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Narcotics and Lethal Violence: Exploring the Organizational
Structures of Organized Crime in Sweden

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Abstract

Title:

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Prior to a few years ago, Sweden was known for having relatively low levels of lethal violence in Europe. However, since the early 2000s, the level of lethal violence in Sweden has increased and is now higher than many other countries. The purpose of the study is to investigate the role of narcotics in the increased deadly violence within organized crime in Sweden and how the organizational dimensions look like in these criminal networks. The theoretical framework set out a conceptual framework and expand upon situational approaches and crime scripts as comprehensive tools for examining organized crime at a crime-specific level of analysis. A case study was used as the research method. The findings suggest that narcotics play a significant role in the rise of gun violence in Sweden as a result of a monopolistic drive from the criminal network. Despite the loose structure of the criminal networks, there is a level of organization that facilitates the trade of weapons and stolen vehicles and enables collaboration with other criminal networks to access targets more easily.

Keywords: Gun violence, Organized crime, Organizational dimensions, Narcotics, Rational choice, crime script.

Forward

I would like to thank all the respondents that participated in this work, your commitment and willingness to share your experiences was very helpful and is greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank my supervisor, Oskar Engdahl, who always motivated and helped me to conduct the study forward.

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1. Introduction

Prior to a few years ago, Sweden was known for having relatively low levels of lethal violence in Europe. However, since the early 2000s, the level of lethal violence in Sweden has increased and is now higher than many other countries. In particular, Sweden has experienced a high level of deadly gun violence, with approximately 4 deaths per million inhabitants, while the European average is approximately 1.5 deaths per million inhabitants (Klara Hradilova Selin 2021). According to the Swedish Crime Prevention Council (BRÅ), no other country in the study exhibits comparable increases to those in Sweden. Meanwhile, over the past three decades, Sweden has witnessed a growth in criminal gangs, which constitute a significant social challenge alongside gun violence. These phenomena partially overlap and call for the development of empirically-supported legal, policy, and practical frameworks aimed at reducing the prevalence of gangs and gang violence in Sweden (Rostami 2017).

The rise in fatal gun violence in Sweden is a puzzling phenomenon that defies explanation as it is not part of an international trend. The nearest approximation to the Swedish trend is an upsurge in fatal knife violence in England and Wales. Although the methods of violence differ, these incidents occurred in settings resembling the escalation of shooting fatalities in Sweden. Namely, they transpired among youthful male populations in precarious areas with links to illegal drug trafficking (Klara Hradilova Selin 2021). Reputation appears to play a significant role in the escalation of firearms violence, as it is the consequences of conflicts that ultimately determine an individual's status and position within the criminal milieu (Jönsson & Nilsson, 2019). The scrutiny of one's actions by peers and rivals within the criminal environment intensifies the significance attached to every decision. Given the intense competition for higher positions, every action carries weight and is taken with utmost seriousness. In this regard, gun violence can be perceived as an investment in one's criminal career, as acts of violence serve to enhance reputation and consolidate one's position. The association of one's name and activities with profits strengthens influence over the local drug market. However, reputation in this context is transient and fragile, requiring constant maintenance and defence. Consequently, conflicts and shootings become strategic tools for competing for position and power, both within the drug market and the broader criminal landscape (Jönsson & Nilsson, 2019).

To understand the link between deadly violence in Sweden and the illegal drug market, it is necessary to trace the development of drug policy in Sweden over the past four decades. The

definition of narcotics is crucial for interpreting this development; in Sweden, all non-medical use of narcotics is considered abuse and is criminalized. One significant change in the Narcotics Penal Code was the criminalization of drug use in 1988, followed by stricter penalties in 1993 that introduced a maximum six-month imprisonment for personal use. Since the 1980s, Sweden has aspired to be a drug-free society, and the criminalization of drug use in 1988 was intended to signal a strong stance against drug handling and serve as a preventive measure against drug abuse among young people and other at-risk groups (Pauloff and Lindström 2000).

However, the more significant question is whether these legal changes have led to a decrease in drug abuse in Swedish society. The available information does not suggest that criminalization and stricter penalties have acted as a deterrent against drug use among young individuals or reduced new recruitment into drug use (Pauloff and Lindström 2000).

1.2 The professionalization of the illegal drug market

The question of whether the criminalization of drug abuse in Sweden has led to a decrease in drug abuse remains inconclusive. However, one certain outcome is that the illegal drug market has undergone significant changes and professionalization. These changes include the adoption of new smuggling structures, the establishment of monopolies for certain sales areas, and increased accessibility for buyers (Tollin, Li Hammar, and Anna Jonsson 2021). Furthermore, organized criminal networks have emerged that control multiple links in the distribution chain. Recent studies have shown that an increasing number of Swedish criminals have established themselves as organizers in European transit countries and in countries where narcotics are produced. These organizers purchase large quantities of narcotics and coordinate their transport to Sweden, thereby contributing to hierarchies in the Swedish criminal environment. Additionally, over the past decade, there has been a development and establishment of internet sales in Sweden, which although currently only a small part of the total drug market, is a growing market that further increases accessibility for buyers (Tollin et al. 2021).

In socially vulnerable areas, the majority of drug transactions take place through mobile phone sales via encrypted applications. These types of sales are frequently governed by criminal networks that claim ownership of the area, and control over locations is crucial for all aspects of drug handling, including sales, smuggling, storage, and distribution. The establishment of control is often accomplished through various forms of criminal activity, including violence. Certain locations are deemed to have more stable dominance relationships, while others have recurring power struggles and territorial conflicts. The competition for territory frequently leads

to a rise in other criminal activities, such as robberies, thefts, and extortion, or alternatively, various networks outsource their operations to other locations throughout Sweden (Tollin et al. 2021).

The relationship between drug use and criminal activity is a complex one. The extent to which drug use causes crime or crime causes drug use is not clear. This study aims to contribute to the field of crime prevention and the purpose of the study is to investigate what the role of narcotics looks like in the increased lethal violence in Sweden and what the organizational dimensions look like in the criminal network, as well as how they affect the shootings.

2. Purpose & Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to investigate the role of narcotics in the increased deadly and lethal violence within organized crime in Sweden and how the organizational dimensions look like in these criminal networks. In order to achieve this purpose, these research questions will be answered:

RQ1 What does the role of narcotics look like in the increased lethal violence in Sweden?

RQ2 What do the organizational dimensions look like in the criminal networks, and how do they affect the shootings?

3. Previous Research

In this section, the previous research will be introduced, beginning with a discussion on Sweden's situation concerning organized crime, the escalation of firearm violence, and the drug market. Following that, prior studies on the outcomes of cannabis legalization in countries that have implemented such policies.

3.1 Sweden

Amir Rostami (2017) presents that Sweden has witnessed a growth in criminal gangs over the past 30 years, and gun violence among young males is also on the rise. Gun violence and street gangs are two prevalent, partially overlapping phenomena that constitute social challenges for the society (Rostami 2017). He compares Sweden's gang crime with the street gangs that exist in the USA, with differences in that grenades are also used in Sweden and that Swedish street gangs are not as well empirically studied, and this is due to little academic attention has been directed towards this problem. It is only in recent years that these gang conflicts have received political attention as well. A little historical perspective, during the 1950s and 60s, organized crime and gangs are understood as mainly something foreign, and it is not until approximately the 70s that organized crime is a widely debated topic. Even if street gangs existed in Sweden during these time periods, it was not until the late 90s and early 2000s that Sweden witnessed the rise of street gangs, and in recent years these gangs have been recognized as one of the most significant challenges in socio-economically deprived areas (Rostami 2017). The Swedish street gangs seem to have flexible criminal behaviour patterns featuring a wide range of offenses such as drug-related and weapon offenses. Gun violence is becoming more concentrated and cemented in some urban areas, for instance, between 2011 and 2016 around 1200 shootings and 54 hand-grenades attacks were identified in Sweden's top 3 biggest cities, Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö, which resulted in over 100 dead and 440 injured. One interesting, and quite scary, finding shows that while a gun offender in eastern, southern, and western Europe is most likely to be in the age group 30-34, in northern Europe, the age group 20-24 is responsible for the largest share. In conclusion, Rostami (2017) maintains that more research in this area is essential to increase our understanding of the dimensions of criminal gangs and organized crime. An effective effort requires a good understanding of the root cause itself, organizational dimensions, operational patterns of the crime problem in question, and the distribution of responsibilities between various actors (Rostami 2017).

A later study on gun violence in Sweden suggest that gun violence is strongly concentrated on open drug markets in vulnerable neighbourhoods, and that those locations in turn exhibit high risks for repeat shootings after an initial shooting event (Gerell et al. 2021). The study aims to explore the link between illegal drug markets and gun violence to understand when and where gun violence take place, which in turn could help preventative efforts by the police and other actors. Open drug markets are considered to be prevalent in all vulnerable neighbourhoods, and drug-related crimes are considered a key problem in these areas, according to the police. A vulnerable neighbourhood is defined as a deprived neighbourhood where criminal networks impact on local community life. 60 neighbourhoods across Sweden were labelled vulnerable by the police authorities in the most recent report. Gun homicides is often attributed to criminal conflicts, and it is here that the most increases can be spotted, it is also tied to young men, deprived neighbourhoods and with illegal weapons being used. Patterns of gun violence show strong near-repeat patterns in Sweden, with a four-fold increase in risk of shooting nearby after an initial shooting, these patterns were significantly found for the three largest cities in Sweden, Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö. Further, they find that gun violence is clustered in both time and space, and the risk of follow-up shootings taking place after an initial shooting, is at least two times as high if the first shooting took place at an open drug scene in a vulnerable neighbourhood compared to if the first shooting took place elsewhere in the cities. The increased violence can also stem from instability within an illegal market caused by monopolistic drive from criminal networks who aim to defend the control over drug markets in these vulnerable areas. Although they argue that they are unable to state any causal mechanisms, they refer to another study that suggest it may be related to key players being removed from the drug markets and the void being filled by younger up-coming figures that turn to violence in order to establish themselves. Interventions against gun violence based partly on drug markets may therefore be relevant, they state (Gerell et al. 2021).

A 2022 report highlights the prevalence of cannabis as the most commonly used drug in Sweden, particularly in Stockholm. While alcohol consumption is declining, the cannabis market is expanding both in complexity and scale. The report emphasizes the negative health effects of cannabis use, including addiction risks and potential links to serious mental illnesses. Moreover, it highlights the significant negative social effects and impact on crime associated with cannabis. The report's objective is to examine the extent, development, and nature of deadly violence related to cannabis. Key research questions include the prevalence of cannabis-related

elements in deadly violence, any changes observed in the 21st century, and the nature of the connections involved, whether pharmacological, economic-compulsive, or systemic. The findings indicate that 45% of fatal violence cases in Sweden between 2008 and 2019 had some form of drug involvement. In most instances (34% of cases), there was a pharmacological connection, indicating the perpetrator or victim was under the influence of drugs during the crime. Systemic connections, related to conflicts over drug handling, accounted for approximately 17% of cases, while economic-compulsive connections were less common (about 5% of cases). The report identifies cannabis as the most prevalent drug element, present in approximately 26% of the analyzed fatal violence cases, either alone or in combination with other drugs. Young adults (aged 15 to 29) were found to be overrepresented in cannabis-related fatal violence incidents. The study concludes that cannabis consumption and conflicts linked to cannabis play a significant and increasing role in deadly violence in Sweden. However, the report does not definitively establish that the rising cannabis consumption directly causes the increase in deadly violence. Nonetheless, it highlights the growth of systematic cannabis-related cases, where conflicts over sales, transfers, and market shares of the drug are direct motives for violence (Granath et al., 2022).

Organized crime is a prominent concern in Sweden, particularly due to incidents of shootings linked to criminal activities. Understanding and addressing this complex phenomenon pose challenges due to its multifaceted nature. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (BRÅ) has developed a framework categorizing organized crime into four main categories: *self-defined groups*, *externally defined groups*, *unnamed groups*, and *project-based constellations*. These categories aid in comprehending the organizational dimensions, criminal markets, and illicit activities associated with different networks and groups (Vesterhav & Korsell, 2016). *Self-defined groups* encompass collectives that emphasize their group affiliation through names, attributes, and membership. This category includes motorcycle gangs and other gangs that have self-assigned names. Despite being affiliated with a particular gang, individual members typically maintain their autonomy, possessing their own agendas and engaging in criminal enterprises or collaborative projects with individuals both inside and outside their respective group affiliations. In essence, individuals within self-defined groups have the flexibility to participate in or form *project-based constellations* for the purpose of conducting lucrative criminal activities (Vesterhav & Korsell, 2016).

Unnamed groups serve as a broad classification encompassing diverse relational networks that lack both self-assigned and externally assigned names. Typically, these groups exhibit a less defined structure compared to self-defined groups, although in certain instances, a stronger sense of loyalty may exist among the members. Examples of unnamed groups include suburban-district-based networks formed by individuals residing in the same residential area, as well as family-based networks. These groups exemplify variations within organized crime characterized by unique social dynamics and affiliations (Vesterhav & Korsell, 2016).

Externally defined groups are characterized by their lack of self-description regarding group affiliation through names, symbols, or attributes. Instead, these groups are assigned names by external entities, such as law enforcement agencies or the media. The identification and categorization of these groups rely on external sources to define and label their existence within the context of organized crime (Vesterhav & Korsell, 2016).

Project-based constellations are formed as specialized groups with the objective of engaging in profitable criminal activities, such as drug smuggling. Similar to project teams in the legal economy, project-based constellations typically comprise one or more project managers and multiple project members, each assigned specific tasks within the criminal enterprise. This group formation can include individuals from the previously mentioned categories, with member selection based on criteria such as competence, reliability, reputation, and suitability for their designated roles within the project-based constellation. It is important to note that not all individuals involved in project-based constellations are necessarily professional criminals; some individuals may only provide intermittent assistance or support as needed (Vesterhav & Korsell, 2016).

An effective avenue for examining the nexus between narcotics and organized crime, as well as the surge in gun-related violence, something that Gerell et.al (2021) raised in their study, involves exploring countries that have performed legalization or decriminalization measures concerning cannabis. By examining the crime statistics of such nations or investigating the clearance rates within law enforcement agencies, valuable insights can be assembled. Consequently, forthcoming research will focus on revealing the association between the legalization of narcotics and its impact on criminal activities.

3.2 Legalization of Cannabis & Crime Effects

Dragone, Prarolo, Vanin, and Zanella (2019) conducted a quasi-experimental study in Washington and Oregon to examine the crime effects of legalizing recreational cannabis (RC). Their

findings indicate that RC legalization did not lead to an increase in crime. In fact, there was a reduction in rapes by 15% to 30% and thefts by 10% to 20%. The exact mechanisms behind these effects are not conclusively determined, but four potential mechanisms are discussed. Firstly, the sedative nature of cannabis suggests a possible substitution effect, wherein consumers shift away from more aggressive substances like alcohol and other drugs. This is supported by the observation that RC legalization led to a 2.5 percentage point increase in cannabis consumption and a 2-percentage point decrease in both regular and binge alcohol consumption. Secondly, the legalization of RC may prompt a reallocation of police resources from cannabis-related activities to other types of crime. Thirdly, legalization may undermine the presence of criminal gangs and individuals in the local cannabis market, as legal markets offer safer and more reliable products through legitimate businesses. This displacement of illegal sellers and reduced involvement of small-scale criminals as drug dealers or pushers subsequently lowers the risk for consumers. However, it is acknowledged that criminal gangs may still retain some presence in the legal or illegal market, albeit to a lesser extent. The study argues that these gangs have a diminished role.

Makin et al. (2019) investigated the impact of recreational cannabis (RC) legalization on clearance rates among police agencies in Washington and Colorado. The study aimed to determine whether RC legalization influenced clearance rates, and their findings align with arguments put forth by proponents of legalization. In Colorado, clearance rates showed improvements across crime types, except for motor vehicle theft, surpassing rates in the rest of the country. Similarly, in Washington, clearance rates exhibited a significant increase compared to national rates. The results indicated an immediate increase followed by a sustained upward trend. The researchers attribute these findings to the reallocation of police resources away from minor cannabis offenses, enabling greater focus on crimes with lower clearance rates. However, they acknowledge the diverse nature of police agencies in terms of prioritization, expertise, expectations, and resources, which complicates a homogeneous explanation. While the analysis provides some insight into the reasons behind the increased clearance rates, the specific factors contributing to these improvements remain less certain (Makin et al., 2019).

Wu, Wen, and Wilson (2021) conducted a quasi-experimental study in Oregon to examine the impact of cannabis legalization on serious crime. In contrast to prior studies, they found that

legalization likely led to significant increases in various crime types. Factors such as increased availability of affordable cannabis, motivating users to engage in predatory crime, and the reallocation of law enforcement resources were identified as potential contributors. These findings challenge the notion that legalization reduces crime and highlight the complex interplay between state policies, law enforcement environments, and the presence of illegal markets. The researchers acknowledge that their study captures short-term effects, emphasizing the need for further analysis as more data becomes available.

Contrary to Makin et al. (2019), Lu et al. (2021) conducted a study in Colorado and Washington that challenges the notion of positive effects of legalization on crime rates. Their aim was to assess the impact of recreational cannabis (RC) legalization on crime rates using a quasi-experimental approach. However, their findings did not indicate statistically significant long-term effects of RC legalization on property or violent crime rates in either state. While there were some immediate increases in crime following legalization, these effects were not sustained over the long term. The study's strength lies in comparing the first two states to legalize RC with states that had no RC laws, and their results clearly demonstrate that RC legalization did not lead to significant increases in crime rates. The authors caution against prematurely concluding that legalization provides substantial improvements in public safety, as most crime rates remained stable in their study, and crime is not the sole measure of public safety (Lu et al., 2021).

In summary, Sweden has witnessed a rise in criminal gang activities, considered a significant social problem. BRÅ developed a framework categorizing organized crime to better understand its manifestations (Rostami, 2017; Vesterhav & Korsell, 2016). Gun violence is concentrated in socially disadvantaged areas, with a higher risk of follow-up shootings (Gerell et al. 2021). Nearly half of reported shootings in Sweden from 2008 to 2019 were drug-related, primarily involving cannabis (Granath et al., 2022). Studies on cannabis legalization in the US show varying effects: increased police clearance rates and reduced gang involvement in some cases, while in others, increased crime due to higher cannabis prices and predatory behaviour (Makin et al., 2019; Dragone et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2021). Lu et al. (2021) found no long-term effects of cannabis legalization on crime rates, cautioning against viewing it as a solution. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive approaches considering the intricate relationship between drug legalization, organized crime, gun violence, and crime rates.

4. Theoretical Analysis Framework

This section set out a conceptual framework and proposes accompanying research methodologies intended to enhance our understanding of these "how" inquiries for policy-oriented objectives. Specifically, this section will expand upon situational approaches and crime scripts as comprehensive tools for examining organized crime at a crime-specific level of analysis.

4.2 The Rational Choice & Crime Scripts

Broadly speaking, the rational choice perspective posits that individuals engage in criminal behavior due to the perceived benefits it offers. Similar to rational economic decision-makers, the reasoning criminal carefully weighs the risks, efforts, and rewards associated with various courses of action and selects the one that maximizes, or at least provides a reasonable return on, their investment of time and energy (Cornish & Clarke, 2001). There are compelling reasons to suggest that the rational choice perspective is particularly well-suited for analyzing organized crimes. Organized crimes are characterized by their purposeful and instrumental nature, as they aim to achieve tangible gains such as financial resources or material goods through the deliberate and strategic exploitation of opportunities for profit (Ibid). Additionally, organized crimes closely resemble legitimate economic activities within non-criminal marketplaces. By adopting a rational choice approach, researchers are prompted to examine organized crimes as products of criminal enterprises operating akin to legitimate businesses. Another significant aspect is that the rational choice perspective emphasizes strategic thinking, planning, and sequential decision-making, which may capture essential elements of successfully undertaking organized crimes. These complex criminal activities involve the mobilization of resources and the coordination of efforts among self-interested and untrustworthy collaborators. While the rational choice approach can provide valuable insights into understanding organized crimes in general, its most noteworthy contribution lies in its focus on the modus operandi of specific crimes (Ibid). This knowledge can be utilized to develop strategies aimed at prevention or disruption of such crimes.

Like other concepts rooted in rational choice theory, the concept of crime script serves the purpose of deepening our comprehension of offending behavior as instrumental actions pursued with the intention of securing advantages for the criminal. The crime script emerged as a method of expanding and systematizing our understanding of the essential elements encompassing criminal actors, equipment, locations, and activities required to successfully execute

each stage of the criminal process. It offers a structured framework that facilitates the organization and examination of the sequential decision-making processes involved in the commission of the crime itself. Given that the rational choice perspective portrays offending behavior as a purposeful and skillful instrumental action influenced by choices and decisions made within specific situational contexts, the crime script concept provides a means of constructing detailed narratives that delineate the step-by-step procedures employed by offenders in the commission of crimes. (Cornish & Clarke, 2001).

4.3 Situational Approach

Different types of crimes have distinct characteristics and can be analysed through a situational perspective. The situational approach has been applied to organized crime by several scholars, who emphasize opportunities for crime prevention. Situational analysis is crime-specific and does not focus on organized crime in general, but rather on specific crimes such as cocaine smuggling (Kleemans, Soudijn, and Weenink 2012), in this case it will focus on the increase in fatal gun violence. Derek B. Cornish and Ronald V. Clarke (2002) assert that situational analysis begins by unpacking the sets of "crime scripts" involved, as these reveal the opportunity structures that enable the activities. Thus, obstacles to organized crime can be identified and developed through this approach. Mondani and Rostami (2022) offer valuable insights into the dynamics and structure of criminal organizations, contributing to a deeper understanding and conceptualization of organized crime. In the broader societal context, organized crime, particularly when it is repeated for profit, is often perceived as a more significant social problem than disorganized crime, such as that committed by a solitary offender. To study organized crime, the authors suggest examining the degree of organization rather than relying on standardized definitions. Their mobility analysis suggests that street gangs in Sweden are largely confined to specific geographic regions and are therefore a locally bound criminal phenomenon. Furthermore, the authors' examination of cross-gang collaborations indicates that street gangs tend to operate independently and do not collaborate with other street gangs (Mondani and Rostami 2022). The authors further contend that the lack of collaboration between street gangs could be a result of their organizational immaturity or natural competition. They also note that street gangs with low levels of mobility and collaboration tend to exhibit less violence, suggesting that violence becomes a necessary tool only when a gang reaches a certain level of organization, such as when it intentionally or unintentionally interacts and competes with other gangs. Finally, the authors suggest that despite varying patterns of mobility, collaboration, and criminal

behaviour among street gangs, they operate within a given range of values (Mondani and Rostami 2022). This implies that, despite their differences, street gangs operate within a limited range concerning their degree of organization. This conceptualization of criminal street gangs and organized crime offers a solid foundation for the study and is particularly relevant to addressing the first and second research questions. By unpacking the crime script sets, the opportunity structures that facilitate the occurrence of fatal gun violence in this instance can be exposed.

5. Methodology & Ethical Considerations

In this section, methods of the study will be presented. A case study will be used as the research method because a case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon (a “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, in other words a case study should be used to understand a real-world case and assume that such an understanding is likely to involve important contextual conditions relevant to the specific case (Robert K. Yin 2018:15-16). The study is somewhat divided into two parts, where the first part concentrates on analysing verdicts from the Swedish District Court in order to get an insight into the role of narcotics in the shootings and the organizational dimensions of the criminal networks, to the follow up with interviews with police officers with experience from crime investigations. Ethical considerations will finally be discussed.

5.1 The Crime Script

Six verdicts for murder or attempted murder from Swedish District Court will be analysed. These verdicts come from different geographical areas in Sweden. In order to find ways of tackling organized crime, rather than merely appreciating it, the crime script will be used to analyse the verdicts. This method is designed to improve understanding of offending as instrumental behaviour and provides a framework for exploring and organizing the moment-to-moment actions and decisions involved in the process of committing the crime itself (Cornish and Clarke 2001). The script concept draws attention to the structure of purposive action, showing how it is organized to evolve through time to achieve its objectives. Hence, criminal action is suggested to proceed in an orderly routinized fashion, guided by explicit and implicit plans, further these plans break down the ongoing action into separate stages, each with its distinctive part to play in furthering the process of the overall crime. For the crime to be successful, specific situational requirements have to be met, for instance being able to get tools, co-offenders, to

enter a setting, to select victims or targets etc. Therefore, the use of scripts permits more detailed accounts of crime commission to be developed from available data, and identifies where gaps in information exist (Cornish and Clarke 2001; Sosnowski, Weis, and Petrossian 2022). By treating the crimes in the verdicts as aggregations of simpler elements it facilitates organized crime to be analysed into their constituent parts, so that the requirements for the success of all their aspects can be closely identified. Cornish and Clarke (2001) argue that through a more systematic understanding of the relevant stages involved in committing specific organized crimes, it expands the options of the situational crime prevention strategist by offering a wider range of possible interventions at which techniques can be applied. Furthermore, it offers a conceptual framework on how relationships among different forms of crime develop and emerge, it also explores how elaboration in criminal methods take place (Cornish and Clarke 2001). The crime script theoretic approach has been gaining momentum within the research community, both the number of publications mentioning the approach and the pool of authors have increased significantly from 2010 to 2018 (Dehghanniri and Borrion 2019).

So, the crime script processes the available data to be analysed specifically in the following steps (Sosnowski et al. 2022):

1. *Preparations*. The acquisition of the necessary tools, the selection of co-offenders, as well as agreeing on the selected locations for the crime or crimes.
2. *Entry*. The entry to the selected place or places where the crime is to take place.
3. *Precondition*. Crimes are not committed all at once. Certain predetermined steps may be taken to enable the crime, such as waiting at the scene for the area to be cleared or for the site supervisor to leave.
4. *Instrumental precondition*. Identifying the suitable targets
5. *Instrumental initiation*. Approaching the target.
6. *Instrumental actualization*. Engaging with the target, e.g., breaking into a car or assaulting the victim.
7. *Doing*. To carry out the intended crime.
8. *Post condition*. The person or persons who commit the crime leave the crime scene.
9. *Exit*. The decisions that need to be made after the crime assignment, such as disposing of the weapon or the stolen property.

5.1.1 Legal Process Material & Sample of Verdicts

The material that will be used as a basis for the script analysis itself consists of verdicts, the lawsuit, preliminary investigation material with interrogations and audio files from all interrogations downloaded from YouTube. The most extensive material comes from the preliminary investigations where for instance interviews with all those involved, observations from the witnesses and policemen's stories are reported. The study aimed to select verdicts from three prominent cities in Sweden, namely Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö, as these locations have been the focus of significant attention in relation to fatal violence (Gerell et al., 2021). Initially, six sentences from these cities were included in the sample. However, after filtering, four sentences were deemed relevant to the study's purpose, as they pertained to organized gang crime. Consequently, the search extended to include two additional judgments from different geographical regions in Sweden. Among the selected sentences, one can be regarded as an extreme case that garnered substantial news and media coverage, resulting in lengthy prison sentences for multiple individuals. The remaining verdicts are representative of typical cases within the sample. The sample of verdicts aimed to choose the verdicts that can provide informative descriptions of the phenomenon to be investigated and provide a foundation to being able to answer the research questions that have been stated. Hence, a strategic or well-selected sample has been used (Robert K. Yin 2018: 56-57), since verdicts where murder or attempted murder within organized crime environment have been of interest. This has also meant that the study has received four verdicts from two of Sweden's three largest cities, Gothenburg and Malmö, but also two verdicts from two different "medium-sized" cities, Orebro and Växjö. The subsequent section provides summarizing case descriptions of the verdicts.

The first verdict involves a 2020 street shooting, along with associated crimes. Sixteen individuals have been charged in connection with these crimes, which prosecutors claim are part of a long-standing conflict between two criminal networks primarily involved in drug-related activities. The crucial role of evidence from the encrypted service "EncroChat" in establishing the perpetrators' criminal activities has been emphasized (GÖTEBORGS TINGSRÄTT 2021).

In the second verdict, a 2022 shooting incident prompted multiple calls to SOS reporting a fast-moving vehicle. In Malmö, an enduring conflict between two criminal networks is highlighted, with the plaintiff associated with one group and the three defendants associated with the opposing side. Both groups are established criminal organizations primarily engaged in drug-related

activities. Although the plaintiff was once affiliated with the first gang, he is now part of the second group known as "Satudarah," indicating a severed connection (MALMÖ TINGSRÄTT 2022).

The third verdict concerns the fatal shooting of a 23-year-old man. The motive behind the shooting is believed to be his involvement in criminal activities and associations, potentially as an act of revenge for previous murders (MALMÖ TINGSRÄTT 2019).

In 2022, the plaintiff was fatally shot as part of a conflict between two criminal networks. One of the defendants' girlfriends had a relative who was previously murdered in 2015 within the context of this ongoing network conflict (GÖTEBORGS TINGSRÄTT 2023).

Over the past few years, a conflict has been unfolding between two individuals and their respective networks, primarily revolving around control of the local drug market. This conflict has resulted in incidents such as shootings and explosions. The fifth verdict involves a premeditated murder case where the network leader, currently located in Spain, orchestrates the killing of the rival gang leader and two other individuals within the same network (ÖREBRO TINGSRÄTT 2021).

In 2021, a 28-year-old man was fatally shot on his way home in Araby, Växjö. The sixth verdict focuses on this murder, which involved two masked individuals riding an electric scooter. The conflict primarily involves two distinct groups: an older group comprising individuals around 25 years old, and a second group consisting of individuals born between 1999 and 2004, to which the two defendants belonged. One of the defendants is identified as a prominent figure within the group. These networks are loosely structured. A surge in violence occurred during the summer of 2021 due to increased competition in the local drug market initiated by the younger network, resulting in reduced prices, which was met with disapproval (VÄXJÖ TINGSRÄTT 2022).

5.2 Semi-structured interviews & Sample

In addition to the analysis of the selected verdicts for this study, interviews with police will also be conducted to supplement the verdicts and thus gain deeper understanding of what it might look like through their knowledge and experience. Four police officers have been interviewed from different parts of Sweden. All police officers have experience in investigations of the type of crimes studied, consequently it becomes relevant to interview them in particular. The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the respondents' point of view, develop meaning from their experiences and reveal their lived world as it was before scientific

explanations (Kvale and Brinkman 2014). The method type of interviews was semi-structured interviews, where the questions are predetermined and created in a interviews guide. All questions are asked to all respondents, in the same sequence, this means that everyone is treated equally and therefore provides a basis for assessment, at the same time the interviews can be shaped to some extent based on the respondent's answers. The advantages of this method are that the respondent can feel safe and the interview is experienced more like a conversation, rather than an "interrogation" (Kvale and Brinkman 2014). However, it is important to always keep track of the respondent's knowledge and the experience that the study is looking for, therefore it is important not to get caught up in something that is perceived as irrelevant in retrospect (Lee 2012).

In general, it can be said that for individual interviews, the benchmark is about 8-12 interviews (Creswell and Poth 2017), or 15 +- 10 (Kvale and Brinkman 2014), but the number is determined by the quality of the interviews (Creswell and Poth 2017). In this study, as said, four interviews were conducted, but since the interviews are a secondary data collection method and a kind of supplement to the script analysis of the verdicts that have been chosen, the number of interviews is still considered sufficient. Three of the four respondents were interviewed on site at the police station, during working hours, and the last one was interviewed via video chat. All interviews were recorder to facilitate the transcription process.

When it comes to the sample of respondents, due to that the interviews aims to unfold the meaning of their experience, the sample consist of qualified people with the "right" experiences and an ability and willingness to communicate these (Alvesson and Lee 2012), therefore respondents who have worked at least 2 years as police officers were sought. Well-selected respondents can be quite helpful, but in this case the study became inclined to rely heavily on those whom were already chosen (Alvesson and Lee 2012). Thus, snowball sampling was used as method by encouraging already existing respondents to contact more members to strengthen the data sets.

5.2.1 Interview Guide

The interview guide was formulated and created to answer the purpose of the study, what does the role of narcotics look like in the increased lethal violence in Sweden, and what do the organizational dimensions look like in the criminal networks, as well as how it affects the shootings.

Alvesson & Lee (2012) argue that a well-structured guide can lead to the respondents only following the researcher's parameters and therefore not discussing topics or themes that they find interesting, and in this way the interview loses richness and novelty. Low levels of structure, on the other hand, can provide opportunities for freedom where the respondents can develop thoughts about new perspectives and ideas, but as previously mentioned, this can lead to time being spent on topics that are not of interest and purpose of the study. Thus, the interview guide is meant to start with a set of open-ended questions to refine the focus and conduct of the study. After an explanatory phase, a more specific set of questions will be asked (Alvesson and Lee 2012). The first set of questions have a background purpose, for instance trying to capture how long they have worked in their profession, whether they have worked in the same place and what their current position entails. Then the questions go quite directly into gang crime and organized crime, the aim is to try capturing the respondents' experiences with structures within gangs, experiences with firearm violence, where these weapons come from and whether there is any connection between firearm violence and drug sales of cannabis. Finally, questions will be asked about how they see the future, for example if they think we will see the same political line against narcotics in Sweden in 10 years.

5.3 Ethical Considerations

The implementation of a research project raises questions about the value of the knowledge that is produced and the contribution that the study makes to society. Social science research should serve scientific and human interests. The four areas of uncertainty that will be addressed here can be used as a framework when preparing an ethical protocol for a qualitative study, and they can be used as ethical reminders of what to look for in practice when conducting interview research (Kvale and Brinkman 2014). This study aims to adhere to good ethical research practices, thus four of the areas that are usually discussed in ethical guidelines for researchers will be presented; informed consent, confidentiality, and consequences and the role of the researcher.

Information about confidentiality and who will have access to the interview or other material, the researcher's right to publish all or part of the interview, as well as the respondent's access to the transcript and the analysis of the qualitative data (Kvale and Brinkman 2014), was included in the information that was handed to the participants prior to the interviews. When it comes to confidentiality, neither names nor workplaces is mentioned as it does not serve any purpose for the study, but also because the respondents have the right to a private life, which is

connected to certain ethical and scientific dilemmas (Ibid). An assessment of the consequences of a qualitative study is necessary, this was made according to the harm that the respondents may suffer and according to the scientific benefits that their participation brings (Ibid). Finally, the researcher's integrity and the role of the researcher as a person is decisive for the quality of the scientific knowledge, as it is through the researcher himself that the knowledge is obtained. Therefore, the interviews strived to achieve high scientific quality, which means that the result should be as accurate and representative of the research area as possible.

The study acknowledges that the analysed judgments are publicly accessible documents; however, it recognizes the presence of ethical considerations that must be addressed. The utmost importance is placed on respecting the integrity and confidentiality of individuals associated with the cases. Consequently, no identifying information, such as names, case numbers, or addresses, will be disclosed in the study. The researchers are committed to upholding a rigorous standard of integrity and objectivity during the analysis process, ensuring the objectivity of their own research. The information presented in the study is accurately and objectively portrayed, without any distortion or misrepresentation of the content found within the judgments.

6. Result & Analysis

This section will provide a detailed exposition of the study's finding, analysis, and results. The aim of this research is to enhance comprehension concerning the relationship between narcotics, particularly cannabis, and lethal violence in Sweden, as well as the organizational aspects of these networks. The study employs case descriptions of verdicts to gain a more profound insight into the role of narcotics and the organizational dimensions in the motive and preparations of the shootings.

6.1 Motives

The motives for the murders and attempted murders in the six analysed verdicts exhibit variations. All six cases are associated with organized networks or gangs embroiled in conflict with each other, and the gun violence tends to be concentrated in socially vulnerable areas within each city. Out of the six cases, two are directly linked to a conflict over the drug market and cannabis sales. In one instance, the younger network in Araby, Växjö, began competing by offering lower prices for primarily cannabis but also other substances. This did not sit well with the older network in the area, leading to a conflict that culminated in a member of the younger network seriously stabbing a member of the older network. This, in turn, resulted in further

violent crimes. According to police information, the person who was murdered in this case was among the more influential members of the older network. Many of the younger network members felt offended by him, as he was often approached for help due to his propensity for violence, his familiarity with weapons, and his interest in them (VÄXJÖ TINGSRÄTT 2022). The preliminary investigation material and the interrogations with the defendants do not provide clarity regarding the nature of the offense that the younger network members experienced at the hands of the influential member of the older network. For instance, it is unclear whether they felt humiliated by him. Consequently, it is challenging to draw conclusions regarding whether the feeling of offense acted as a motive for their later plan to kill him.

The second example comes from Örebro, according to the police, the conflict has been going on between two criminal networks for a few years now and has its starting point in the local drug market and its revenues. It is possible to connect a number of events that resulted in violent crimes where people from the various networks were involved, either as plaintiffs or suspects (ÖREBRO TINGSRÄTT 2021).

These findings are consistent with Gerell et al.'s (2021) study, which establishes a strong link between gun violence and the open drug market in socially vulnerable areas. Additionally, these areas are at high risk of recurring shootings after the initial shooting. The authors suggest that increased violence may result from instability in the drug market, where monopolistic criminal networks seek to maintain control over vulnerable areas (Gerell et al. 2021). This phenomenon is also apparent in the two conflicts related to the drug market and drug sales observed in the present study.

The remaining four cases examined in this study did not involve direct conflict over the drug market, but rather arose from previous conflicts between two or more criminally organized networks. The motivation for these murders appears to have been revenge for previous violent crimes perpetrated against the perpetrators' own gang. Two of these verdicts involve the same conflict, an armed conflict that began in 2010 and resulted in numerous shootings, murders, and casualties (GÖTEBORGS TINGSRÄTT 2021, 2023). The networks involved in these conflicts consist of individuals who grew up together in the area and were once members of the same network. Following a split, however, they became embroiled in a violent conflict with one another. The verdicts also indicate that additional criminal networks, which are not directly involved in the conflict, have contact and some degree of cooperation with one side of the conflict.

The remaining two comes from Malmö. In Malmö, there has been a conflict between two criminal networks for a long time, of which the plaintiff's group is on one side. The plaintiff allegedly belonged to the first gang, but change gang affiliation after an internal split. It ought to also be the motive for the attempted murder. In the second verdict from Malmö, a 23-year-old man is shot to death. The motive for the murder is supposed to be his connection to crime and probably revenge for a murder of a man from the opposite gang. Based on the account of a police officer, there is no further information available regarding the underlying cause of the conflict between the networks. It appears to have resulted from a split of some kind, and as such, it is not possible to conclude that the change in gang affiliation caused any uncertainty that led to pre-emptive shooting. Additionally, it cannot be assumed that the subsequent cycle of retaliation was motivated by feelings of betrayal or humiliation.

Through an analysis of these verdicts on murder and attempted murder in organized environments, tendencies of loosely composed networks can be observed, where members appear to switch gang affiliations to rival networks and collaborations between networks of different kinds. The process of being accepted by a new gang, or leaving the current gang, does not appear to be particularly difficult. This observation is supported by police investigators' interviews, which shed light on structures, loyalty, and leadership within criminally organized networks. For instance, a police investigator highlights the distinction between organized networks and gangs:

“It goes hand in hand. The crudely organized has sought to the arenas where the gangs are. Then there are different types of structures in the gangs as well. It has tended, over the years, to leave the structured “MC-gang culture”, to more loosely composed constellations in different networks that cooperate across borders.” (P2)

Further he notes:

“Today, almost everyone collaborates across different borders, depending on what the purpose is, where the goal is and where the money is. When criminals cooperate, their abilities in their crime area increase.” (P2)

Another policeman talks about loyalty and structures within criminal networks:

“But my experience is that it is not really based on loyalty in the same way that you might have perceived gangs before. Back then, people had an idea that gangs were something that was based on brotherhood and loyalty to each other. But my experience now, I would say is more that these people are..., well, very greedy individuals who are driven by a motivation mostly of money actually. They are quite willing to go against each other very much, that is my experience, if there is some kind of financial gain.”
(P4)

A third policeman confirms his statement:

“Basically, I don’t think it is. They pretend many times that they are brothers, but I would probably say that what rules is probably the money, that’s all. They can sell their own mother just to make money from it.” (P3)

When it comes to motives for the deadly violence, it can be concluded that revenge for previous shootings and conflicts is what permeates most of the verdicts analysed. As previously mentioned, two out of six cases are directly connected to the illegal drug market and the sale of cannabis, in contrast, the remaining cases are usually also connected to conflicts around the market, even if the actual motive for the shooting is revenge for previous shootings. Gerell et.al (2021) concluded that the risk of a follow-up shooting to an initial shooting is at least twice as high if it takes place at an open drug market in a vulnerable neighbourhood, compared to if the initial shooting took place elsewhere in the city. These results are highly relevant for this study and with the help of them the conclusion can be drawn about the role of narcotics. It thus plays a large role in the shootings that have increased in Sweden in recent years, as many of the conflicts are based on shares of the illegal drug market.

A conclusion that can be drawn about organization dimensions in these criminal networks, in relation to the motives, is that it is possible to see tendencies of loosely composed networks, instead of an organized culture based heavily on loyalty. Members change gang affiliations and therefore become targets for fatal shootings, another reason is that these networks can cooperate with members of rival networks to access their targets. Despite the beliefs of police officers that financial incentives drive betrayal and network switching within organized criminal environments, the verdicts analysed do not provide clear evidence of this. While the police officers

assert that money is the motivating factor, the available data from the analysed verdicts does not confirm this hypothesis. Similarly, it is not possible to rule out the possibility that financial incentives play a role in network switching.

6.2 Preparations

In five out of the six cases examined, it was evident that some form of preparation had taken place prior to the fatal violence. The degree of preparation varied, with some instances being more impulsive than others. However, the preparations entailed a range of activities, including the use of encrypted chat services to plan escape routes for the accused, as well as reconnaissance activities, and the acquisition of weapons or means of transportation for the purpose of executing the crime efficiently.

In four of the six cases examined, it was found that the murder weapon had been procured or obtained only a few days prior to the planned crime. Of these cases, two involved the acquisition of weapons in Malmö. In the preliminary investigation for the verdict in Växjö, it was revealed that the murder weapon had been acquired by one or more members of the younger network in Malmö. Information suggests that multiple individuals within the gang had access to the weapon and shared it. On the day of the murder, the two perpetrators travelled together in a rental car with an electric scooter loaded in the trunk. On the same day, the plaintiff received a warning that two masked men were observed sitting in a silver car near his residence. The car was parked approximately 50 meters from the scene of the murder, when the perpetrators saw the plaintiff, they ride the electric scooter and shoot the man at close range (VÄXJÖ TINGSRÄTT 2022) . In the other case where the weapon was retrieved in Malmö, a recently released prisoner was hired to carry out the murder of the plaintiff, with the identity of the client remaining unknown. While in prison, the perpetrator's friend was killed, and he felt a sense of danger for his social circle, leading him to seek a firearm for self-defence. Although he had contacts in Stockholm, they refused to sell him a weapon for fear of retaliation. Instead, he obtained a weapon in Malmö, traveling there on July 14, 2018, to retrieve it and execute the mission. While he claims the trip was spontaneous, he possessed between 15-20 thousand kroner, which he earned from selling cannabis for a brief period. He allegedly had assistance in Malmö, as someone provided him with a moped that was used during the shooting. The moped had been acquired through a robbery (MALMÖ TINGSRÄTT 2019).

In addition to the above-mentioned case from Malmö, there is another instance of one or more outsiders being hired to carry out a mission. In the second case, the leader of one criminal

network had instigated two people, who are outside the conflict itself, to kill the leader of the opposite network, and in consultation with them decided that the murders should be carried out (ÖREBRO TINGSRÄTT 2021). One noteworthy aspect of this particular verdict is that it stands out from the other five cases analysed, in which firearms were purchased for the commission of the crimes. In this instance, the leader of the criminal network provided the shooters with an automatic weapon on loan. It is also noteworthy that the leader was located in Spain, as he was being sought by Swedish authorities, which may have contributed to the decision to have individuals outside of the network carry out the mission. Additionally, a stolen car with Polish registration plates was procured with the intention of using it in the murder of one or more of the targets.

In the examined verdicts, it was observed that the perpetrators employed various types of vehicles, such as cars, mopeds, or electric scooters, during the commission of their offenses. In certain instances, these vehicles were also employed for surveillance purposes of the intended target. It was determined that these vehicles constituted a crucial aspect of the perpetrators' planning and preparation, primarily for the purpose of ensuring a swift and efficient entry and exit to and from the scene of the crime. The acquisition of these vehicles by the criminal networks was typically achieved through the perpetration of other types of criminal activities, including but not limited to theft, robbery, or fraud.

Based on the verdicts reviewed, it appears that the availability of firearms is substantial. Criminal networks are observed to engage in cooperation with one another, primarily for the purpose of gaining an advantage over competing groups. In particular, this cooperation is found to revolve around the acquisition and use of firearms, with instances of network collaboration involving the targeted assassination of individuals from rival groups. Analysis of the preliminary investigation indicates that such networks communicate via encrypted chats and explicitly discuss the financial salary associated with carrying out specific missions. Additionally, the perpetrators are well aware of the high level of police scrutiny in the area, and accordingly, attach great importance to meticulous planning in order to avoid detection. According to police officers who have been interviewed, the availability of weapons can be facilitated through several means. All interviewed officers concur that obtaining firearms is a relatively uncomplicated process in Sweden. Additionally, they emphasize that over the past decade, there has been a

significant decrease in the threshold for taking another individual's life. One of the officers describes the differences between the present and the past as follows:

“... and it feels like the threshold is much easier than it was 10 years ago. Back then, it took more stupidity to be the target of a shooting. If you go back 10-15 years, of course firearms were used, but then they shot more kneecaps or cut fingers or something like that, you threatened and intimidated by hurting. Today, they aim for the head, if you have decided that someone will be exposed, then this person must be killed.” (P2)

Another police officer agrees and says:

“In the past, it was a huge step to take someone's life, then you were right on the edge, but it is not like that today.” (P1)

Further, she talks about why deadly gun violence has increased:

“I think it is so easy to get hold of weapons in Sweden. It's the flatness, or the EU... or this thing about it being completely open. Both drugs, weapons, explosives, everything. You don't have to be a genius to come across such things.” (P1)

A third police officer agrees:

“Secondly, my view is that firearms have just become very easily available in Sweden. And I think that both those who shoot and those who work on the other side, different types of government agencies, both of these sides can agree that it can be quite difficult to corroborate different types of evidence in shootings which makes it a quite effective way to simply deal with their competitors.” (P4)

When it comes to collaborations between different networks, where assignments are given to people outside the real conflict, one of the four police officers talks about their experiences:

“However, when it came to shootings within that environment, I know that this particular network figured in various shootings in other areas of Sweden, as executors of assignments for other constellations or networks.” (P4)

While the presence of loosely connected networks is evident, these entities demonstrate sufficient organization to engage in the illegal trade of firearms and the acquisition of stolen vehicles, which are deemed to be of high importance in the planning and preparation of lethal violence. The phenomenon observed in this context bears resemblance to what Vesterhav and

Korsell (2016) refer to as project-based constellations. These constellations involve the formation of criminal groups or gangs comprised of individuals who collaborate to execute lucrative criminal activities, such as orchestrating a contract killing for financial gain. The degree to which narcotics play a role in preparing for fatal violence varies between cases. In a particular instance, narcotics assume a significant role in the preparation process, as evidenced by the sale of cannabis for a brief period to generate the funds necessary for purchasing the weapon and fulfilling the mission. However, the available data does not offer much insight into the overall influence of narcotics in preparing for murder. It is unclear if individuals who sell weapons have recurring ties to drug sales or if their involvement is strictly limited to weapons trade and does not extend to other criminal activities.

6.3 Entry & Preconditions

In all six cases examined, the perpetrators utilized various types of vehicles to gain access to the crime scene. Cars were employed in three instances, electric scooters in two instances, and a moped was utilized in one case. These vehicles also served the purpose of scouting the target location on the day of the murder. In one of the Gothenburg cases, the offenders reportedly surveyed the plaintiff and remained vigilant for police activity throughout the day leading up to the murder. Testimonies suggest that the plaintiff and his acquaintances were aware of suspicious activities, having observed two cars circling the vicinity or taking routes that directly or indirectly led to the area where the plaintiff was subsequently shot. One of the cars, crucial to the planning process, had been rented approximately five days prior to the incident, while the other vehicle was privately purchased with the buyer intentionally providing false personal information to ensure anonymity, utilizing what is commonly referred to as a "car goalkeeper." Following the murder, two cans of petrol were discovered in one of the cars, raising the possibility of their intended use for arson and the removal of evidence. However, there is a lack of substantial evidence to definitively establish the defendant's precise intentions regarding this matter.

The remaining two cases involving the use of cars exhibit notable similarities. In both instances, the vehicles employed were either rented or stolen a few days prior to the intended murder. This strategic choice serves the purpose of minimizing potential evidence that could be traced back to the perpetrators.

The incident involving the use of a moped to access the location of the murder took place in Malmö. In this particular case, the assigned shooter was responsible for targeting the plaintiff,

while the other defendant played a supportive role by providing the moped used as a means of transportation during the shooting. As part of their preparations, two mopeds were obtained through a robbery approximately one week prior to the murder. On the evening of the murder, four cars arrived at the crime scene, with the plaintiff exiting one of these vehicles. Numerous individuals were present at the scene, and witnesses reported observing a moped approximately two hours after the cars had arrived. Three minutes later, the same moped returned to the vicinity, as reported by witnesses.

In the preceding two cases, as previously mentioned, electric scooters were utilized as a means of accessing the location where the murder occurred. In one specific instance from Gothenburg, the plaintiff had visited a gym and clocked out at 16:00. Subsequently, he accompanied a friend to a gaming kiosk within the vicinity. Approximately five minutes later, one of the defendants arrived at the scene riding an electric scooter. He made a stop at a nearby pizzeria and glanced inside the establishment. Within seconds, he proceeded to the entrance of the gaming kiosk and paused, looking inside. Meanwhile, the second defendant had also arrived at the scene and entered the pizzeria located a few meters away from the kiosk. The defendant on the scooter then called out to his friend, using both the phrase "come out, come out" and a name, as reported by witnesses present in the pizzeria. Subsequently, the friend entered the gaming kiosk where the plaintiff was situated, holding a gun in his left hand, while the plaintiff was unarmed.

The second case involving the use of electric scooters as a mode of transportation pertains to a fatal shooting incident in Växjö. In this scenario, the plaintiff is accompanied by a friend as they make their way home. Meanwhile, the defendants are situated in a car located at a certain distance from the plaintiff's location. Upon spotting the plaintiff and his friend, the defendants retrieve an electric scooter from the car's trunk and ride together towards the plaintiff. Subsequently, one of the defendants dismounts from the scooter and initiates the shooting.

In summary, it can be inferred that vehicles play a significant role in the entry phase, serving both for reconnaissance purposes and as a means of convenient transportation to and from the murder scene. The criminal gangs demonstrate caution by avoiding the use of vehicles that could be traced back to them. Instead, they engage in other criminal activities such as vehicle theft or robbery, employ the practice of providing false personal information during purchases, and utilize mediators who undertake responsibility for the vehicles. However, the exact method of hiring these mediators, commonly referred to as "goalkeepers," remains unclear from the perspective of the judiciary. It is uncertain whether they are existing members of the network

or if they are coerced into taking on this role. This lack of clarity primarily stems from their unwillingness to cooperate or provide information to the police that does not directly concern them.

6.4 From Entry to Exit

In each of the cases examined within this study, there is a notable swiftness in the transition from the perpetrators' entry into the crime scene to their subsequent disappearance from the area. Consequently, the data obtained from judicial sources pertaining to instrumental prerequisites, initiations, actualizations, as well as actions during the crime and the subsequent exit, will be presented collectively.

As previously highlighted, vehicles played a crucial role in both the planning and execution stages of the analysed cases. In the Gothenburg case, a car carrying three perpetrators arrived shortly after the plaintiff's arrival at his residence. The plaintiff was fatally shot outside an apartment building, and multiple close-range shots indicated a targeted execution, leaving no chance for self-defence. Although two of the perpetrators were involved in firing the shots, the specific identity of the shooter remains unknown due to communication restrictions. After the shooting, the shooters quickly entered the backseat of a waiting vehicle, driven by an individual not directly involved in the shooting. The car was later discovered in a parking lot, where two weapons, later linked to the plaintiff's murder, were found among other items.

In a Malmö verdict, a similar pattern emerged. A car chase involving an Audi and a Passat took place, with the Audi coming to a stop in a roundabout as the Passat approached the exit. According to an eyewitness, the shooting occurred from the back seat of the Audi when it aligned with the Passat. Although two gunshots were fired from the passenger side, fortunately, the plaintiff in the Passat remained unharmed. The Audi attempted to flee the scene by completing a full lap around the roundabout but faced difficulty due to heavy traffic. The police, who arrived promptly, eventually lost sight of the Audi. During the investigation, a gun was found along the escape route, displaying signs of being discarded during the getaway.

In the second Malmö case, the assailant fired multiple gunshots at the plaintiff from a moped. Two shots struck the plaintiff, causing him to fall, followed by the shooter firing two more shots at close range. The shooter swiftly left the scene on the moped and later encountered another moped with two individuals on a bicycle path. The shooter dismounted from his own moped and became a passenger on the second one, while one of the individuals took control of the shooter's moped. Both mopeds left the scene, evading detection. Approximately two hours after

the shooting, reports were made of a burning moped, leading to the discovery of a firearm nearby, suggesting recent human contact. It was later determined that the recovered weapon was used in the shooting.

In the remaining cases, electric scooters were utilized by the shooters. In the Gothenburg verdict, the shooter entered a gambling kiosk where the plaintiff was present. The plaintiff attempted to flee upon seeing the firearm but was met with gunfire. Seeking refuge inside the kiosk, the plaintiff was pursued by the shooter, who continued to fire shots, resulting in the victim collapsing within the establishment. The shooter then made their way to an electric scooter, observed by witnesses who also noticed two scooters leaving the scene. Notably, the perpetrators inadvertently left behind gloves, a jacket, and a buried weapon in a shoulder strap bag. Upon the defendants' arrest, a key fitting a storage room was found, leading to the discovery of a significant quantity of cannabis with fingerprints connecting all three defendants to the murder. Additionally, business cards recovered from the bags bore inscriptions such as "Active every day" and "Gbg's finest, burre & ladd."

In the Växjö case, the assailants employed an electric scooter. One perpetrator operated the scooter while the other dismounted upon reaching the victim. The shooter initiated the attack by firing a shot at the plaintiff's leg, causing him to fall. Subsequently, the shooter approached the fallen victim and fired multiple close-range shots, hitting both the body and head. The defendants swiftly departed the murder scene on the scooter. Further investigation revealed gun care kits in an apartment, indicating that the weapon and ammunition had been handled within residential premises. The murder weapon was eventually discovered in another apartment belonging to a female.

Based on the presented data, it is evident that the shootings were carried out with a clear intention to cause fatal harm to the targeted individuals. There seems to be no indication of a motive to intimidate or spare the lives of the victims. Instead, the shooters proceed to deliver close-range shots to ensure the completion of the killings after initial shots have been fired and the victims have been hit. This pattern of escalating firearm violence is acknowledged by police officers during interviews, highlighting the increasingly brutal nature of these incidents. One police officer, for instance, mentions:

"I think initially, when the shootings became bigger in Sweden, it was probably about showing a large capital of violence and being intimidated, but I think we have moved

more and more towards an environment and mentality where the aim is to injure so seriously so that the person can no longer operate in that environment, and even kill the other person has become a purpose of the shooting.” (P4)

Granath et al. (2022) conducted a study that yielded an important finding regarding fatal violence in Sweden. Specifically, they determined that in 34% of the cases analysed, there was a pharmacological link, indicating that either the perpetrator or the victim was under the influence of drugs during the commission of the crime. In line with this, some police officers have suggested that individuals who engage in such acts are often under the influence of substances. For instance, one of them noted:

“Yes, there is a very clear connection between drugs and violence. Many of the conflicts concern the drug trade. The perpetrators are often under the influence of drugs when they commit violent crimes as well. “ (P3)

However, it is noteworthy that the analysed verdicts do not provide clear evidence to ascertain whether the shooters carried out the shootings while in a sober state or while under the influence of drugs. Therefore, the exact role of substance use in these incidents remains uncertain.

7 Discussion

The aim of this research is to examine the role of narcotics in the escalating levels of lethal violence witnessed within organized crime networks in Sweden. Additionally, this study aims to shed light on the organizational structures that characterize these criminal networks. The research employs a case study approach that analyses six distinct legal cases involving murder and attempted murder within organized crime networks in Sweden, and in addition conducting interviews with police officers with experience investigating these types of crimes. This section will outline the primary concepts investigated, with a concluding section that summarizes the findings.

Sweden was previously known for having low levels of lethal violence in Europe, but has recently experienced a rise in deadly gun violence (Klara Hradilova Selin 2021), particularly in areas with open drug markets that are deemed vulnerable. Prior research suggests that there is a high risk of repeated shootings in these areas after an initial shooting occurs (Gerell et al. 2021). This study's findings support this assertion, as all verdicts related to these shootings were concentrated in vulnerable areas of the respective cities. While revenge was the primary motive

for the majority of the analysed verdicts due to previous shootings, all of these conflicts originated from disputes over drug market shares. In some instances, such as the murder in Gothenburg (GÖTEBORGS TINGSRÄTT 2021, 2023), these conflicts resulted in lengthy, violent battles that were motivated by drug market control. These results are related to the study's first research question concerning *the role of narcotics in increased lethal violence*. Narcotics appear to play a significant role in the rise in gun violence, not only in the motivation to shoot but also by generating illegal income that can be used to purchase the firearms used in murders and attempted murders. Police officers' experiences also support the notion that all criminal networks related to the analysed shootings are founded on the drug market and its profits. The officers assert that these revenues are the driving force behind the shootings and increased violence, rather than the drugs themselves. Therefore, it is not the drugs that are responsible for creating conflicts, but rather the income generated from the sale of substances such as cannabis. Based on the findings of Granath et al. (2022), the most common link between firearms and drugs is a pharmacological connection, implying that shooters are often under the influence of drugs at the time of the shooting. However, this current study's analysis of verdicts does not provide any clear evidence that the shooters were indeed under the influence of drugs during the shooting. Instead, the results of this study suggest that the second most prevalent connection, as identified by Granath et al. (2022), is a systematic connection, where lethal violence is driven by disputes over drug trade.

The emergence of street gangs as a notable issue in socio-economically deprived areas of Sweden was not observed until the late 1990s and early 2000s. Over the years, these gangs have increasingly become recognized as a significant challenge (Rostami 2017). In the past, organized criminal gangs were characterized as having a strong emphasis on loyalty and brotherhood. However, through a crime script analysis of verdicts pertaining to shootings in an organized criminal environment, a tendency towards loosely composed criminal networks is suggested. These results are relevant to the study's second research question: *what do the organizational dimensions look like in the criminal networks, and how do they affect the shootings?* Members of gangs appear to be able to switch gang affiliation easily, making them frequent targets of shootings. The motivation behind a criminal's decision to switch gang affiliations remains unclear from the analysed verdicts, apart from indicating an internal conflict of some sort. However, insights from police officers who have experience in dealing with such criminal

networks suggest that financial gain and incentives are key drivers for such shifts. Nonetheless, as the verdicts do not reveal any explicit indications of this, drawing definitive conclusions regarding the extent of monetary motivations is challenging, as other factors may also be at play. Furthermore, it is unclear from preliminary investigation material whether changes in gang affiliation have led to the shootings as a preventive measure due to perceived uncertainty or other factors such as betrayal or humiliation. Nevertheless, these gangs or networks exhibit a level of organization that enables them to acquire weapons and stolen vehicles without detection by the police. They are fully aware of police surveillance and employ encrypted chat services to discuss financial compensation for their missions, which complicates police work. Overall, while modern organized criminal networks display loosely assembled dimensions, they maintain enough organization to engage in illegal activities undetected by authorities. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that in certain instances, collaborations between distinct criminal networks are utilized as a means to facilitate access to specific targets and thereby gain a competitive advantage over rival gangs operating within the illicit drug market. While the findings of this study align with previous research on the organizational aspects of criminal networks, there is a notable deviation from prior research. Specifically, Mondani and Rostami (2022) asserted that inter-gang collaborations were infrequent, and instead, gang members tended to operate independently. In contrast, this study's results suggest that there is some level of collaboration among criminal networks, primarily concerning the procurement of weapons and, in some instances, assigning tasks to eliminate members of rival gangs. On the other hand, according to Mondani and Rostami (2022), the absence of inter-gang collaboration could be attributed to either the gangs' essential competition or organizational immaturity. Hence, this study's ability to identify instances of collaboration between criminal networks implies that these networks have achieved a degree of organizational maturity.

8 Conclusion & Limitations

Two research questions have been formed to achieve the purpose of the study: What does the role of narcotics, primarily cannabis, look like in the increased lethal violence in Sweden? What do the organizational dimensions look like in the criminal networks, and how do they affect the shootings?

The findings of this study suggest that narcotics play a significant role in the rise of gun violence, particularly because they provide a motive for carrying out murders of rival gangs as a

result of a monopolistic drive, as well as generating a substantial source of income that can foster a capital of violence. Moreover, the experiences of police officers also suggest that conflicts over drug markets underlie most deadly conflicts in the organized crime environment.

Based on the analysis of the verdicts, the study identifies patterns of loosely formed networks, where members often come from the same area and have known each other for a long time, but can switch affiliations relatively easily. However, despite the loose structure of these networks, there is a level of organization that facilitates the trade of weapons and stolen vehicles and enables collaboration with other criminal networks to access targets more easily.

The present study applied a case study approach that examined verdicts from Swedish District Courts and Court of Appeal. Although case studies can be useful for examining specific phenomena, they may not be the most appropriate method for investigating broader issues. In this study, only six verdicts were analysed, and a more extensive sample could have been examined from multiple cities in Sweden to gain a better understanding of the role of narcotics in the increased violence. Moreover, a more comprehensive research approach that incorporates a larger sample size and multiple methods, such as statistical analysis and interviews, may provide a more in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the issue at hand.

Understanding these organizational dimensions is crucial for effective crime prevention and defector activities. Conducting interviews with criminal individuals can offer valuable insights into the organizational dimensions of criminal networks. This approach can enhance our understanding of the factors that motivate individuals to switch between gangs and how these networks are structured, ultimately aiding in developing more effective crime prevention and defector programs. Another method that could provide a deeper understanding of criminal networks is ethnographic research, which involves immersing oneself in a particular community or group to gain an in-depth understanding of its culture and practices. However, it is important to acknowledge that conducting interviews with criminal individuals can present ethical challenges as it may involve interacting with individuals engaged in criminal activity. Therefore, researchers must carefully consider ethical implications when conducting such studies.

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Appendix

A1. Interview Guide

Syfte	Frågeställningar	Följdfrågor		
Bakgrundsfrågor	Hur länge har du arbetat med ditt yrke? Vad är din nuvarande position?	Har du jobbat på samma ställe under dessa år?		
Frågor om gängkriminalitet och organiserad brottslighet	Vill du berätta vad gängkriminalitet och organiserad brottslighet betyder för dig? Vill du berätta lite mer strukturen hos dessa gäng, handlar det om lösa nätverk eller är det så organiserat som man hör i debatter och media? Vill du berätta om din erfarenhet om det dödliga skjutvapen våldet? Vart tror du att dessa vapen kommer ifrån? Det dödliga våldet ökar i Sverige, finns det en koppling mellan våldet och drogförsäljningen? Det går att se stora utvecklingar i den organiserade	Är det någon skillnad på de två begreppen? Finns det roller? Hur ser man på lojalitet? Finns det tydliga ledare eller är det en kamp? Hur går det till när de börjar skjuta? Varför skjutet de och inte t.ex. som i UK med kniv? Är syftet att döda eller skrämmas? "Uppsk" eller inte? Finns det någon väg dessa vapen tar i Sverige? Hyr/köper man vapen av varandra? Är de som säljer involverade på något sätt? Om ja, vill du berätta hur du ser på denna koppling?		
	brottslighetens organisationsstrukturer, där t.ex. svenska kriminella etablerar sig som organisatörer i europeiska transitländer och i länder där narkotika produceras, hur påverkar detta det brottsförebyggande arbete i Sverige?			
Frågor om avkriminalisering av cannabis	Tror du att avkriminalisering av cannabis kan ses som en insats mot de kriminella gängen? Vilka för- och nackdelar finns det med en legalisering?	Varför? Varför inte?		
Frågor om legalisering av cannabis	Kan legalisering av cannabis ses som en insats mot de kriminella gängen? Vilka för- och nackdelar finns det med en legalisering?	Varför? Varför inte?		
Frågor om framtiden	Vi ser en internationell trend, kanske framför allt i Europa, där det har börjat luckrats upp en del gällande cannabis, Malta har legaliserat, Tyskland vill införa en ny hantering och sedan Nederländerna, Spanien och Norge som har olika typer av			