings to pin-point each assessment’s inherent contradictions, before comparing them using tables and diagrams. “Theoretical memos” (Layder 1998, pg 58) were used to develop specific ideas, observations and patterns. These memos were essentially “notes to oneself” (*ibid*, pg 59) containing ideas about why these assessments were incoherent. After creating a number of these memos they were collated into particular themes, then reviewed and refined. As might be expected, this was something of a messy process. Over time though, it became clear that four underlying factors undermined each of the assessments, although to varying degrees. These factors are discussed individually in the following sections.

### **A lack of clear problem definitions**

Analysis began with an attempt to compare how the three different local assessments represented the problem of local organised crime. For OCGM, organised crime itself was a kind of criminal organisation which took the form of “OCGs” inflicting harm on local police territories. Within local profiles, by contrast, organised crime was explicitly regarded as a kind of organised criminal activity, but there was also a subsidiary emphasis on local crime groups. The problem was regarded as one of a generalised threat. The CBOCAs meanwhile, explicitly spoke of organised crime in terms of criminal organisations and illicit enterprises but then actually expended most effort discussing markets, criminal business models and patterns of activity. They blamed organised crime for causing a multi-faceted range of problems across society, including everything from environmental damage, to revenue losses and drug addiction. Table 24, below, summarises each of the three problem representations.

Table 24. Problem representations of the different local assessments

	OCCGM	Local profiles	CBOCA
<b>Problem representation</b>	OCGs, primarily involved in drug supply, causing harm within police force territories, requiring governance through police operational activity	Organised criminal activities with the emergent capacity to threaten national security requiring multi-faceted CONTEST strategy of governance ----- Threatening local crime groups and gangs requiring police management	Organised crime gangs, operating as illicit business enterprises, which exploit the border, cause a multi-faceted and disaggregated range of problems and require governance through cross-border police enforcement

These problem representations were not reducible to one underlying perspective, although they shared some characteristics. Common to each of them was an interplay between “criminal organisations” and “organised criminal activities”. Both these dimensions were present in the assessments, although with variation in the extent to which one was dominant over the other. Each assessment could be said to make use of the same conceptual “furniture”, in the form of “OCGs”, “drugs”, “human trafficking”, and so on, but rearranged these into different configurations. Noticeably absent however, was a conceptualisation of organised crime as a form of illegal governance over particular territories, markets or communities – a definition strongly favoured by some scholars (Varese, 2010).

However, this attempt to summarise and compare the problem representations of the different assessments left out much detail. In simplifying and clarifying the assessments’ representations of local organised crime, there was a risk that such analysis would do the assessments’ work for them. As was discovered in the case studies themselves, these problem representations actually contained multiple, contradictory accounts of the local organised crime problem. They were, in a sense, *schizophrenic*, with different “voices” or narratives clamouring to be heard. Local profiles, for instance, ostensibly cast organised crime as an emergent, national security threat composed of complex sets of criminal activity. Employing the language of counter-terrorism and security, this “voice” was often clearest in the profiles’ introductory sections where entire passages were sometimes paraphrased from official Home Office strategy. Yet, a different “voice” could be heard within

much of their substantive content. Here, the narrative was one of well-known, locally-embedded OCGs and street gangs, typically involved in the drug trade, with most attention directed toward exploring their group membership, geographical base, areas of operation and modus operandi. These two narratives embodied two fundamentally different representations of the local organised crime problem. Although the weighting given to each of these narratives varied, the hybridisation of such different problem representations led to a significant amount of incoherence within the local profiles.

The same tendency was observed in the CBOCAs. They explicitly described the organised crime problem as that of “organised crime gangs” animated by business logic; a heavily actor-centric way of thinking in which morally-corrupt but rational offenders are regarded to be the source of the problem. Yet, much of the CBOCAs’ substantive content was instead focused on the market dynamics and patterns of activity of specific thematic areas of crime. Instead of exploring the structure, geography and enabling conditions of these crime gangs, they discussed the medical consequences of drug abuse, the implications of tax losses and shifts in waste dumping patterns. As with local profiles, there were conflicting “voices” in the CBOCAs.

Within OCGM, there were admittedly fewer such tendencies, perhaps because the assessment was quantitative, leaving less room for different narratives of the problem to emerge. Upon revisiting the OCGM case though, the real issue was the *absence* of a clear problem representation. For OCGM, the very existence of OCGs was presumed to pose some kind of problem although the problem itself is never explicitly explained.

The important realisation here was that all three types of local assessment presupposed the nature of the local organised crime problem, but did so only in a vague, contradictory way. Their presuppositions lacked a clear definition of the problem – or problems – that they sought to assess. Both the local profiles and the CBOCAs were internally-inconsistent in what they regarded organised crime problem(s) to be, while OCGM over-looked the issue in its ambition of counting OCGs. The use of vague categories such as “drugs”, “cyber” or “human trafficking” within the assessments does not provide enough problem-specificity for the assessments to focus on. Such categories inevitably pose questions such as “what specifically is the problem with drugs in this locality?”, “how does the problem

work?”, “what are the causal factors behind it?”. Yet these questions are missing. “Drugs” are presumed to be a self-evident problem in their own right, as are “OCGs” and “cyber” or “fraud”.

The lack of clear problem definitions was demonstrably a source of incoherence across all three assessments. With no clear sense of what exactly the organised crime problem(s) was, many of these assessments provided loose, descriptive narratives about an eclectic array of issues ranging from urban street gangs to cyber-attacks, from pathways into crime to levels of homelessness, from local transport infrastructure to educational attainment. Without a clear explanatory understanding of the problem being assessed, there is no way of ascertaining how or why such factors may be relevant. A more explicit and explanatory focus on specific, clearly-defined crime problems would lead to more coherent assessments.

### **A lack of internal cohesion**

There was also the suggestion that methodological issues were undermining the assessments. If an assessment is to be coherent, its aims, unit of analysis, methods and data need to be aligned with one another. In the terminology of social science research, this is known as “internal validity”. Without such alignment, an assessment can become incoherent. For example, if an assessment were to identify illegal markets as the source of the organised crime problem but choose “OCGs” as the unit of analysis, and then collect data on local educational attainment, homelessness and transport infrastructure, then the resulting assessment would probably become nonsensical. While reviewing the case study findings, there was a growing suspicion that a lack of such internal cohesion was one of the main causes of incoherence in local assessments. In exploring this further, the different elements of each assessment were compared. See table 25, below.



Table 25. Different elements of the three types of local assessment

	<b>OCGM</b>	<b>Local profiles</b>	<b>CBOCA</b>
<b>Unit of analysis</b>	OCGs	Local areas	Thematic areas of crime
<b>Methodological orientation</b>	Counting and ranking OCGs	Collation and presentation of data about local area	Retrospective, descriptive narrative
<b>Data sources</b>	Police intelligence	Demographic Economic Educational Police intelligence OCGM data Drug use Recorded crime Transport Miscellaneous	Commodity seizures Financial cost Convictions / disruptions Recorded crime Miscellaneous

Clearly, each assessment focused on different units of analysis. OCGM isolated the “OCG” as their primary focal point, while local profiles, in a slightly vaguer sense, chose actual *local areas* as their object of assessment. The CBOCAs meanwhile, despite their “police vs OCGs” narrative, implicitly focused on *thematic areas of crime* as their unit of analysis.

In terms of methodology, it was only OCGM, with its emphasis on counting and ranking OCGs against strict criteria, that had a definable methodological approach. By contrast, both local profiles and the CBOCAs were noticeably vague on questions of methodology. Local profiles were mostly concerned with collating different data sets and then simply presenting them, with little attempt at extracting their overall meaning or significance for local organised crime. The CBOCAs, meanwhile, had a definite retrospective orientation; they sought to summarise recent developments and changes within different thematic areas of organised crime, and to do so as part of a descriptive narrative.

The three assessments also varied considerably in their choice of data. OCGM was found to be largely based on police intelligence which, of course, can actually include a range of different information sources, but still provides a fairly narrow perspective on local organised crime. In stark contrast to this, the local profiles aimed to use a hugely eclectic range of data sources, including demographic and economic statistics, police intelligence reporting, OCGM data, information on educational attainment, details of transport infrastructure, drug abuse levels and

recorded crime, among others – although this ambition was not always realised. The CBOCAs also used a very diverse range of data but, compared to local profiles, they were oriented more toward collecting data about past events, such as commodity seizures, the number of convictions obtained and recorded crime levels.

The question though, was “*to what extent are these units of analysis, methods and data cogent with each other, within each type of assessment?*” A more detailed, composite table was constructed, outlining each component of the three assessments. By moving down each column it was possible to identify discontinuities between, say, the unit of analysis and the data actually collected, or between the problem representation and the method. A red cross was marked on the table wherever such discontinuities were encountered. The results of this analysis can be seen in table 26, below.

Table 26. An analysis of discontinuities across the three types of local assessment

	<b>OCGM</b>	<b>Local profiles</b>	<b>CBOCA</b>
<b>Problem representation</b>	OCGs, primarily involved in drug supply, causing harm within police force territories, requiring governance through police operational activity	Organised criminal activities with the emergent capacity to threaten national security requiring multi-faceted CONTEST strategy of governance ----- Threatening local crime groups and gangs requiring police management	Organised crime gangs, operating as illicit business enterprises, which exploit the border, cause a multi-faceted and disaggregated range of problems and require governance through cross-border police enforcement
<b>Unit of analysis</b>	OCGs	Local area	Thematic areas of criminal activity
<b>Method</b>	Counting and ranking OCGs	Collation and presentation of data about local area	Retrospective, descriptive narrative
<b>Data</b>	Police intelligence	Eclectic range of data on demographics, economics, crime groups, recorded crime, OCGM, police intelligence <i>et cetera</i> .	Eclectic range of data on drug abuse, seizures, convictions, recorded offences, financial cost, <i>et cetera</i> .

It was plain to see that OCGM maintained a relatively high degree of internal cohesion. It was more difficult to judge the cohesion of the local profiles, due to their vague methodology and complex, layered problem representations. There was some identifiable discord, however, between a problem representation explicitly focused on types of highly organised criminal activity, and the implicit focus on local areas themselves as the unit of analysis. For instance, local profiles devoted much of their actual content to presenting information about their local area, in terms of education levels, deprivation ratings, demographics, homelessness and so on, but without making any real link to organised criminal activities. Given their problem representation, a more sensible unit of analysis would have been *types of criminal activity*, which could then have been explored in local terms. In relation to something like “drug dealing”, this might have involved identifying local centres of consumption, commodity flows, street-dealing hotspots, local market changes, local dealing “scripts”, the underlying conditions that enable drug dealing in particular places at particular times, and so on.

On first glance it might seem that local profiles do exactly that which is described above; they do contain sub-sections on “drugs”, “firearms” and “modern slavery”, for example, and attempt to describe them in local terms. Yet, as already mentioned, this usually took the form of a discussion of the local OCGs active in the area, and not a discussion of overall patterns of activity beyond specific crime groups. Furthermore, so much of the profiles’ content is constituted of eclectic data-sets on education, transport, deprivation, homelessness and health care, that the unit of analysis remained firmly set on the local area itself, not the organised criminal activity found therein.

The CBOCAs were the least cohesive of the three assessments. As the red crosses show in table 26, the explicit representation of the problem in terms of “organised crime gangs operating as illicit enterprises” did not agree with the subsequent emphasis on thematic areas of crime as the unit of analysis. Despite embodying a heavily police-oriented governmentality, the CBOCAs actually sat closer to local profiles than OCGM in terms of data collection. This was puzzling, especially given the CBOCAs’ strong explicit emphasis on OCGs. Such an emphasis - it might be expected - would lead to an assessment more concerned with collecting data about these OCGs - their size, areas of operation, business interests, *et cetera*.

Instead, the data related to market changes, seizures, drug abuse levels, with little mention of OCGs.

To a greater-or-lesser extent then, the lack of an explicit and rigorous methodology leads to a breakdown in the internal cohesion of many local assessments. Specifically, it means that data collection is eclectic, unfocused and of little relevance to the problem being assessed, however loosely-defined that problem may be. This, in turn, contributes to the incoherence found in many local assessments.

### **The infeasibility of assessing administratively-defined local areas**

“Localness” was a problematic concept across the three case studies. For OCGM, the “local” was a specific police force territory; a frame for counting OCGs – a blank space devoid of any social, cultural or economic detail. The local profiles also defined the “local” as a police territory – sometimes broken down into smaller units - yet they provided a wealth of information on transport networks, educational attainment, homelessness, unemployment and a range of other things. The CBOCAs were loosely focused on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland but hardly mentioned the border zone’s history, culture, demographics, politics or economics. Despite their differences, all three assessments share a common way of thinking about the relationship between “localness” and organised crime; a way of thinking which undermines their overall coherence.

Specifically, all three assessments define their local area by adopting a set of pre-existing administrative boundaries, such as a police force territory or a border. They then assess organised crime within (or along) that administrative area. Understandably, this seems the obvious way to assess organised crime at a local level. However, this leads to incoherence in two ways.

First, administrative boundaries are an arbitrary way of defining localness; they are not designed to capture distinguishable local places; there is no guarantee they will map onto discernible social or economic contexts. A police force territory, for example, includes many different kinds of place; from cosmopolitan business districts, to deprived and ethnically-homogenous housing estates, to quiet suburbs, to isolated rural areas. Each may play a role in generating certain organised crime problems and each may be affected in different ways. By using administrative zones

to frame the “local”, these assessments attempt to subsume diverse and eclectic geographies within a convenient administrative label. In OCGM, this is taken to the extreme, with local areas becoming little more than an inert backdrop for OCGs. The local profiles by contrast are overwhelmed by the kaleidoscopic diversity of the issues they are forced to include. Similarly, the CBOCAs attempt to provide coverage on just about anything which might affect the border zone. As a result, these assessments are unable or unwilling to focus on specific, locally-relevant crime problems in a holistic way.

Second, many so-called “organised crime” problems are not actually self-contained within discrete local areas. In an age of internet communications, high-speed transport networks, international migration and cosmopolitan cities, problems such as illegal drug supply and human trafficking traverse different localities and even international borders. All three assessments recognise this, yet their response is to depict their “local” organised crime problems as part of some larger “national” organised crime problem. OCGM, for instance, is part of a nationwide programme in which the local is merely a counting frame for OCGs, while the local profiles present organised crime as a national field which permeates all localities in much the same way. Yet the binary between the “local” and the “national” is a dubious one.

Hobbs, in his ethnographic studies of organised crime in British cities, has made much the same point, although with reference to the “global” rather than the “national”:

It is crucial therefore to be sceptical of models of organised or serious crime that rely heavily upon transnationality, cross-border, international or other metaphors of globalisation at one end of a spectrum and “local street gangs” at the other. Such a model fails to embrace the complexity of “local contextualities” (Giddens 1991, p22), and although the essential connectedness of contemporary organised crime which is necessitated by trading relationships that stretch across the globe (Harvey 1989) is a major feature, this does not indicate a local / global... polarity.  
(Hobbs, 1998, pg 418-419)

Hobbs stresses the importance of local context for “organised crime” (1998, 2001), showing how criminal structures are fragmented by industrial and urban change in some localities, but are retained in others (*ibid*). Yet “organised crime” is not bounded by these contexts either, as his findings make clear:

The notion of organised crime... needs to be reconsidered in the light of empirical research, which indicates that ever mutating interlocking networks of locally-based serious criminality typifies the current situation.

(Hobbs, 1998, pg 419)

Given this, many so-called “organised crime” problems are best described as *inter-local*; they are inextricably linked to local places geographically dispersed from one another. “County-lines” drug trafficking is an example of this – the phenomena of drug supply networks in large cities expanding “lines” into rural counties (NCA, 2017) depends on causal conditions in both the cities and the counties, yet it does not affect all parts of the UK as a nation. It is not reducible to the local or the national; it is *inter-local*.

By focusing their attention on organised crime *within* discrete localities and by assuming them to be part of a national picture, local assessments ignore *inter-local* connections. Such connections are severed at the boundaries of administrative zones. This truncates the capacity of assessments to understand “organised crime” problems in a holistic way. It means they only obtain fragmentary understandings of real crime problems. Importantly, this suggests that the very notion of assessing organised crime within discrete local areas is unfeasible. It suggests that local organised crime assessments need to change significantly in order to become more coherent.

### **Flawed ontologies of organised crime**

In-depth, cross-case analysis of the three case studies also suggested a common, underlying problem with the way they conceptualised organised crime itself. Specifically, it became clear that their ontologies of organised crime were based on “*chaotic concepts*” (Sayer, 1992, pg 138). Originating with Marx, but subsequently used by realist thinkers, a “chaotic conception” is that which:

...arbitrarily divides the indivisible and/or lumps together the unrelated and the inessential, thereby “carving up” the object of study with little or no regard for its structure and form.

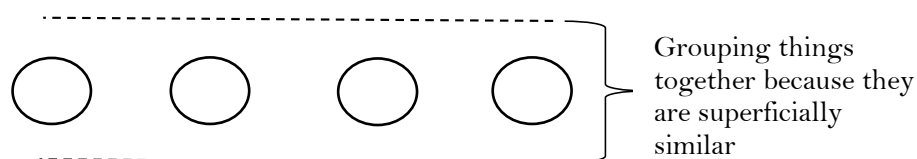
(Sayer, 1992, pg 138)

It is, in other words, a misrepresentation of reality. For our conceptualisations of the social world to be coherent, they must isolate real social entities; they must, in other words, correspond to a real “thing”, as far as possible. If a particular conceptualisation were to conflate two separate social entities and speak of them as if they were one, then that concept would be a misrepresentation, and it could be termed “chaotic” (Sayer, 1992). Similarly, if a particular concept were to isolate only certain elements of a real social entity, while ignoring its other key components, then this too would be a “chaotic conception” (*ibid*).

When close attention was paid to the three assessments’ ontologies of organised crime, it became apparent that each of them was based on the sorts of “chaotic conceptions” (*ibid*) discussed above. Even though each assessment was distinct from the others, all three employed the same kinds of thinking, and it was these thought-processes which made them “chaotic”.

The specific issue was that each assessment grouped together a range of criminal activities and / or criminal organisations under the title “organised crime” on the basis that these things were *superficially similar* to each other, not because they were *actually connected*. For instance, the OCGs within OCGM were not necessarily connected to one another; they did not constitute an overarching “mafia” superstructure; they were not inter-related parts of one system; they were just social entities with something in common, i.e. they were all groups of people breaking the law in some way. Similarly, the types of criminal activity depicted within local profiles were not connected or related to each other in some essential way; they were just activities sharing some superficial characteristics, i.e. they were all illegal acts requiring a high degree of organisation and / or co-operation. In critical realist terms, this kind of logical association is known as “formal relations of similarity” (Sayer, 1992, pg 243) and it is visualised in figure 20, below.

Figure 20. Objects with superficial similarities



There are several problems with grouping things together in this way. Firstly, it fails to identify the actual connections between different social phenomena (Sayer, 1992). Secondly, it can lead to very different, incongruous social entities being conflated (*ibid*). Thirdly, things which are only superficially similar to one another and not actually inter-related cannot combine to form one entity with emergent causal powers (*ibid*, pg 138-139). Put another way, all the many diverse, disconnected OCGs in one locality cannot reasonably be said to exert a combined, collective effect in and of themselves. Similarly, the sum total of all the drug trafficking, cybercrime, human trafficking, modern slavery, *et cetera*, in a local area cannot reasonably be said to form a collective “threat”, either locally or to national security. This is because they do not form one collective social entity; they are different things which have been lumped together erroneously.

It is useful to explore these points using a thought-experiment. Imagine if a media-driven discourse were to emerge about the growing threat of something called “vehicle crime”, which was said to comprise car theft, illegal parking, drink-driving, speeding, and drive-by-shootings, on the basis that all of these were crimes involving vehicles. This is a way of grouping things together based on “formal relations of similarity” (*ibid*, pg 243). Imagine also, that this discourse was taken up by government and translated into a set of policies, strategies and policing techniques all aimed at stopping the “vehicle crime” threat. Over time, this way of thinking might become institutionally-embedded and taken-for-granted. Local police might start producing assessments of “vehicle crime” for their area containing an implicit causal model in which “it” has the emergent, collective power to cause harm to motorists as a whole, or to threaten national transport infrastructure. Clearly though, car theft, illegal parking, drink-driving, speeding and drive-by-shootings are all very different things. They are not inter-related. They are not connected to each other in any meaningful way; they simply share something in common – they are all illegal acts committed using vehicles. They cannot then be brought together as components within a causal model of “vehicle crime”.

This was the same style of thinking found in all three local assessments. Instead of “crime” and “vehicles” being the common basis for grouping things together though, it was “criminal organisations” (in the case of OCGM), and “organised criminal activities” (in local profiles). It is not wrong to say that drug trafficking, firearms trafficking, cybercrime and modern slavery all entail a degree of



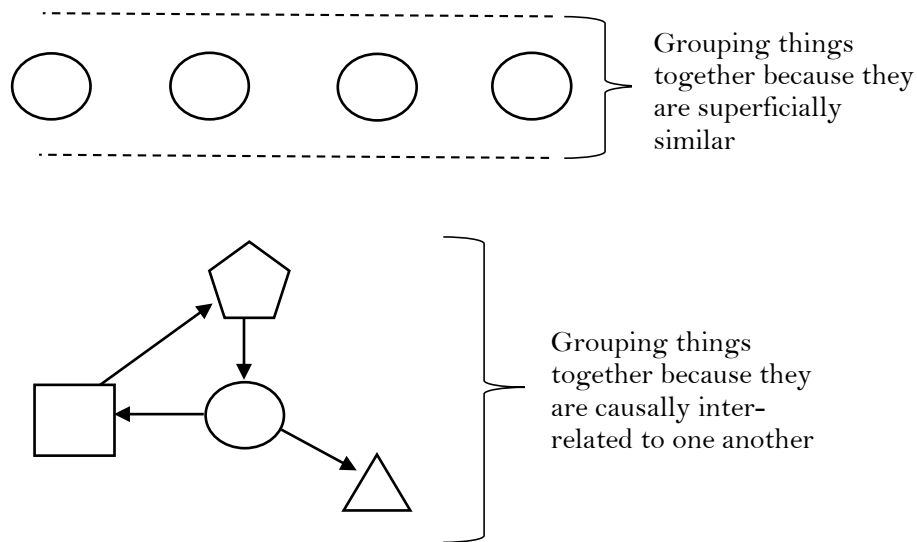
organisation, but the fact that they share this one common feature does not mean they should be grouped together on that basis as “organised crime” and ascribed with some emergent power. Similarly, it is not wrong to claim that a drug dealing gang, a child exploitation network and a business using forced labour are all organisations of offenders, but again, this is not a good reason for grouping them together as one “thing”; namely, “organised crime”. It is precisely this style of thinking that creates “chaotic concepts” (Sayer, 1992, pg 138); very different things are conflated with one another while real causal connections and relations are overlooked.

A more appropriate basis for grouping things together is by identifying the essential, causally inter-related, component parts of a social entity or system (Bhaskar, 1979, Sayer, 1992, pg 244). In critical realist terms, this is known as the “substantial relations of connection” (Sayer, 1992, pg 243). Returning to the “vehicle crime” example, this would mean taking a phenomenon such as “drive-by-shootings” and focusing on its *causal* links to such things as “gangs”, “drug market competition”, and “deviant social status”, as opposed to its *superficial* similarities with speeding, illegal parking and drink-driving.

The same point applies to local organised crime assessments. Instead of grouping together OCGs based on “formal relations of similarity” (*ibid*, pg 243), OCGM would do better to explore the causal connections of specific types of OCG. This might mean taking an entity such as a local heroin-dealing street gang and tracing its connections to such things as local heroin demand, deviant subcultural values, inter-gang rivalry, territorial solidarity, and so on. In the same way, rather than grouping together drug trafficking, cybercrime, modern slavery, child exploitation and firearms based on superficial similarities, local profiles would do better to focus on the causal relations between phenomena like modern slavery and things such as poor regulation in certain economic sectors, demand for cheap labour, the availability of vulnerable individuals and techniques of “enslavement”.

By employing this form of logical association, assessments would be able to elucidate the real, causal connections between things. It would help to create a more systemic, integrated representation of the phenomena in question, leading to conceptualisations that are sound, rather than “chaotic”. Figure 21, below, attempts to depict the difference between the two kinds of logical association.

Figure 21. Two ways of grouping objects



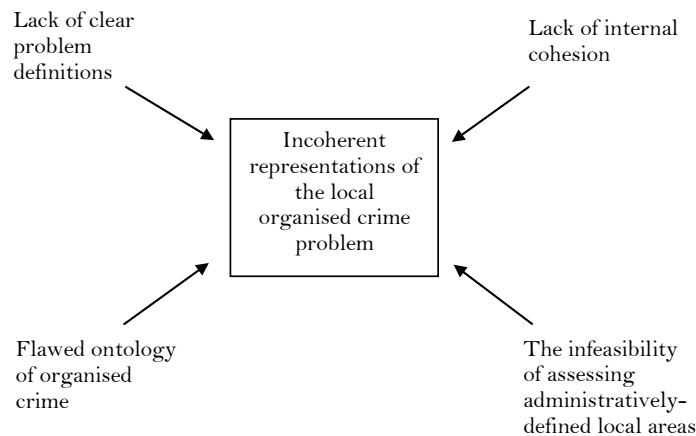
For all of these reasons, the problem representations contained within the three local assessments could be said to be based on dubious foundations. Their accounts of “local organised crime” were undermined by a reliance on “formal relations of similarity” (*ibid*, pg 243) rather than “substantial relations of connection” (*ibid*, pg 243).

In OCGM, this was manifested in the grouping together of diverse local OCGs - such as low-level heroin supply networks, street gangs, cannabis farmers, businesses using forced labour, corrupt currency exchangers implicated in laundering, armed robbers and collectives of men abusing children in institutional settings - all within one inert “local” police territory. Within local profiles, it was manifested in the grouping together of drug dealing, firearms, human trafficking, *et cetera*, and the subsequent ascription of causal powers to these things as a collective entity. In the CBOCAs, a fusion of both OCGs and different criminal activities led to a similar account. So while each of these three assessments were different in their representation of the local organised crime problem, all three employed the same erroneous forms of logical association. These flawed ontologies were the fractured and misshapen cornerstones upon which the assessments were built; their deformations leading to the distortion of the assessments’ broader superstructures.

### 9.3. Conclusions

The four factors described above were found to be the main sources of incoherence across the three case studies. These were the underlying reasons why local assessments were confused and chaotic in their representations of local organised crime. This is depicted in Figure 22, below:

Figure 22. Sources of incoherence in local assessments



These different factors affected the different types of local assessment to varying degrees. OCGM, for instance, did follow a methodology of sorts and maintained some semblance of internal cohesion but its ontology of organised crime was still a “chaotic conception” (Sayer, 1992, pg 138). It also lacked any sort of problem definition and glossed-over the diversity of local areas. The local profiles and CBOCAs, meanwhile, attempted to define some local organised crime problems in a very vague way, like “drugs”, “cyber” and “economic crime”, but lacked any cohesive methodological structure which could explain or understand them.

The significance of these findings was threefold. First, they disproved the notion that local assessments were incoherent simply because of a tension between the “local” and the “national”. Such a tension was indeed observed in the OCGM and local profile case studies – but it was not evident in the CBOCA case. The cross-case, systematic analyses of this chapter showed that the local-national tension is simply the manifestation of a more fundamental lack of clear problem definitions and a flawed ontology of organised crime. Without a clear appreciation of the specific problem(s) being assessed, and with an ontology which regards organised crime as national phenomenon - rather than an *interlocal* one - many local

assessments struggle to resolve their implicit tensions. This, of course, contributes to their incoherence.

Second, these findings allowed the proposition to be significantly expanded. Beyond the straightforward argument that local assessments represent the problem of local organised crime in an incoherent way, the above analysis isolates the specific underlying sources of this incoherence. As such, the proposition was amended to the following:

Local organised crime assessments tend to be incoherent in their representation of local organised crime. This is due to the following factors:

- A lack of clear problem definitions
- A lack of internal cohesion
- The infeasibility of assessing administratively-defined local areas
- A flawed ontology of organised crime

In some respects, the proposition had become a critique, and this was intentional. By demonstrating that local assessments contain self-contradictory and incoherent elements it is possible to *denaturalise* them; to show them to be partial, limited accounts of organised crime and, thereby, to *contest* their governmentalities of the problem. In turn, this permits intellectual space for thinking about alternatives. Indeed, this was the third significant outcome of this chapter's analytical work; it provided a basis for developing a new model for assessing local organised crime. The objective of this study was always to move beyond the deconstruction of local assessments. In accordance with many of the studies encountered in the literature review, there was an ambition to use the insights generated as a basis for developing a new assessment model; there was a desire for this study to be "constructive", not just "deconstructive". The task was to build on the findings of this chapter and the case studies themselves, to learn lessons from OCGM, local profiles and the CBOCAs, and to translate these lessons into some basic principles of assessment. In the following chapter, these basic principles are outlined, and a new assessment model is proposed.

# 10. Developing a new model: the Systemic Crime Problem Assessment (SCPA)

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## 10.1. Introduction

Through “reverse-engineering”, local assessments can be shown to contain incoherent and self-contradictory elements. Their projection of a particular reality can now be seen as partial, fragmentary and constructed. In demonstrating the fallibility of these accounts, it becomes possible to “denaturalise” them; to strip away some of their authoritativeness; to make the unquestioned acceptance of their claims less palatable.

In eschewing a sociologically-detailed, “realist” governmentality approach (Garland, 1999, Stenson, 1999, Edwards and Gill, 2003), it was always the intention of this study to use these insights as a way of *contesting* local assessments; of dragging so-called “organised crime” problems back into the public sphere and opening-up space for new ways of thinking. As such, the study now moves beyond the deconstruction of local assessments to re-imagine how they might otherwise represent the problem of organised crime.

Section 10.2, below, begins by outlining a number of relevant key issues to emerge from the case studies, while section 10.3 translates these into a new assessment model, called the Systemic Crime Problem Assessment (SCPA).

## 10.2. Key issues for a new assessment

### *1. The need for a sound ontological underpinning*

Local organised crime assessments attempt to understand, represent or explain a particular aspect of the social world; they are, in other words, a form of social scientific research. As with any such inquiry, there is a need to consider ontology and epistemology; to come to some conclusion over what exists and how such things can be known. Much of the incoherence found across the three case studies was caused by a flawed underlying ontology of organised crime. Of course, police analysts and policy-makers have neither the time nor the autonomy to explore these questions, which is where independent social scientific work can make a

contribution. A proper consideration of ontology is, therefore, the essential starting point for developing a new assessment.

While social scientists and philosophers remain divided over questions of social ontology and epistemology, one of the most plausible and coherent movements to emerge in recent decades is critical realism. The social world, from the critical realist perspective, is not merely a construction; it exists independently of our conceptualisation of it, but cannot be known or perceived in a direct way (Bhaskar, 1979, Easton, 2010). Critical realism envisages the social world as comprised of, a) *social objects* or *entities* (Bhaskar, 1979, Sayer, 1992, Easton, 2010) - which include organisations, networks, roles, values, economies, etc. (Easton, 2010, pg 120; Sayer, 1992); b) “*causal mechanisms*” or “*generative processes*” that cause things to happen (Bhaskar, 1979, pg 122, Sayer, 1992, pg 105, Easton, 2010); and c) “*conditions*” or contexts under which the aforementioned mechanisms and processes are triggered (Bhaskar, 1979, pg 120, Sayer, 1992, pg 214, Easton, 2010). This is to say that “*social entities*” activate “*causal mechanisms*” under the right set of “*conditions*” (Bhaskar, 1979, pg 213, Sayer, 1992, Easton, 2010).

Using this meta-theoretical framework, the problematic concept of “organised crime” can be re-imagined in terms of systems of inter-related mechanisms, entities and conditions (Bhaskar, 1979, Sayer, 1992, Easton, 2010). Indeed, some researchers have already begun this sort of reconceptualisation. Edwards and Levi used a critical realist framework to re-cast the monolithic notion of “organized crime” into questions over “how serious crimes are organized?” (2008, pg 368). This directs attention onto the “commissioning of serious crimes” (Edwards, 2016, pg 13), leading to a focus on the entities, mechanisms and conditions that constitute specific “organised” crimes (*ibid*, pg 18).

Edwards (2016) has outlined how this might work in practice. In relation to a problem such as illegal waste dumping, a critical realist assessment – instead of asking “does it meet the Home Office criteria for classification as organised crime?”, and instead of trying to count the number of OCGs involved in “it” – would explicate the process through which waste dumping occurs (the mechanism), before identifying the corrupt businesses, landowners, technologies and financial practices that enable it (the social entities), as well as the socio-economic conditions that triggered it (Edwards, 2016).

The adoption of a critical realist framework holds several advantages. Operating at a deep ontological level, it transcends arguments over whether assessments should focus on criminal organisations or criminal activities. It replaces the vague notion of “activities” with the more precise notion of “mechanisms”; it supplants presupposed ideas about “crime gangs” with that of “social entities”, thus broadening the scope of enquiry to include the role of legitimate businesses, networks, markets, cultural affiliations, ethno-linguistic bonds and technologies in enabling crime (Edwards and Levi, 2008). Importantly, it also synthesises these elements; it combines mechanisms, entities and conditions to show how they are systematically inter-related (*ibid*, Edwards 2016).

This sort of critical realist perspective remedies the “chaotic conceptions” (Sayer, 1992, pg 138) of organised crime found in local assessments. Rather than lumping together a range of different crime problems - such as drug dealing, labour exploitation and human trafficking - under the label of “organised crime”, it calls for a focus on specific mechanisms (Edwards and Levi, 2008, Edwards, 2015). It thus avoids grouping things together in an erroneous way. In simpler terms, it is an empirical, bottom-up approach to understanding so-called “organised crime” problems which avoids over-generalisation.

Finally, by adopting a critical realist framework, assessments align themselves with a plausible, carefully-considered account of the social world. By following through on its basic tenets, assessments can become more coherent and can generate better findings.

## *2. The need to focus on interlocal crime problems within socio-economic systems*

“Localness” was found to be a problematic concept across the three case studies. For some assessments, such as OCGM, the “local” was little more than an arbitrary frame for counting OCGs – an administrative zone of governance for a nationwide problem. For local profiles, the “local” was a unique place, but served only as an inert backdrop to the crime problems found therein. The CBOCAs, meanwhile, were relatively devoid of real local detail about the border zone.

However, the issue is not simply that these assessments fail to capture “localness” but that the very idea of assessing organised crime within administratively-defined geographic zones is almost impossible. As was argued in

section 9.2., few so-called “organised crime” problems are entirely self-contained within such spaces. The development of internet and communication technologies, the mobility of modern populations, the transnational nature of the illicit drug trade, the increase in immigration flows and the development of high-speed transport infrastructure means that local areas cannot be isolated from one another based on police or council boundaries.

Yet this does not imply that organised crime must therefore be a “national” phenomenon. In recognising that few organised crime problems are hermetically-sealed within local areas, many official local assessments presume that organised crime must exist on a national plane and that the local is merely a piece of this larger jigsaw. The imposition of a national blueprint of organised crime onto all local areas – something observed in local profiles – is not helpful since some national priorities will not be present locally (for instance, urban street gangs are less likely to be a problem in rural mid-Wales) while some more localised problems will not be recognised as national priorities (for instance, organised salmon poaching in Scotland).

As was argued in section 9.2., rather than being “local” or “national”, many organised crime problems are best described as *inter-local*; they are causally-connected to localities spatially-distant from one another. The “inter-locality” of organised crime implies a need to transcend the “local” as a frame of reference for assessment. In other words, a new assessment model should not limit itself to assessing organised crime within administratively-defined local areas. Instead, there is substantial value in shifting the frame of reference onto *socio-economic systems*. This would mean seeking-out and assessing specific inter-local crime problems within “systems” such as the waste management sector, the haulage industry, the illegal drug economy, local government, the fishing industry, the security and private protection sector, and so on.

Vander Beken has led much of the thinking on this “systems-based” approach to organised crime assessments (2004, pg 479). The advantage, he argues, is that it focuses on how “a number of interdependent or interrelated components... constitute the whole; (it is) the way in which they relate to the other that provides the depth for further analysis” (*ibid*, pg 480). As Vander Beken suggests, this is a more holistic and cohesive frame of reference for assessments than arbitrarily-defined local areas; it allows assessments to incorporate all the causally-related, integral parts



of a broader system - wherever they may be located – and explore their inter-local connections.

Adopting socio-economic systems as a frame of reference is also a sound way of building on the critical realist ontology outlined in the previous section. Such systems can be articulated as interconnected webs of entities, mechanisms, conditions and events and crime problems as sub-systems within these (Bunge, 2004).

The value of adopting this new frame of reference can be demonstrated by considering the so-called “county lines” problem, in which urban gangs extend drug trafficking routes out into small towns and rural hinterlands. This problem is inextricably tied to highly “local” conditions in both large cities and rural areas (NCA, 2017) – localities which are geographically-dispersed from one another, sometimes by hundreds of miles. In such situations, neither a “national” nor a purely “local” assessment would be appropriate for understanding the problem, yet a focus on understanding “county lines” as part of a broader *system* - i.e. the illegal drug economy in the UK – would draw attention to market variations in price, competition and risk between urban centres and rural towns, thereby highlighting the inter-local dimensions of the problem in a holistic way.

This kind of systemic, “inter-local” approach would bridge the artificial divide between the national and the local found within official assessments. Perhaps most significantly though, it would direct attention onto crime problems themselves, leading to greater conceptual coherence.

### *3. The need to explain crime problems in a holistic way*

It is clear from the cross-case analysis in the previous chapter that many local assessments are incoherent because they group things together as a “problem” on the basis of “formal relations of similarity” (Sayer, 1992, pg 243), rather than “substantial relations of connection” (*ibid*). In other words, they group things together because they are superficially similar to each other, and not because they are meaningfully connected. This means that the organised crime problems presented in these assessments are “chaotic conceptions” (Sayer, 1992, pg 138), lumping together very different kinds of problem in an incoherent way.

The implication here is that any new assessment model should concentrate on isolating discrete crime problems within socio-economic systems, and on uncovering

the entities, mechanisms and inter-local conditions that constitute those problems. This means grouping things together as part of one crime problem only if those things are causally inter-related to one another. A crime problem should be thought of as its own sub-system comprised of interconnected entities, processes and conditions (Bunge, 2004); an orientation which coincides with the basic critical realist ontology already outlined. Indeed, this systemic approach to thinking about organised crime has already been developed by Vander Beken. Drawing on Dwight-Smith's "spectrum of enterprise" theory (1980), he shows how organised crime is inextricably embedded within certain socio-economic systems, comprised of "a number of interdependent or interrelated components" (Vander Beken, 2004, pg 480) – all of which need to be taken into account when producing an assessment (*ibid*).

By thinking in systemic terms, assessments can be made more coherent; they can correspond much more accurately to social reality. Assessments also need to focus on explanation, not just description; they need to explain how the crime problem works in a holistic way.

#### 4. *The need for an "intensive" research orientation*

An emphasis on explaining and understanding crime problems by identifying the interconnected sets of entities, processes and conditions which comprise them, demands a different analytical focus to that found in most local assessments. OCGM, local profiles and the CBOCAs were all oriented towards what might be called "scanning"; towards a general surveying of a local area with the aim of counting OCGs, describing market changes, charting the local economy or discussing shifting patterns. This can be described as "broad but shallow" research or, in critical realist terms, as "extensive" research (Sayer, 1992, pg 241). In this kind of analysis, the aim is to uncover regularities and common patterns, not to explain or consider causation (*ibid*). By contrast, "intensive" research involves in-depth analysis of how the phenomenon in question actually works and what causes it (Sayer, 1992, pg 241, Edwards and Levi, 2008). Importantly, it implies a different approach to that taken by most local assessments; it implies the detailed study of a crime problem through the investigation of a small number of specific case studies (Sayer, 1992, Edwards and Levi, 2008). This might mean examining, in-depth, several particular cases of waste dumping or county lines drug trafficking through the analysis of case files, social services records, police intelligence reports, witness statements or interviews.

Only through this kind of research orientation can the “substantial relations of connection” (Sayer, 1992, pg 243) of a crime problem be uncovered (Edwards, 2015, Edwards and Levi, 2008). There is of course, still value to be gained from “extensive” (Sayer, 1992) analysis of local areas, but this needs to be complemented by a subsequent, more intensive focus on causation.

##### *5. The need for internal consistency*

In far simpler terms, any new assessment model would need to maintain internal consistency. As was observed in the cross-case analyses of the previous chapter, many local assessments lacked cohesion; there was often incongruity between data collection, method and the unit of analysis. A new model would need to work methodically and systematically from its underlying representations and ontologies, through to its method and data-collection. It would also need to ensure that the account it provides is not self-contradictory.

##### *6. The need for a proper, explicit methodology*

It was noted throughout the case studies that some types of local assessment were vague on issues of methodology. This led to eclectic data usage and a general orientation toward descriptive narrative which failed to penetrate beneath the surface of actual crime problems. Any new assessment model would need to be explicit about its methods and would need to ground its methodology in more basic considerations of ontology, epistemology and overall objectives.

##### *7. The need for independence*

Analysis of the three case studies shows that local assessments do not exist in a vacuum. They are inextricably tied-up with particular governing strategies, “centres of calculation” (Latour, 1987, Miller and Rose, 1990, pg 9) and institutional ambitions. It was seen how OCGM, for example, was developed by ACPO as a way of plugging the so-called “level 2” gap (O' Connor, 2005), but may have also bolstered ACPO's claims to be a national centre of governance. Local profiles emerged out of a political context in which the organised crime problem was being re-branded as a “national security threat” and their counter-terrorist governmentality was imposed on local agencies from the centre. Official local assessments such as these are thus shaped and constrained by the webs of power, discourse and

governmentality within which they exist; they are situated within police hierarchies and policy networks; their methodologies, priorities and scope are often heavily influenced by dominant “police enforcement” mentalities and by centrally-imposed narratives of the problem. Under such conditions, it can be difficult for assessments to “break the mould”; there is an expectation that they will follow official guidance or discuss the problem in terms acceptable to their host organisation. There is, in other words, little scope for these assessments to challenge the *status quo*. The subsequent risk is that local assessments only find what they expect to find, or that they fail to perceive real problems which do not comfortably fit with institutional expectations.

In addition to this, recent years have arguably seen a growing “securitisation” of organised crime in the UK; organised crime has been given special national security status, meaning that debates over the problem have been withdrawn somewhat from public view and restricted to the high tables of security-cleared officials. What once were localised crime problems are now enrolled into this national security programme, meaning that local police can refuse to discuss them because of “security”. There is a sense then – certainly evident during this study – that many local crime problems are not up for debate; they are not public issues but security issues, reserved for those with appropriate vetting and institutional standing. This risks exacerbating the self-referential, “locked-in” tendency of local assessments to focus only on pre-determined problems (Edwards, 2015).

The implication is that assessments need to be more independent; they need to be freed from the constraints of central diktat; extracted from police hierarchies and protected from the growing “securitisation” of organised crime. They should instead be as free-standing as possible, focused only on understanding inter-local crime problems, in and of themselves. This means that any new assessment model should be designed for use by elements of *civil society*, rather than just the police; the assessment should be open for use by research institutes, academic organisations, NGOs, think-tanks, community organisations and the like. This is not to say that these bodies are more neutral than the police, or devoid of their own internal politics, but they may retain more freedom to think about crime problems differently and to say things the police cannot.

#### 8. *The need to consider politics*

Allied to the above call for independence is the need for assessments to take into account the political dimension of the assessment process. No assessment can be wholly politically-neutral; the use of overtly “neutral” managerialist tones in OCGM, local profiles and CBOCAs is little more than a smokescreen for implicit political representations of the problem. “Political” here need not refer to party politics, or a right-wing versus left-wing dichotomy, but to the exercise of power in more fundamental terms. Politics is always involved in defining crime problems, as it is in proposing who should govern those problems, and how they should do so (Edwards and Gill, 2003, Crawford, 1998). An organised crime assessment, by making claims to knowledge about certain crime problems and by implying certain ways of governing them, can bolster the governing ambitions of some bodies while challenging the authority of others. In more simple terms, a local assessment has a “voice” in (what should be) a public debate and that voice can undermine the status of certain bodies as unquestioned governors of the problem. This can create resistance; it can mean that dissenting voices are shouted-down, ignored or denigrated, no matter how sound their underlying assessment process, or how much evidence they provide. For instance, an independent local assessment which disproved the very existence of local OCGs would perhaps encounter resistance from those reliant on OCGM for their livelihoods and professional status.

Instead of ignoring this and continuing with the pretence of neutrality, any new assessment model should incorporate, within the assessment process itself, a consideration of *who* is currently trying to govern local crime problems, *how* they are doing so, what *representations of the problem* they are employing, what *resistance* they might provide to any attempt to reconceptualise the problem and how this might be overcome. The ambition here is not to develop a confrontationist, politically-charged type of assessment, but to acknowledge that police and other state agencies would not “give up” on their own local assessments and their own accounts of the problem, even if a more ontologically, methodologically and empirically-sound type of assessment were to contradict their findings. The issue for any new assessment model is how such resistance might be overcome. How might police and other state agencies be convinced to shift their institutionally-embedded ways of thinking? How might they be “enrolled” (Callon, 1984) into a new account of the local problem?

In considering such issues it is useful to employ insights from Callon's "sociology of translation" (1984). This strand of sociological inquiry explores the means by which key actors frame a social or policy problem in a way that "enrols" or recruits some, but not others, into its management (*ibid*). These key actors can then position themselves as an "indispensable passage point" (*ibid*, pg 6) in the resolution of the problem; they can become integral to its governance (*ibid*). Using these ideas, an independent assessment could re-frame local crime problems where necessary and then identify which agencies, bodies or institutions might be empowered and enabled by that representation of the problem. The re-framing of an inner-city "gang" problem as a "drug consumption" problem, for example, might then empower medical organisations, social services and NGOs to become involved in governing, where before it might have been the sole preserve of the police. The re-framing of a "waste crime" problem in terms of unregulated dump-sites, rather than organised criminal conspiracies, might enrol landowners, local councils and environmental scientists in helping to resolve the problem – as opposed to just detectives and prosecutors. The point is that any new assessment model should include these elements within the assessment process itself, with a special emphasis on how the problem is currently being represented, who has a vested interest in this representation, how they might resist a re-framing of the problem, how this might be overcome, and who else might be empowered to govern the issue.

#### *9. The need to be open-minded in seeking out previously unconsidered crime problems*

It was observed in the case studies that many local assessments adopt pre-determined definitions of what counts as an "organised crime" problem. In OCGM, it was OCGs involved in specific types of crime. In local profiles, there was a fixation on the "approved" list of organised criminal activities provided by the Home Office. The CBOCAs were somewhat more open to changing their priorities, as the temporal analysis of chapter 8 shows, but were also opaque in how and why some problems were prioritised in the first place. The problem with focusing on pre-determined and centrally-dictated priorities is that; a) it tends to obscure important differences between local areas by suggesting that "organised crime" is the same across all places, b) it creates a self-referential fixation on certain problems (Edwards, 2015) leading to exaggeration and aggrandisement and, most importantly, c) there is no

attempt to identify previously unconsidered types of problem. This can mean that locale-specific problems, which are not considered a national issue, are overlooked, and it can mean that local assessments dedicate excessive time and effort to analysing things which do not impact on a local area but are thought to be a national problem.

Many local assessments, and many of those embedded in police intelligence analysis doctrines, speak of “new” crime problems as if they always emerge in a clear and self-evident way. This is epitomised by the notion of “horizon-scanning”; a term implying that crime problems always come riding over a distant horizon and can be immediately recognised as such. In reality though, crime problems tend to exist long before they are recognised as problems. The better approach is to ask; “what crime problems already exist, but aren’t currently being registered as a problem?”

More broadly, in avoiding a self-referential fixation on the same old issues, assessments need to be more *investigative*; they need to question things, they need to think openly about what else – beyond drugs, guns and OCGs – might be occurring in a local area. This implies a shift from producing descriptive narratives of what is already known, to investigating what might also exist. Any new assessment model would therefore need to find a way of incorporating an open-minded search for overlooked crime problems and be freed from central priorities and traditional police preoccupations.

### **10.3. The Systemic Crime Problem Assessment (SCPA)**

The aforementioned basic principles were condensed into a new assessment model, known as the Systemic Crime Problem Assessment (SCPA). However, the SCPA was also influenced by the work of a number of other criminologists and social scientists, and these are briefly outlined below.

#### *Influences*

One key inspiration for the SCPA was Edwards and Levi (2008). In calling for a focus on “the organization of serious crimes” (*ibid*, pg 363), they show how the monolithic notion of “organized crime” can be reframed in realist terms. They articulate a way to combine “routine” offender-target-guardian interactions in

organised crime, with a deeper analysis of the socio-economic factors that shape such interactions (*ibid*). One of the many benefits of this re-conceptualisation is that it leads to greater problem-specificity and this was kept in mind when developing the SCPA.

The “SARA” (Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment) (Eck and Spelman, 1987) approach to assessing crime also had significant potential. It offered a means by which Edwards and Levi’s (2008) insights could be transformed into a specific assessment methodology. SARA emphasises the need for a clear focus on specific crime problems (*ibid*); it does not presume to know what the problem is before the assessment process actually begins; it is open-minded about finding the best response and it aims to evaluate outcomes - all of which are desirable qualities for a crime assessment model. However, the SARA approach fails to take into account the politics involved in defining crime problems; it treats the “scanning” phase of the assessment as a theoretically and politically neutral process in which crime problems simply “emerge” and it also tends to be heavily embedded within police strategies of governance. Such issues would need to be resolved within the new assessment model.

The SCPA also owes an intellectual debt to Cornish’s script analysis work (1994). Breaking down complex “organised” crimes into a series of discrete steps is a useful analytical process. Not only does it elucidate the roles, equipment, expertise and resources needed to commit complex crimes, but it allows the researcher to pinpoint the “weak spots” in the crime-commission process (Levi and Maguire, 2004, pg 409; Cornish, 1994, Edwards, 2015).

Eckblom, through his “Conjunction of Criminal Opportunity Framework” (2003), was among the first to show how scripts can be applied to organised crime under the aegis of a problem-oriented approach. Developing this further, Edwards (2015) has shown how a realist script analysis approach (1994) can be used to break-down specific types of serious crime and elucidate their “substantial relations of connection” (Sayer, 1992, pg 243, Edwards, 2015). The ultimate outcome of such an approach is a re-conceptualisation of “organised crime” as sets of dynamic mechanisms that can be understood through a form of realist script analysis (Edwards, 2015). This approach was used to inform Stage 3 of the SCPA.

Elements of the work of Vander Beken also informed the SCPA model, in particular his “systems-based” approach to thinking about organised crime (*ibid*, pg



479). By emphasising that organised crime is embedded within socio-economic systems, including “both legitimate and illicit markets” (*ibid*, pg 479), he demonstrates the need to incorporate these systems or “environments” (pg 487) into assessments themselves. This was in stark contrast to OCGM, which completely isolates OCGs from their socio-economic contexts.

These works helped to expand the range of possibilities for re-imagining local “organised crime” assessments. However, the SCPA was primarily developed from the nine basic principles outlined in section 10.2. These principles, in turn, emerged from the three case studies. The actual process of development involved working through each of the nine basic principles and asking, “*how can this be translated into an assessment methodology?*” Ideas were noted in bullet-points and, over time, these were combined and put into a sequence of discrete steps. Thought-experiments were used to refine the model into its finished form. As such, there was a direct line of continuity between the findings of the case studies and the new model. The following sub-sections describe how the SCPA should be used, how it works and what impact it is meant to have.

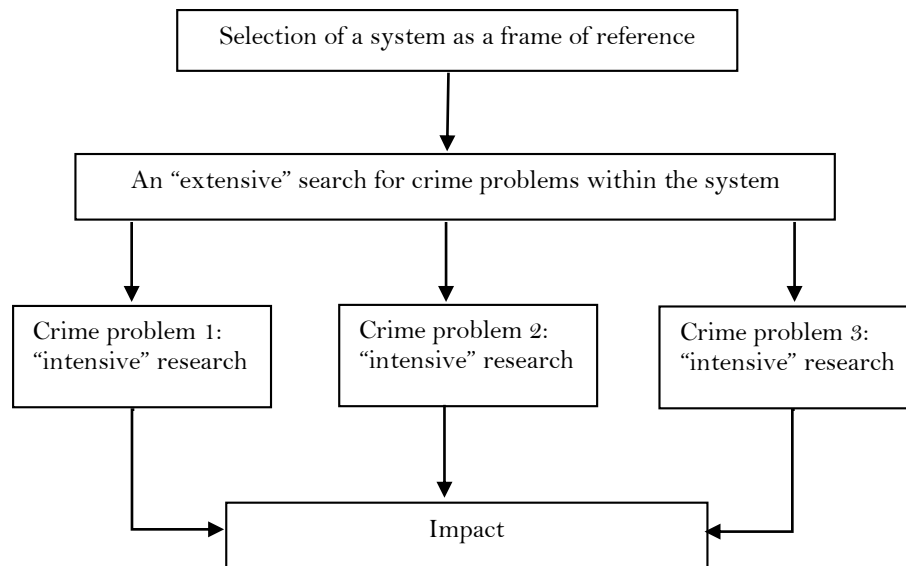
### *Using the SCPA*

In following the principle that “organised crime” assessments should be independent, the SCPA is intended for use by research institutes, think-tanks, policy centres, university researchers, regulatory bodies, NGOs, government researchers and other non-police organisations – although this does not preclude its use by law enforcement. The assessment process itself is best thought of as a long term, collaborative project which takes a long-term view of crime problems. It is not intended to provide short term “updates” on crime fluctuations every few months, but to lay the groundwork for sustained reductions in crime problems. The SCPA can also be regarded as a form of “action research”; as a way of involving different agencies in the research process, building new networks of potential governors, and of challenging dominant representations of crime problems where needed. Though developed from a critique of local assessments in the UK, it is meant for use anywhere in the world.

### *The SCPA method*

The following sections outline the overall structure, method, data collection strategies and outcomes of the SCPA, with figure 23, below, providing a diagrammatic overview of the assessment process.

Figure 23. An overview of the SCPA assessment process



#### **Stage 1: Selection of a social or economic system for analysis**

The first stage is to select a social or economic system as an initial frame of reference for the assessment. As was explained in basic principle 2 in section 10.2, there is substantial value in selecting a "system" as a starting point for the assessment, rather than an administratively-defined local area. Importantly, the chosen "system" is only intended to be an initial frame of reference for the assessment; a starting point from which specific interlocal crime problems can be identified and analysed. Choice of system will depend on the interests and objectives of the assessment team. In recognising that many systems have links and interdependencies with other systems (the haulage sector will have links to taxation and finance, for example), care should be taken to delineate a system of interest in a

holistic way but without creating an unwieldy frame of reference. Examples of potential systems are provided below:

- Waste processing sector
- International haulage sector
- The heroin economy
- Commercial fishing industry
- Agricultural labour market
- Door-staff security industry
- Domestic supply of cannabis
- Meat processing sector

In this context, a “system” can be a legal economic sector – like the haulage industry - which may host parasitic crime problems within it, but it can also refer to something which is wholly criminalised, like the supply of heroin. Even in cases such as this, where the *whole system* may be regarded as a problem in its own right, there will still be value in breaking that criminal system down into more specific interlocal problems. The SCPA may, therefore, select “the heroin economy in the UK” as its initial frame of reference and then, in stage 2, go on to identify more specific interlocal crime problems within it, such as “violent competition over street corners used to sell heroin” or “exploitation of vulnerable people to transport heroin”. This helps to break-up vague and unwieldy conceptualisations such as “the heroin trade” or “the drug trade” into more specific sets of problems, while also leaving open the possibility of identifying cross-cutting links.

**Stage 2: An “extensive” search for crime problems within the system**

The second stage of the SCPA involves an open-minded search for interlocal crime problems within the selected system. This is a form of “extensive” research (Sayer, 1992) which seeks out problems in a “wide but shallow” sense but makes no attempt to understand or explain them in any deep causal way. In accordance with the ninth basic principle outlined in section 10.2 (*The need to be open-minded in seeking out previously unconsidered crime problems*), the objective at this stage is to break (at least temporarily) with any prevailing fixations on particular types of crime, to cast off traditional priorities, to think beyond dominant representations of organised crime. This can be thought-of as a kind of “creative destruction”; a refusal to take things for granted; an attempt to broaden perceptions to the possibility of other ways of looking, and other kinds of crime problem. In some respects this is similar to what

military analysts have termed “red-teaming”; a conscious attempt to seek countervailing perspectives to those currently held (Sandoz, 2001).

It may not be possible to exhaustively identify all such crime problems within a system. This stage, therefore, is inevitably an open-ended process. Yet there is significant value in deliberately seeking-out crime problems which have gone unnoticed and breaking with official pre-occupations. The means by which this can be achieved is for the assessment team to ask themselves, “*what inter-local crime problems could hypothetically exist within this system?*” This phase of assessment essentially takes the form of a prolonged thought-experiment, with the emphasis placed on creativity, imagination and insight, rather than on empirical investigation. A number of specific analytical techniques should be used to aid this process. These are outlined below:

- Policy delphi research

This involves assembling a group of experts or interested parties and asking them to complete a survey on crime problems within the chosen system, the results of which are then anonymised and reported back to them (Hart and Franklin, 2007, Hasson et al., 2000). Further questions are asked in order to refine the findings, and the process continues (*ibid*). It was first used for criminological research by Edwards, Hughes and Lord (2013). In relation to the SCPA, this approach should be used to generate ideas about previously unconsidered crime problems in the system. A range of different individuals could be asked to participate, including regulators, environment agency staff, police officers, NGO workers, and so on.

- Focus groups

By assembling those who might hold insights into local crime problems and asking open questions, focus groups can be used to generate new ideas.

Those who might be asked to participate could include police officers, NGO workers, local residents, environmental regulators, and so on.

It is important for the assessment team to take the perspectives of those involved in delphi surveys and focus groups seriously, but to retain a critical stance. It was

observed in the literature review of this study, that some assessment models reify police opinion and accept police definitions of the problem without question. The purpose of conducting delphi surveys and focus groups in the SCPA is to broaden the perspectives of the assessment team, to throw open the assessment process to alternative ways of thinking - especially from those who are not normally involved in the production of official assessments – not to unquestioningly accept problems as given by respondents.

This stage of the SCPA should result in the development of a list of potential interlocal crime problems. Some of these may be well-established and fairly obvious problems, others might be more speculative. Since the aim here is to think differently, to conceptualise problems which might not yet have been conceptualised, it is important not to exclude these more speculative ideas at this stage, even if powerful or influential agencies do not consider them problems.

The next task is to seek to verify the existence of these potential problems. The assessment team need to ask themselves, “*if this crime problem were to exist, then how might it be empirically registered?*” They also need to ask, “*who might empirically register such a problem, beyond the police and criminal justice system?*” The aim at this point is not to fully understand such crime problems and how they work, but simply to seek confirmatory evidence for their existence. For some hypothetical crime problems this will be straightforward. For others, it might require creative-thinking. A hypothetical problem with “illegal organised waste dumping” could be verified by seeking out reports of pollution and illegal dump sites from councils or residents. A hypothetical problem with “organised poaching of salmon” could be verified by asking angling organisations, farmers or water bailiffs whether they find abandoned nets or other signs of poaching.

Potential crime problems which have been verified should be taken forward to the next stage of the assessment process. It is likely that such problems will have only been defined in loose and potentially inaccurate terms, but this is not an issue at this stage of the assessment. Indeed, it is important for the assessment team to be constantly open to refining and modifying their definitions of the crime problems they encounter. As such, the identified crime problems must be defined only in provisional terms.

### **Stage 3: “Intensive” research into specific crime problems within the system**

The assessment team should now focus on those specific, tentatively-defined crime problems identified in stage 2. The objective here is understand each crime problem in a holistic way by focusing on its “substantial relations of connection” (Sayer, 1992, pg 243). As argued under basic principle 4 in section 10.2, this requires “intensive” research (Sayer, 1992, Edwards and Levi, 2008, Edwards, 2015) which examines a small number of specific incidences or occurrences of the crime problem and seeks to explain how it works in terms of the different entities, mechanisms and conditions involved. The method for achieving this can be broken down into the following parts:

#### *3.1. Data collection*

The assessment team should select a small number of specific incidences of the crime problem. These can be thought of as case studies. For example, if the problem has been provisionally defined as illegal dumping within the waste processing sector, then the assessment team should select four or five specific waste dumping incidents. If the problem is one of shootings between rival street dealers within the heroin economy, then select several specific shooting incidents for analysis. The sampling of these cases need not be strictly representative, since the aim is not generalisation to a wider population, but rather the identification of underlying generative processes (Sayer, 1992, Danermark et al., 2002). In-depth, detailed qualitative data about those specific incidents should then be collected. Data sources may include court records, case files, victim interviews, and offender interviews.

#### *3.2. Script analysis*

The assessment team should use their data to outline the causal process through which such incidents occur. This means breaking down the incidents into a number of sequential steps – what Cornish refers to as the “crime-commission process” (1994, pg 151) – and producing a “script” outlining these steps (*ibid*, Edwards 2016). Script analysis is an excellent analytical tool for this kind of task; it compels the assessment team to develop a detailed, in-depth understanding of how an interlocal crime problem actually works. In relation to a waste-dumping incident, the script might include such phases as 1) identifying a suitable dump site, 2) collecting waste,

3) dumping waste and 4) forging paperwork. This script can then be used as a basis for researching and analysing other elements of the interlocal crime problem.

### 3.3. *Identification of social entities*

Using their collected data, the assessment team should next identify the key *entities* involved at each stage of the “script”. This means identifying the organisations, networks, roles, resources or specialist expertise involved in each step (Cornish 1994, Edwards 2016). Some of these entities may be (or at least appear to be) legitimate – like a haulage business or waste processing facility, while others may be entirely illicit – such as a cannabis “factory”. Importantly, this analysis should include those who may be regarded as victims, customers, enablers, facilitators, and so on – rather than just offenders (Edwards 2016, pg 988). In relation to an illegal waste dumping script, for example, relevant entities might include “roles” such as waste business owner, complicit landowner, corrupt accountant and truck driver; it might include “expertise” such as the ability to forge regulatory paperwork or operate heavy lifting machinery; it might include “resources” such as waste storage containers and transportation vehicles; it might include “organisations” such as registered waste carrier businesses.

### 3.4. *Identify the underlying conditions*

Using the collected data, the assessment team should next identify the *conditions* under which the “script” takes place (Edwards, 2016, pg 975). These conditions can be thought of as the factors that determine the presence of motivated offenders, the absence of guardians and the availability of targets or vulnerabilities (Edwards and Levi, 2008, pg 368, Cohen and Felson, 1979). In other words, the assessment team should establish what social, cultural, governmental or economic conditions may be driving the problem. For example, a fall in drug demand may be increasing the problem of violent competition between drug dealers, or a reduction in fishing quotas may be driving a problem with illegal commercial fishing. In a waste dumping example, these conditions might include a difficult economic context for the waste industry as a whole, thus producing offenders who want to reduce costs and the absence of local council inspections of private landowner dump sites. Through such analysis, the inter-local connections of the problem can be more thoroughly explored.

### 3.5. *Provide a holistic account of the problem*

The next task is to combine the script, the entities and the conditions into a holistic and systemic explanation of how the crime problem works. This can be achieved by producing a straightforward written account of the problem, supplemented by a diagram or flow-chart. This sort of causal account would draw attention to the “substantial relations of connection” (Sayer, 1992, pg 243) of the problem; it would seek to explain how a specific set of conditions enable or prompt certain entities to engage in the causal process of committing crime. Importantly, the definition of the problem may have changed significantly from its original version. In relation to an interlocal problem such as illegal waste dumping, such an account might describe how under conditions of severe financial pressure and poor regulation in rural areas, otherwise legitimate waste disposal companies engage in a causal process or “script” which involves paying-off landowners, forging paperwork and illegally dumping waste in rural areas.

### 3.6. *Identify harmful outcomes*

The assessment team should then identify the harmful outcomes of this crime problem. They should ascertain – “*for whom or for what does this present a problem?*”, paying particular attention to those things which cannot necessarily speak for themselves. In the waste dumping example, harm may be caused to natural habitats, water supplies, food chains, farm workers and others who might not be in a position to complain or register the damage being done.

### 3.7. *Identify points for intervention*

The final task at this stage is to identify the crime problem’s “weak spots” (Levi and Maguire, 2004, Edwards, 2016, pg 989). The assessment team should ask themselves, “*what would cause this problem to break down?*” or “*how might the underlying conditions be altered to stop this from happening?*” Interventions can be targeted at the “script” itself, at the social entities involved or at the underlying conditions. Again, creative thinking is needed to expand the range of possibilities beyond the traditional police emphasis on prosecuting offenders. In the illegal waste dumping example, it may be that a targeted dissuasion campaign aimed at complicit



landowners would be the simplest means of reducing the problem, or the GPS monitoring of waste disposal trucks. Based on this analysis, the assessment team should produce a list of proposed interventions, along with an explanation of how exactly they would be expected to work, and how the intervention might be evaluated, following realist evaluation best practice (Tilley, 2009).

The above steps 1) – 8) should be repeated for other crime problems identified within the system.

#### **Stage 4: *Impact***

The final stage of the SCPA is concerned with using the assessment's findings to contest official narratives of the organised crime problem (where needed), to change policy or strategy, and to empower other potential governors of the problem. This stage of the assessment builds upon basic principle 7 (*the need for independence*) and 8 (*the need to consider politics*). The assessment team should begin this stage by understanding how the problem(s) is currently framed, who is attempting to govern the problem and how they are doing so. This can be achieved by reviewing the official documentation of local authorities such as the police, by requesting information through Freedom of Information requests, by interviewing police, and so on. It might become clear, for example, that local "organised crime" strategy is developed by a collaborative, community-minded, multi-agency partnership open to input from the assessment team or, by contrast, that local crime control is dominated by a heavily-armed police force fixated on military-style incursions into gang territory.

By mapping out these governors and their governing strategies, the assessment team can identify current representations of the "organised crime" problem, understand who is empowered by these representations, and anticipate points of resistance to their project. It may also allow the assessment team to locate potential governors who are currently disenfranchised by the dominant problem representation (such as medical NGOs, city-planners or housing service providers). Levi and Maguire (2004), in their comprehensive review of organised crime prevention, have mapped-out a range of actors beyond law enforcement with the

potential for governing. These include different elements of the private sector, community organisations, tax authorities and financial institutions (*ibid*, pg 411).

Drawing on this analysis, the assessment team might disseminate their report to key figures such as local police chiefs, politicians or community leaders. If faced with an obstinate response, it may be useful to develop a more high-profile media strategy to generate public attention and pressure. Members of the assessment team might condense their findings into a news article or summarise their findings in an interview. Indeed, one of the advantages of the SCPA is that it focuses on underlying causes not named offenders, meaning that it can be disseminated publicly – contrary to the more secretive nature of many official assessments. A local conference might also be held to explain and discuss the assessment, to which key figures within the system could be invited. The assessment should also be sent to those identified as potential governors of the problem, highlighting what more they might do. This could include NGOs, healthcare providers, community organisations, regulators and so on.

The broader point is that the SCPA should not be published and then filed away. Nor is it only for the eyes of high-level policy makers. It is intended to be a tangible vehicle for challenging established ways of thinking and governing; it is meant to destabilise, to question, to reclaim “organised crime” from the closed and secretive national security apparatus. By drawing on sound ontological foundations, by actively searching for previously unregarded crime problems, by not presupposing that “organised crime” is the same everywhere, by conceptualising crime problems in a systemic and holistic way based on their “substantial relations of connection” (Sayer, 1992, pg 243), by applying an explicit and rigorous methodology, by being independent and by acknowledging the political dimension, the SCPA has the potential to provide a more coherent account of inter-local crime problems and thus become a powerful tool for critiquing official accounts of local organised crime.

# 11. Conclusions

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## 11.1. Finalising the proposition

The central thread of this study has been the development of a proposition about local organised crime assessments. The proposition began as little more than a suspicion that local assessments would not actually be very “local” in their representation of local organised crime. Following the tenets of an adaptive theory approach (Layder 1998), this early proposition was tested against a case study of the “Organised Crime Group Mapping” (OCGM) assessment. It was found that OCGM represented the problem of local organised crime in the same terms across all localities; as organised crime groups primarily involved in drug supply. Their lack of “localness” strengthened original suspicions and led to the more fully-formed proposition that *local organised crime assessments would only represent “local” organised crime as an arbitrary subdivision of “national” organised crime and, hence, would not be truly local at all.*

This more specific proposition was taken forward into a case study of a different kind of local assessment known as the “Serious Organised Crime Local Profile”. The objective here was to further test the proposition, to elaborate on it as necessary and to see if it applied to this very different kind of assessment. Reverse-engineering of a sample of local profiles presented a complex picture, however. They were found to contain multiple, sometimes contradictory accounts of the local organised crime problem. There was an ostensible emphasis on organised criminal activities impacting on national security, but an actual focus on local crime groups. The profiles often spoke of “organised crime” as if it were a national field which only needed the addition of some local place names for it to become “local”, although they did also contain some genuine insight into the local area itself. The more significant point here then, was not that these assessments lacked “localness” but that the conflict between “national” and “local” representations of the problem led to a degree of *incoherence* within them.

In light of this, the proposition was amended to the following: *local organised crime assessments tend to be incoherent in their representation of local organised crime, due to a fundamental tension between “local” and “national” problem representations.* This insight called for a shift of focus; a shift away from

trying to develop an elegant and parsimonious answer to the research questions and towards exposing the incongruities, inconsistencies and rough edges of local assessments.

It was noted at this stage that both OCGM and the local profiles were developed by central agencies (ACPO and the Home Office, respectively) and then imposed on local police forces; a fact which could have accounted for their inherent local / national tensions. There was a subsequent need to test the proposition against a third assessment – an assessment which was bespoke to one particular locality and free from central government interference. It was anticipated that such an assessment might be more truly “local” - that it might be more coherent. The “Cross Border Organised Crime Assessment” (CBOCA) was selected as an exemplar of a bespoke local assessment, focused as it was only on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Analysis showed, however, that the CBOCAs were also incoherent in their representation of the organised crime problem – despite not having been imposed by a central agency. Their incoherence did not stem from a local / national tension, but from the contradictions arising out of an ostensible focus on “crime gangs” and an actual focus on illegal markets and activities. It became clear therefore, that the incoherence found within local assessments was not always due to a tension between “national” and “local” accounts of the problem.

In developing the proposition further, there was a need to establish whether there were common, underlying reasons for the incoherence observed in different types of local assessment. In Chapter 8, four such reasons were identified:

- 1) a lack of clear problem definitions
- 2) a lack of internal cohesion in their choice of method, data and unit of analysis
- 3) the infeasibility of assessing organised crime within administratively-defined local areas
- 4) flawed ontologies of organised crime

In finalising the proposition though, it was important to make a broader point. This study focused on identifying and unpicking the problem representations implicit within local assessments. Yet the very fact that these assessments can be shown to contain implicit problem representations – however vague or confused they may be - means that they *presuppose* the problem of local organised crime (Edwards and Gill, 2003, pg 269). These assessments do not set out in an open-minded way to establish

what crime problems actually exist in a local area. Instead, they impose pre-determined, if vague, notions of what the problem is, then simply set out to render it into local terms. The distinction is an important one. It means that the most important questions a local assessment can ask – *what is the problem and how does it work?* – have already been answered, long before any data is collected. The very *implicitness* of these pre-existing problem representations closes off the possibility of seeing things differently; they channel perceptions, meaning that local assessments are inherently limited in their ability to identify and understand local crime problems.

There was a need to express this broader point in the proposition itself; a need to show how presupposing problems limits the potential of current local assessments. As such, the proposition was amended into the following, final form:

Local organised crime assessments presuppose the problem of local organised crime; they adopt pre-determined representations of what the problem is and then assess “it” in those terms.

These implicit problem representations tend to be incoherent.

There are four underlying factors which contribute to this incoherence

- A lack of clear problem definitions
- A lack of internal cohesion
- The infeasibility of assessing administratively-defined local areas
- A flawed ontology of organised crime

This became the main conclusion of the study; an attempt to reduce and distil the core argument. Of course, this did not represent a “theory” as such, or a generalisable rule. While this study incorporated some of the most common types of local assessment used in the UK – such as OCGM and local profiles – it was not possible to examine every single assessment produced, and so the above conclusion was not intended to describe some law-like regularity. Hence, it could be said, based on the empirical evidence, that local assessments “tended” to be incoherent, not that they always would be so. Similarly, there was no reason for the same underlying, cross-case sources of incoherence to always be present in local assessments. All that could be said was that they appeared in multiple cases.

In moving beyond this deconstruction of local assessments though, Chapter 10 called for a shift of emphasis; a move away from assessing organised crime within administratively-defined local areas and towards assessing discrete inter-local crime problems. This means putting crime problems first and exploring their local dimensions second. It also means developing holistic, causal explanations of crime problems through “intensive” research (Edwards, 2015, Edwards and Levi, 2008, Sayer, 1992). In doing so, however, there is a need to be open-minded and to avoid presupposing the nature and extent of interlocal crime problems. These points are encapsulated in a new assessment model called the “Systemic Crime Problem Assessment” or SCPA.

### **11.2. Answering the research questions**

The finalisation of the proposition allowed the research questions to be answered in full. Each is dealt with below.

#### *1. How do different types of local organised crime assessment represent the problem of local organised crime?*

Different types of local assessment represent the problem in different ways. OCGM represents the problem as that of OCGs – mostly involved in drug supply - causing harm within a police force territory and requiring ongoing police management. Local profiles are more complex; they contain hybridised narratives which fuse a national, securitised, activity-oriented representation of the problem with a more local emphasis on known crime groups. The CBOCAs explicitly frame the problem as that of crime gangs operating as illegal businesses, but implicitly adopt a market and activity-based representation of organised crime. The broader point though, is that these local assessments are largely incoherent in their representation of the problem. This makes it impossible to construct a neat typology or comparative framework.

#### *2. What governmentalities of local organised crime are embodied by these assessments?*

There was variation in how local assessments perceived their object of governance. OCGM adopted an actor-centric mentality, with offenders deemed to be rational, “active subjects” (Garland, 1999, pg 23; Bottoms, 2008), distinguishable from the

“normal” populace, but not wholly “alien” either. This governmentality was not reducible to a full-blown “external threat” narrative (Edwards and Gill, 2003, pg 267), but rather drew upon a lighter “localised external actors” version of this. Factors such as socio-economic conditions, lifecourse patterns or subcultural values were wholly excluded from this governmentality; a style of thinking reminiscent of classical criminology with its straightforward focus on individual decision-making as the cause of crime.

Within the local profiles, by contrast, the ostensible object of governance was a specific list of criminal activities, including such things as drugs, firearms and cybercrime. This implied governance of *acts*, not actors; of *offending*, not offenders; a radical shift from OCGM, and a perspective aligned with such broader criminological approaches as script analysis (Cornish, 1994), the “organisation of serious crimes” (Edwards and Levi, 2008), and situational prevention. Yet, the emergence of a more local narrative within the substantive content of the profiles led to a more familiar, *actual* emphasis on well-known local offenders. As with OCGM, this deviant population was cast as rational and financially-motivated.

For the CBOCAs, there was an explicit emphasis on organised crime gangs as the object of governance. Gang members were portrayed as hyper-rational economic actors animated by business logic and only distinguishable from the general populace by the callousness and selfishness of their business practices. Implicitly aligning itself with such perspectives as that of Dwight-Smith’s “enterprise” theory of organised crime (Smith, 1980) and, more generally with rational choice theory, offenders were seen as part of a continuation of normal socio-economics, not as “alien” outsiders. This was offset somewhat by the CBOCAs actual focus on the market dynamics and offending patterns within specific thematic areas of crime.

Each assessment’s governmentality, in conceiving of its own object of governance, had certain implicit theoretical affiliations. Table 27, below, summarises these.

Table 27. Theoretical affinities of each type of local assessment

	OCGM	Local profiles	CBOCAs
Theoretical affinities	Classical criminology	Script analysis “The organisation of serious crimes” (Edwards and Levi, 2008) Situational criminology	Rational choice “Enterprise theory” (Smith, 1980)

Again, there were both contrasts and similarities in the assessments’ conceptions of *who* should govern the local organised crime problem. OCGM’s governmentality provided unilateralist *carte blanche* to the police, while, in stark contrast, the local profiles sought to distribute governing responsibility amongst a hugely diverse range of local actors, including social services, education providers, health workers and sometimes even the fire brigade. This was a dispersed and collaborative governmentality, relying upon “responsibilisation” (Garland, 2001, pg 124) as a way of activating multifarious capillaries of governing potential. In reality, of course, many local profiles were unable to fulfil such lofty ambitions, relying instead on a more traditional, police-oriented discourse of crime governance, much to the frustration of HMIC inspectors. The CBOCAs meanwhile, more closely resembled OCGM; they identified cross-border, joint policing structures as the primary seat of organised crime governance.

The proposed means by which the organised crime problem should be governed also varied across the three assessments. For OCGM, it was police management of OCGs that took centre stage. The local profiles, meanwhile, in accordance with their dispersed and collaborative governmentality, followed the “4Ps” counter-terrorist strategy, employing a vast array of governing mechanisms that ranged from blocking “intergenerational pathways” (Local Profile 6, pg 51) into offending, to convicting offenders, to protecting the vulnerable, and many other things in between. For the CBOCAs, police enforcement operations were the solution to the problem.

Despite the differences observed across the three assessments, it was possible to detect some deep-seated, underlying themes in their respective governmentalities.



There was, for example, a recurring “police enforcement” mentality which emphasised the governance of OCGs and cast offenders as rational, financially-motivated agents. Yet this strand of thinking did not appear uniformly across the assessments; rather, it was blended with other narratives and discourses. In local profiles, it was combined with a national, securitised, counter-terrorist-inspired narrative to form a hybrid governmentality. In the CBOCAs, it was infused with corporate language and business logic. Only in OCGM did this mentality exist in a relatively pure form.

The governmentalities of the three assessments were distinct from one another, yet, to a greater-or-lesser extent, they all drew upon a “police enforcement” mentality; they were, in some senses, hybridised and mutated versions of this style of thinking. This inter-mixing of rival governmentalities undoubtedly contributed to the incoherence found in many of these assessments.

### *3. How might local organised crime be otherwise represented and assessed?*

Assessing organised crime within discrete, administratively-defined local areas, is fraught with difficulty. A better approach is to focus on assessing specific inter-local crime problems within socio-economic systems, and to do so in a holistic and systemic way. This means disaggregating the “chaotic concept” (Sayer, 1992, pg 138) of organised crime into more specific crime problems. It also means putting the “problem” first and exploring causal links to different local areas second. In seeking out such problems it is important to be open-minded and to challenge current presumptions through the use of delphi rounds, focus groups and other techniques. “Intensive” research should be used to explain how the crime problem works and what drives it (Edwards and Levi, 2008, Edwards, 2015, Sayer, 1992). These principles are encapsulated in a new assessment model, called the Systemic Crime Problem Assessment (SCPA).

### **11.3. Illustrating the findings: a thought-experiment**

The above conclusions are best demonstrated by way of a thought-experiment. It is interesting to imagine two distinct, hypothetical local areas and to think about how OCGM, local profiles and the CBOCAs would present different versions of

organised crime in each locality. Thinking-though this hypothetical scenario is a useful way of illustrating the main points of the study's argument.

Imagine an inner-city police district called "A-town" comprised of a patchwork of wealthy suburbs, industrial parks and deprived tower-block estates. The industrial parks harbour corrupt firms involved in fraud and waste dumping. The tower-blocks suffer from large-scale unemployment and have a reputation for gang problems, shootings and drug dealing; they are regarded as a no-go area for many of the other city residents. If the OCGM assessment were applied to "A-town", it would depict the problem as that of specific OCGs known by the police to be active in the area. It would provide a list of these OCGs, each with its own quantified score, ranked in order of priority (HMIC, 2016b, pg 38). It would not incorporate any meaningful detail about "A-town" itself and it would presuppose the problem (in very vague terms) to be, self-evidently, the mere existence of these OCGs. This version of the problem would empower the police; it would frame the issue in terms which imply police styles of governance.

A local profile would provide a different view of "A-town"; it would present reams of data on educational attainment, unemployment, homelessness, transport infrastructure, demographics and the like, but it would not tie these in a meaningful way to local organised crime. Such a profile would presume that "A-town's" organised crime problems were merely local manifestations of an essentially national phenomena; it would also be presumed – before any data-collection or analysis took place - that organised crime in "A-town" followed the standard Home Office blueprint and was comprised of drugs, firearms, child exploitation, cybercrime and so on. Much of the actual content of the profile, however, would resort to discussing OCGs – how many of them are known to be active in "A-town", what kinds of activity they engage in, where exactly they are based, *et cetera*. While ostensibly encouraging a dispersed and collaborative style of governance, the emphasis on OCGs would mostly imply police leadership in governing "A-town's" crime problem. The profile's account of the problem would be much more locally-grounded, more sensitive to socio-demographic and economic context than OCGM, but it would also be confusing and incoherent.

A local assessment similar to the CBOCA would present a different perspective again. It would presume the problem to be that of organised crime gangs based in "A-town", but it would conceptualise them as illegal enterprises; they

would be described as operating on the logic of legitimate business. Members of these enterprises would not be spoken of as “deviant others” but as businessmen gone bad. Yet the assessment would actually dedicate most attention to describing how many arrests and seizures were made over the previous year, as well as providing an update on market dynamics and patterns of offending in very general terms, not restricting itself to “A-town”. Its version of the problem would strongly support a police-dominated mode of governance.

Taking a second, very different, hypothetical location, it becomes possible to see the extent to which these local assessments mistakenly presume to know what the problem is before they actually begin the assessment process. Imagine now a deeply rural, mountainous police district called “Llandrwg”, with a tightly-knit, though geographically-dispersed farming community; an area in which environmental regulators suspect there is organised salmon poaching and illegal waste dumping, an area where food regulators believe poached deer meat enters the human food chain and where there are frequent thefts of rare-breed livestock. Once again, the OCGM assessment would attempt to fashion “OCGs” out of this locality, presuming, as before, that “Llandrwg’s” organised crime problem was reducible to such neat offending groups. Local profiles would again provide extensive detail on “Llandrwg’s” local demographics, economics, education and transport, but because of an adherence to the Home Office’s list of designated forms of organised crime they would be unlikely to even consider salmon and deer poaching, waste dumping or livestock theft. These would not fit with national priorities. Instead, the profiles would once again seek out drugs, guns and gangs, projecting national concerns onto “Llandrwg’s” unique rural area. A CBOCA-style assessment, meanwhile, though more oriented toward understanding issues such as waste crime, would still be overly-concerned with finding crime gangs and reporting seizures or arrests.

In each case, these local assessments would take their own implicit problem representations for granted; they would presume to know what the organised crime problem was before the analytical process even began, imposing a set of hidden assumptions on very different types of locality. Thus, important differences between places such as “A-town” and “Llandrwg” would be obviated. By seeking to assess organised crime *within* these discrete, administratively-defined localities, they would overlook connections to other localities and only perceive crime problems in a

partial, fragmentary way. In other words, there would not be enough of a focus on holistic, inter-local crime problems.

The Systemic Crime Problem Assessment (SCPA) is designed to be different. A scenario can be imagined in which a research institute or regulatory body might select a *system* – rather than a locality – as requiring assessment; they might choose, for example, to focus on the waste processing sector in Wales. Beginning with an “extensive” scan, the assessment team could use policy dephis, interviews and focus groups to identify potential crime problems within the system, before homing-in on inter-local waste dumping as worthy of further attention. The SCPA assessment team could then undertake “intensive” research (Sayer, 1992, pg 241) into how inter-local waste trafficking functions. Using court records, interviews and waste dumping data they would produce a “script” (Cornish, 1994) which isolates the conditions and mechanisms involved in waste trafficking. Their analyses would show how conditions in “A-town” lead corrupt firms to transport waste out to “Llandrwg” and to illegally conceal it on remote farms by paying complicit landowners. Focusing on the “weak spots” (Levi and Maguire, 2004, pg 409, Edwards, 2015) of the problem, they could then devise a range of proposals for intervention and then identify those with the potential to help in governing the waste trafficking problem.

By sending their assessment to key local officials, by holding a conference or by engaging with the media, the assessment team could propagate their account of the problem, challenging official accounts where necessary and empowering new agencies and organisations to govern such problems. Of course, this particular assessment would not have covered other problems affecting “A-town” or “Llandrwg” but these could be assessed by focusing on other “systems” such as the heroin economy or the demand and supply of local governance. By following such an approach, the SCPA assessment team would avoid presupposing local crime problems and would focus on specific problems in a coherent way.

#### **11.4. Limitations and contributions**

##### *Paths not taken*

Despite developing several insights into local assessments and their implicit ways of thinking, there are a number of limits to what this study can say. In the first instance,

it cannot claim to know whether any of these local assessments reflect what local agencies, police forces or individual police officers *actually think* about their local organised crime problems. Neither can it comment on what local authorities *actually do* when attempting to govern local organised crime. Local assessments are not some direct window into police perspectives or practices.

This point boils down to a pre-existing distinction within the governmentality school itself, between those who seek to isolate governmentalities in an “abstracted” way (Garland, 1999, pg 31) – perhaps through historical analyses - and those who argue for a more grounded empirical approach (*ibid*, (Edwards and Gill, 2003). The two are, of course, complementary, but the important point, as Garland has argued, is not to mistake the pure, abstracted governmentalities found in official policy and strategy for what actually happens in practice (*ibid*). This means that the governmentalities of local assessments identified in this study are unlikely to fully reflect the “...messy realm of practices and relations...” (Garland, 1999, pg 31) of actual organised crime governance, nor the “...compromised, corrupted, partial ways...” (*ibid*, pg 31) in which official policy and strategy is locally enacted (Edwards and Gill, 2003). It is perfectly possible, for example, that police organised crime squads might unofficially reject the counter-terrorist strategies of governance embedded in local profiles, preferring instead their own tried-and-tested control strategies. It might be the case that local community safety boards refuse to believe the figures provided by OCGM, or that local councillors ignore recommendations from what they regard to be police-dominated assessments.

These would be interesting issues, but it was beyond the scope of this study to examine them. Doing so would have required a wholly different research study, one based on in-depth ethnographic observations of perhaps one or two police forces. Research of this kind could have provided insight into the *actual* governance of local organised crime in one or two local areas, yet this study was always more concerned with *denaturalising* the official governmentalities implicit within local assessments; with “contesting” (O’Malley, 1997) their accounts of organised crime (Edwards and Gill, 2003) and, ultimately, with developing a new assessment model. In sacrificing detailed sociological insight though, the study has gained greater practical relevance. It has consciously tried to avoid becoming an arcane and esoteric governmentality study, of the sort criticised by O’Malley et al. (1997).

Secondly, although this study has examined the historical context of each local assessment, it cannot provide a full “realist” (Stenson, 2005) account of the political struggles involved in the development and implementation of these assessments. It was seen, for example, how OCGM was developed by ACPO in 2007 (Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie, 2010, ACPO, 2007) in response to the perception that so-called “Level 2” organised crime was poorly understood (O’Connor, 2005). The assessment allowed ACPO to accumulate data and become a national “centre of calculation” (Latour, 1987, Miller and Rose, 1990, pg 9) for organised crime. It was seen how the introduction of local profiles was part of a broad shift in official strategy, which included a renewed emphasis on national security, threat narratives, and counter-terrorist modes of governance. The CBOCAs, meanwhile, lay along a different trajectory to OCGM and local profiles. Insulated from UK policing strategy and governance by the unique political context in Northern Ireland, and not having been imposed by a central authority, the CBOCA was instead the outcome of political pressure for cross-border police co-operation. Each assessment was thus suspended in webs of inter-relationships between institutions, discourses, “centres of calculation” (Latour, 1987, Miller and Rose, 1990, pg 9) and governing strategies. Yet, this study cannot explain in any great depth *how* local profiles came to be imbued with the language and logic of counter-terrorism, for example, although it can describe the more general policy-shift that occurred at the time. It cannot explain why the CBOCAs emphasise the business-logic of crime gangs so strongly, nor why they say so little about paramilitary organisations – although this can be guessed at. The study stops short of Stenson’s realist approach toward governmentality (2005); a perspective which emphasises the historical contestations through which certain governmentalities emerge at particular times and at particular places. In relation to local assessments, this sort of perspective would prompt research into the political manoeuvrings, debates, contestations and power relations in play during the development and implementation of a particular type of assessment. It would have involved – at best, direct observation of the development and implementation process – or alternatively, post-hoc interviews with those involved. Again, this would have implied a very different kind of research study - one requiring considerable high-level access. In retaining a more modest focus on local assessments in their present-day form, this study is unable to say exactly why these assessments are the way they are.

Thirdly, the study is also limited in its capacity to explore the effects these local assessments have, or to understand how exactly they are used. Questions such as “*does anybody actually read these assessments or take any notice of what they say?*” and “*do these assessments ever change anybody’s thinking?*” often come to mind during this kind of analytical process. In more sociological terms, there was the interesting possibility that these local assessments operated as a “technology for governing at a distance” (Rose and Miller, 1992, pg 173); a means by which local police forces could be forced to adopt a central government agency’s particular representation of the organised crime problem, and a mechanism through which the police could themselves be regulated. Again though, such questions are beyond the scope of this study and would require a different focus and research strategy. Testing the “technology for governing” (*ibid*) theory, for example, would have needed ethnographic observation of central government policy meetings, senior police officer discussions and the workings of police analysts – all of which would have required prolonged and substantial high-level access. This also would have detracted from the study’s main interest in local assessments themselves. The point though, is that this study cannot claim to know what effects, if any, local organised crime assessments have on their target audiences.

Fourthly, this study has only a limited contribution to make to the governmentality literature as a whole. This is not a “pure” governmentality study, if such a thing can be said to exist. The main concern is not with uncovering the governmentality of local organised crime control in its entirety, nor with extrapolating to broader governmentalities of crime control in the UK. Rather, the governmentality approach was used as an analytical perspective; an extension to Bacchi’s “*what’s the problem represented to be?*” (2009, pg 2) style of policy analysis; a general technique for understanding local assessments at a deeper level. The local assessments chosen for this study were not intended as windows into a broader governmental perspective, the assessments were the objects of study in their own right. Hence, discussions of governmentality are therefore limited to the assessments themselves, rather than to local organised crime control as a whole.

#### *The current state of local assessments in the UK: a critical contribution*

Beyond its main conclusion and notwithstanding the limitations described above, this study has the capacity to contribute to current knowledge in several ways. On a

practical level, the study provides an in-depth critique of some of the most common local assessments used in the UK. It uncovers their implicit representations of the local organised crime problem and highlights their inconsistencies. It also comments on their methods, data-collection strategies and units of analysis. Such critical points can be extracted from the study and used to improve these assessments. OCGM might be improved, for instance, by breaking up the homogenous “OCG” category into more specific types of criminal organisation, such as “youth street gang”, “online child exploitation network” and “corrupt business”. Local profiles could be improved by abandoning the Home Office’s list of designated forms of organised crime and instead encouraging local assessments to become more problem-oriented. All of these types of assessment could be improved if they discarded their presumptions about the nature of local organised crime and set out with an open-mind to identify real inter-local problems in a holistic way.

#### *A new assessment model*

Building on this critical contribution, the study has outlined in detail how local assessments might be done differently. In developing the “SCPA” it has contributed a full methodology which is ready for use by whomsoever needs it. The SCPA is flexible enough to be used around the world, at multiple levels of “localness” and, depending on the skill of those who might use it, this new assessment model is capable of analysing anything from illegal logging in a South American nature reserve, to drug-market violence in London. The SCPA, therefore, is the main practical outcome of the study.

#### *Contributing to the research literature*

This study emerged from some general frustrations with the research literature on local organised crime assessments. It was found that, while several high-quality studies had examined local assessments, they rarely penetrated far beneath surface appearances, saying little or nothing about the deep-seated styles of thinking implicit in such assessments. Many of these studies – though rigorous and insightful – were more concerned with satisfying police and policy-makers; with reviewing local assessments in terms of their usefulness, rather than uncovering their deep-seated and implicit ways of thinking about crime and its governance. There was a noticeable reification of police expertise in such work, a fixation on helping the



police set priorities and a subsequent over-emphasis on measurement, quantitative scoring and ranking as the only means of assessing organised crime. More fundamentally, there was an assumption that the task of defining the local organised crime “problem” should be left to the police – a perspective which relegates social scientists to the role of subservient technical functionaries (Edwards, 2015) whose job is simply to design better scoring mechanisms.

This study counteracts such perspectives. In retaining a critical distance from law enforcement, the study has avoided becoming co-opted into police-dominated programmes of research. As a result, it is able to demonstrate that local assessments contain deep-seated and implicit representations of local organised crime and that they embody different strategies of governance. By showing how these implicit representations are often incoherent, it counteracts the view that social scientists should only ever help police and policy-makers on their own terms without questioning their account of the problem (Edwards, 2015). It resists the reification of police expertise; disposes with the belief in ranking, measurement and quantitative scoring, and rejects the idea that assessments should only be for helping set police priorities.

In this way, the study hopes to move the field forward, away from stagnant arguments over the best scoring mechanism for OCGs, toward discussions over how social scientists might re-shape dominant problem representations of “local organised crime”. One way of achieving this is for researchers to work backwards before they work forwards; to question and challenge the implicit ways of thinking embedded in local assessments before they help to refine them. Another, more radical way, is for researchers to work with others to produce their own independent, methodologically-sound assessments. The Systemic Crime Problem Assessment model, proposed by this study, provides a blueprint for doing just that. By following such a path, researchers and social scientists can help to develop better accounts of “organised crime”; accounts which are both more coherent and more problem-oriented.

# Appendix A

A classification table of different types of local assessment used in the UK

Assessment	Description	Usage	Comments
<i>Organised Crime Group Mapping</i>	Computerised process for assessing organised crime groups (HMIC, 2015)	Used by local police forces throughout the UK	One of the most prominent and long-standing local assessments. Focused specifically on organised crime.
<i>Serious Organised Crime Local Profile</i>	Report describing organised crime in specific local areas (Home Office, 2014)	Used by police forces in England and Wales	More recent form of assessment, now widely used. Focused specifically on organised crime.
<i>MORiLE (Management of Risk in Law Enforcement)</i>	Risk assessment tool (HMIC, 2015)	Used by local police	This assessment is not specifically focused on organised crime, although it includes forms of organised crime.
<i>Metropolitan Police Gangs Matrix</i>	A database of gangs and gang-members in London (MOPAC, 2018)	Used by the Metropolitan Police	Focused on “gangs”, rather than organised crime <i>per se</i> .
<i>Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment (STRA)</i>	A standard “National Intelligence Model” (NIM) product, it includes many different kinds of crime, not just those classed as “organised”	Used by many police forces across the UK	Not just focused on organised crime.
<i>Cross-border Organised Crime Assessment</i>	A report which assesses organised crime on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland	Produced jointly by police in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland	Bespoke to one area, tailored to assess organised crime in the border zone – not applied to other locales
<i>Fraud and Cyber Crime Profile</i>	Developed by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau for local areas across the UK (Home Office, 2014)	Disseminated across the UK	Focused exclusively on fraud and cyber crime, not all forms of “organised crime”

# Appendix B

A simplified summary of the three case study databases

## Case study 1: Organised Crime Group Mapping

Name	Source	Comments
HMIC review of Regional Organised Crime Units	<a href="https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/regional-organised-crime-units.pdf">https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/regional-organised-crime-units.pdf</a> - accessed 21/06/2016	Contains substantial detail about how OCGM is used by police
Police Foundation: comments on Home Office Prevent interventions guidance	<a href="http://www.police-foundation.org.uk/uploads/holding/policy/prevent_guide_resp.pdf">http://www.police-foundation.org.uk/uploads/holding/policy/prevent_guide_resp.pdf</a> - accessed 21/06/2016	Comments on the current use of OCGM
HMIC PEEL reports for each police force 2015-2017	<a href="https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/frs/peel-assessments/national-peel-reports/">https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/frs/peel-assessments/national-peel-reports/</a> - accessed 24/02/2019	One PEEL report per police force in England and Wales, describes each force's use of OCGM
Letting Our Communities Flourish: A Strategy for Tackling Serious Organised Crime in Scotland	<a href="http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2009/06/01144911/3">http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2009/06/01144911/3</a> - accessed 23/06/2016	Describes Scottish use of OCGM system
Police Scotland: Environmental crime and SOC	<a href="http://www.parliament.scot/S4_JusticeCommittee/Inquiries/EC7_Police_Scotland.pdf">http://www.parliament.scot/S4_JusticeCommittee/Inquiries/EC7_Police_Scotland.pdf</a> - accessed 23/06/2016	Describes Scottish use of OCGM system
Scottish OCGM project report	<a href="http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/254429/0098144.pdf">http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/254429/0098144.pdf</a> - accessed 11/11/2016	
Excellent policing for Merseyside	<a href="https://www.merseyside.police.uk/media/12959/228208_pccprospectus.pdf">https://www.merseyside.police.uk/media/12959/228208_pccprospectus.pdf</a> - accessed 23/06/2016	
OCGM quantitative data sets 2015-2017	<a href="http://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/data/peel-assessments">http://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/data/peel-assessments</a> - accessed 24/02/2019	This is a large quantitative data-set of OCGM data results for each police force
Scottish Police Authority report on SOC	<a href="http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/126884/199545/item5">http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/126884/199545/item5</a> - accessed 23/06/2016	
SOCEX speech	<a href="http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/697-serious-organised-crime-exchange-2016-speech-by-nca-director-general-lynn-owens/file">http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/697-serious-organised-crime-exchange-2016-speech-by-nca-director-general-lynn-owens/file</a> - accessed 29/06/2016	
Local to Global	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97823/organised-crime-strategy.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97823/organised-crime-strategy.pdf</a>	
NCA Annual Plan 2016-17	<a href="http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/683-nca-annual-plan-2016-17/file">http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/683-nca-annual-plan-2016-17/file</a> - accessed 29/06/2016	
Parliamentary question	<a href="https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2009-06-01d.273024.h">https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2009-06-01d.273024.h</a> - accessed 01/08/2016	Contains information about the Organised Crime Partnership Board
HMIC review of strategic policing	<a href="https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/an-inspection-of-the-arrangements-that-police-forces-have-in-place-to">https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/an-inspection-of-the-arrangements-that-police-forces-have-in-place-to</a>	

	<a href="#">meet-the-strategic-policing-requirement.pdf</a> - accessed 14/11/2016	
Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research article	<a href="http://www.sccjr.ac.uk/projects/organised-crime-mapping-project/">www.sccjr.ac.uk/projects/organised-crime-mapping-project/</a> - accessed 09/08/2016	Summaries the Scottish OCGM project
New Landscape of Policing	<a href="http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmhaff/939/939.pdf">http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmhaff/939/939.pdf</a> - accessed 14/11/2016	
Mapping Organised Crime (Scotland)	<a href="http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Justice/policies/reducing-crime/organised-crime/organised-crime/soc/MappingOrgCrim">http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Justice/policies/reducing-crime/organised-crime/organised-crime/soc/MappingOrgCrim</a> - accessed 09/08/2016	
Getting Organised	<a href="https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmic/media/getting-organised-20090330.pdf">https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmic/media/getting-organised-20090330.pdf</a> - accessed 13/08/2016	
HMICS local police inspection report	<a href="http://www.hmics.org/sites/default/files/publications/Local%20Policing%2B%20Inspection%20of%20the%20Management%20of%20Intelligence%20in%20Ayrshire%20Division%20and%20the%20National%20Intelligence%20Bureau.pdf">http://www.hmics.org/sites/default/files/publications/Local%20Policing%2B%20Inspection%20of%20the%20Management%20of%20Intelligence%20in%20Ayrshire%20Division%20and%20the%20National%20Intelligence%20Bureau.pdf</a> - accessed 13/08/2016	Describes use of OCGM by police forces in Scotland
Fife Constabulary OCGM report	<a href="http://admin.1fife.org.uk/uploadfiles/publications/c64_Item17-FifeConstabulary-SeriousOrganisedCrimeMappingProjectBriefing.doc">http://admin.1fife.org.uk/uploadfiles/publications/c64_Item17-FifeConstabulary-SeriousOrganisedCrimeMappingProjectBriefing.doc</a>	
Extending our reach	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228946/7665.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228946/7665.pdf</a> - accessed 19/08/2016	
Police Professional article on ACPO SOC co-ordinator	<a href="http://www.policeprofessional.com/news.aspx?id=9078">http://www.policeprofessional.com/news.aspx?id=9078</a> - accessed 21/11/2016	Describes the historic role of the ACPO SOC co-ordinator
CJP article on OCGM project	<a href="http://www.cjp.org.uk/news/archive/cracking-down-on-the-mr-bigs-10-12-2007/">http://www.cjp.org.uk/news/archive/cracking-down-on-the-mr-bigs-10-12-2007/</a> - accessed 21/11/2016	
College of Policing summary of OCGM	<a href="https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/intelligence-management/intelligence-cycle/">https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/intelligence-management/intelligence-cycle/</a>	
Policing in the 21st Century	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118241/policing-21st-full-pdf.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118241/policing-21st-full-pdf.pdf</a> - accessed 29/11/2016	
Freedom of Information response from NPCC	Written response from NPCC regarding the historical development of OCGM	
Closing the Gap	<a href="https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmic/media/closing-the-gap-20050911.pdf">https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmic/media/closing-the-gap-20050911.pdf</a>	

## Case study 2: Serious Organised Crime Local Profiles

Name	Source	Comments
Serious and Organised Crime Local Profiles: a guide	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/371602/Serious_and_Organised_Crime_local_profiles.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/371602/Serious_and_Organised_Crime_local_profiles.pdf</a> - accessed 17/06/2016	
SOC Local Partnerships Bulletin 01	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/465508/SOC_Local_Partnerships_Bulletin_Sept_2015.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/465508/SOC_Local_Partnerships_Bulletin_Sept_2015.pdf</a> - accessed 17/06/2016	
Tackling serious and organised crime: a local response	<a href="http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6869714/L15-376+Tackling+Serious+%26+Organised+crime_04.pdf/0005d382-139d-4695-b828-1ea987c2d957">http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6869714/L15-376+Tackling+Serious+%26+Organised+crime_04.pdf/0005d382-139d-4695-b828-1ea987c2d957</a> - accessed 17/06/2016	
SOC Local Partnerships Bulletin 02	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486345/SOC_Local_Partnerships_Bulletin_Dec_2015.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486345/SOC_Local_Partnerships_Bulletin_Dec_2015.pdf</a> - accessed 17/06/2016	
SOC Local Partnerships Bulletin 03	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/509033/SOC_Local_Partnerships_Bulletin_March_2016.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/509033/SOC_Local_Partnerships_Bulletin_March_2016.pdf</a> - accessed 17/06/2016	
Serious Organised Crime Strategy	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/248645/Serious_and_Organised_Crime_Strategy.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/248645/Serious_and_Organised_Crime_Strategy.pdf</a> - accessed 17/06/2016	
131 HMIC PEEL reports	<a href="https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-2015/">https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-2015/</a> - accessed 20/06/2016	These inspection reports describe how each police force use local profiles
National HMIC report 2015	<a href="https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/police-effectiveness-2015.pdf">https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/police-effectiveness-2015.pdf</a> - accessed 20/06/2016	
Tackling SOC report - PCC West Yorkshire	<a href="http://www.westyorkshire-pcp.gov.uk/Documents/Meetings/March%2011%202016/Item%206%20-%20Tackling%20Serious%20and%20Organised%20Crime.pdf">http://www.westyorkshire-pcp.gov.uk/Documents/Meetings/March%2011%202016/Item%206%20-%20Tackling%20Serious%20and%20Organised%20Crime.pdf</a> - accessed 20/06/2016	
Local to Global	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97823/organised-crime-strategy.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97823/organised-crime-strategy.pdf</a>	
CT Local Profiles	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118203/counter-terrorism-local-profiles.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118203/counter-terrorism-local-profiles.pdf</a> - 04/07/2016	
National Strategic Assessment of SOC (NCA) 2016	<a href="http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/731-national-strategic-assessment-of-serious-and-organised-crime-2016/file">http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/731-national-strategic-assessment-of-serious-and-organised-crime-2016/file</a> (accessed 24/10/2016)	
National Strategic Assessment of SOC (NCA) 2015	<a href="http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/560-national-strategic-assessment-of-serious-and-organised-crime-2015/file">http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/560-national-strategic-assessment-of-serious-and-organised-crime-2015/file</a> (accessed 24/10/2016)	
SOC local partnership bulletin 04	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/509033/SOC_Local_Partnerships_Bulletin_March_2016.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/509033/SOC_Local_Partnerships_Bulletin_March_2016.pdf</a> - accessed 17/06/2016	
Home Office memo on OSCT	<a href="http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhaff/212/212we13.htm">http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhaff/212/212we13.htm</a> - accessed 07/11/2016	Describes the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism
Home Office Freedom of Information response re OSCT	Home Office	Describes when the OSCT took over organised crime policy

Policing in the 21st Century	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118241/policing-21st-full-pdf.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118241/policing-21st-full-pdf.pdf</a> - accessed 29/11/2016	
Local Profile 1	Obtained through FOI request	
Local Profile 2	Obtained through FOI request	
Local Profile 3	Obtained through FOI request	
Local Profile 4	Obtained through FOI request	
Local Profile 5	Obtained through FOI request	
Local Profile 6	Obtained through FOI request	
Local Profile 7	Obtained through FOI request	
Local Profile 8	Obtained through FOI request	
Local Profile 9	Obtained through FOI request	
Local Profile 10	Obtained through FOI request	
Local Profile 11	Obtained through FOI request	
Local Profile 12	Obtained through FOI request	

### Case study 3: Cross-border Organised Crime Assessment

Name	Source	Comments
North-South Irish Responses to Transnational Organised Crime	<a href="https://www.keele.ac.uk/law/research/researchprojects/respondingtotransnationalorganisedcrimeintheislandofireland/AHRC%20OC%20Project%20Final%20Report.pdf">https://www.keele.ac.uk/law/research/researchprojects/respondingtotransnationalorganisedcrimeintheislandofireland/AHRC%20OC%20Project%20Final%20Report.pdf</a> - accessed 27/07/2016	
Cross-border Police Cooperation and Illicit Trade	<a href="http://www.britishirish.org/assets/NewFolder-2/235.-BIPA-report-from-Committee-A-Sovereign-Matters-on-Cross-border-Police-Cooperation-and-Illicit-Trade-2015.pdf">http://www.britishirish.org/assets/NewFolder-2/235.-BIPA-report-from-Committee-A-Sovereign-Matters-on-Cross-border-Police-Cooperation-and-Illicit-Trade-2015.pdf</a>	
Cross-border OC assessment 2004	<a href="http://www.octf.gov.uk/OCTF/media/OCTF/images/publications/cross_border_organised_crime_assessment_2004.pdf?ext=.pdf">http://www.octf.gov.uk/OCTF/media/OCTF/images/publications/cross_border_organised_crime_assessment_2004.pdf?ext=.pdf</a> - accessed 27/07/2016	
Cross-border OC assessment 2006	<a href="http://www.octf.gov.uk/OCTF/media/OCTF/images/publications/Cross%20Border%20Organised%20Crime%20Assessment/CrossBorderOrganisedCrimeAssessment.pdf?ext=.pdf">http://www.octf.gov.uk/OCTF/media/OCTF/images/publications/Cross%20Border%20Organised%20Crime%20Assessment/CrossBorderOrganisedCrimeAssessment.pdf?ext=.pdf</a> - accessed 27/07/2016	
Cross-border OC assessment 2008	<a href="http://www.garda.ie/Documents/User/cross%20border%20organised%20crime%20assessment%202008.pdf">http://www.garda.ie/Documents/User/cross%20border%20organised%20crime%20assessment%202008.pdf</a> - accessed 27/07/2016	
Cross-border OC assessment 2010	<a href="http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/14537/1/CROSS_BORDER_CRIME_ASSESSMENT_2010%5B1%5D.pdf">http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/14537/1/CROSS_BORDER_CRIME_ASSESSMENT_2010%5B1%5D.pdf</a> - accessed 27/07/2016	
Cross-border OC assessment 2012	<a href="http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/doj-cross-border-threat-assessment.pdf/Files/doj-cross-border-threat-assessment.pdf">http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/doj-cross-border-threat-assessment.pdf/Files/doj-cross-border-threat-assessment.pdf</a> - accessed 27/07/2016	
Cross-border OC assessment 2014	<a href="http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/22721/1/cross-border-crime-assessment-final.pdf">http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/22721/1/cross-border-crime-assessment-final.pdf</a> - accessed 27/07/2016	
Cross-border OC assessment 2016	<a href="http://www.octf.gov.uk/OCTF/media/OCTF/images/publications/Cross%20Border%20Organised%20Crime%20Assessment/Threat-Assessment-Report_Layout-1.pdf?ext=.pdf">http://www.octf.gov.uk/OCTF/media/OCTF/images/publications/Cross%20Border%20Organised%20Crime%20Assessment/Threat-Assessment-Report_Layout-1.pdf?ext=.pdf</a> - accessed 06/12/2016	
Joint Agency Taskforce Report	<a href="http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Joint_Agency_Task_Force-Strategic_Oversight_Group_Report_January-June_2016.pdf/Files/Joint_Agency_Task_Force-Strategic_Oversight_Group_Report_January-June_2016.pdf">http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Joint_Agency_Task_Force-Strategic_Oversight_Group_Report_January-June_2016.pdf/Files/Joint_Agency_Task_Force-Strategic_Oversight_Group_Report_January-June_2016.pdf</a> - accessed 27/07/2016	Describes the work of the taskforce on border organised crime
Cross border policing strategy	<a href="http://www.garda.ie/Documents/User/Cross%20Border%20Policing%20Strategy.pdf">http://www.garda.ie/Documents/User/Cross%20Border%20Policing%20Strategy.pdf</a> - accessed 27/07/2016	
Joint task force question	<a href="http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PQ-21-07-2016-75">http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PQ-21-07-2016-75</a> - accessed 27/07/2016	
Joint task force question 2	<a href="http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PQ-05-11-2015-137">http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PQ-05-11-2015-137</a> - accessed 27/07/2016	
Cross border co-operation report	<a href="http://www.britishirish.org/assets/A-Report-on-Cross-Border-Cooperation-between-Police-Forces-July-2008.pdf">http://www.britishirish.org/assets/A-Report-on-Cross-Border-Cooperation-between-Police-Forces-July-2008.pdf</a> - accessed 27/07/2016	
Northern Ireland OC strategy	<a href="http://www.octf.gov.uk/OCTF/media/OCTF/documents/publications/N.I.%20Organised%20Crime%20Strategy/The-NI-Organised-Crime-Strategy-April-2016.pdf?ext=.pdf">http://www.octf.gov.uk/OCTF/media/OCTF/documents/publications/N.I.%20Organised%20Crime%20Strategy/The-NI-Organised-Crime-Strategy-April-2016.pdf?ext=.pdf</a> - accessed 27/07/2016	
Tackling Paramilitary Activity	<a href="https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/publications/tackling-paramilitary-activity-criminality-and-organised-crime-executive-action-plan">https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/publications/tackling-paramilitary-activity-criminality-and-organised-crime-executive-action-plan</a> - accessed 01/08/2016	
Paramilitary Groups in NI	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/469548/Paramilitary_Groups_in_NI.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/469548/Paramilitary_Groups_in_NI.pdf</a>	

	oups_in_Northern_Ireland_-_20_Oct_2015.pdf - accessed 01/08/2016	
Independent Monitoring Commission Report	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/89856/imc_26th_and_final_report_july_2011.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/89856/imc_26th_and_final_report_july_2011.pdf</a> - accessed 01/08/2016	
Cross border OC seminar 2012	<a href="http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR12000271">http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR12000271</a> - accessed 23/08/2016	Summary of seminar where CBOCA is produced
Cross border OC seminar 2009	<a href="http://www.garda.ie/Controller.aspx?Page=3051">http://www.garda.ie/Controller.aspx?Page=3051</a>	Summary of seminar where CBOCA is produced
Cross border OC seminar 2011	<a href="http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR11000231">http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR11000231</a> - accessed 23/08/2016	Summary of seminar where CBOCA is produced
Cross border OC seminar 2015	<a href="http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR15000500">http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR15000500</a> - accessed 23/08/2016	Summary of seminar where CBOCA is produced
Chief Constable report to NI policing board	<a href="https://www.psni.police.uk/news/Latest-News/090616-chief-constables-formal-report---northern-ireland-policing-board-9th-june-2016/">https://www.psni.police.uk/news/Latest-News/090616-chief-constables-formal-report---northern-ireland-policing-board-9th-june-2016/</a>	
Evidence to NI affairs committee	<a href="http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmsselect/cmniaf/1504/1504we06.htm">http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmsselect/cmniaf/1504/1504we06.htm</a> - accessed 23/08/2016	
NI Assembly questions on organised crime	<a href="https://www.theyworkforyou.com/ni/?id=2016-02-22.5.53">https://www.theyworkforyou.com/ni/?id=2016-02-22.5.53</a> - accessed 23/08/2016	
Cross-border seminar schedule	FOI request to PSNI	A full schedule of the cross-border organised crime seminars
Speech at Cross-Border Organised Crime seminar 2016	<a href="http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Speech-by-the-Tanaiste-at-the-14th-Annual-Cross-Border-Seminar-on-Organised-Crime-28-September-2016">http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Speech-by-the-Tanaiste-at-the-14th-Annual-Cross-Border-Seminar-on-Organised-Crime-28-September-2016</a>	
NI Assembly hansard report 2016	<a href="http://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/plenary-17-10-2016.pdf">http://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/plenary-17-10-2016.pdf</a>	
Northern Ireland Security Statement	<a href="https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2016-06-30/HCWS52/">https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2016-06-30/HCWS52/</a>	



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