

“Criticality of Environmental Crises” and Prospects of “Complexity Green Criminology”

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1 Introduction

In recent years we have seen lots of extraordinary natural phenomena, which might be caused by the global warming. At this moment nobody denies that we are facing environmental crisis and human beings stand on the edge of a precipice of subsistence. As

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there is a possibility that this situation influences upon the survival environment of next generations, protecting the environment from destruction is one of the challenges today.

In this paper the present state and problems of green criminology and prospects of “complexity green criminology” are considered.

2 Environmental Crimes and Green Criminology

2.1 Greening of Criminology

In their textbook Eamonn Carrabine et al. mention crimes against environment and a green criminology as follows:

- 1) As part of the many ways in which criminology is developing, diversifying and maturing in the twenty-first century, there has recently been the growth of a green criminology that focuses upon crimes against the environment.
- 2) These crimes may come about simply because of the violation of international agreements and laws about the environment; or they may come about through various forms of exploitation, corruption and associated state or corporate crimes which find ways of avoiding or abusing such legislation.
- 3) Green crimes are feature of a global risk society and need to be located in such a framework.
- 4) At this early stage in its development, a green criminology has four main tasks:
 - a) to document the existence of green crimes in all their forms and to evolve basic typologies and distinctions such as that between primary and secondary green crimes.
 - b) to chart the ways in which the laws have been developed around this area, and to assess the complications and political issues generated;
 - c) to connect green crimes to social inequalities;
 - d) to assess the role of green social movements (and their counter-movements involved in a backlash) in bringing about such change.

2.2 Green Field of Criminology

Nigel South makes a proposal for a new perspective, a green field of criminology, as follows:

The issues which could (and should) be addressed by a green agenda for criminology and social justice are wide and diverse. Criminology must recognize the finite nature of the earth's resources and how this fits with global and socio-economic trends which have profound implications for the social sciences. A criminology relevant to the 21st century should have the intellectual breadth and constitutional space to be able to embrace environmental, human, and animal rights issues as related projects. To think through the implications of a green perspective, we may need some new theoretical tools and practical propositions.

3 Political Economy of Environmental Crimes: Race, Class, Gender and Inequality

3.1 Meaning of Green

Michael J. Lynch and Paul B. Stretsky critically consider the meaning of green contrasting criminological perspectives.

Previous discussions of green criminology have not defined the meaning of the term 'green'. They investigate alternative definitions of this term, focusing attention on two contrasting definitions. One definition is aligned with corporate interests and emerged through corporate redefinitions of green environmentalism; examples of the 'green' criminology that resulted are provided. They then offer a contrasting environmental justice definition. This alternative concept highlights common elements in social movements concerned with environmental justice while emphasizing these movements' commitment to simultaneously incorporating race, class and gender-oriented issues into green criminology.

3.2 Corporate Environmental Crimes and Social Inequality

David R. Simon shows new directions for environmental justice research.

According to him, in a 1997 article, Sasz and Meuser note that environmental justice research may have "excluded" certain questions of import. Among the topics they list as neglected are (a) the place of upper class in environmental research and (b) the lack of both a global and a historical perspective. He examines patterns of environmental crime among the largest multinational corporations, both in the United States and around the world, as well as the environmental deviance committed by the federal government. It is demonstrated that environmental crimes are part of an entire pattern of criminal activity that takes place within a political economy dominated by large corporations and upper-class stockholders.

3.3 Environmental Harm and the Political Economy of Consumption

Rob White (2002) demonstrates the political economy of environmental harm and its regulation as follows:

Adequate study of environmental harm must proceed from sustained analysis of the basic institutions and structures of contemporary capitalism. The central question at the core of environmental degradation and destruction is the organization of human subsistence and the relationship of this to nature. Thus he demonstrates the centrality of capitalist political economy to the construction of the substantive problem (environmental harm) and to the limitations of existing regulatory regimes in relation to this problem.

To illustrate the theoretical issues and complexities in this area, the specific focus will be on "consumption" relations. He discusses the relationship between production and consumption, the developments underpinning the extension of "consumerism" in capitalist society (e.g. privatization and commodification), and the symbolic place of consumption and its association with the realization of surplus value by capital (e.g. production of meaning, identity, and desire). Each of these areas has implications for the conceptualization of environmental problems and for how to regulate or respond to environmental harm.

4 Multiple Perspectives and Imagination to Environmental Issues

4.1 Crime, Ecophilosophy and Environmental Harm

Mark Halsey and Rob White sketch out three broad philosophical frameworks relating to the human/environmental nexus: the anthropocentric, biocentric and ecocentric perspectives.

They argue that acknowledgement of these different perspectives is essential in any analysis of environmental harm. Community and academic commentary on each of these perspectives has been extensive. However, generally they have received little discussion or notice within mainstream criminological circles or in legal studies debates over environmental regulation. Such discussions are central, and indeed crucial, if we are to unpack the environmental and human dimensions (and costs) of much existing economic activity. The challenge ahead is to further refine our understanding of the human-environment relationship, including environmental harm to develop an 'ecological imagination' regarding crime and crime control.

4.2 Environmental Issues and the Criminological Imagination

Rob White (2003) raises numerous concerns relevant to environmental criminology and argues that criminologists need to examine these issues in ways that incorporate the growing complexity and multi-dimensionality of this area.

He also reviews environmental actions and resistance, both from the perspective of corporate and state sectors and from that of green activists. It is essential critically to scrutinize developments from multidimensional and often complicated angles to discern when 'reform' means managing rather than redressing problems, and when democratic participation becomes simultaneous occasions for demonization and criminalization.

Despite the use of coercive measures, ideological campaigns and efforts to co-opt and divide environmental movements, it is clear that ordinary people continue to react against environmental degradation in their lives, whether toxic waste, oil spills and/or bad drinking water. Clever corporate greenwashing and the hesitancy of nation-states to limit corporate interests cannot hide the material basis continuing protests against environmental destruction. Our criminological imagination contribute to these struggle by rethinking how new global relationships can diagnose, deter, prevent— and indeed, sometimes criminalize— ongoing environmental harms.

5 Complexities of Environmental Crimes and Critics against Modern Green Criminology

5.1 Environmental Crime in Global Context

Rob White (2005) explores the theoretical and empirical complexities of environmental crime.

According to him, the development of a green or environmental criminology as a field

of sustained research and scholarship will by its very nature incorporate many different perspectives and strategic emphases.

Environmental criminology deals with concerns across a wide range of environments (e.g. land, air, water) and issues (e.g. fishing, pollution, toxic waste). It involves conceptual analysis as well as practical intervention on many fronts, and includes multi-disciplinary strategic assessment (e.g. economic, legal, social and ecological evaluations). It involves the undertaking of organizational analysis, as well as investigation of ‘best practice’ methods of monitoring, assessment, enforcement and education regarding environmental protection and regulation. Analysis needs to be conscious of local, regional, national and global domains and how activities in each of these overlap. It likewise requires cognizance of the direct and indirect, and immediate and long-term, impacts and consequences of environmentally sensitive social practices.

Based on this recognition, he mentions that one challenge for environmental criminology is to separate out different levels and kinds of analysis, and to ‘make sense’ of what is a very complicated whole. He mentions that, to understand complexity, we need to simplify. He discusses environmental issues in regards to four types of perspective: focal considerations; geographical considerations; locational considerations; and temporal considerations. Exploration of themes and issues within each of these areas exposes the diversity of perspectives, approaches and concepts that are utilized in the field of environmental criminology.

5.2 Against “Green” Criminology

Mark Halsey overviews recent work on environmental crime and regulation and demonstrates that the majority of such scholarship is imbued by quite problematic ideas concerning how best to envisage the nature of environmental harm and the type of regulatory structure which should be promoted to assist in the amelioration of environmental damage.

He argues that green criminologists have, with few exceptions, drawn implicitly or explicitly upon one or a combination of five (competing) environmental perspectives — all of which emerge within, and carry with them the kinds of shortcomings associated with, modernist thought. These perspectives are ‘liberal ecology’ ecomarxism, ecofeminism, deep ecology, and social ecology. Adherence to any of these streams of thought necessarily leads to highly questionable renderings of nature, society, subjectivity and, concomitantly, of what causes and what might be seen to prevent environmental damage. Green criminology does not possess the lexicon required to move beyond modernist conceptions of harm and reparation.

6 Prospects of “Complexity Green Criminology”

Frank Williams III offers an alternative paradigm, self-organized criticality theory. It suggests that various, otherwise random, events and factors accumulate into recognizable shapes and patterns. These ultimately result in similar processes, like the analogy of dropping grains of sand to form a sand-pile.

A criminological critical-incident perspective focuses on the “accumulation” of variables over time to produce behavior. The variables being accumulated are biological, social, environmental, and psychological. Some are deposited prior to others, and it is also possible to “take away” some variables. That is, both addition and subtraction are possible, as well as interaction, and all affect the composite weight of the system. No particular order is required for the accumulating variables. All that is necessary is that the pile begins to assume a particular shape. These accumulated variables ultimately achieve enough weight to reach a critical point where something (a behavior) is waiting to happen. The next variable (perhaps one with a tiny addition to the pile) may be enough to create the behavior.

Once a behavior is at the critical point, the effect of adding a new variable does not assure that a particular behavior will occur. This is because the emission of behavior is a weakly random function. Over a large number of critical points or over a large group of individuals, behavior becomes patterned and more predictable. If the critical point randomly remains for an extreme period of time, it becomes supercritical. Under these conditions, the addition of each new variable is more and more likely produce behavior. Such supercritical stress-relieving behavior is more likely to be seen as spontaneous and potentially more harmful behavior.

Once a behavior relieves the stress, the accumulation of variables begins again. If only accretion takes place, things will build toward the critical point once again. Because of this, where there are segments of society in which social, environmental, and biological variables routinely build toward critical points, behaviors are aggregated repetitive and predictability increases. Criminal behavior itself is only one of a class of behavior. There are many different forms of behavior that serve to relieve the stress of a critical point. The task is not to explain criminal behavior per se, but the class of behavior

7 Conclusions

Making use of the self-organized criticality theory, I think, we can overcome a criticality of environmental crisis and make difference to our environment and the fate of human beings. Complexity green criminology can also overcome the limitation of modern criminology and change the paradigm of criminology.

Notes

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