

## Figuring Out Organised Crime: How could GIS help law enforcement?

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Crime is society's dark half, and geographic information systems (GIS) have been helping law enforcement agencies shine a light on several aspects of that world. However, GIS applications by police agencies have been almost exclusively used for tactical analysis of crimes of violence or property crimes perpetrated by individuals. Strategic criminal analysts working with police agencies have very few tools to help them tackle organised crime. This paper explores how GIS could be used as a resource to analyse organised crime, though at a very general level. The somewhat chaotic state of police databases prevents any further technical discussion. Comparisons are made with other fields such as epidemiology and transportation that have used GIS in unusual ways to deal with complex problems that require a combination of visualization, modeling, and analysis. The paper concludes with guidelines for further research and for policymakers who will take up the baton in implementing GIS in law enforcement agencies. Among these guidelines is testing an object-oriented approach that could encompass information received at a very disaggregated level and as well as broad societal data. Ultimately, GIS may be more useful not in forecasting organised crime trends but in understanding the very nature of one of society's most powerful enemies.