

Summary

Sweden is a welfare state that rests upon stable social and political institutions, with, among other things, a comprehensive social security system, high trust in authorities and a strong civil society. The success story of Sweden and the Swedish model has meant that the image of Sweden during a large part of the 20th century was that of a leading country in the international political debate. However, the increase in gun and explosive violence within criminal milieus in recent years has generated a lot of attention regarding the Swedish crime trend, not only in Sweden but also internationally. In several countries, the development in Sweden has been as a deterrent narrative, and the term ‘the Swedish condition’ has been coined to describe a negative development in an otherwise prosperous welfare state.

At the same time, the Swedish crime development can best be described as a paradox. The severity of crime in Sweden depends on which types of crime are studied. Overall, violence has not increased in recent decades. In 2012, Sweden had the lowest level of fatal violence in the last fifty years, while at the same time there has been a steady rise in firearm-related homicides and explosions. Financial crime has also gone through a very negative development. Within this context, much of the negative development regarding crime in Sweden can be attributed to organized crime. From a societal perspective, crime in organized form is often perceived as a bigger problem than crime with a lone perpetrator. Recent changes in criminal organizing, with more collaborations in crime, especially for violent and financial crime, represent a new set of challenges for society.

Against the background of this development, the present report aims to study organized crime in Sweden with a focus on its geographical aspects. Internationally, the geography of crime is an

extensive area of research. In a Swedish context, and despite there being relatively many studies on organized crime, few studies have focused on its spatial aspects. These have shown, for example, that firearm violence is concentrated in areas which have been defined by the police as vulnerable areas. Research has mostly focused on geographic patterns of different types of crime and their consequences, and not specifically on the spatial dimension of organized crime. An increased understanding of organized crime's geography, mobility and geographical linkage associated with different criminal milieus can give us better conditions to reduce organized crime's maneuvering room.

We use longitudinal records for the period 2011–16 on crime and analyze criminal collaborations and the geographical dimension of organized crime. For example, we investigate differences and similarities in geographic crime patterns for different types of municipalities. We also study crime linked to vulnerable areas and the distribution across different types of criminal milieus within organized crime, such as street gangs and outlaw motorcycle gangs. The analyses are carried out at various levels of aggregation, from police regions to municipalities, and within municipalities with a focus on vulnerable areas.

We find that the Stockholm police region dominates the crime distribution for most milieus, even when the population of each police region is taken into account. Furthermore, a role differentiation appears to exist within each criminal milieu (for example, the outlaw motorcycle gang milieu), with approximately one-third of the members of each milieu having high mobility, i.e., having been suspected of crime in two or more police regions. Mobile individuals account for between 45 and 65 percent of all suspected crimes in the respective milieus. However, the degree of mobility varies depending on the gang milieu, and possibly reflects differences in the degree of criminal organizing within them. Mobile individuals also show different patterns regarding their range, i.e., how they move between municipalities in their criminal activities. Clear patterns at the milieu level emerge which reflect the criminal groups' organizational structure and organizing degree.

Our conclusions point to several policy-relevant aspects. To reverse the negative crime trend described above, society needs to increase the pressure on organized crime, with a focus on violence

capital and the illicit economy, and avoid tunnel vision on specific groups, types of crime or individuals. Organized crime should probably be considered as an ecosystem, where the invisible parts benefit from the visible parts and vice versa. This report highlights certain geographical aspects of this ecosystem. The report also shows an interplay between criminal collaboration on several levels. Among other things, we find that there are mobile individuals within the gangs who can not only move people, money and goods, but also create new contacts and business opportunities in new locations.

Furthermore, we find that the share of criminal suspicions during the analysis period for which there is geographic data is lowest when it comes to financial crime. This means that a deeper understanding of this type of crime requires other sources. To achieve success against organized crime, deeper knowledge and understanding of the role of the illicit economy as a capital generator and criminal driving force must also be developed.

Based on the fact that Sweden is one of the world's most resourceful and digitized countries, there exist all the conditions to implement the right measures to reduce criminal exploitation and reduce organized crime's ability to organize. In this report, we have tried to study the spatial aspects of organized crime. Hopefully, it can be a piece of the puzzle in our joint pursuit of effective measures against this form of crime.