

Preface

In June 2011, the Heinrich Böll Foundation hosted an international conference on transnational organized crime (TOC). It was the first time that the Foundation addressed the issue of transnational organized crime in such a comprehensive manner. The intention of this event was to raise awareness about the interdependency of international criminal structures, legal economic processes, and the respective political orders. A further aspect that was addressed was the interwovenness of drug, arms, human and organ trafficking, and money laundering.

With our conference we also intended to contribute toward overcoming the well-established stereotype of organized crime as being a marginal problem. And we tackled another dominant stereotype in Germany, namely that TOC only exists in other countries and that Germany is not much involved, affected, or responsible. The conference was a big success and well documented in the national and international media.

Organized crime is not a new phenomenon; however, it has become fatal for more and more people. Violence and the violation of human rights have become almost ordinary occurrences. Since democracy is one of the central concerns, it is important that TOC be recognized as a structural element of international relations. Internationally as well as nationally, the price that a society and its individuals must pay as a result of the infiltration of TOC should be much more transparent. The international conference was not meant to be a one-time event but the beginning of a deliberate process that links the policy field of (transnational) organized crime to the issue areas of our daily work – such as freedom, democracy, human rights, anti-racism, ecology, and gender equality. We should expect those in politics, media, and civil society – on a global scale – to focus on the problem and act rather than ignore it. Therefore, we are currently strengthening civil society engagement against TOC in various countries and are fostering networking and knowledge-exchange on the issue.

We are especially interested in the dialectics between committing and combating (transnational) organized crime. We are also interested in civil engagement as a means to protect civil, political, and economic life against infiltration by TOC. We want politicians and lawyers to assess those interdependencies with a new vision and assert their responsibilities within the context.

Who shapes our current role models? And where does our general orientation come from? How can we define the fine line between a successful businessman earning millions a year through financial speculation on staple foods and an unscrupulous Mafia boss dealing with drugs and women? Who consumes such drugs and women, and who is involved in money laundering in our societies?

The answers are difficult and it is our responsibility to work them out! With this book we hope to contribute toward the responsible handling of the questions. Hopefully, many interested readers across the whole world will feel enriched by its offerings and will benefit from our having assembled so many authors to address transnational organized crime from many different countries and perspectives, to analyze it, and to elaborate on policy recommendations. Many thanks for their commitment.

This book was only possible thanks to the energy, the knowledge, and the networks of Regine Schönenberg; the engagement and the enthusiasm of Annette von Schönfeld, Head of the Heinrich Böll Foundation's Regional Office for Mexico and Central America; the valuable contributions and interview skills of Verena Zoppei; and the efforts of Daniel Backhouse, who maintained the overview of all partners involved and contributed with his always reliable project management.

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