

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The monograph has attempted to provide an insight into how crime can be organised, as well as how people have defined organised crime. It has ended by presenting the basis of an alternative perspective to the mainstream, one that replaces the term organised crime with the notion of *illicit enterprise*.

The first task involved extrapolating four models from contrasting views on the organisation of famous crime groups, particularly the American Mafia. The four models—hierarchy, networks, markets and clans—have been isolated in criminological literature, which has the potential to impair analysis. It was argued that the necessary tools for a comprehensive understanding of crime lie in a combination of the four models—real crime entities may well be *hybrids* of some or all of the four models. Although the monograph did not explore the wider analytical application of these models, it was suggested that future work should explore their dynamics and research how the organisation of crime relates to the context in which it operates. Such analysis may also help with policy debates surrounding organised forms of crime.

The second task of the monograph involved providing the history of a mainstream definition of organised crime, starting from the 1930s in the USA and ending with its present status as a world-wide concept. This history showed how the term was reinvented from the 1930s onwards to denote a culturally homogeneous structured criminal conspiracy that exists independently and at odds with the formal economy. Within Southern Africa official and non-official definitions seem highly influenced by the mainstream model.

The third section comprised both a description and a critique of the underlying assumptions behind the mainstream definition of organised crime. In particular, it was argued that:

- the mainstream approach relies on a simplistic understanding of how crime can be organised;
- it misleadingly isolates organised crime from civil society via the notion that organised crime presents a sinister threat akin to a global virus;

- it tends to define organised crime as being culturally homogeneous and comprising of a special 'organised crime person', whereas the available evidence suggests organised crime involves a wide range of actors, many of whom occupy key positions in civil society; and
- the distinction between organised crime and other serious economic crimes is based on spurious stereotypes of offenders, rather than a meaningful distinction between the types of activities.

These critical arguments of the mainstream definition were used to justify the call for an alternative paradigm for the study of organised forms of crime. This alternative approach replaces the incoherent distinction between organised crime and other types of serious crimes with the unifying notion of *illicit enterprise*. However, within this broad category, it was suggested that future analysis should concentrate on specific *illicit economies*—both *criminal economies* and *criminalised economies*. This alternative research direction should be based on a series of core principles that in sum should help future work to overcome many of the shortcomings of the mainstream paradigm.