

IV. Outlook

The question whether TOC is an intrinsic feature of a globalized economic life or an indicator of its collateral conflicts will remain a polemical one. However, from our point of view, which is backed up by the articles in this book, transnational organized crime profits significantly from the legal proceedings of global trade; the preponderant ignorance or even consent of political actors on all levels and of all parts of the world regarding the proliferation of criminal networks; the secrecy and lack of regulation of the financial sector; the still quite unknown possibilities of cybercrime; and the materialistic and individualistic philosophy of our age.

It is especially the broader debate regarding the interwovenness of legal and illegal economic activities and the underlying normative conflicts about the legitimacy of action that makes TOC politically relevant. If one assumes that transparency, accountability, and participation are preconditions for a democratic life, we see actors of transnational and national crime networks absorbing political structures – and even decision-makers – through secrecy, non-rejectable offers, and open threats. John Christensen elaborates in his interview the role and the power of secrecy. Marco Lara Klahr describes in his article on extortion in Mexico the social naturalization of threats, which is becoming a threat to democratic society itself.

Currently, *the state* and its institutions are being challenged on different fronts since they are competing with alternative networks offering often faster and more promising survival strategies. In this context it should not be underestimated how the prevailing gold-rush mood characterized by the scramble for maximum profits in society as a whole primes the field for extra-legal actions.

In Europe, the state is increasingly losing its ability to provide security and well-being via public policies to private providers. Additionally, uncontrolled financial markets compete for the money of the taxpayers, leaving the communities without resources for the most necessary investments into public infrastructure.

In many countries of the global South, state institutions never were in the position to dominate public life. As described, for example, in the articles on Afghanistan or the Amazon region, belonging to a certain network is almost natural since it corresponds with family, regional, and/or ethnic affiliations. Starting under such conditions, creating a type of democratic political culture and correspond-

ing institutions would need the support of transparent and accountable global structures instead of the “everything goes” mentality that currently shapes global trade relations. Against that background, sporadic anticorruption campaigns reveal their cosmetic and false character. All those tendencies together undermine the dwindling legitimacy of the state and open up corridors for alternative survival strategies – be they religious, patrimonial, or criminal networks.

It is not only in weak states or war-torn countries that the fine line between legal and illegal is becoming increasingly more diffuse. As long as, for example, illegal labor conditions for construction workers on public construction sites in the German capital of Berlin are the norm – with responsible police officers stating that they can only engage in surprise raids, because otherwise corrupt colleagues would sell the information to corrupt subcontractors who profit from the German bidding legislation – it will remain impossible to locate organized crime outside of our everyday lives. Additionally, Western Europe and the United States profit from cheap, sub-human labor conditions and the non-observance of environmental regulations all over the world that are incorporated into the majority of our prevalent, often surprisingly cheap, consumer goods.

The multi-facetted manifestations of transnational organized crime can be classified according to their political and personal consequences.

Personally, we hope that this book stimulates reflection on the fine line between legal and illegal activities in everyday life – especially regarding the far-reaching effects of the lack of transparency, accountability, and civic participation on the political cultures of our countries. We hope that, for example, the interviews concerning these issues with activists and people from public institutions or business – like Claudio la Camera from the Museo della Ndrangheta; Aurelio Rios from the Public Ministry of Brazil; or Steffen Salvenmoser from PricewaterhouseCoopers – will help to create visions and ideas on how to deal with these challenges, also perhaps in similar contexts.

Regarding political action, we aim to inspire everybody in the legal, political, and economic arenas to stand up for transparent and accountable structures – even though this might lead to the loss of short-term profits.

We wish to continue and to intensify the dialogue on the topic, possibly through the formation of an exchange network of experiences, especially those regarding organized crime, as described so well by various contributors to this book.¹

1 | See list of authors and their email addresses at the end of this book.