

Willing offenders outwitting capable guardians

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Abstract In this article we use the situational crime prevention theory to argue that the subcultures of 1 %-MCs – commonly known as ‘outlaw motorcycle gangs’ – and of trailer parks both provide willing offenders with ample opportunities to organise profitable crimes in the Netherlands. The simple fact of belonging to these groups generally is a powerful signal within the criminal subculture. Part of this message is that one must not try to challenge these capable and solid ‘stand-up men’, as the risk of a violent retaliation and a loss of face will be high. This in turn will have repercussions on the person and on his business. Another part of the message is that one must not inform the authorities, as the repercussions will occur, in the sense that the group will retaliate. This applies to members from the group itself as well. Three group characteristics – social bonds, reputation and the culture of silence – make the crime entrepreneurs from trailer parks and from 1 %-MCs feared and respected actors in the underworld. Both full colour members as well as crime entrepreneurs from the trailer community tactfully use these group characteristics for the organisation of crime. These group characteristics are instrumental in the creation of a void in which there are no capable guardians, both psychosocially (e.g. situations and relations in which social factors dominate individual behaviour) as well as physically (e.g. the respective club houses and trailer parks). Another advantage is that through intimidation and reputation psychosocial barriers are erected in order to prevent effective guardianship. Behind these barriers there is a safe social environment for the organisation of profitable crimes. By increasing the visible guardianship and decreasing the reputation, the crime triangle of willing offenders from both subcultures might be weakened, as the effective manipulation of psychosocial spaces will be countered.

Keywords Situational crime prevention · Willing offenders · Crime entrepreneurs · Organized crime · Reputation · Psychosocial space

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Introduction

In academic debates on organised crime much emphasis is placed on the composition of illegal markets (Reuter 1983; Van Duyne 1995) and on the position of groups and individuals within networks (Kleemans et al. 1998, 2002; McIllwain 1999; Morselli 2009; Malm et al. 2011). There also has been attention for the role of subcultures within organised crime, primarily to explain their prevalence in specific parts or chains within illegal markets (Zaitch 2002; Paoli et al. 2009). This mostly concerns ethnic subcultures, for example former Yugoslavian criminals presumably specialised in violence and contract killings, Chinese criminal groups in human smuggling, or Turkish and Colombian criminal groups in the trade of heroin and cocaine respectively. Explanations for the prominent role of these subcultures rely heavily on geographical and historical factors. Comparatively, little attention has been paid to the question of what makes some subcultures structurally more prevailing and resilient (Ayling 2009) than others in the organisation of profitable crimes in general.

In the Netherlands two subcultures prevail in the criminal scene that do not rely on a solid and structural relation to source countries of illegal goods. These subcultures are the 1 %-MCs – commonly known as ‘outlaw motorcycle gangs’ – and the so-called trailer community (which has other features than the trailer parks in the USA, as will be explained later). Individuals from both subcultures frequently appear in various investigations into profitable crimes, such as drug production or trafficking, ram raids, truck cargo thefts, extortion, as well as related phenomena such as beatings, kidnappings and murders. From the perspective of law enforcement, both subcultures have an ingrained resilience towards police interventions, investigations and guardianship (Ayling 2009).

Since both subcultures have not built their position in the vicinity of illegal goods or source countries, the question is how they have become such prominent actors within the Dutch organised crime scene. In this chapter we will attempt to answer *why crime entrepreneurs from 1 %-MCs and the trailer community structurally prevail in the field of organised crime*. Is it possible that characteristics of a specific subculture structurally advance the organisation of profitable crimes by its members? Which characteristics would these be and what makes them so relevant?

We will first explain the added value of the psychosocial aspects within the crime triangle and the situational crime prevention theory when it concerns the organisation of profitable crimes. Then we will outline our research method and data. Next we will elaborate on the characteristics and historical context of the trailer community and the 1 %-MCs in the Netherlands, in order to understand their present-day state of affairs and their collective face within the criminal scene. Then we will look into the favourable position of both subcultures towards the crime triangle, with a special focus on the manipulation of spaces to bar effective guardianship. We will conclude with exploring situation crime prevention strategies to counter the resilient position of willing offenders from both subcultures towards the crime triangle.

Reputation and intimidation – the psychosocial space

The social and psychosocial aspects of organising crime, related to its situational context, are the focus of our research. The term ‘psychosocial’ deserves some

explanation. We define this as situations and relations in which social factors dominate individual behaviour. In this article these social factors entail individual behaviour related to subcultural norms. The two subcultures that are discussed in this article have their own particular norms that are embedded in their group behaviour and world view. One of the basic principles of behaviour from a ‘subcultural’ point of view is that a personal reaction in a given situation is not just based on the individual’s role, perceptions and interpretations, but equally or more on social experiences and background (e.g. the trailer or the ‘outlaw biker’ community). We will expand on this view in our discussion of the two subcultures.

To date, the concept ‘psychosocial’ has hardly been applied to organised crime issues. However, the concept as such surely seems to have an added value in understanding the structural position of specific subcultures in organised crime. It appears to be very dominant in the criminal scene, arguably being an indispensable part of the crime triangle (Clarke and Felson 1993). To date, these psychosocial elements have not received the focus they probably deserve, also within the situational crime prevention theory. These elements have great impact on the crime triangle, especially on the presence and the solidity of capable guardians. In everyday life in the criminal scene, it appears that some outstanding subcultures master the art of outwitting capable guardians and intimidating criminal peers. We will focus on these outstanding subcultures.

We assume that being part of (or associated with) a specific subculture makes individuals and groups better equipped to create opportunities for the organisation of profitable crime, similar to Felson’s description of the reputation of street gangs (2006a). It is not so much their individual skills that mark their position in the underworld, but rather being part of a subculture that has outstanding or clearly distinguishable characteristics. Whereas Felson is playing down the relevance of intangible features such as status and fear based on visible signals, we will argue that in this respect the perceptions of others (i.e. those who are not part of these subcultures) are essential. They may be based on facts or on myths, but they define the concrete actions of others. Most importantly, perceptions guide behaviour and therefore influence the presence and prevalence of capable guardianship.

Both subcultures harbour a network of loyal, trusted and motivated offenders; an intimidating reputation; and an environment in which capable guardians are almost always absent: elements that are very conducive to criminal acts. Being part of these subcultures means that at least two sides of the ‘crime triangle’ (Bullock et al. 2009) are present: (1) willing offenders who are not hampered by (2) capable guardians have ample opportunities to create situational context that is conducive to various criminal acts: e.g. extortion, rip deals (i.e. theft or raid among criminals), cargo theft, fencing, and the production of and trade in drugs. Both subcultures have a solid violent reputation based on historical examples of individual acts of group members. This reputation is intimidating towards others, including other crime entrepreneurs. According to Felson, who describes the benefits of intimidation by gangs in his article ‘the street gang strategy’, intimidation serves at least four purposes: “1) to scare off your enemies, 2) to get your personal victims to comply with your wishes, 3) to discourage bystanders from interfering with your criminal acts and 4) to discourage witnesses from speaking against you later” (2006a: 312). We argue that most of these goals are obtained by 1 % MCs and the trailer park community as well.

Felson describes this phenomenon within the gang culture, arguing that through their reputation gangs distinguish themselves from everything else. He explains how the use of symbols by gang members has an intimidating effect on the public. It demonstrates that they are part of a certain group that should not be messed around with. “Plain colors can tell others to leave you alone” (2006a: 311). Felson argues that the use of symbols to scare off others distinguishes gangs from organised crime groups, because the latter prefer anonymity instead of visibility. We argue though, that some subcultures do benefit from their collective face to create a space in which capable guardianship cannot be effective. Furthermore, the use of unique symbols is the only asset that has a public meaning and that can publicly be used when the situation requires to do so. Unique symbols are powerful signals (Gambetta 2009), meaning there is no misunderstanding in the criminal scene.

Research data on the two subcultures

Both the trailer community and the 1 %-MCs are known for their reticence. The body of academic literature is very scarce, probably as a result of the difficulty in getting access to these subcultures. Academic works about the Dutch trailer community mostly concern historic analyses of its position within the society. In contrast, there are many newspaper articles on both groups, mostly written in response to police activities (e.g. searches or arrests) or to violent incidents within these subcultures. Some investigative journalists have written monographs on the ‘outlaw biker’ world, based on their own research and on police sources (mostly interviews with detectives). Also, Morselli (2009) has used Canadian police investigations on 1 %-MCs for a social network analysis. However, both Morselli and journalists have not used sources that explore the direct behaviour and interaction between members of these 1 %-MCs in their daily surroundings, such as confiscated material, intercepted telecommunications and police observations.

For the research into 1 %-MCs we have relied on two large police investigations (*Acroniem* and *Cobalt*) that were conducted in the period 2003–2006, both of which focused on the suspected criminal acts of different individual Hells Angels (both cases covered close to 40 individuals) and shed light on the wheeling and dealing of Dutch 1 %-MCs. In both cases many suspects were interrogated, telecommunication was intercepted and various searches took place. Confiscated material showed that many rules that stipulate the behavior of individual Hells Angels members and chapters also apply to other 1 %-MCs. For two reasons we have not attempted to conduct interviews with the suspects. Firstly there was plenty of first-hand information available that gave us a good view of the daily behaviour and interaction of the suspects. Secondly, within the investigation teams there was abundant experience with the unwillingness of individual Hells Angels members to speak to outsiders on any ‘criminal matter’ at all.

The trailer community and its scene of crime entrepreneurs have been researched by conducting interviews with experienced investigators and scientists who have investigated this subculture and by consulting six closed investigations. Also relevant academic works, government policy reports and newspaper articles have been studied. In addition, a former long-term resident of the trailer park community was interviewed.

In this article we have primarily used the case material and the interviews to answer our research question. The existence and crucial role of the psychosocial

space – and in particular the meaning of social bonds, reputation and the culture of silence – can only be explained by using primary data. Only with investigative data such as transcripts of intercepted telephone conversations, covert observations and interrogations it becomes possible to understand the meaning of the behaviour and interaction in these subcultures towards the organisation of crime.

Trailer community in the Netherlands

Fijnaut et al. (1998) was one of the first to point out the important role of the trailer community in the Dutch organised crime field, amongst others in organised thefts and burglaries, robberies, fencing, and (rip deals in) drug trafficking. According to Fijnaut, the trailer community has a ‘key position’ in the criminal scene because its members are capable and willing to use violence to protect themselves and their properties, they can rely on each other within a strong community, they have a long and wide experience in organising illegal activities and because it has been very difficult for the authorities to penetrate their community (Fijnaut et al. 1998).

Nowadays the position of crime entrepreneurs from the trailer community within the Dutch organised crime scene is still prevailing. In the Dutch National Threat Assessment of 2009, the involvement of the community in organised and serious crime is called ‘striking’. Crime entrepreneurs from the trailer community remain active in the field of property crime (ram raiding and car theft) and drug trafficking but also the trafficking of arms and counterfeit money. Recent national police data show that the trailer community has a prominent position in the organised cannabis cultivation. A third of the suspects that appeared in the largest investigations on cannabis cultivation belonged to the trailer community (KLPD 2009). One third of the most important¹ criminal entrepreneurs who are involved with organised cannabis cultivation originate from the trailer community and another third is somehow related to this community.

The Dutch trailer community should not be confused with its counterpart in the USA. Although in both cases people live together (in trailers or caravans) in an area isolated from regular society, there are some mayor differences within these communities. Members of the Dutch trailer community do not live in small caravans nowadays. In the last 20–30 years, most parks have been hosting buildings that number multiple floors and are more expensive than midrange houses. Such buildings have more resemblance with villas than with caravans. Belonging to the trailer community is more about being part of a culture than about living in a trailer. Some members of the community live in regular houses (not located in trailer parks), but still belong to the community.

Historical research (Cottaar 1996) points out that the trailer community originally consisted of a group of people that made their living out of handicrafts and merchandising. For a long time a shady reputation accompanied the community. In 1918 the Dutch government tried to restrict the number of trailers. Cottaar argues that only after the authorities assigned the most unappealing spots to the trailers, the culture of

¹ Based on police information on an individual’s role, capacity and position within the whole logistical process of the cannabis market.

the trailer community started to emerge. In the 1960s the government decided that the numerous small trailer parks around the country had to be centralised into larger regional entities in order to enhance the integration into mainstream society. The community reacted by turning against society and its values and conventions. The police soon found out that this policy resulted in the parks turning into no-go areas. In this environment the authorities were absent and therefore the groups who were the strongest ruled.² The strongest was the family that wielded most power, which was primarily based on physical strength and a reputation of violence. In this tough environment, where the police were absent and in any way not trusted, a culture of settling affairs amongst each other emerged, in which the threshold of violence was very low. Shootings frequently took place in these parks.³ At the end of the 1970's there were some large notorious trailer parks in the south and in the middle of the Netherlands.

Due to problems of control, in 1975 the large trailer parks were downsized into smaller entities. However, by splitting up the trailer parks, an important guardian was set aside. Social workers, who formed a bridge to conventional society, lost contact with the community. Local governments had to deal with the community and its problems their own way, even though some of them were unwilling or incapable to do so (Bovenkerk and Hogewind 2003). The policy of decentralisation turned out to be a policy of permissiveness that lasted until 2004. In that year the municipality of Maastricht, which accommodated an 'old-fashioned' large trailer park of more than 100 trailers, called 'Vinkenslag' decided that the indulgence had lasted for too long. It forced half of the families that lived there to move and transformed the trailer park into a place where the authorities regained their roles. Maastricht set the example for many other local administrations (VROM, not dated).

In various investigations notorious trailer park family names appear that are known to many police officials. Often the family names have been known for several decades, as the fathers, uncles or grandfathers were also active in the organisation of profitable crimes. As a result of the extensive kinship-ties, crime entrepreneurs from the trailer community have useful contacts in other trailer parks throughout the country. This is not to say that there are no conflicts within the trailer community. On the contrary; due to trade disputes, betrayals or rip deals, each family has (or had) its share of feuds with others.

Traditionally, the economic activity within these parks was street trade, scrap and breaker's yards. Needless to say not the entire trailer community became involved in illegal businesses, but a large number made a living out of the trade in fake jewelry, soft drugs and stolen cars. As Van der Poel (1999) puts it: "In their parks they live underneath and above the law". In the 1970's, these larger trailer parks became home to mobile gangs who conducted ram raids, rip deals, burglaries and robberies. In many trailer parks the loot of organised burglaries was stashed. According to Fijnaut et al. (1998) people within the community invest the money they earned in the past decades with theft, burglaries and robberies in the drug trafficking. From the early

² Interview with a retired police official, who ran informants and conducted criminal investigations related to trailer parks for approximately 25 years, 16 April 2008.

³ Interview with two experienced police officials, who have both worked on crime entrepreneurs from trailer parks, 22 January 2010.

1990's onwards various trailer parks were home to cannabis cultivation and the production of synthetic drugs.⁴

1 %-MCs

'Outlaw motorcycle clubs' are also known by their self-adopted nickname 'one-percenters', a name reputedly born out of a remark made by the chairman of the American Motorcycle Association in 1947 after a large fight between motorcyclists at a rally in Hollister, California. He was supposed to have stated that one percent had tarnished the public image of motorcyclists. We will use their terminology, and refer to them as 1 %-MCs. The 1 %-MCs do not only have a notorious reputation in the Netherlands, but in many Western countries as well (see e.g. Wolf 1991; Marsden and Sher 2007). Although little empirical research has been done on the involvement of 1 %-MCs in organised crime, it cannot be denied that they appear in many Dutch crime investigations. Both analysts and experienced detectives acknowledge this.

The 1 %-MCs have explicitly institutionalised the culture of reticence, as is illustrated by the description on the website of the chapter Northcrew of the Dutch 1 %-MC Veterans of the meaning of 1 %:

Through the years 1 % has grown into much more than a little group of rebel bikers

- a 1 % is a man who lives and rides by a strict code of honor. To the 1 %, his motorcycle is his life.
- a 1 % does not lie to, or cheat to/on a brother.
- he has respect for his brothers and their property.
- he stands up for who he is and what he believes in.
- he supports his brothers against outsiders and helps them whenever he can.
- a brother never takes advantage of another brother. That is the creed of the citizen.

1 % is not a club, it's not a patch; it's who you are.⁵

This enumeration is a description of small behavioural codes and ceremonies (Goffman 1967) that constitute the basic elements of the 'face' of 1 %-MCs.

Dutch 1 %-MCs such as Hells Angels and Satudarah⁶ have a uniform hierarchical structure per chapter (i.e. a territorial branch of the 1 %-MC): with full-colour members acting as President and Vice-President, followed by those who act as the Sergeant at Arms, Road Captain and Treasurer. After this cadre there are the other full-colour members. Outside of this core group there are aspiring members who are either in their first process (the hangarounds) or in their second process (the prospects) of gaining a full-colour membership. Next to that, there is a larger but amorphous group of - sometimes self-proclaimed - supporters and support clubs.

⁴ Interview, 22 January 2010.

⁵ www.veteransmc.nl (accessed on 1 September 2009).

⁶ MC Satudarah Maluku is a Dutch 1 %-MC that was founded in 1990 by a group of persons who shared a strong Moluccan identity. Nowadays, the club attracts members from other backgrounds as well. Most notably, it has a chapter that consists of members with a trailer park background.

Morselli (2009) has shown that in Canada full-colour members of a 1 %-MC acted as brokers (i.e. moving between other actors and bringing different relevant actors together) in the organisation of profitable crimes. The full-colour members were not directly involved in the drug trafficking; that was done instead by prospects and members of a support club.

Written and unwritten rules and norms are essential components that guide the behaviour of members, prospects and hangarounds of 1 %-MCs. Rules are lived by and are strictly upheld to protect the identity and the mutual loyalty, which is in line with Goffman's analysis on face-work (i.e. image maintenance) and status rituals (Goffman 1967). In this respect the club paraphernalia have an essential meaning for any 1 %-MC, as they are significant symbols with a powerful radiation that are inseparable with the club's status and identity. These signals express the position, status and power of individual members and the 1 %-MC as a whole (similar to street gangs: see Felson 2006a). Without the colours, logos, patches and even the font of the letters, 1 %-MCs would not be able to distinguish themselves in the public domain.⁷ The club reputation in the public domain is primarily upheld by observable symbols, such as tattoos, the colours and the club logo. From this perspective it is understandable that Hells Angels have undertaken harsh measures towards those who threaten their trademarks. It is not surprising that the 1 %-MC has protected its logos as registered trademarks: it is about the protection of the tools with which they run their business. Measures against abuse range from intimidating visits to physical punishment, including murder.⁸

No one can join a 1 %-MC at his own initiative. One needs to be introduced by a full-colour member, who will act as the mentor from that moment on. In general, someone is asked to join the 1 %-MC because of specific skills or abilities. Different ex-Hells Angels have testified that new aspirants are approached only when the club or an individual member assesses that person to have potential for the club, such as his social position (e.g. a public official) or his economic position (such as being the owner of a transport company, a private security company, a factory, et cetera), and when that person is assumed to be loyal and trustworthy. Through its members' positions the club's interests are served: new facades can be built, new places for stashes become possible, new logistical possibilities emerge. These processes have also been ascertained by the Cobalt-investigation, amongst others, through the testimony of the crown witness.

The 'club policy' is very strict to those who aspire to become members, as they still have to prove their loyalty and commitment. During the entry period, the hang-around and prospects are tested in order to get to know the person and to assess his loyalty and trust (see also Gambetta 2009). From the moment of entry, personal and family details are communicated throughout the club. His picture is sent to all other chapters worldwide.⁹ Eventually, the mentor will recommend the prospect as a full-colour member to his peers in the chapter, who will decide unanimously. This

⁷ The colours are sleeveless leather or denim jackets with patches and rockers. The patches are rectangular pieces of cloth with a text on it, the rockers are semicircular arcs of cloth with a text on it. The texts on patches and rockers show the function and position of a full-colour member within the 1 %-MC.

⁸ "Enforcer" for Hells Angels sent to prison for 15 years', *Seattle Times*, 20 December 2007.

⁹ Expert testimony, *R. v. Bonner and Lindsay* [2005] O.J. No. 2870 (QL).

mechanism of accession to the club has similar features for new chapters, new clubs or new countries.

By excluding outsiders, the absence of capable guardians is a fact. Each 1 % MC chapter has a club house, in which meetings are held and parties are given. Generally a club house has a fortified entry, an alarm and an intercom. The surrounding club area is fenced and supervised by CCTV. A 24-hour watch is organised by the members, who then also observe the cameras. Some club houses have bulletproof glass, barred windows, movement detectors and barbed wire.¹⁰ Some chapters also have special locations where they meet to discuss sensitive matters, and which are nearly impossible to put under surveillance. Members go there without cellular phones in order to prevent any tracking.

A Hells Angel can leave the club either in good or bad standing. Good standing is a departure on his own initiative, whereas a bad standing is being forced by the club (based on voting) and is caused mainly by a breach of trust. In both cases, he is obliged to remain loyal to the club, in the sense that he will never inform others about the MCs' wheelings and dealings. All chapters are informed when someone has left the club, in order to prevent information from still reaching him. The person is obliged to hand all his club-related material (colours, etc) to the club, as well as to remove or adapt his club-related tattoos.¹¹ These rules and behaviours make it virtually impossible for outsiders to fake membership and make use of the status and reputation: this is too costly, as it could lead to being murdered (see also Gambetta 2009).

Both internally as well as externally the behaviour of members is based on power. Within a 1 %-MC behaviour is influenced by three forms of power: rewards, punishment and hierarchy. Promotions in a chapter seem to be the result of personal capabilities of individual members, as senior full-colour members have been seen to be outrun by younger 'serving' members. Career growth is thus not dependent on seniority. The two police investigations therefore provide a confirmation of a similar suggestion by Morselli (2009).

To the outside world the image is upheld that Hells Angels will never rat on their 'brothers'. But sometimes individual members seem to have other reasons for their silence than their brotherly bonds, as they are afraid of retaliation from the club, especially to their family. Members from three different Dutch chapters each stated that they were afraid to testify about criminal acts related to the club.¹² The internal pressure is effectively maintained, as prospects and members all have to provide information on themselves and their families. According to a testimony of an 'outlaw' insider, the whole subculture is dominated by respect, prestige and fear: "the whole biker world is a society that consists of unwritten rules that are maintained by back colour clubs [*author's note: i.e. 1 %-MCs*] and that are enforced at will".¹³

The network of an international 1 %-MC is global, as members can rely on any other chapter for contacts, support or a hiding place. This global network of willing co-offenders gives wide opportunities for illegal enterprises. For several years there

¹⁰ *Investigation Acroniem*, supplementary testimony 303/03, part A.2.9 (2007).

¹¹ *Investigation Acroniem*, supplementary testimony 303/03, part A.1.8. (2007).

¹² *Investigation Acroniem*, supplementary testimony 303/03, part B.2.1.2. (2007).

¹³ *Investigation Acroniem*, supplementary testimony 303/03, part B.5.3.5. (2007).

have been numerous investigations and confiscations that have shown different full colour members of 1 %-MCs involved in the production, trading or smuggling of drugs. Former Hells Angels from different countries have testified on this involvement. One stated that if someone was already dealing in drugs, then he had to continue to do this, but from now on for the club. Another said that during his period as a prospect, he had to smuggle drugs for various full-colour members. In the beginning of this century, in the south of the Netherlands the police encountered different producers of drugs who were extorted by members of 1 %-MCs, but who did not want to testify against them. They only dared to speak off the record. In a similar vein, owners of night life establishments (such as bars, cafés and night clubs) have made regular payments to members of 1 %-MCs in order to ensure protection or security at their doors.¹⁴

Manipulation of psychosocial spaces: social bonds, reputation and the culture of silence

Now that we know more about the wheeling and dealing within these subcultures, we will explain what makes them so prevalent in the organization of profitable crimes. The situational crime prevention theory is helpful to answer this question (Cohen and Felson 1979; Clarke and Felson 1993; Clarke 1997). It assumes that the development of crime depends on three situational conditions: (1) a motivated offender, (2) a suitable target and (3) an absence of capable guardians. The rational offender encounters opportunities in his daily activities. If the offender assesses the costs or risks of crime to be high, then he will be inclined not to continue. But if the situation provides only marginal or no risks, then there is nothing to stop him from continuing. The theory however does not focus on the characteristics of offenders, but on the opportunity structures within specific crimes (Bullock et al. 2009). The first and third side of the crime triangle (motivated offender and absence of capable guardianship) can be manipulated by the offenders, while the second one (suitable target) cannot. Therefore we focus on the offenders and the absence of capable guardianship that runs through the different logistical steps of the organisation of a criminal act.

A more subtle but highly effective way for offenders to prevent any oversight or control by capable guardians is the manipulation of the psychosocial space (portrayed in Fig. 1). In the daily practice of organising profitable crimes, this space is created by the implicit message to ‘back off’ and not to interfere with someone’s business. A similar phenomenon has been described by Korsell and Skinnari (2009), in their analysis of unlawful influence as exerted by criminals towards public prosecutors. This space comes into being when a specific group of people dissociates itself from the ‘others’ (ingroup versus outgroup). Both subcultures have a closed appearance towards society. In both subcultures, the collective face is an essential element in their position and status within the wider criminal scene. Society-at-large assumes that certain attributes are part of the ‘face’ of the subcultures (such as toughness towards outsiders and low threshold for violence), and adapts its attitude and behaviour accordingly. At the same time, persons from these

¹⁴ *Investigation Acroniem*, supplementary testimony 303/03, part A.1.8. (2007).

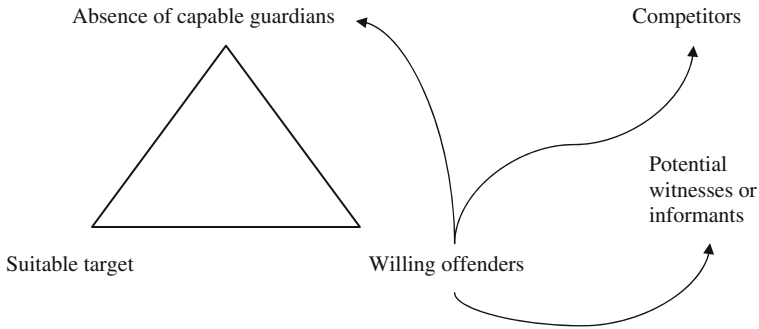


Fig. 1 Willing offenders exerting influence in the psychosocial space

subcultures maintain their face by behaving consistent with the features that are attributed to their face. As a result, in this psychosocial space, deviant behaviour can easily flourish.

Through the manipulation of physical and psychosocial spaces, both subcultures have created their own space where capable guardians are absent and where opportunities abound or are easily created. In these isolated communities a culture of toughness and ability to cope independently prevails. In this culture, portrayed as a ‘survival of the fittest’ by one seasoned detective, a certain pedigree rises to the top. These are the solid and stand-up guys, the capable offenders. In order to enhance their businesses the control-void is maintained, protected and extended. This applies for example to the opportunities within trailer parks to safely organise stashes of stolen goods or growing cannabis at a large scale. It also applies to the extortion of legal and illegal entrepreneurs through intimidation and fear by members of 1 %-MCs.

As we have seen, being part of these two subcultures is very conducive for the organisation of profitable crimes: it guarantees a large and sharply defined set of motivated offenders who can capitalise on opportunities because they operate in spaces where capable guardians are absent. To explain how these spaces are manipulated, we take a further look at three group characteristics that are shared by both subcultures: (a) social bonds, (b) reputation and (c) a culture of silence. We argue that these group characteristics are used to manipulate psychosocial spaces.

Social bonds

The solid social basis provides strength to both the trailer park crime entrepreneur and his ‘outlaw’ counterpart. In both subcultures, there is a high degree of in-group versus out-group behavior. Both are isolated from conventional society. In the case of trailer parks this is the consequence of a physical isolation from the environment.¹⁵ Ayling describes social bonds as community support, being “a source of resilience”: offering

¹⁵ The segregation can either be a cause or effect of their separated housing in trailer parks. Some would argue that they separated themselves from mainstream society by living in trailers; others would say that the fact that they were put away in parks turned them into outcasts of society. In either case it is plausible that the physical segregation stimulated the in-group versus out-group behavior.

sanctuary, a place to regroup, providing material and psychological resources (2009: 188).

Both subcultures clearly show a constant accretion of motivated offenders, as such have a semi-structural character and are thus resilient. However, motivation is more explicit for 1 %-MCs than for the trailer community. Membership of a 1 %-MC is not for everyone: as has been explained one must be introduced by a full colour member, and normally the club will only accept this when the candidate has a specific value for the club. In contrast, trailer communities are composed of the same (extended) families for generations.

Within a 1 %-MC, behaviour and interaction of full colour members, prospects and hangarounds is determined by explicit rules and guidelines.¹⁶ This is not the case for crime entrepreneurs from the trailer community, where subcultural norms and values are ingrained in the group, and as such behavioural rules are more implicit. A crime entrepreneur with a trailer background is born and raised in the community. There are no specific skills he has to show to become a member of the group. On the other hand, not all people belonging to the trailer community are involved in organised crime. Then why do individuals within the trailer community become (successfully) involved in the organisation of profitable crimes? In this respect the situational crime prevention theory has no explanatory value, as it sees a motivated offender as a *conditio sine qua non*.¹⁷

For 1 %-MCs the main *raison d'être* is their 'outlaw' lifestyle, which in many ways is impossible to match with a role in conventional society. Loyalty towards like-minded others is an essential feature. It creates bonds of trust: the best human 'cement' in the organisation of crime. In trailer parks loyalty is institutionalised through the intergenerational transfer of subcultural norms of in-group versus out-group (i.e. society at large). Within 1 %-MCs loyalty is institutionalised through the strict maintenance of explicit rules (e.g. do not inform the authorities). In both subcultures, unknown aspiring peers are screened in order to assess their loyalty and trustworthiness (Gambetta 2009). The goal of 1 %-MC rules is to create uniformity and loyalty. Through the emphasis on cohesion and internal trust, there is a group pressure on each individual member to not abstain from this (Gambetta 2009). It can be argued that there is a structural group think: the pursuit of consensus is so dominant that divergent opinions are neglected or forcefully suppressed, a practice that has been testified by former Hells Angels.

Within the trailer park community the solid social basis is more implicit. When people are needed for an illegal activity, the recruitment takes place through trusted others, who can vouch for different candidates. The view that emerges from recent closed investigations is that various crime entrepreneurs from trailer parks have developed into successful men with a multitude of international relationships. For them, the organisation of large transports of drugs or other illegal goods is a quite common activity.

¹⁶ *Investigation Acroniem*, supplementary testimony 303/03, part B.4.2. (2007). 'Toffe jongens' ['Great Guys'], *Vrij Nederland*, 13 December 2006.

¹⁷ We think that the differential association theory and the situational action theory have added value in explaining how individual offenders from the trailer community become motivated offenders, by looking at social learning processes and the crime propensity. However, it would stretch too far to include that exploration in this article.

Reputation

Within the trailer community certain families have had a violent reputation for decades. The reputation of these families can be used to intimidate rivals, police and other families within the trailer park. One's family name alone can be enough to inspire the environment with awe or to attract police attention.¹⁸ The violence towards the authorities has strengthened the image of a shielded fortress. Many policemen have experienced violent encounters at a trailer park. For example, in 1993 the police organised a search at a large trailer park near Rotterdam. At one moment a police officer got cornered by an inhabitant, who threatened to pour him with gasoline and to set him on fire. Eventually the officer was able to set himself free, upon which the whole police squad fled the scene. Later, the police returned to conduct their search, this time escorted by armed soldiers and armored vehicles.¹⁹ As Bovenkerk and Hogewind (2003) note, the actual use of violence against police officers is not very common; a threat of violence usually was enough to scare the guardians off. However, the tide has turned lately, as the authorities nowadays organise a solid capacity in the case of searches at parks.

In the 'outlaw' subculture, the use of symbols such as unique logos is an additional strength. Even more so, this strength is one that can be made explicit, operationalised in clothes and tattoos as well as on buildings. Felson (2006a) describes a similar process phenomenon within street gangs, who use symbols to stand out from others as well as to 'give face' to their reputation. Most strikingly perhaps is the 'Dequaillo' patch of the Hells Angels, which can only be earned after having fought with the police,²⁰ or, from a theoretical perspective, having fought with capable guardians in order to resist them. Such symbols add substantial credibility to the reputation. Within the underworld, every criminal (either partner or competitor) knows what these symbols stand for. Or, as Felson says, "each participant can draw upon the nastiness of the whole by using common signaling" (2006a: 313).

In effect, the absolute strength of both groups is their reputation that comes with the membership of a specific group within the criminal scene and towards the authorities. From that perspective it is a very logical step that various professional crime entrepreneurs are joining the ranks of an upcoming 1 %-MC, where they will not only find new opportunities (through protection), but also an environment that lacks a capable guardian. A Canadian police-informant, from a Hells Angels chapter, stated before a court in 2008 that drug crime entrepreneurs strive for membership of the club, since by acquiring their colours they also get power and a criminal network. "The patch means muscles and everyone behind it, with the patch comes the power".²¹ Most strikingly, unvoiced intimidation is very effective, is enduring and is perfectly legal (Felson 2006a).

Through its extensive reporting on every case in which 1 %-MCs appear, both the police and media sustain the image of fearlessness. This has also been underlined by Felson (2006a). The same applies to trailer parks, although to a lesser extent; when

¹⁸ Police attention is presumed to be a structural situational condition by most professional entrepreneurs (Letkemann 1973).

¹⁹ Conversation with a police officer who took part in that search, February 2010.

²⁰ *Investigation Acroniem*, supplementary testimony 303/03, part A.1.4. (2007).

²¹ 'Gang run like a business, judge says', *The Toronto Star*, 1 October 2008.

newspaper articles on trailer parks are surveyed, it seems that the only activity is crime.

Culture of silence

Both 1 %-MCs and people from the trailer communities put themselves at a distance from society. They do so (1) in a territorial way, by living or gathering in segregated areas (trailer parks, clubhouses) and (2) in a psychosocial way, by creating and conserving their own culture, norms, values and rules and by maintaining and exploiting a reputation or face (Goffman 1967) that keeps other people at a distance. This shuts potential guardians out and leaves a void; a space that can be used as a safety zone to extend the opportunities to organise any form of profitable crime.

The presence of a territorial shielded location applies to the trailer park communities as well as to the 1 %-MCs. The trailer park is a location without general supervision by the police. This provides ample opportunities for the organisation of profitable crimes, such as the cultivation of cannabis and the stashes of stolen goods. History demonstrates that by merging different trailer camps together the level of crime increased. The parks turned into no go areas where outsiders (including the police) were absent.

The 1 %-MCs have a private and secluded place for meetings and other interests that serves as a safe environment for its members. Both subcultures use their territorial locations that are shielded from outsiders and capable guardians as a meeting place: an ‘offender convergence setting’ that helps to “set the stage for criminal acts” (Felson 2006b). Ayling sees this ‘thick crime habitat’ as “an environment that is conducive to business” (2009: 187), where offenders can share information and make plans, which “can lead to a form of organizational learning” (ibid).

The reticence of the trailer community is one of its essential strengths: the trailer park offers a closed environment where illegal activities can take place without risk. The subculture of trailer parks is a world where everybody knows everyone else (often through references and families). Covert surveillance at or near the park is almost impossible. New or unknown persons or cars are immediately noticed, as has also been remarked by a former inhabitant of a trailer park. In one investigation the police attempted to infiltrate a trailer park. After 1 year the infiltrator was accepted within the park, but he was not able to get closer to the main suspect. Eventually, the infiltration was stopped without any result. Through the strong social cohesion there is hardly a chance that a disgruntled inhabitant will call the police to inform them on any shady practices.

Former Hells Angels have testified that members, prospects or hangarounds are forbidden to share compromising information with the police. This has also been ascertained by confiscated material.

- “*What is important: to keep your mouth shut*”;
- “*Say nothing until your lawyer has spoken with you*”;
- “*If you really need to make a statement, do not compromise others.*”²²

²² Investigation Acroniem, supplementary testimony 303/03, part B.2.1.2. (2007).

Hells Angels are aware of the techniques of observation and interception, as well as of the risks of information carriers. Therefore there are various counter-measures. Communication of sensitive issues through open information channels is not allowed. These issues have to be coded by the chapters, and if not then they will be removed from the mailing lists. Meetings in public are mostly closed off to outsiders, as the discussants are surrounded by peers who stand guard.

Another way to maintain the reticence of the 1 %-MCs is by supporting detained members financially. There is also communication from the club to the detainee, such as newsletters, to give moral support and to prevent that he will eventually become a police informant. Rewards are given to those members who perform meaningful acts for the club, such as standing up against the police or committing serious violence that is functional to the club's interests. The rewards are specific patches that can only be worn by those who have earned them, who therefore also see their status enhanced.

The Canadian ex-biker Daniel Wolf (1991: 266) argues that through a stringent enforcement of silence 'outlaw bikers' are pre-eminently suitable for the organisation of crime: "*It is a society capable of enforcing internal discipline, including an iron-clad code of silence...Uncompromising commitments of brotherhood generate cohesion, mutual dependence, and a sense of a shared common fate. The lengthy socialization required to become a legitimate 'biker' and the 2 years of proving oneself as a probationary member in order to become a member make the infiltration of a club by the police a virtual impossibility.*"

Situational crime prevention strategies

We think several strategies can be applied to weaken the resilience of willing offenders within both subcultures and counter the absence of capable guardians. The solutions should be aimed at the three main group characteristics in order to create barriers to prevent or reduce the success of the subcultures.

Social bonds

- Suppress places, not people.

The policy to suppress places – the offender convergence settings – instead of people is one of Felsons recommendations to prevent gang crimes. This recommendation could be projected on the trailer community. Trailer parks could be split up into smaller parks. History demonstrates though that this is not necessarily effective. Decades ago the Dutch government broke up some of the larger trailer parks in an attempt to decrease the crime level. This policy turned out not to be quite effective. The network appeared to be strong enough and little trailer parks are still used for criminal offenses. Perhaps a 'multi-agency' approach by different governmental stake-holders might be decisive: improving the reciprocal sharing of information by the police, the municipality, the fiscal authorities, whilst at the same time informing each other of the specific needs and priorities of each agency. That could be an effective way to dissolve the problem of unsupervised crime prone areas where guardianship is absent. This might also be an effective way to increase the law-abiding attitude within the trailer park community, as

non-criminal members will appreciate a more visible presence of the authorities (as long as this visibility will lead to a tangible decrease of crime within the community).

Reputation

- Affect the image of the group in a way that the public fear and respect is decreasing.
The government should show to the public that they are capable to uphold the rule of law within the trailer community and 1 %-MCs. The police and other public services, like customs and public utilities, have been known for their lack of control within the parks and at club houses, which left an image of these locations as no-go areas. This has strengthened the intimidating image of the trailer community and 1 %-MCs. For 1 %-MCs an inventory should be made of possible steps to minimise the use of symbols. Promising steps have been taken by (local) governments in Japan, Australia and Canada, who have imposed prohibitions or ‘sign laws’ on ‘outlaw bikers’ to wear colours and accessories that mark them as members, in specific areas or at specific events. Another example is the instalment of a license condition to establishments to ban ‘outlaw bikers’ who wear their colours and accessories. Licensees have welcomed this policy, as it gives them a rule to stand behind when refusing access (Ayling 2011). An example that has been rejected by a U.S. District Court Judge was the injunction requested by the public prosecutor’s office to seize all products bearing the Mongols trademark, as part of a racketeering indictment.

Culture of silence

- Increase supervision to improve understanding and grip on the groups.
This could be executed by an active search for informants inside the trailer community. Non-criminal families may cooperate because they are being ‘suppressed’. In addition, non-police attention should be paid to these trailer communities, for example through social workers. Furthermore, more visible police attendance on the parks as well as in club houses, for example through regular visits, beat patrols or surveillances, should be organised. Also technical solutions could be considered, like camera surveillance at the entrance of the park or club houses (after having been allowed to do so by an investigative judge). In this way the offender convergence setting is being tackled and resilient community support weakened.

Table 1 shows how these three group characteristics can be translated into situational crime prevention strategies, in order to counter the resilience of the two subcultures and their prominent position within Dutch organised crime.

Concluding remarks

We conclude that the subcultures of 1 %-MCs and of trailer parks both provide willing offenders ample opportunities to organise profitable crimes. The simple fact of belonging to the group brings a solid reputation. Being a full colour member or a

Table 1 Strategies of situational crime prevention.

Increase the effort	Increase the risks	Reduce the rewards	Reduce provocations	Remove excuses
1. Target hardening through support and possibly protection of witnesses and victims.	2. Extend guardianship within the trailer and outlaw biker community, by improving surveillance (e.g. beat patrols as place managers).	4. A modest reporting of police actions, in order to minimise image-building in the print and broadcast media.	6. Avoid disputes between governmental agencies and the two subcultures.	7. Uphold the law and maintain public order.
	3. Reduce the anonymity of individual crime entrepreneurs from the trailer and outlaw biker community.	5. Monitor and license legal companies owned by individual crime entrepreneurs from the trailer and outlaw biker community.		8. Create new regulations and, if possible, laws to harden targets and strengthen surveillance. 9. Alert conscience in the media and towards the public.

‘trailer’ criminal in general is a powerful signal within the criminal subculture. Part of this message is that one must not try to fool these capable, solid and ‘stand-up men’, as the risk of a violent retaliation and a loss of face will be high. This in turn will have repercussions on the person and on his business. Another part of the message is that one must not inform the authorities, as repercussions will be taken, in the sense that the group will retaliate. This applies to members from the group itself as well.

The three group characteristics – social bonds, reputation and the culture of silence – make the crime entrepreneurs from trailer parks and from 1 %-MCs feared and respected actors in the underworld. Both full colour members as well as crime entrepreneurs from the trailer community knowingly use these group characteristics for the organisation of crime. These group characteristics are instrumental in the creation of a void in which there are no capable guardians, both psychosocially as well as physically (e.g. the respective club houses and trailer parks). Another advantage is that through intimidation and reputation psychosocial barriers are erected in order to prevent effective guardianship. Behind these barriers is a safe social environment to organise profitable crimes. By increasing the visible guardianship and decreasing the reputation, the crime triangle and resilience of willing offenders from both subcultures might be weakened, as the effective manipulation of psychosocial spaces will be countered. Future research is needed to ascertain whether these approaches are indeed effective.

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