Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Oxford
Unit of Assessment: 23 – Sociology
Title of case study: Enhancing Policies to Combat Organized Crime
1. Summary of the impact

Federico Varese's research has redirected thinking on the (mainly local) nature of organized crime. Varese has shown that a significant factor accounting for the spread of organized crime is the efforts of individuals to escape arrest in their home country. His research, as well as his role on the Strategic Review (2010), has made substantial contributions to the restructuring of the UK's Serious Organized Crime Agency (SOCA). In Italy and Canada, he has helped to shape and inform policy debates within the Anti-Mafia Commission, and Public Safety Canada, respectively. His work has also been cited as being "particularly relevant" by prosecutors in Italy. More specifically, Varese's use of quantitative methods to analyze the transcripts of wiretaps has inspired Europol to organize the training of police and prosecutors in these methods, and to alter their approach to better combat organized crime.

2. Underpinning research

Oxford Research Team comprised:

- Federico Varese - Lecturer in Criminology (2003-2006), Professor of Criminology (2006-present)
- Paolo Campana – Research Associate (Mar-Nov 2007), Postdoctoral Researcher (2012-present)
- Tom Snijders – Professor of Social Statistics at the University of Oxford (2006-present)

In his first major publication, *The Russian Mafia: Private Protection in a New Market Economy* (2001) **[Section 3: R1]**, Professor Federico Varese tested whether the birth of the Russian Mafia was caused by a flawed transition to the market economy. From 2003 onwards, he explored an under-theorised aspect within criminology, namely the reasons that account for the migration of crime groups outside of their territory of origin. More broadly, this work addresses the relationship between globalization and crime.

The research — culminating in a major book **[R2]** — is based on extensive field interviews and data collection in Italy, the United States, Russia, Hungary, and China. Matched comparisons are deployed to explain why mafias sometimes succeed at conquering new territories, while at other times they fail. An example is the movement of the Calabrese `Ndrangheta clan in the 1960s to both Bardonecchia (Piedmont) and Verona (Veneto). The `Ndrangheta achieved long-term success in the former, but failed to become established in the latter.

The book concludes that mafias do not move outside their territories in order to take advantage of globalization, as the literature has claimed. Instead, mafiosi are forced out either by internal conflict, by police action, or occasionally to escape poverty. They succeed in creating established outposts where their arrival coincides with significant expansions in local markets (such as construction) that are not properly governed by legitimate institutions of authority. These findings vindicate the insight that mafias are a form of governance of local markets, using violence for the benefit of market incumbents, yet they account for the fact that mafias do exist outside of their territory, an outcome denied by previous researchers (e.g. Gambetta, 1993).

Research for the book unearthed transcripts of wiretaps produced during an Italian investigation into a Russian mafia group. These transcripts recorded 758 conversations among 164 people, providing unprecedented insights into their routine activities. While similar transcripts have been read selectively by scholars in the past, Varese spelled out general validity and reliability issues related to these data, and applied advanced quantitative techniques to the entire corpus of transcripts **[R3]**.

In the *Trends in Organized Crime* paper **[R3]** Varese and Campana outline the general criteria for using this kind of data, while, in his book and two further papers, Varese **[R2, R4 and R5]** uses quantitative content analysis, multiple correspondence analysis, and network analysis to analyze these data. This innovative combination of techniques enables Varese to link the content of the

conversations to the attributes of the speakers, and to the structure of the network. In further work with Campana **[R6]**, Varese uses statistical modelling techniques developed among others by Tom Snijders, to trace the evolution of the network through time and test hypotheses on tie formation**.**

Using these techniques, Varese showed that this Russian mafia group in Italy had a well-developed hierarchical organization, with an internal division of labour, and that women played a significant role in managing the group **[R4]**. The group's core business activities remained in Russia, while the Italian branch was primarily concerned with laundering money and monitoring its investments **[R3]**. This work is the first to reconstruct the internal structure of a crime group on the basis of what people do, and more generally it shows that crime groups are functionally diversified.

3. References to the research
[R1] Federico Varese, 2001, *The Russian Mafia: Private Protection in a New Market Economy*, Oxford University Press.
- Winner, Ed Hewitt Prize, Am. Ass. for Slavic Studies, translated in Polish and Dutch.
- Widely reviewed.
- 353 citations (Google Scholar).

[R2] Federico Varese, 2011, *Mafias on the Move: How Organized Crime Conquers New Territories*, Princeton University Press; ISBN 978-0-691-128559.
- Outstanding Publication Prize, awarded annually by the International Association for the Study of Organized Crime.
- 'intellectually absorbing .... it offers public-policy-oriented readers insights into the importance of ill-designed property right legislation and poor legal implementation and some familiar warnings about the risks of repressive moral prohibitionism' (*American Journal of Sociology*); 'All will certainly appreciate the thought-provoking analysis' (*British Journal of Criminology*).
- translated into Italian (Einaudi, 2011).
- cited 63 times (Google Scholar).

[R3] Paolo Campana and Federico V**a**rese, 2012, 'Listening to the Wire: Criteria and Techniques for the Quantitative Analysis of Phone Intercepts', *Trends in Organized Crime*, vol. 14, pp. 1-18; DOI 10.1007/s12117-011-9131-3
- cited 13 times (Google Scholar)

[R4] Federico Varese, 2012, 'How Mafias Take Advantage of Globalization: The Russian Mafia in Italy', *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 52, pp. 235-53; REF2
- journal has 5-year impact factor of 2.1 (IS); cited 12 times (Google Scholar)

[R5] Federico Varese, 2013, 'The Structure of Criminal Connections: The Russian Mafia in Italy', *European Sociological Review*, online, DOI 10.1093/esr/jcs067; REF2
- journal has 5-year impact factor of 1.9 (ISI); cited 3 times (Google Scholar)

[R6] P Campana, F. Varese, 'Kinship and Violence as Credible Commitments in Criminal Organizations: an Empirical Test', *Rationality and Society*, 25(3): 263-289.

Research Grants
Federico Varese, 'A New Agenda for European Security Economics (EUSECON)', European Commission FP7, January 2008 to April 2012, €133,100.

Federico Varese, 'Criminal Behaviours and Trust-Based Regulation in Europe', part of 'New European Crimes and Trust-based Policy (FIDUCIA)', European Commission, February 2012 to January 2014, €200,840.

4. Details of the impact

The impact of Varese's research extends across several countries. Findings from the research have reshaped policies to combat transnational crime, while the methods have been incorporated into the training and practices of police forces and prosecutors in a number of different nations.

Policy
The UK's Cabinet Office, and Office of the Prime Minister, invited Varese to join the Strategic

Review of Serious Organized Crime, in 2009, because his work had come to the attention of the Chairman of SOCA **[Section 5: C1]**. As one of two academics on the review, he shared the insights from his research on the factors enabling mafias to migrate across borders, ensuring that his research contributed directly to the panel's recommendations **[C1]**. In particular, Varese's research confirming the localized nature of organized crime led to recognition that a national agency devoid of links to local policing units would be less effective. Recommendations based on Varese's research **[**culminating in **R2]** were implemented after the 2010 election, when the new government announced that the Serious and Organized Crime Agency would be merged into a newly created organization, the National Crime Agency, much more embedded in local policing.

As a consequence of several analysts attending one of Varese's lectures in the United States, Public Safety Canada (equivalent to the UK's Home Office) commissioned a paper on Varese's work (written by Ottawa University Professor of Criminology R. Hastings (2006)), and then employed Varese as a consultant in 2010 to discuss the implications of his research for migration and the risks of organized crime. He addressed the chief civil servant in each ministry dealing with crime and migration **[C2]**. Varese's analysis **[R2]** informed the government's review of priorities, emphasizing that crime was not caused by migration, but rather by the sudden expansion of unregulated markets, and the development of a demand for informal or criminal protection. As demonstrated in Varese's research **[R2]**, undocumented migrants might seek protection from mafia-like organizations when criminalized.

Varese's research also held particular relevancy for policymakers in Italy. Two prosecutors from the Anti-Mafia Parliamentary Commission, reporting to the Parliament's Joint Committee on the Mafia in 2011, cited *Mafias on the Move* as 'extremely significant' **[C3]**. A Member of Parliament then quizzed the prosecutors on Varese's explanation for which cities are more vulnerable to penetration by the mafia. In addition, the book was cited in proceedings to remove one Member of Parliament's immunity from criminal prosecution. The Member who initiated the proceedings described Varese's research on the mafia's mechanisms of penetration of the legal economy as 'the most up-to-date and scrupulous analysis' **[C4]**.

Practitioners - police and prosecutors:
The widest impact on the practices of police and prosecutors has occurred within two European institutions, Europol and Eurojust.

Europol helps police forces fight against serious international crime and terrorism. When Europol hosted a training symposium for 120 crime analysts from Europe and the United States (organized by the International Association of Crime Analysts) in April 2012, they invited Varese (based on their awareness of his research) to give a keynote lecture on techniques for the quantitative analysis of telephone intercepts. Europol then invited Varese's co-researcher, Campana, to provide a two-day hands-on workshop at the Hague in September 2012. He taught 25 crime analysts how to apply network and correspondence analysis techniques developed by Varese **[R3, R4, R5]** to the evidence already collected by their police forces. A letter from a Senior Analyst at Europol confirms the value of Campana's training of Europol's strategic analysts **[C6]**. In addition, Varese and Campana advised on the way Europol collects data for its biennial *Organised Crime Threat Assessment* **[C6]**. This advice led to a major restructuring of Europol data collection strategy. Relationships initiated through Europol have now developed between the two researchers and national police forces. One such force (which cannot be identified because its investigation is ongoing) sent two police analysts to Oxford in May 2013 to spend two days learning network analysis from Campana.

Eurojust helps judicial systems investigate serious cross-border and organized crime. After an initial meeting with Varese and Campana, the organization's Case Management Analyst invited Campana to the Hague in May 2012 to improve data collection on the prosecution of transnational crime. He recommended augmenting the data to include the outcome of each case prosecuted: whether the accused was convicted and, if convicted, the sentence imposed. This enabled Eurojust to evaluate whether transnational crimes should be prosecuted in a single country or in multiple countries, depending on the type of crime and the type of judicial system. Eurojust

incorporated Campana's advice into the organization's strategic plan **[C7]**.

Furthermore, Italian prosecutors operating in the areas studied by Varese have stated that his research is 'particularly relevant' in identifying conditions that lead to mafia penetration **[C5].**

Beyond policy and practices, Varese's research on the Russian mafia's migration to Western Europe informs the plot of John le Carré's novel, *Our Kind of Traitor*. The author acknowledges him: 'heartfelt thanks ... for his creative and ever-patient counsel' **[C8]**. The novel sold 132,000 copies in the United Kingdom in 2011, making it the 89th bestselling book.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[C1] Deputy Director of Home Affairs, Prime Minister's Strategy Unit: letter of 23 February 2009
- appoints Varese to Strategic Review of Serious Organized Crime.

[C2] Manager of Research and Academic Relations, Strategic Policy Branch, Public Safety Canada
- will testify to the impact of Varese's research on Canadian policy.

[C3] Senato della Repubblica e Camera dei Deputati, *Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul sul fenomeno della mafia e sulle altre associazioni criminali*, resoconto stenografico no 79, 21 June 2011: testimony by two prosecutors and a Member of the Chamber of Deputies; www.parlamento.it/service/PDF/PDFServer/DF/281575.pdf See p. 8, p. 20, p. 21.

[C4] Camera dei deputati, *Relazione della giunta per le autorizzazioni sulla domanda di autorizzazione a eseguire la misura cautelare della custodia in carcere nei confronti del deputato Cosentino*, Doc IV, no 26A, 6 December 2011: Report on Cosentino Arrest Request by Marilena Sampieri (Member of the Chamber of Deputies); www.camera.it/_dati/leg16/lavori/documentiparlamentari/indiceetesti/004/026a/intero.pdf

[C5] Deputy Head, Prosecutor's Office, Turin, Italy: letter of 18 July 2013
- confirms the role of Varese's research in identifying conditions that lead to mafia penetration.

[C6] Senior Analyst, Europol, The Hague, Netherlands: letter of 12 August 2013
- discusses impact of Varese's research at operational/strategic intelligence analysis as well as policy level; testifies to the value of Campana's training of strategic analysts on social science research methods (i.e. survey, content and correspondence analysis), and of an informal consultation and feedback on the methodology of the Serious and Organised Threat Assessment.

[C7] Head of Case Management Unit, Eurojust, The Hague, Netherlands
- will testify to the impact of Varese's and Campana's research for Eurojust.

[C8] John le Carré, *Our Kind of Traitor*, Penguin, 2011, ISBN 978-0670919017
- Varese's research is the first acknowledgement (p. 309).