

Klaus von Lampe: *Organized crime: analyzing illegal activities, criminal structures, and extra-legal governance*

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Klaus von Lampe is an associate professor at New York City's John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Prior to coming to John Jay, professor von Lampe was the director of the Organized Crime Research Project at The Free University of Berlin, Germany. He has authored a number of edited volumes, book chapters, and journal articles focusing on organized in Europe and the United States, and is the editor of the peer-reviewed journal *Trends in Organized*, as well as a member and past president of the International Association for the Study of Organized Crime.

Intended to be used as a text, von Lampe's book, *Organized Crime: Analyzing Illegal Activities, Criminal Structures, and Extra-Legal Governance*, is an important contribution to the scholarly literature on the study of organized crime. While most textbooks simply review detailed information about the work of other scholars, von Lampe's work seeks a more analytical approach by placing its main emphasis on the underlying patterns and dynamics that transcend any specific manifestation of organized crime. The author accomplishes this goal by analyzing the phenomenon of organized crime according to three dimensions: *illegal activities*, the *structure* of organized crime, or the patterns of interpersonal relations that support illegal activities, and *governance*, that is the illegal power structures that regulate individuals and groups involved.

The book is broken down into fourteen chapters organized into four parts or sections. Part one introduces the book (chapter one), reviews definitions of organized crime (chapter two), and provides a history of organized crime research (chapter three). It is in chapter two that the author outlines his conceptual framework for the study of organized crime—illegal activities, structure, and governance. The next five chapters of

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the book (part two) provide an overview and case studies of organized criminal activities (chapter four), the organizational structure and governance of these activities (chapter five), and an examination of the three forms of criminal organization presented in chapter five: illegal entrepreneurial structures (chapter six), associational structures (chapter seven), and quasi-governmental structures (chapter eight). The word criminal structure is used as a generic concept encompassing terms such as criminal group, criminal organization, illegal enterprise, illegal firm, mafia, crime syndicate, and criminal network that are frequently used in the organized crime literature.

Part three describes the role that organized crime plays in the wider society. It seeks to understand the segments of society that are involved in and affected by organized crime and the nature of the relationship between organized crime and the wider society. Chapter nine addresses the general social embeddedness of organized crime. Recognizing that organized crime does not exist in a vacuum, social embeddedness, as used by the author, refers to the social environment in which organized criminals find themselves. The link between organized crime and legal business is addressed in chapter ten, and the link between organized crime and government is addressed in chapter eleven. Finally, chapter twelve deals with organized crime on a global or transnational scale. Part four of the book summarizes the author's work (chapter 13) and chapter fourteen summarizes countermeasures against organized crime. I was particularly impressed by von Lampe's call for the application of situational crime prevention presented in the last chapter. The author argues that law enforcement efforts should be supplemented with long-term prevention strategies to remove the "root causes" of organized crime as well as short-term strategies such as the regulation of money-laundering activities.

While focusing on the concepts of illegal activities, structure, and governance, the author's analysis identified two additional dimensions that he thought critical to understanding the phenomenon of organized crime. The first, the nexus between illegal and legal structures or social embeddedness, refers to the social environment within which organized criminals find themselves. Organized crime does not exist in a social vacuum. While it commonly exists among marginalized groups, who use it as a mechanism of social advancement, it is also found among powerful groups who have entered into alliances with political, business, and social groups. The second dimension that the author found to be of importance in analyzing organized crime is the individual criminals themselves. While research on the traits necessary to become an organized criminal is sparse, the author argues that knowing the right people is important, but one's social skills go a long way to ensure membership.

As the above review has shown, von Lampe's book is a fairly complex work. The author has painstakingly attempted to explain the "big picture" of organized crime by bringing together the various facets of this elusive concept within one conceptual framework. While I am not surprised by the conclusions of this book, the depth of the analysis that led the author to it is striking. The author argues that the problem of organized crime is not only a matter of the consolidation and sophistication of criminal structures, but also the formation of alliances of convenience between the underworld and the upper world. He concludes that there is no scenario where it would not matter how government and civil society responded to the organization of crime and criminals, and that any modeling of organized crime without taking the effectiveness of policing and civil vigilance into account would be incomplete.

The complexity of this work has drawn some criticism from scholars in the field, but at the same time von Lampe's book should be commended for the sheer size of his effort. The book is 467 pages long and contains nearly 1,000 references. While the text may be challenging for an undergraduate organized crime class, the complexity of the material is exactly what is needed for graduate level study. This book makes an important contribution to the academic literature. It moves well beyond the usual examination of "mafia" groups that has dominated the organized crime literature for years. It not only provides a well-researched analysis of this elusive concept, but also provides a conceptual framework for the future study of organized crime.