



Mobility of OC: Mafia

BUILDING A SAFE AND RESILIENT CANADA

Strategic thinking can be combined with addressing emergent factors faced by organized crime. Supply of criminals, local conditions, and demand for organized crime are proposed categories of analysis.

In 2010, Morselli, Turcotte, and Tenti wrote a report on *The Mobility of Criminal Groups*, for Public Safety Canada. The report reviewed several case studies and prior commentaries and, based on an inductive, evidence-based process, offered a conceptual framework for understanding how organized crime groups come to establish themselves, successfully or unsuccessfully, in places outside of their area of origin.

The framework of Morselli, Turcotte, and Tenti included push factors (i.e., factors that drive a criminal group away from a setting) and pull factors (i.e., factors that attract a criminal group away to a setting), which were both subsumed under a broader distinction between 'strategic' and 'emergent' contexts for organized crime. In the former, criminal groups intentionally or strategically mobilize themselves to seize opportunities in various geographical locations across the world. In the latter, criminal groups are the product of offenders' adaptations to the constraints and opportunities surrounding them. Morselli and his colleagues concluded that past research supports the view that organized criminals do not strategically seize opportunities but rather adapt to their context and its intrinsic opportunities.

The purpose of this report was to perform an in-depth analysis of the framework proposed by Morselli et al., and suggest a modified framework for the migration of organized crime groups. This paper then applied this revised framework to the mobility of crime groups to several settings: the movements of the 'Ndrangheta from Calabria to Piedmont and Veneto (Northern Italy); the Sicilian mafia to New York City and Rosario, Argentina; the Russian mafia to Rome and Hungary; and Taiwanese triads to mainland China.

The author felt that Morselli et al.'s distinction between 'strategic' and 'emergent' organized crime groups might not hold universally, and that it does not consider a number of unique possibilities. For example, members of organized criminal groups can be pushed out of their territory, but still exercise strategic thinking in deciding where to go, and then in the new territory they will be better able to adapt to the local conditions. In this scenario, all elements of the Morselli et al. framework are present simultaneously (e.g., push factors; strategic thinking and adaptation to the local environment). The report also found that strategic motivations for mafia groups to move are diverse and must be unpacked analytically. In particular, a key strategic motivation to send an envoy abroad is to find ways to invest the proceeds of crime in various licit and illicit business ventures in different countries (ultimately, resulting in money laundering).

This paper suggested a modified framework for describing the migration of organized crime, which consisted of three basic elements: 'supply,' 'local conditions' and 'demand for organized crime.' A 'supply' of criminals might find themselves abroad as a consequence of strategic thinking, in order to seek resources, markets and/or opportunities to invest the proceeds of their crime. The unintended reasons for movement of organized criminals are: generalized migration; mafia wars; and law enforcement repression activities. 'Local conditions' include the level of trust, the presence of newly formed market economies, booming markets and incentives to create cartels, large illegal markets, size of the locale, and presence of existing Mafia and other organized crime groups. All these factors can be positively or negatively correlated to the emergence of a demand for the services of organized crime and lead to successful mafia transplantation.

An application of the proposed framework to seven settings found that in all cases, the presence of a supply of mafiosi and the inability of the state to successfully govern and regulate markets are the key factors that determine successful transplantation, such as the `Ndrangheta in Bardonecchia and the Russian mafia in Hungary. In Bardonecchia, disenfranchised migrant workers from outside the region accepted illegal employment over unemployment, thereby forgoing membership in trade unions and more generally state-sponsored protection. Entrepreneurs not only hired illegal workers but also schemed to restrict competition. The structure of the local labour market and the booming construction industry (in which firms compete locally and there is a strong incentive to form cartels) led to the emergence of a demand for illegal protection. Members of the `Ndrangheta Mazzaferro clan resided in this territory. They offered certain firms privileged access to this market, and were able to settle disputes between workers and employers.

The author concludes by recommending that scholars study transplantation within a comparative framework. The first step would be to undertake targeted comparisons, for instance, between two cases that are as similar as possible for as many antecedent features as possible, but differ in the outcome (i.e., the mafia groups were successful or not in transplanting). The author has previously done such work focusing on `Ndrangheta transplantation in Northern Italy. Both cities selected for the study - Bardonecchia and Verona - are part of the same region of the country, and the attempt at transplantation was taking place roughly at the same point in time and by the same mafia group (`Ndrangheta). Such a design allows scholars to control for some common antecedent conditions, such as the level of corruption and to evaluate the effect of other factors. For instance, in the case of Varese's previous study, generalized migration and the *soggiorno obbligato* policy (i.e., forced migration of convicted *mafiosi* from the South to the North of Italy) are the likely causes of successful transplantation.

Note: This report was part of a series of three papers by European experts on the migration of criminal groups, who reviewed a framework proposed by Morselli, et al. The framework outlining the push and pull factors in the mobility of

criminal networks can be found in Research Brief number 4.

Varese, Federico. (2010) *A Response to "The Mobility of Criminal Groups": A Reflection in Light of Recent Research on Mafia Movements*. Ottawa: Public Safety Canada.

Morselli, Carlo, and Mathilde Turcotte, with Valentina Tenti. (2010) *The Mobility of Criminal Groups*. Ottawa, ON: Public Safety Canada.

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