Criminal organizing applying the theory of partial organization to four cases of organized crime

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Abstract We explore how the idea of partial organization can provide insights in the study of organized crime. Studying criminal organizing with a theoretical framework used for other social organizing phenomena can help us see the interplay between different forms of criminal collaboration under a single analytical lens, and start a discussion on whether criminal organizing is intrinsically different from other types of social organizing. We analyze four cases of criminal collaboration in Sweden between 1990 and 2015: the Syriac mafia, the Hells Angels Mc Sweden, the street gang Werewolf Legion, and the Hallunda robbery. While the outlaw motorcycle gang, and to a certain extent the street gang, are complete organizations, the mafia is based around and heavily parasitic on other institutions. We have also shown that time-bounded projects are found in the criminal context, with these emerging from strong network relations. Our results show that most of the elements of criminal organizing are not formalized and that partial organization is at least as important and powerful as complete organization.

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Introduction

A significant fraction of criminal activities is carried out through some form of collaboration. Irrespective of whether it is a matter of gangs, mafias or terrorism, criminal collaborations are considered to constitute a greater societal problem than crime committed by single individuals. These criminal collaborations typically fall under the label of “organized crime” (Albini and McIllwain 2012; Ceccarelli 2007; von Lampe 2016; Levi 2007; Sullivan and Bunker 2002).

One central concern within research on organized crime is the question of what organized crime is and how to conceptualize it (Finckenauer 2005; von Lampe 2008, 2016). von Lampe (2008:8) argues that there is not one core understanding of what organized crime is. Instead, there are views that hold that organized crime is mainly about crime (i.e. criminal activities), or about some form of criminal organization in contrast to lone offenders, or that it is about concentration of power. It has been suggested that the challenge of finding a universal definition of organized crime limits our understanding of the problem and impairs the development of crime prevention strategies (Levi 1998). For example, the sheer number of concepts creates difficulties for the adequate framing of relevant criminal activities and underplays the importance of distinguishing between various forms of criminal collaborations with regards to appropriate social responses and policing measures.

It has been suggested that one possible way to advance research on organized crime would be to “transplant” theories from other disciplines (Kleemans 2015:48) In this study, we set out to explore whether the framework of partial organization developed over two decades primarily by Ahrne (e.g., Ahrne 1994; Ahrne 2007; Ahrne 2014) and Ahrne and Brunsson (2011)—to understand various aspects of social organization, such as family, state, voluntary organizations—can be applied as a conceptual lens to analyze organized crime. One strength of this approach is that it provides an analytical tool that distinguishes between dimensions of social order, both inside and outside of formal organizations, allowing for the development of explanations about the interplay and development of different forms of organization across time and space.

The aim of this paper is to explore the fruitfulness of partial organization for research on organized crime. By doing so, the focus is shifted from the challenge of definitions mentioned above to an analysis of the common organizing principles underlying all forms of social collaboration, of which criminal collaboration is one. The exploration is conducted by characterizing the basic elements and relations found in criminal collaboration in contemporary Sweden (1990–2015). Our empirical point of departure is a set of category-defining forms of criminal collaboration, namely: the Syriac mafia, the Hells Angels outlaw motorcycle gang, the street gang Werewolf Legion, and the planned criminal project the Hallunda robbery. By and large these cases represent the

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1 According to von Lampe (2017), the number of definitions of organized crime in the literature adds up to more than 180.
main distinct types of criminal collaborations in contemporary Sweden as recognized by police authorities.

In the next section, we present the framework of partial organization and its exploratory application to organized crime. We then describe the empirical cases, data sources and how they were sampled and analyzed, and finally we discuss our approach and results.

**Partial organization and organized crime**

Depending on the point of view adopted by the researcher, organized crime is usually described either from a structure-and-activity perspective (e.g., the bureaucracy, hierarchical model and the patron-client model; see von Lampe (2016) for further discussion on models of organized crime) or in terms of a set of network relationships. On the one hand, and within the structural perspective, organized crime is studied in terms of organizations and internal dynamics, such as membership, the capital of violence (e.g., arms and money), the degree of specialization and social composition (Gounev and Ruggiero 2012; Paoli 2003). Organized crime has also been described as an institutional phenomenon (e.g., extra-legal governance model, see von Lampe 2016), as a socially embedded industry that provides goods and services (Gambetta 1993; Hill 2003; Varese 2001). On the other hand, the network perspective looks at the criminal group as an adaptive entity that is shaped by its context and opportunities (Morselli 2009). Both perspectives frame the problem in terms of social relations and actions that are part of a specific context of criminal collaboration within a social order.

By applying partial organization to analyze organized crime we attempt to go beyond these distinctions while still maintaining useful aspects from all of them. This approach does not focus on the distinction between organized crime as illicit activities, criminal organization, or power concentration. In contrast, it attempts to take a holistic view that brings together organizational processes, elements and activities. We believe that this will allow for a deeper understanding of the organizing qualities of organized crime that opens for comparative analyses of, and analogies to, other organizational phenomena beyond crime.

Even though the concept is primarily associated with the 2011 paper by Göran Ahrne and Nils Brunsson, the idea of partial organization as a conceptual framework has been evolving over the past two decades (Ahrne 2014, 2014; Ahrne and Brunsson 2011; Brunsson and Olsen 1998). Interaction inside, outside and between organizations has been the prime concern in Ahrne’s theoretical work of organization (Ahrne 1994, 2007, 2014), and the complexity of forms of cooperation and competition among organizations that cannot be captured solely by models such as hierarchies and markets have been further developed by Brunsson (Brunsson and Olsen 1998). Finally, the partiality of organizing and the distinction between organization, institution and network was presented in Ahrne and Brunsson (2011).

Ahrne (2014) proposes that a) institutions, b) organizations and c) networks express different dimensions of social order (see Table 1). Institutions embody conceptions and norms that are taken for granted by a group of actors and that structure social action into stable and routinely reproducible behavioral patterns. Networks are informal structures and relations that link social actors, which can be persons, groups or organizations. Relations are non-hierarchical, and the network itself is maintained through trust,
reciprocity and social capital. Instead of formal position, the exercise of power rests on the positions held by individual actors, and control is exercised by means of gossip and rumors. The relations that constitute a network are embedded in other social relations (Granovetter 1985) and the boundaries of a network are therefore often blurred, which means that who belongs to a network is not decided upon, but rather it is latent (Ahrne 1994; Ahrne and Brunsson 2011).

Unlike institutions and networks, organizations constitute a decided order with well-defined boundaries. Certain elements are fundamental to this dimension of social order, namely: decided membership, hierarchy, rules, monitoring and sanctions (Ahrne and Brunsson 2011). Upholding these elements defines a complete organization (Ahrne and Brunsson 2011). Whereas in complete organizations all the elements of organization can be identified, partial organization is based on the presence of only one or few of these elements. Like complete organization, there are many forms of partial organization which consist of various incomplete combinations of organizational elements.

According to Ahrne (1994:17) the core of all organization is a set of collective resources that is produced, maintained and used by affiliates of the organization. The reason affiliates come back to the organization is that they have some interest in these resources; they need them and want them. These resources can be material as well as immaterial. Affiliation to a complete organization is manifested through formal membership; thus, we can say that membership constitutes the decisive aspect of the affiliation element. Membership embodies a combination of individual motives and collective objectives. While institutional boundaries are fluid, organizational expectations are crystallized in the form of formal rules. Complete organizations also have a formal hierarchy based on positions, in contrast to the status and roles that constitute the fundamental power elements in institutions. Unlike institutions, where control takes place implicitly and is enforced by respect or scorn, organizations need to monitor and control that their rules are followed in order to sanction their members. In organizations, sanctions are not restricted to punishment for breaking rules, but are also a tool for measuring performance and rewarding positive actions. Interaction within organizations is therefore essential to the maintenance of all of the elements (Ahrne 1994; Ahrne and Brunsson 2011).

The three dimensions outlined above (institutions, organizations and networks) are intertwined in the same social reality, such that no one dimension can arise in isolation

| Elements        | Dimension     | Institution | Organization | Network                                                  |
|-----------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Affiliation     | Symbolic      | Membership  | Acquaintances, contacts |
| Expectations    | Norms, traditions | Rules      | Habits        |
| Power           | Status, roles, honor | Hierarchy  | Reciprocity, centrality, or strategic position |
| Control         | Prejudices    | Monitoring  | Gossip, rumor, information |
| Consequences    | Respect, scorn | Sanctions (grades, prizes, exclusion, bonuses) | Ignoring, invitation, bullying |

(pure, impure)
from the others. For example, organizations rely to a varying degree on institutional conceptions and networks in order to exist; at the same time, institutional conceptions are manifested in the degree of organization (Ahrne 1994, 2014; Ahrne et al. 2008).

Data and methods

Instances of criminal collaboration have been documented in Sweden at least since the 1940s (Centralförbundet för Socialt arbete 1941). However, it is only from the mid-1980s that we see the appearance and development of criminal organizations with intentional visibility, manifested through insignias and marketing activities. This development was particularly obvious in the emergence of the international outlaw motorcycle clubs (OMCs) in the Swedish gang milieu during the early 1990s and the emergence of street gangs in the early 2000s (Rostami and Leinfelt 2012; Rostami et al. 2012).

Despite obvious challenges in organized crime research, such as the refusal by members of organized crime groups to take part in research projects and the reluctance of law enforcement agencies to provide access to data on organized crime (Lombardo 2012), the empirical data for the four case studies examined in this article are based on i) interviews with members of Swedish organized crime groups, and ii) law enforcement data. The empirical data of this study is based on two sources. First, 42 interviews (i), conducted between 2008 and 2016 with members of organized crime groups in Sweden, such as gang leaders, gang members, and other key actors (facilitators). The first author of this study has been a police officer with the Swedish Police, and his field experience and insight on membership in organized crime groups guided the selection of interview participants. The interviews have an in-depth, semi-structured design, and focused on specific themes such as organizational activities and entry to and desistance from crime, thus providing us with unique insights into the organizing dynamics of our four cases. Some interviews were transcribed \((n = 22)\), others were not since the respondents did not give their consent for the interviews to be recorded and therefore interview notes were taken. The respondents were identified out of the Police intelligence files. The respondents were approached either directly or through gatekeepers. The latter could be police officers or social interveners with good reputation among gang members, or it could be members of criminal organizations who after the interview facilitated contact to other members. Interviews were conducted wherever it was most convenient for the participants.

Second, approximately 730 police and judicial documents (ii) such as intelligence documents, police protocols and court judgments relating to organized crime in Sweden were collected. The data were pre-categorized by the Swedish law enforcement agency under designated classification scheme such as outlaw motorcycle-gangs, street-gangs (which is labeled as suburban gangs), crime networks or projects and operational code name. The pre-categorization is done when the police register files for different cases such as police operations and or intelligence files. The Swedish police use consequently a category classification scheme, which our material is based on.

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2 This author is currently on leave from the Swedish Police.
3 Open-source material (e.g. public websites of gangs, e.g. Hells Angels’ official website, statements by officials published in newspapers) was used as a complementary source to our main data, but not part of the thematic analysis.
The four cases were selected for ease of access to data and because they have received a great amount of attention and are category-defining examples for the Swedish crime context. Our four cases are: the Syriac mafia, the Hells Angels MC Sweden, the street gang Werewolf Legion, and the Hallunda robbery.

The Syriac mafia as the main institutionalized crime organization in Sweden, Hells Angels MC as the most dominating outlaw biker gang in Sweden (as well as in the Nordic countries in general), Werewolf legion as one, if not the first, of the visible street-gangs in Sweden, and the Hallunda robbery is one of the most spectacular robberies in modern Swedish criminal history. Convenience sampling, accordingly, is the method adopted for this study. The sampling over different categories of organizations is intended to maximize variation in the data while making it representative for the application of the theory of partial organization.

There are other conceivable examples within these categories (e.g. the Outlaw Motorcycle Club Bandidos MC, the street gang Black Cobra and the Arlanda Robbery, to name a few) that could have been selected. Also, while we are confident to have captured the most important typical categories of organized crime in contemporary Sweden, we do not cover the whole spectrum. As an example, it seems that recent developments in Swedish gangs bring to the fore a new phenomenon in which gangs put less emphasis on insignia and are more project-based and network-oriented. This would suggest a hybrid category between gang and project collaboration. However, more field observation and documentation is needed before we can assess this development.

We have conducted a thematic content analysis on the material. Keywords based on cases under study and theoretical elements which is based on the elements of partial organization theory, were systematically searched and identified. The analysis was thematic in order to identify and interpret the underlying context of the documents since the police data are not always explicit. For example, central position, key or leading individuals are more frequently used labels in intelligence files than “membership”. The same procedures were conducted on the interview material. Each interview was analyzed based on the theoretical elements.

These rich data allow us to understand criminal organizing from different perspectives, both from the point of view of those who organized these collaborations, and from the point of view of those who work to combat them. As Rostami and Mondani (2015) show for the case of a criminal gang, intelligence-led policing and other forms of data collection on criminal collaboration suffer from a number of biases that have to be considered. We believe the use of multiple data sources adds to the reliability and validity of our data. In the next section we present the analysis of our cases by describing their membership, hierarchy and rules, monitoring and sanctions (Ahrne and Brunsson 2011), and their fundamental collective resources (Ahrne 1994).

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4 Sweden has no equivalent to the Certificate of Confidentiality (CoC)—which allows researchers to refuse to disclose the names or other identifying characteristics of research subjects in response to legal demands. Therefore, in each instance, we have obtained informed consent from our respondents and explained the rules for breaking confidentiality in cases where reporting is mandatory. We have also applied ethical vetting in accordance with the Act Concerning the Ethical Review of Research Involving Humans (2003:460) for the parts of the research that involve matching different datasets, and approval has been received from the ethics review board in Stockholm.
Results

Case I: The Syriac mafia

Mafia-like organizations are typically characterized as behavioral patterns embedded in community traditions and family ties (Europol 2013; Gambetta 1993). Family is broader in its implications than blood ties (Paoli 2003). The behavioral patterns of these organizations constitute the basis for hierarchies, formal rules and monitoring via repeated ceremonial interactions. The organizations have a strong identity grounded in territorial boundaries, which capitalizes on local traditions and myths (Dickie 2004, 2013; Gambetta 1993).

In Sweden, the Syriac Mafia in Södertälje and Botkyrka, two municipalities south of Stockholm, has been labeled as a mafia and has been described as having the characteristics of a mafia-like organization (Gunnarson and Rostami 2017). In September 2014, the Svea Court of Appeal in Stockholm confirmed the existence of a criminal organization in Södertälje that is devoted to criminal activities such as illegal gambling, extortion, and violence. Police operations and trials have revealed an extensive power structure that reaches into the political and welfare sectors of the municipalities they operate in (Polismyndigheten 2015a; Södertälje Tingsrätt 2012; 2014). However, it is important to emphasize that despite its label—and similarly to the Italian, Russian, Japanese, Chechen, Albanian, or Turkish mafia—it does not imply that members of the Syriac community are involved in criminal activities, share its interests, or that all those individuals who identify themselves as Syriac are accepting or legitimizing criminal activities. On the contrary, there is active efforts by the community to prevent the influence of these organizations (Polismyndigheten 2015b).

Membership

The analysis of our data, and the police analysis, suggest that membership in the Syriac mafia rests on three components: family ties, ethno-religious identity and the Church. Families can be described as clans rather than nuclear families. These families, in turn, identify themselves as parts of a larger clan with a geographically bounded identity. To be clear, direct blood relationships or ethnic identification are not a sufficient condition for membership; instead, they are a necessary component for acceptance into the

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5 Länstidningen 2 april 2011, “Maffian styr Södertälje” accessed 18 May 2018 at http://www.lt.se/stockholm/sodertalje/maffian-styr-i-sodertalje and Sveriges Radio 12 september 2013” Åklagarkritik mot tingsrätten som inte sparat förhör från knarkrättegång” accessed 18 May 2018 at http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=94&artikel=5644214

6 Quote from respondent: “With us the family, the clan goes before anything else”. Another respondent described: “Certainly the family comes before everything, the family is the most important, and you stick to the family, but we do not take orders from someone just because they have a lot of money [belonging to the same family].”

7 The Swedish police states in its files: "These individuals were linked by ethnicity and kinship, and by a shared environment growing up. [...] Individuals from the criminal sphere [Södertälje] had taken part in political assemblies where they gained access to political committees and boards with influence and authority. Since a few years back, it was seen [by the police] that large sums [money] which derived from criminally obtained capital had been reinvested in legal activities.”
organized enterprise (Polismyndigheten 2012; Södertälje Tingsrätt 2012; 2014). At the same time, there are no clear-cut formal entrance requirements or initiation rituals; rather, by accepting existing hierarchies and contributing to the maintenance of the organization, members acquire career opportunities (see section on collective resources). The ethno-religious component of membership revolves around the concept of Syriac as a single people, a single religion and a single Church. Identity is built upon a common ancestry in the Aramaic civilization and through this a link to Jesus and to the Syriac Church (Syrianska-Arameiska Ungdomsförbundet 2015).

Syriac is an ethno-religious identity that emphasizes religious homogeneity and unity, with the Syriac Orthodox Church as the central marker of identity. This means that the Church as an organization has a unique position among those who identify themselves as Syriac in that it may intervene in the individual’s private sphere. The Church is not merely a religious gathering point, but operates as an administrative unit that offers a variety of services to its members. It assists with the administration of justice, mediates conflicts and performs religious or economic services such as baptism, weddings and providing loans (Polismyndigheten 2012, 2015a; Södertälje Tingsrätt 2012).

A combination of religious and service-based mechanisms allows the Church to penetrate various arenas, and plays a central role in the coordination, rationalization, and legitimation of activities and, over the longer term, also in the identity formation of the Syriac mafia. Religious values and institutional conceptions, like the Sayfo – the genocide of Syriac Christians in the early twentieth century – are used to attract, unite and coordinate the Syriac mafia and its activities. With the Church’s blessing, organizational representatives gain legitimacy and status while at the same time getting the opportunity to monitor the broader local community through ceremonies and rites (Polismyndigheten 2015a).

8 As an example, the Södertälje District Court states in its court statement on a homicide where seventeen people were prosecuted and sentenced for murder, attempted murder, kidnapping, extortion, and abuse of judicial procedures that: “[...] the Syriac/Assyrian community has largely created a completely paperless financial system, where you borrow from each other and make arrangements for payment of the debt through mediation. Conflicts are also solved through mediation or otherwise without the interference of the authorities or the police. The investigation shows that contact with the police in several cases has resulted in that these persons had to leave Södertälje for good and [...] the Christian Church has a significant role and it is often in “the Church” internal problems are solved and contacts are maintained” (Södertälje Tingsrätt 2012:80).

9 Quote from respondent: “The church in the home country was really poor. The church did not have the role it has in Sweden, where it gets involved in people’s business. You look up to the priest and the church because you have been oppressed. You have had the church as a unifying point. Now they have built empire […] the church, the TV-channel, the football team, the newspaper. We have been oppressed [and therefore] we are protecting each other, looking for a priest to mediate […] you feel the shame when you go out the box. You want to keep together. […] People have tried to break down between people, but the Church does not want because it will lose a lot of power. First and foremost, economically. Position. This development did not exist in our home country because we lived in the Muslim country [were oppressed] and had to hold together.”

10 Quote from respondent: “The power sphere has moved away from associations, from National Federations and more and more turned to the political field, but not least of all, the Church. The church, which has now, can say this, directly and indirectly, where power is accumulated.”
Hierarchy and rules

Hierarchy in the Syriac mafia rests upon three embedded dimensions: first, status within the kinship structure of each family; second, the position of power occupied by individuals in various social institutions within the local community, in combination with the position of the family relative to other families; and finally, the ability of individuals who possess resources that are considered strategic by the organization to attain higher positions. These resources may include political positions or means of violence. The way in which the mafia is organized around family means that meetings among members become a natural part of their daily lives and of the organization itself, which in turn creates a form of self-monitoring.

The families in the Syriac mafia have board meetings, and also a council of elders where leaders from each family meet to resolve common problems, not uncommonly with the participation of a representative of the Church. Hierarchy is not strictly based on age, and status is provided by different forms of capital that can confer influence. Each family negotiates specific areas of operation, such as chairmanship in the Church, the local football club, TV-stations, the entertainment industry and politics. Positions are rotated within the families, since this is viewed as being necessary in order to maintain the balance of power, and in exceptional cases, when the opportunity arises (e.g., when someone loses a political position or is arrested) one family can take over operations from another family.

The process by which power is balanced and negotiated is not based on formalized rules, but is rather institutionalized around the organizational dynamics of the families. The organizational career within the organization does not depend entirely on traditional values and status within the family hierarchy, such as may be associated with age. Occasionally, young members possessing a valuable resource (e.g., political position or means of violence) can climb the hierarchical ladder.

Despite being a male-dominated organization, women play an important part. They are instrumental in setting up legal companies and boards and, occasionally, they are employed in the public sector (Södertälje Tingsrätt 2014). As an example, the main suspect and later convicted in one of the larger serious fraud cases in relation to publicly financed elderly care was a former female local politician and member of one of the main families (Polismyndighet 2013).

Monitoring and sanctions

Monitoring and sanctions within the Syriac mafia are partly institutionalized in daily-life and ceremonial interactions. Control, monitoring and sanctions are linked together in a [11] Quote from respondent: “[...] authority is extremely important. The priest, [ ...], the leader, he preaches on several languages. Well trained. Even Swedish education. It gives great authority. Clan leaders have automatically gained respect because of their economy. They have many employees and automatically makes people bow. Age still have respect. First age then money. Everyone wants status. We do not express who is in charge since everyone wants the status, everyone wants to be in charge, by not expressing it, everyone can get along.”

[12] Quote from respondent: “They have divided up the balance of power. [...] Briefly. If we say that this [one of the families in control] says so: “Okay. Let us have control over the church and you get control of the National Association and organizations. Or will you take over the mall in [...] we take over the church administration and management of the properties in Södertälje? Or, you take over our television channel [...] so we take the Central Board, that is. It is a real horse-trading.”
chain of relations and emotional bonds that increase the cost of deviant behavior (e.g. collaborating with the justice system or with competitors). The stability of the organization is strengthened by access to sources of social bonding (e.g., love, kinship, friendship).

Monitoring takes place in different contexts, such as dinners, religious services, board meetings and other ceremonies such as baptisms and weddings. Gifts to the Church, the local football club, relatives or a couple getting married become markers of loyalty and may lead to subsequent rewards in the form of a better position in the organization. For example, our respondents say that ceremonies include a special “gift moment,” when a list of all the gifts that have been given is read out loud and duly noted, so as to manifest loyalty to the whole community. Each member of the parish must buy something in Church (candles, benches, etc.). In turn, these investments affect a person’s hierarchical position and their potential to become a part of the organization’s collective resources.13

Participation and visibility at ceremonies and rites is not only important for monitoring and as a marker of loyalty; it also creates an ideological context that has bearing for both affiliation and access to collective resources. This does not mean that direct control does not exist, however; for example, formal meetings between heads of families occur on a regular basis, particularly when conflicts and power-sharing deals need to be negotiated. There are also concrete sanctions in the form of threats and acts of violence. Direct rewards are also given in the form of money for, among other things, successful murder assignments (Södertälje Tingsrätt 2012). Sanctions may also take the form of social or physical exclusion or ostracism from the organization and the community, oppression, rumor, and defamation.

Collective resources

Each “family” in the Syriac mafia possesses a set of strategic resources of various kinds, such as financial, political and religious influence. Each family has the capacity to carry out violent acts, both with its own resources and those of other families. The accumulation of these resources constitutes a capital of violence that is managed by each family. The capital of violence is also effective in eliminating free-riders. There are cases where individuals have tried to profit from the organization’s trademark, resulting in retaliation. Finally, there is an accumulation of resources at the level of the organization, where resources are pooled together for use in common objectives (Finansinspektionen 2014).

The creation and use of collective resources is facilitated by piggybacking on existing institutions, such as political parties, the Church board, cultural and entertainment associations and financial services (Polismyndigheten 2012, 2015b; Södertälje Tingsrätt 2013).

The establishment and allocation of executive positions on the Church council is critical to the Syriac mafia’s collective resources. Apart from conferring higher status, and therefore a higher position in the community hierarchy, these positions also provide access to economic resources. For example, ceremonies like weddings, birthdays, baptisms and concerts, apart from providing networking opportunities, enable criminals to

13 Quote from respondent: “As an example, the priest welcomes [NN] when everyone has sat down for church service in an attempt to display his special status. […] If you do not attend the church services or change your church [affiliation] then everyone knows that you have taken a stand, that you don’t want to be part of this.”
“fence” goods such as smuggled alcohol, meat and other goods that have been acquired illegally. The organization of events is also dependent on suppliers who arrange wedding cakes, party clothes, photography, music, flowers, etc. These operations demand extensive logistics and the coordination of various resources. These large-scale cash-oriented events generate opportunities to create and reproduce dependency between arenas under the influence of the Syriac mafia and the rest of the businesses community.

The gift industry, dependency relationships, control of the Church as a gathering place and parasitical relationships with existing institutions create the prerequisites for political infiltration. The bishop’s blessing may persuade the parish to vote for preselected candidates, who then acquire political power and develop status within the organization. Elected candidates may occupy important municipal positions, such as chairman of the committee that manages construction projects. Members who are elected to parliament confer status and demonstrate that the organization has penetrated the highest legislative bodies. At the same time, these members work actively on issues that strengthen their own operations, such as establishing a church tax in the parish or influencing the inspection of imported cars.

The descriptions of the Syriac mafia organization found in court documents portray a segmentary system—in contrast to an organization—functions using existing arenas and creating new ones for services and goods. Members of this segmentary system then occupy these arenas. In turn, these arenas create an industry over which they obtain a monopoly by means of its acquired influential positions and its capital of violence (Södertälje Tingsrätt 2012, 2013).

Case II The street gang Werewolf legion

The Swedish gang development has been associated mostly with outlaw motorcycle gangs. However, in the early 2000s, new gangs emerged which later became categorized as streets gangs (Rostami et al. 2012). Three gangs exemplify the development of street gangs in Sweden: The Original Gangsters (Gothenburg 1993), Werewolf Legion (Stockholm 2006) and Black Cobra (Malmö 2008). Our case, the Werewolf Legion, emerged first as a prison gang in the prison facility of Tidaholm when a group of friends who together served time in prison created a “brotherhood” to protect themselves inside the prison.

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14 As an example, the prosecutor stated in a case against the organization: “The business has been primarily focused on wedding parties but the parties have also been arranged in conjunction with other gatherings, such as New Year’s celebrations, baptisms, etc. Not infrequently, it has been a matter of hundreds of guests. As for the wedding festivities, among some of the guests there has been a tradition of giving the wedded couple gift in cash. They usually have large amounts of cash which has made it easy to cheat and to keep revenues outside the accounts. [...] Customers have generally requested a “whole package” and the company has collaborated with various service providers; including the flowers [florist] and photo services [photographers] (Södertälje Tingsrätt 2013:6–8).

15 Quote from respondent: “There is a negotiation on voters and positions. [...] Politics is a tool for keeping and maintaining power in the community.”

16 Quote from respondent: “Boarding membership are very important [such as in the] Church and football clubs. They do not give away their position. The interact [power sharing and strengthening] is through these positions. How should we increase our income? How should we keep together? That’s the biggest problem. It’s the shame that keeps them together [people with symbolic high legal-formal to street affiliates] and that they protect our interests. Like a kind of army. It is our military defense. We want a city without Muslims. If there is war, then this force will defend. If there are problems with Muslims, they will defend us.”
When the leader of the “brotherhood” and another high-ranking member were released, they founded the WL outside of prison. These two individuals came from different suburbs in Stockholm, and together with several friends whom they had grown up with, they started the street gang WL in southern Stockholm in 2006.\textsuperscript{17} At its peak, the gang consisted of 31 full members and a network of 280 co-offenders (Rostami and Mondani 2015). The WL entered a declining phase in 2012 after several police operations and internal disputes (Polismyndigheten 2009).

\textit{Membership}

Although the WL is a gang with explicit insignias and formal membership rules, members describe the gang first and foremost as a “family”. This “family” consists of people with strong friendship ties prior to joining, either because they lived together, had been schoolmates or because they had spent time in the same prisons.\textsuperscript{18} They share local institutional norms and a cultural territorial affiliation. Formal acceptance in the gang confers status, especially on full members, and other relationships become secondary, including biological family relationships.

Notions of solidarity become the invisible glue holding the family together, with conceptions about brotherhood and fatherhood being placed in the foreground. This solidarity becomes a kind of alternative familial connection, and each member takes care of his brothers. Members see themselves as the antithesis to both commercialized motorcycle gangs and kinship-based mafias.\textsuperscript{19} The organization is an artificial, substitute family for all those lone wolves who do not have relatives, the state or socio-economic status to rest upon. Membership is characterized by a strong sense of unity. The connection with the local community is tight, and this local identity is expressed through (among other things) music, graffiti and tattoos.

\textit{Hierarchy and rules}

Although the gang is portrayed as a “family”, this does not mean that the WL has no formal rules or hierarchy. The existence of formal rules and a bureaucracy may be seen as an adaptation to existing norms within the gang milieu, where organizational bureaucracy is seen as a strength with the standard in this

\textsuperscript{17} Quote from respondent: “Prison gang is the foundation of this [WL]. Nothing more. A prison gang and a suburban gang.”

\textsuperscript{18} Quote from respondent: “We started to build it in our way. […] You picked your own childhood friends. Come come come Then people came.”

\textsuperscript{19} A respondent described the difference between Werewolf Legion and Outlaw biker gangs as: “You call him brother, you throw away and tell him to clean up your beer that you have thrown, and you call him your brother. Why? If that’s your brother, you should wipe it up there for him. Put it in the trash and say ‘here, I’ll help you clean up’. We all should help him clean up. He will not stand by and clean yourself there. It’s family. Do you get it? We should not get dirty, and he will clean up after us. We all clean up together. Not more than that. You have learned, everyone eats together. You should not sit and eat here while he was watching. Fuck you. I have a million. Do you need money? Here, take half a million.”
regard having been set by established outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMCGs). The formal rules of the WL resembles an organization’s “code of ethics” which outlines a set of principles like the “family before everything and never talk about the family’s activities to anybody outside the family”. Even if it regulates the relationship between the group and its members it is not as comprehensive as the bylaws of most OMCGs, and most of the decision making is less formal than that of the OMCGs.

There are four levels of formal hierarchy through which new members may be accepted as authorized by the leadership. However, a member’s pre-existing role in friendship circles influences the individual’s formal position in the gang. When the gang was founded, the hierarchical structure consisted of a president and a vice-president. However, due to an internal conflict, the members removed the president, and a council governed by three “generals” took its place. Each general had subordinates called captains (team leaders), who in their turn ruled over the so-called soldiers (regular members) and other associates. New members must be introduced by an active member, and the individual who introduces a new member has full responsibility for the newcomer. One criterion for introducing new members is that the candidates must have previous experience of co-offending with an active member or that they have served time in prison together. The WL has also started a subgroup called the “Young Pirates” to initiate young prospects (Werewolf Legion 2007, 2009a).

Internal hierarchical competition is limited, and as long as they concern original members, internal conflicts are resolved in order to preserve the community as a brotherhood. Competition is mostly oriented toward external conflicts. Thus, much of the decision-making and division of labor rests on some form of “adhocracy”.

**Monitoring and sanctions**

The WL does not have formal or fixed gang clubs. Meetings may be held on the street and in squares, pubs and members’ homes and periodically apartments have been rented for gang parties. Monitoring takes place through informal interaction, with each member manifesting commitment to the group...
by being available to the others and by being seen together, they demonstrate unity and monitor one another. Loyalty is measured in terms of the time and resources that are devoted to the gang, and the relationship among members might almost be conceptualized as “living close to each other”. Loyalty is also manifested through the use of violence against others. Monitoring and sanctions in the WL are characterized by unobtrusive control (see Perrow 1986 for discussion on unobtrusive control), with the prerequisites for gang unity being enforced by means of routines and rules stemming from local institutional norms about “the street”. Absence and failure to be visible may lead to sanctions in the form of repudiation, and finally expulsion from the community, coupled with both economic and physical punishment.

Finally, since many of the relationships within the gang have arisen from friendship circles and the leadership is centered around few members, hierarchical changes and sanctioning are not formalized (besides leaving the gang or doing activities with outsiders, see the WL rules in footnote 20). In order to uphold organizing of the gang, members are sanctioned positively by being allowed to create their own crew and in that way gain influence and more economic rewards from illegal activities carried out collectively.

Collective resources

The Werewolf Legion was formed in response to an unsafe and hostile environment populated by other gangs, and members’ perceptions of a lack of social opportunities. Because gang members were threatened by a hostile environment, social bonds between them were strengthened, and violence played an important role as a marker of loyalty and identification. As a result, violence fulfills a central function for the organization.

The Werewolf Legion’s criminal activity pattern is characterized by so-called “cafeteria-style offences”, with members engaging in a range of types of crime. One of the resources available to the organization is skills in the form of “street capital.” This means that the gang operates within territorially bounded areas and engages in traditional criminality (see criminal activity pattern of the Werewolf Legion in Rostami and Mondani 2015 and Rostami et al. 2012).

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23 Quote from respondent: “Everyone was together. As a fat mess. Q: Did you do a lot together? [...] A: Everything. You isolate yourself from everyone else. There, there is no other room for others. Do you understand?”

24 Quote from respondent: “It is not enough to mug someone, you beat him roughly, it’s a statement that you exist, others know that you are, your friends know what you are going for.”

25 Quote from correspondence between gang members confiscated by the law enforcement: “Everyone received a warning [and] all came down a position [degrades] it was [NN] and [NN]’s idea. I was very angry, everyone came down a position, who was captains and I was a captain but [NN] and [NN] keep their positions. Why are they better than me? No, absolutely not, I’ve always been there for the family never hesitated. [...] [NN] banned me from Jordbro [suburb in Stockholm] because I knock out too many people” (Werewolf Legion 2008).

26 Quote from respondent: [...] only reason the gang started was because people wanted to work. Then also, you know, you’re always guaranteed. For the problem is that we could be childhood friends, but if you are there for me, you must always ensure that you are there for me. When things come [problems], it does not matter whether you want to or not. It is your [member’s] responsibility to be there for me [for the gang]. So, that way, you got always a guarantee that there is always someone who will be there for you, when you are out [prison]. Someone will take care of things for you on the side.”
Thus, the organization’s collective resources consist of the sum of its members’ skills. It capitalizes on the use of their individual resources for the common good. Collective resources are expressed through territorial claims and gang symbols woven into a common, recognizable identity, for example in the form of permanent spectacular tattoos that demonstrate life-long commitment. Collective capacity is directed mainly toward the optimization of resources to achieve increased collective resistance and criminal potential.

**Case III: The outlaw motorcycle club the hells angels MC Sweden**

Even though Sweden has traditionally had a vital biker culture (Grundvall 2005; Lagergren 1999), the Swedish biker milieu witnessed a change with the entrance of the international outlaw motorcycle clubs (OMC), such as increased violent competition between OMCs which reached its peak with the Great Nordic Biker War between 1994 and 1997 (Brå 1999; Klement 2016).

Among OMCs, both in Sweden and internationally, the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club (HAMC) stands out. Because of its size, history, organization and strong trademark, the HAMC is not only category-defining for clubs within the outlaw sphere; it also serves as a role model for other types of gangs in Sweden (Rostami 2013). During the past sixty years, the HAMC has developed from a local organization into a mega-organization represented in around 56 countries and claiming as many as 5000 members divided among more than 400 so-called “charters” (Hells Angels Motorcycle Corporation 2017; Rikskriminalpolisen 2012). Until 1961, the HAMC was based in California. The first charter outside California was established in Auckland, New Zealand in 1961. The first European charter was established in Great Britain in 1969, and Sweden got its first charter in 1993 (Lavigne 2011). Sweden currently has 14 charters, from Luleå in the north of the country to Malmö in the south (Hells Angels MC Sweden 2017; Rikskriminalpolisen 2012). Our data show 698 full members within the HAMC organizational sphere, of whom 207 are full members in HAMC Sweden.

**Membership**

Membership in the HAMC is seen as a lifelong commitment to the club, its identity and lifestyle. A constant socialization process takes place within the organization, comprising activities designed to integrate members into the group’s culture. 27 Membership is voluntary and strictly regulated, and is based on a contract between the organization and each registered member (Hells Angels MC 2007).

Membership within the organization entails formal requirements and takes place in steps that ensure that both the HAMC and the individual are making the right choice. Probationary members are socialized gradually as they renounce their private attachments and prove their loyalty to the organization. 28 Both initiation and termination are

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27 Quote from the bylaws of the Red and White Crew: “Come to parties and other organized events. These are often arranged for us to know each other, so it is both duty and pleasure to attend.”

28 Quote from a respondent: “As a new [associate] in the organization, you need to read about the club. You must read about its history. You need to put 95% of your time for the club, 3% for the family, and 2% on our girl. […] As new prospect we had to sit and watch old YouTube clips about the organization’s [Hells Angels] history, how we got where we are, old news clips about the organization and [the gang leader] went around and kept telling us all the time that we are the greatest and finest [motorcycle gangs]. It’s like brainwashing.”
formally regulated in terms of levels and consequences. Membership is closed and not bounded in time.

Leaving the organization is similarly regulated and sanctioned, but is not as voluntary as entry. It is up to the organization to decide who can leave the HAMC without further consequences. People leaving without authorization are labelled as being “Out in bad standing”, and any member may punish such a person with fines or violence (Polismyndigheten 2010). Leaving the organization “Left in good standing”, on the other hand, means that the former member may maintain contact with the organization without punishment.29

Other established motorcycle clubs may also seek to join the organization, which involves a similarly hierarchical initiation process: friendship clubs, hangarounds, prospective members and full members. The organization also has “supporters”, independent motorcycle clubs, gangs and other groups with their own insignias that are not directly affiliated with the HAMC. Loyalty is shown by “bearing” the HAMC’s “colors” in their insignia.30 Before the HAMC emerged in Sweden, an association called the “Stockholm model” (Stockholmsmodellen), which later became the “Sweden model” (Sverigemodellen), was created, whereby biker clubs could exchange information and coordinate biker events. The task of this association was and still is to regulate the basic requirements for what constitutes a “motorcycle club” and the use of insignias to avoid conflicts of interest. However, this association has become a tool for the HAMC to monitor other clubs and recruit new members (Polismyndigheten 2015c).31 The goal is to organize all motorcycle clubs under the leadership of the HAMC, in return allowing clubs to become part of the organization’s collective resources, both through recruitment and by providing space for organizational activities. The Swedish model and the HAMC are similar in terms of bureaucracy, with formal rules for membership, operations and meetings (Sverigemodellen 2011).

Hierarchy and rules

The size of the organization and its diffusion has resulted in a flat organization with a clear regional and local hierarchical leadership structure, with people assigned to specific areas of responsibility. The organization is held together by formal rules and strict meeting procedures at the local, national, continental and international levels, which are binding for all clubs. It is at meetings held at the local, national, continental and international levels that comprehensive guidelines, rules and strategic decisions, called bylaws, are adopted.

29 Quote from the bylaws of the Hells Angels MC: “Left: Shall write ‘Left’ and date visible on all the tattoos. Can still visit the milieu […] OUT: Must have covered all tattoos. Cannot visit the milieu and cannot have any contact with HAMC” (Hells Angels MC 2005).
30 Quote from the bylaws of the Red Devils MC: “(1) We are the official supporters club of the Hells Angels. (2) All members shall support the Hells Angels. (3) Hells Angels approves new chapters and has the right to create new ones in consultations with the Red Devils” (Red Devils MC 2003).
31 “Sverigemodellen [Swedish model] is an organization created by the Hells Angels MC during their early establishment period, in order to take control of the milieu and creating a base for recruitment” (Polismyndigheten 2015c:28).
The hierarchy in the Hells Angels consists of full members, prospects, hangarounds and supporters. Full members who have specific areas of responsibility are called officers. Each membership level has formal rules. These hierarchical levels are not just individual-based, but apply at the club level as well. This means that there are hangaround clubs and full member clubs within the organization.

Each club (“charter”) must have a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and road captain (the road captain is not an officer). The president is the club’s highest leader, and is elected by the members of the club. Decisions within the club are made by members, each having one vote, but in case of disagreement the president casts the deciding vote. Each club also has a vice-president who is the president’s deputy and his sounding board. The secretary exists as a function at the club, national, European and international levels, and has the task of taking the minutes at meetings, maintaining member lists, recording motions and election results and distributing this information (Rikskriminalpolisen 2012). The treasurer is responsible for the club’s budget, the collection of membership fees and the payment of bills. Another mandatory function is the sergeant-at-arms, whose main role is to enforce internal rules within the club and to take responsibility for the monitoring and sanctioning of club members. Sergeants-at-arms from different clubs meet regularly to discuss security issues in the organization (Rikskriminalpolisen 2012).

Similar hierarchical divisions exist in the organizations that are directly connected to HAMC Sweden, including motorcycle clubs like the Red Devils MC, and other supporter clubs and gangs like the Red and White Crew. The names and functions may look different, but the bureaucratic meeting procedure is similar to that of the HAMC, and organizations like the Red and White Crew must send meetings minutes and obtain authorization for all the decisions made by the club in accordance with the HAMC charter to which they are formally affiliated (Red and White Crew 2009). The hierarchy of the HAMC is based on a set of formal rules that are stipulated in the form of detailed expectations and membership requirements. The organization has a “constitution” called the Constitutional World Rules, which is a compendium of the organization’s rules and regulations. The Constitutional World Rules are supplemented with bylaws regulating specific functions (Lavigne 2011; Rikskriminalpolisen 2012).

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32 Quote from the bylaws of the Hells Angels MC Sweden: “2:6§ At least 2 years’ period of hangaround/prospect to become a member. To become a member requires a prospect time at least 1 year, according to the World Rule” (Hells Angels MC 2005).

33 Quote from a respondent: “There are five officers [mandatory in each club]. President. Vice president Sgt. [Sergeant at Arms] Secretary and Treasurer. Vice President is not the police he is the president’s sounding board. Sgt is the police in the club. Under threat or war, the words of Sgt are the law. [...] All officer positions are voted at the annual meeting. [...] To start a chapter, you must be six members. But not get the club frozen [lay down the club] at least five members is needed. [...] Road Captain cannot appear for the club [chapters] at officers’ meeting [S.O.M].”

34 Quote from the bylaws of the Hells Angels MC Gothenburg: “4:5§ A new proposal must be approved by two thirds of all members in Sweden before it takes effect. Alternative a united S.O.M [Swedish Officers Meet] can approve a proposal” (Hells Angels 2005).

35 Quote from the bylaws of the Red and White Crew: R & W Crew shall meet once a week. All Crew members must attend meetings and absence must be notified. All members [full] and probationary members of the R & W Crew has one vote, however, all decisions must be approved by HA [Hells Angels] (HA always has a veto). When the crew chapters open in the area where there is no existing chapter it must be approved by the HA [...]” (Red and White Crew 2009).
Monitoring and control

Monitoring through attendance lies at the core of the HAMC’s control of its members (Hells Angels MC Hells Angels 2010; Red and White Crew 2009; Red Devils MC 2003). The organization has a strict procedure for regular meetings, which individual clubs must follow, and which is overseen by the national level by the recording of minutes and their collection by a club that has been assigned this task.\(^{36}\) There are no strict rules for assigning this responsibility; it can be a matter of competence, resources or of trust in a particular member or club.

Representatives from the different clubs meet regularly at national, European and international meetings called “officer meetings”. At these meetings, representatives discuss current motions and high-level decisions.\(^{37}\) The regulations and rules make it very clear those meetings are very important in themselves (Hells Angels MC Hells Angels 2010; Red and White Crew 2009; Red Devils MC 2003).\(^{38}\)

The basic idea of the HAMC is to be a representative organization with the principle of one member, one vote. A large part of the decision-making process takes place locally. Each charter is autonomous with respect to daily activities. The local autonomy of the Hells Angels is central to organizational governance (Hells Angels MC Hells Angels 2010; Red Devils MC 2003; Rikskriminalpolisen 2012). The management of internal and external conflicts, press releases, and entering and leaving the organization are all examples of areas of responsibility where decision-making requires unanimous agreement (Hells Angels MC Hells Angels 2010).

Monitoring in the HAMC is built around a set of bylaws, meetings and direct control through inspections. Monitoring is accomplished by means of strict rules of conduct, especially in relation to informing the authorities (snitching), rituals, the meeting structure, documentation, regulations, the registration of members and opponents such as police officers and other organizations, unannounced inspections of individual clubs and meetings for the purposes of control and socialization. For example, members may be rewarded for their loyalty by being given medals and higher ranks; they may also be punished by means of fines and threats and acts of violence.

The control culture is internalized to such an extent that members control each other voluntarily. In cases where it is not possible to control members directly, for example, when a member is incarcerated, the organization ensures that the member receives financial support through a defense fund, so that he will remain under the influence of the organization and loyal to it. This reduces the risk of collaboration with the authorities or with members of rival gangs; the prospects at the charters of incarcerated

\(^{36}\) Quote from respondent: “Documentation is very important because it shows signs of professionalism. That we are business like. Through this you also want to gain control, have structure of what is happening. You want to have long-time planning.”

\(^{37}\) Quote from the bylaws of the Hells Angels MC Sweden: “4:3§ One member per charter shall attend the EOM [European Officers Meet] and the WOM [World Officers Meet] that is associated with the World Runs. 2 representatives, others are participants. WOM outside Europe is represented by two from Sweden, Sweden secty [Secretary] and [...] or acting representative” (Hells Angels 2005).

\(^{38}\) Quote from respondent: “Clubs are too big today and it’s one of the problems. Keeping together the entire organization. Therefore, they have meetings on meetings. We meet at the club level every week, a national level every month. Then there is an abundance of informal meetings that are of great importance. At these meetings, the thing that is important is discussed. Daily affairs, what is good for the club, tactical decisions and so on.”
members are obliged to visit these members. All members are also obliged to contribute financially to the defense fund (Red and White Crew 2009; Rikskriminalpolisen 2012). The main purpose of the defense fund is to create self-control within the organization. Additionally, the long gradual process of becoming member—hangaround, prospect, full member, officer—also have the function of embedding risk reduction into the organization for increased control over new members and through this prevent infiltrations by law enforcement and rivals. 39

Collective resources

The collective resources of the HAMC include material resources such as clubhouses, money, number of members, access to weapons, and other goods. The collective resources also include immaterial resources such the insignia, which is a copyrighted trademark. Other immaterial resources include the organization’s colors, club history, biker events and road-trips.

Among other things, the trademark (insignia) has an economic and symbolic value, both externally and internally as a unifying and personifying force. The historical heritage and myth-making that surrounds the organization’s origin and evolution is formed in an ongoing process, with the Hells Angels producing its own documentaries, books and communication strategies (Hells Angels MC Hells Angels 2010).

The trademark transforms the organization’s fundamental material resources into an immaterial resource. It is protected by copyright and strict rules of usage and there are strong sanctions for the illegal use of the organization’s name and symbols. For example, each new charter and member must wait for a certificate from the HAMC that gives the members the right to use the trademark. 40 Each individual member must protect and defend the organization’s trademark and colors, irrespective of whether or not they are full members. In each country where the Hells Angels are active, there is a designated person who has the task of ensuring the internal and external protection of the HAMC trademark and of preventing its symbolism from being undermined (Rikskriminalpolisen 2012).

The HAMC has a distribution chain consisting of a number of different companies that sell products and services capitalizing on the organization’s trademark. Like a football club, they sell products such as T-shirts, decals, mugs, etc. The Hells Angels Motorcycle Corporation owns all trademark rights to the Hells Angels insignia and the rights to use the words that belong to the trademark, including Hells Angels, Red & White, Support 81 and Big Red Machine.

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39 Quote from a respondent: Red Devils MC started a few years after the MC war [The Great Nordic Biker War]. There was a great need for new members after the war, while the interest was huge to become a member. It was same period that many clubs in the United States had been infiltrated by the police. By creating an organization that newcomers first had to become a member, the membership process was extended to almost five years. […] This was done because it was assumed that the police did not have the time and resources to spend five years on an infiltrator.

40 Hells Angels motorcycle cooperation property agreement (member sublicense): “[NN] a Member of the HELL’S ANGELS MOTORCYKEL CLUB’s (‘HAMC’) Gothenburg Charter, hereby expressly acknowledge, and agreed with the following terms and conditions: 1. All intellectual properties comprised in whole or in part of the HELL’S ANGELS mark and for the DEATH HEAD log belongs solely and exclusively to Hells Angels Monocycle Corporation (‘HAMC Corp’). This includes, without limitation, those marks listed on Exhibit A hereto” (Hells Angels MC 2007).
Apart from the formal protection of its trademark, the HAMC has a whole range of other media and communications strategies intended to strengthen its profile and image.  

41 HAMC Sweden, for instance, has developed communication strategies focused on how the organization’s image, profile, identity and trademark should be strengthened (Hells Angels MC Hells Angels 2010).

**Case IV The Hallunda robbery**

During the 2000s Sweden witnessed several spectacular and sophisticated robberies, Arlanda (2002), Hallunda (2005) Landvetter (2006), and Västberga (2009). The Hallunda robbery, which took place just after noon on Monday, August 29, 2005 is regarded as one of the most spectacular raids on cash transport vehicles in Swedish history which is one of our cases.

The Hallunda robbery was carried out with military precision, and it involved a complex coordination of activities (Polismyndigheten 2005a). At 11:34, about half an hour before the robbery in Hallunda (in south-western Stockholm) the robbers organized another robbery against a bank in Skogås (south-eastern Stockholm) to provide a distraction (Polismyndigheten 2005b). A few minutes later, a dozen stolen cars were set on fire, smoke torches were ignited, and chains with spiked metal caltrops were placed in various locations together with loose caltrops. Bags displaying the word “BOMB” were also placed in several locations in town. The intention of these activities was to shut down the main communication pathways to the crime scene, and they succeeded in delaying the responding police, who arrived at the scene of the crime 15 to 20 min after the robbery was over (Polismyndigheten 2007).

**Membership**

The material we have gathered indicates that the project was initiated by three individuals: one was a member of a criminal street gang specializing in “smash and grab” and robbery, and two were specialized in high-value robbery with access to information about cash transport routines.  

42 Two of the three individuals had served sentences for other crimes, and the third was commissioned to develop a similar criminal project, to which the members were added as a result of the skills of these recruits. The Hallunda robbery was shaped by a particular combination of skills. Four people were involved in

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41 Quote from Hells Angels draft proposal of a communication strategy: “We would also like to enjoy the status of membership in both criminal as well as the biker milieu. We know that our brand gives us advantages in most areas and we have no problem with that our image is exaggerated. We would probably like others to see us more as heroes than crazy criminals or wild brains. We would rather like that others feel safe in our presence instead of being afraid. The desired image of us is for the public to respect us as though honorary guys but that they should not step on our toes, that we always help an old lady across the street, and who always knows what is morally right and wrong. It is important for us that women feel extra safe in our presence and we are seen as the nice guys with motorcycles.”

42 Quote from respondent: “All cell-phones for the robbery was handed out by [NN1]. The whole concept came from [NN2]. He may have received it from [NN3] or [NN4]. At the time of the robbery, they were serving prison penalty though. On several occasions, the entire crew was standby to carry out the robbery but it was canceled due to various reasons.”
the main robbery while, according to the police, at least 23 people participated in the project as a whole.\footnote{Quote from the police investigation: “On the robbery crime scene, the police found a cell phone dropped by one of the robbers. Based on this cell phone the police conducted a comprehensive investigation regarding cell phone communication data. The communication investigation has made it possible for the police to detect a robbery “organization” with some 30 cell phones” (Polismyndigheten 2007:6).}

Unlike the other forms of criminal organization that we have presented in this article, where membership is sought voluntarily or is a result of blood bonds, the Hallunda robbery was a project in which people from different organizations came together and actively recruited new members with the competences and skills needed to serve specific functions in a short-term endeavor. Thus, in general, membership is achieved by a form of invitation, and serves to increase the organization’s scope of action and the individual’s resources. At the same time, membership in this form of project organization is strictly linked to a specific task, which means that if one lacks the required skills, it is impossible to become a member of the organization.

New members are mostly recruited from their own respective organizations, but if the required skills cannot be found, members are recruited from external networks, both interpersonal and intergroup. All of the identified members were primarily affiliated with other criminal organizations and participated in this one only until the robbery was carried out.

Hierarchies and rules

This temporary organization was divided into three hierarchical levels. The first level consisted of at least 5–7 people, who were the principal members and had a management function. These individuals had information about how the cash would be transported and how the robbery would be implemented. Having this overview made them the leaders of the organization. The second membership level consisted of at least 9 people, who served as links between the first level and the third level. All members had clearly delineated, specialized tasks associated with the planning and/or implementation of the robbery.

The investigation by the Stockholm County police identified an “organization” with 30 mobile phones that were connected to a command center. Analysis showed that the implementation of the crime involved three hierarchical levels and a “command center” consisting of at least 11 phones (numbers) in one specific geographical location. The “phones” in the command center had contact with “phones” linked to specific tasks associated with the implementation of the robbery. The policelabelled these “team leaders”, who had been allocated, by function, to specific locations and had been given instructions from the command center which were then delegated to other members of the project (Polismyndigheten 2007).

The organization had no formal rules, but was based on a “code of silence” which in simplified terms means that one does not reveal secrets or transmit information to outsiders under any circumstances. Codes of silence involve a self-sanitizing mechanism whereby those who do not comply are punished by means of social or physical exclusion.
Monitoring and sanctions

As with voluntary organizations, membership in criminal projects such as the Hallunda robbery is optional: no one is compelled to participate, and there is congruence between individual motives and organizational goals. This, together with the fact that the organization is temporary, means that opportunities for sanctions are limited. At the same time, rule violations pose a danger to the entire organization. If someone reveals the plans for the robbery, this not only puts the project at risk, but all members may be prosecuted. For this reason, only those directly involved in the crime have information about it – and at each hierarchical level, members know only as much as they have to know to do the job.44

This means that sanctions are associated with direct personal costs, and rewards are given only when the project is completed. In the case of the Hallunda robbery, formal meetings were avoided to prevent exposure to potential external monitoring, and interactions during the planning stage were incorporated into everyday activities in order to not attract attention. In contrast to the previous three cases, criminal projects tend to be silent organizations.

Collective resources

The purpose of membership in a criminal project is that collaboration creates collective resources that are not otherwise obtainable by isolated individuals. As in the case of a voluntary organization, the organization becomes a tool for the individual and the individual a resource for the organization. The collective resources that members create become part of a kind of “purely public good” (Whyanes and Bowles 1981).

Discussion

Partial organization is an approach that has been used to analyze various contexts of social organization (Ahrne 1998, 2007, 2014; Ahrne et al. 2008).

One of its strengths is that it attempts to capture organizational processes, elements and activities in a holistic way, by identifying underlying organizing principles common to many different phenomena. In this study, we explored the fruitfulness of partial organization for the understanding of organized crime. We did so by analyzing four categories defining cases of criminal collaboration in contemporary Sweden (the Syriac mafia, Hells Angels Mc Sweden, Werewolf Legion, and the Hallunda Rubbery).

Our results show that the Syriac mafia is based on, and largely operates within the framework of institutional elements such as kinship and cultural and religious values rather than having a clear-cut formal membership. The Syriac Church and ethno-religious identity are important components of the organizing process. Territorial influence is achieved through a combination of different forms of capital, including

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44 Quote from respondent: “Only those who will carry out the robbery are included in the planning of the robbery. No matter how close you know each other, if you are not taking part in the robbery, you will not know anything about it to reduce the risk of detection. Those who will take part in the robbery avoid meeting too much and tried meeting through regular interaction in order not to attract attention.”
violent, cultural and economic capital, and their accumulation creates influence and the ability to act in multiple arenas within the community. Gift-giving and other uses of capital allow the organization to become parasitic on different community arenas, including the municipality, the parish and public authorities.

Although affiliation criteria exist, informal control through daily interactions and ceremonies constitutes the basis for monitoring and sanctions. These elements make the organization stable over time and territorially bounded. By showing indication of parasitical behavior on existing institutionalized behavioral patterns and elements, the organization can acquire the capacity to act upon and influence multiple arenas to produce various services and goods. The interplay between the capacity to act in multiple arenas and territorial boundedness seems to make the organization more enduring and stable, allowing for the infiltration of legal structures, which in turn increases collective resources. The Syriac mafia is a partial organization with heavy institutional characteristics.

The street gang Werewolf Legion as an organizational unit grew out of the need for collective protection in a hostile environment, which was to be achieved through the exercise of violence. The street gang evolved out of existing friendship circles and a family-like horizontal structure, which constitutes the basis for formal membership. Organizing is strongly linked to the local context with regard to membership, monitoring and collective resources, and this influences the organization’s operational activity. Identity is closely linked to the territory, symbols and the use of the capital of violence as a survival strategy and as a means of overcoming the limited opportunities available to its members. The organization and its collective resources are very sensitive to the composition of the organization in terms of individual members, making it time-bounded and transient. Because organizing is dependent on strong friendship ties, over time the gang’s operations are sensitive to the commitment of its individual members. The Werewolf Legion is to a certain extent a complete organization.

The outlaw motorcycle club the Hells Angels MC Sweden (HAMC) is a highly bureaucratic complete organization with formalized organizational procedures such as formalized rules for membership, hierarchy, monitoring and sanctioning. The organization’s trademark constitutes an essential element in its identity and collective resources. The HAMC has a set of subgroups such as the Red and White Crew, AK81 and other types of organizations that are similar to street gangs – all this is to ensure that the organization will continue to survive and expand. These subgroups both recruit members and provide markets for the goods and services provided by the HAMC, and they also enable the organization to distribute risk, preserve its trademark and expand its capacity to act in different arenas. This may result in organizational inertia because to manage and coordinate the different organizational units consumes resources,

45 AK81 stands for ‘Altid klar HA’. AK stands for ‘Altid Klar’, which in Danish means Always Ready, and 81 is synonymous with the letters HA meaning Hells Angels.

46 Quote from respondent: “We created the R&W and AK81 to encounter the immigrant gangs. We wanted soldiers to challenge the street gangs. We wanted to bring in fresh, young people, train them. We are all in our 40s, we cannot go out and fight. [...] Within the organization there are several ideologues. However, ideology is flexible since the world is flexible. If you do not adapt you die, you have to adapt. As a company, you have to adapt to survive.”
particularly when decisions must be sanctioned at different levels of decision-making within the HAMC.

The trademark makes it possible for the organization to establish itself in different geographical settings and to gain access to common resources. By setting up clubs and supporter clubs, the HAMC creates a strong, widely distributed geographical presence, while at the same time remaining strictly controlled and allowing no room for deviation. This means that the HAMC has geographical flexibility but is limited in its arenas of operation. The HAMC features all the organizational elements, and is therefore a complete organization.

The Hallunda robbery is characterized by being a specific task-oriented project; it was a temporary organization with a well-defined purpose. Membership was by invitation through acquaintance ties, with specialized functional requirements being the top priority. Monitoring occurred through visibility and informal meetings. Due to its temporary character and clearly defined goals, the organization was designed to act in a single arena and was bounded in space and time. As an organizational form, projects tend to fluctuate in time, as the members involved go back to their original occupations and eventually become engaged in new projects. This is the case with some of the people involved in the Hallunda robbery. Thus, the Hallunda Robbery is a partial organization with strong network-based traits.

In Table 2 we show a full outline of the conclusions from our cases.

Our results indicate that partial organization as a framework can be applied to study organized crime. Since this approach has already been applied to other social contexts, it can be an advantage to transplant this framework to the context of organized crime. This can allow us to discuss whether criminal organizing is intrinsically different from other types of social organizing, as it has been suggested that criminal groups are not intrinsically different from social organizations is not unique to this study (e.g., Alach 2011; Brotherton and Barrios 2004; Catino 2015; Fagan 1989; Gottschalk 2016; Lombardo 1994; Rostami 2016a; Schelling 1967, 1971, among others).

Our results show that most of the elements in the cases under study are not formalized and still we deal with highly resourceful criminal collaborations. These findings are in line with the argument by Ahnne and Brunsson (2011) and Ahrne (1994) that organizing is not restricted to complete organizations, and that partial organization can be at least as important and powerful as complete organization.

These insights can advance policies on organized crime by going beyond the efforts to find a universal legal definition of organized crime as complete organizations. By focusing on criminal organizing as a way of dissecting the underlying core processes of criminal collaborations, we can develop a deeper understanding which can enable us to take measures to reverse and prevent criminal organizing through all-encompassing social responses. As it has been suggested, it is important to identify the type of problem in question before implementing societal policies (Goldstein 1990). It is important to identify the type and level of the criminal problem before planning a response, since forms of criminal collaboration exist on a continuum and vary in time and space. Different types of problems require different types of policies and measures.
Table 2  Result overview of the organizational elements in our four cases. Hells Angels, and to a certain extent Werewolf Legion, are complete organizations, while the Syriac mafia and the Hallunda Robbery are partial organizations. The Syriac mafia builds on institutional elements and the Hallunda Robbery on strong network relations.

| Elements of complete organization (for institutional elements see Table 1) | Institution | Organization | Network |
|---|---|---|---|
| Membership | Syriac mafia | Werewolf Legion | Hells Angels MC | Hallunda Robbery |
| Rules | Kinship, ethno-religious | Formal, friendship based | Formal membership | Circle of acquaintances |
| | Institutional values, code of the street | Formal rules, code of the street | Formal rules | Code of the street and honor |
| Hierarchy | Position, status | Roles, Positions | Formal hierarchy | Reputation |
| Monitoring | Institutional behavioral patterns | Territorial visibility | Formal meetings | Informal meetings |
| Sanctions | Oppression, defamation, shame | Expulsion, sense of belonging | Discharge, member of a biker community | Invitation, ignore |
| Collective resources | Financial, political, cultural and violence capital (criminal know-how) | Street and violence capital (criminal know-how) | Clubhouse, ideological and violence capital (criminal know-how) | Inclusive wealth (criminal know-how) |
| Material | Institutional infrastructure | Symbols | Trademark, symbols | Reputation, Trust |
| Immaterial | | | | |
Failure to accurately identify the problem may result in efforts that are misguided and at best ineffective and at worst counterproductive (Rostami 2016b).

Criminal organizing is evolved and shaped by its particular social, economic, and political context. By analyzing the underlying organizational principles of criminal organizing, differentiating between various degrees of criminal collaboration, and focusing on the organizational elements that have bearing for the particular case under investigation, law enforcement and other actors can shape more accurate social responses to prevent and police organized crime.

Moreover, both scholarly knowledge and preventive measures can more easily draw upon and take advantage of work on the functioning of organization in other social domains. One important limitation is that the issue of having a fixed analytical framework with predefined elements (like membership, rules, etc.) can lead to a risk of a kind of confirmation bias, i.e., that the researcher finds in the empirical material the very elements that she set out to find in the first place. This raises the question as to why, giving the original concept of partial organization, we find instead that all cases we have studied do not lack one or more elements. What we rather find is that the elements are present, but to different degrees. For example, membership can vary in a continuum from affiliation to formal membership; expectations can be formalized in rules or be based on institutional traits.

While the variation in the level of structural integration with respect to criminal structures have been discussed and emphasized in previous research (e.g., von Lampe, 2016) it is the first-time partial organization as a concept is applied to a criminal context. This is a limitation. Consequently, further research is needed to investigate the usefulness of partial organization in other contexts within the field of organized crime. Furthermore, we argue that more “transplantation” of theories and frameworks from other research areas is needed in order to enrich our picture of the underlying principles of criminal collaboration.

While there are limitations, as outlined above, the need for alternative frameworks in organized crime research prevails over the limitations. Therefore, we believe further research along these lines should be encouraged.

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Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Ethical approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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