

The Greentown Crime Network: Introducing its Cast of Principal Actors

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Summary: This article, based on the author's doctoral study completed in 2015, offers new insight into the operation of criminal networks in Ireland and in particular their influence on children who become engaged in network activities. The research aimed to explore the role of 'network' as an aggravating factor in influencing the trajectories of children involved in criminal behaviour. The research, based on a case study design focuses on 'Greentown', a real (but anonymised) Garda Sub-District located outside Dublin.

The study argues that a relatively small number of principal actors directed and controlled network activity while also actively cultivating the social conditions to sustain the network's incumbent hierarchy. The most powerful of these principal actors belonged to a dominant family and kinship group. This group entered into 'contracts' with a range of often very vulnerable 'associates' involved in the network. The paper argues that understanding the nature of such networks and their relational influence on children's propensity for serious and multiple offences is a first step in seeking solutions for policy makers and practitioners in this often hidden and complex area of youth justice.

Keywords: criminal network, youth crime, serious crime, risk science, wicked problem, geography of crime, crime dynamics, social dynamics of crime, situational dynamics of crime, criminal enterprise, desistance.