

Organised Crime: are we missing global characteristics?

Felia Allum of European Studies and Modern languages is looking at organised crime in Italy and the UK through two concurrent studies.

In the first one, Felia is studying the Neapolitan Camorra - the Naples mafia - to see how they move into countries outside Italy and the consequences of this. The oldest criminal organisation in Italy, the Neapolitan Camorra finances itself through drug trafficking, extortion, protection and racketeering. The study will look at patterns of behaviour in groups away from their home territories.

"It's a challenging area," says Dr Allum."Organised crime is embracing globalisation just as quickly as anyone else."

"Often, many of the key factors are well concealed. For example, the La Torre group in Aberdeen appear outwardly no different to any other large family. They arrived from Naples in 1983. They became successful entrepreneurs and were highly respected by the local community. However by 2003, the head of the family had been extradited to Naples facing criminal charges. It's contentious; does this mean any large group from the area is immediately under suspicion? Or should we be looking for other characteristics, such as past criminal activity in their country?"

The second study is broader and involves interviewing UK's Police officers who deal with this type of crime. "The British Justice system does not recognise Mafia associations," adds Dr Allum. "A gang in Britain isn't necessarily perceived as having international connections."

There are anomalies. In Liverpool, for example, a regular crime is the robbery of armoured vehicles carrying money. This is considered organised crime as it involves a gang and premeditation. In Italy, the same incident is not seen as such. Their definition of organised crime looks for wider involvement in many areas of criminal activity, including abroad.

"We need an improved context and structure to meet the challenges of global crime," says Dr Allum. "Finding common characteristics and using those as criteria is a good place to start."

Related:

The Neapolitan Camorra - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camorra

30,000 involved in organised crime in the UK - Guardian - http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/jul/13/uk-criminals-organised-crime

'He's innocent' says Scots wife of Mafia boss - The Scotsman - http://news.scotsman.com/organisedcrime/Hes-innocent-says-Scots-wife.3326889.jp

Organised Crime Task force -http://www.octf.gov.uk/index.cfm/section/article/page/octf_agencies