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What is This?
A green-cultural criminology: An exploratory outline

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Abstract
Within the last two decades, “green criminology” has emerged as a distinctive area of study, drawing together criminologists with a wide range of specific research interests and representing varying theoretical orientations. “Green criminology” spans the micro to the macro, from work on individual-level environmental crimes to business/corporate violations to state transgressions, and includes research conducted from both mainstream and critical theoretical perspectives, as well as arising out of interdisciplinary projects. With few exceptions, there has been little work attempting to explicitly or implicitly integrate cultural criminology with green criminology and vice versa. This article promulgates a green-cultural criminology—an approach that seeks to incorporate a concern with the cultural significance of the environment, environmental crime, and environmental harm into the green criminological enterprise. It begins by demonstrating how cultural criminology is, at some levels, already doing green criminology. It then attempts to map a green criminology onto several key dimensions of cultural criminology: (a) the contestation of space, transgression, and resistance; (b) the way(s) in which crime is constructed and represented by the media; and (c) patterns of constructed consumerism. This article concludes by showing how a green-criminology-cultural-criminology cross-fertilization would be mutually beneficial.

Keywords
constructed consumerism, cultural criminology, environmental crime/harm, green criminology, green-cultural criminology, media, resistance, transgression

Introduction
“Green criminology” is concerned with crimes and harms affecting the natural environment, the planet, and the associated impacts on human and non-human life. Since the early 1990s when...
first proposed by Lynch (1990), it has developed into a distinctive and fertile area of study that now draws together criminologists with a wide range of research interests and theoretical orientations (see, e.g., Beirne and South, 2007; Sollund, 2008; South and Brisman, 2013; White, 2010). There is some debate as to whether “green criminology” constitutes a theory or a perspective (South, 1998; White, 2008: 14), and the term has been subject to some discussion (Meško et al., 2011; Ruggiero and South, 2010: 246–7; White, 2008: 6–8), with other formulations also being offered. White (2008) has suggested “environmental criminology,” but this term may be too easily confused with the longer established description of crime patterns and features of the urban environment. Other proposals include “eco-crime,” which Walters (2010a: 180) argues could cover “existing legal definitions of environmental crime, as well as sociological analyses of environmental harms not necessarily specified by law”; “conservation criminology” (Gibbs et al., 2010; Herbig and Joubert, 2006); and White’s (2010) most recent suggestion, “eco-global criminology.” But criminologists most frequently employ the term “green criminology” to describe the study of ecological, environmental or green crime or harm, and related matters of speciesism (e.g., Beirne, 1999, 2009) and environmental (in)justice (e.g., Lynch and Stretesky, 2003).

In terms of criminological lineage, green criminology most clearly arises from within the tradition(s) of critical criminology, while actively embracing science-based, arts and culture-orientated or social science-rooted approaches and eagerly seeking inter- and multidisciplinary engagement. It can be seen as a body of work and also as an active network of interested individuals sharing and debating ideas that span the micro to the macro, from individual-level environmental crimes to business/corporate violations to state transgressions. Major themes, topics, and problems include pollution and its regulation; corporate and state criminality and environmental impacts; workplace health and safety where breaches have environmentally damaging consequences; criminal organization and official corruption in the illegal disposal of toxic waste; the impact and legacy of law enforcement and military operations on landscapes, water supply, air quality, and living organisms populating these areas; as well as forms of law enforcement and rule regulation relevant to such acts (see, e.g., Lynch, 1990; Lynch and Stretesky, 2003; South, 1998: 214; South and Brisman, 2013).

Various typologies have been offered to deepen our understanding of environmental crimes and harms (e.g., Lynch and Stretesky, 2011). These are important as ways of identifying and organizing clusters of issues and problems that can help shape future research, policy, and practical projects. One simple approach is to draw a distinction between primary and secondary green crimes, classifying some as resulting directly from the destruction and degradation of the earth’s resources, such as pollution of the air and oceans, abuse of non-human species, and deforestation, and others as crimes or harms that are symbiotic with or dependent upon such destruction and efforts made to regulate or prevent it, such as those arising from the exploitation of conditions that follow after environmental damage or crisis (e.g., illegal markets for food, medicine, water) and/or those arising from the violation of rules that attempt to regulate environmental harm and to respond to disaster (Carrabine et al., 2013).

Regardless of the typology employed, green criminology must attend to the mediated and political dynamics surrounding the presentation of various environmental phenomena (especially news about environmental crimes, harms and disasters), as well as to resistance to environmental harm and demand for changes in the way that “business as usual” and “ordinary acts of everyday life” (Agnew, 2013) are destroying the environment. Such resistance and change may be effected by the science of energy use, design of our cities and moves toward local sustainability (Lynch, 2013), or more provocatively (and, perhaps, radically), through protest movements and changes
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to the culture of consumption, which are discussed below. We argue in this article that our appreciation of environmental harms and crimes is limited and incomplete without an understanding of the social construction of environmental harm and crime, in the sense that:

Images of crime and crime control have now become as “real” as crime and criminal justice itself—if by “real” we denote those dimensions of social life that produce consequences; shape attitudes and policy; define the effects of crime and criminal justice; generate fear, avoidance and pleasure; and alter the lives of those involved. (Ferrell et al., 2004: 4; see also Greer, 2009: 194)

This is a process that is synergistically affected by images of environmental disaster reported in the news media and depicted in television and film; by messages that reinforce capitalist principles of conspicuous consumption, exploitation and individualism that contribute to environmental degradation (see Lynch, 1990; see also Lynch and Stretesky, 2003); and in response, by various forms, means and practices of resistance to such environmental harm.

To further develop green criminological concern with mediated depictions of and resistance to environmental harm (including efforts to change the culture of consumption)—and in keeping with green criminology’s willingness to engage across disciplinary boundaries—this article draws on and takes inspiration from cultural criminology, which is concerned with the interrelationship of culture and crime in late modernity (see, e.g., Hayward and Morrison, 2009; Presdee, 2000). Despite the theoretical breadth of green criminology, there has been little previous work attempting to explicitly or implicitly integrate cultural criminology with green criminology and vice versa (cf. Boekhout van Solinge, 2008; Brisman, 2010a, 2010b; Kane, 2009; White, 2008: 40–5, 106, 193; see also Brisman, 2009, 2011; White, 2000–1). In this article, we explore some linkages between green criminology and cultural criminology. Our aim is to demonstrate how cultural criminology is, at some levels, already “doing” green criminology, and to suggest that green criminologists might find a cultural criminological view interesting and fruitful.

We begin with a brief overview of cultural criminology before highlighting three ways in which green criminology might adopt a cultural criminological lens: (a) by adopting cultural criminology’s concern with the contestation of space, transgression, and resistance to analyze the ways in which environmental harms are opposed in/on the streets and in day-to-day living; (b) by devoting greater attention to the way(s) in which environmental crime, harm and disaster are constructed and represented by the news media and in popular culture forms; and (c) by dedicating increased attention to patterns of constructed consumerism and related processes. Our goal in this article is not to identify weaknesses in previous approaches or to promote a particular solution to an environmental problem or set of environmental problems, but to examine existing areas of overlap and to stimulate further investigations across the two fields. Perhaps unimaginatively, but with the benefit of simplicity, we refer to our efforts to integrate cultural criminology and green criminology as a “green-cultural criminology.”

Overview of Cultural Criminology

Cultural criminology is a rich, dynamic, fluid—and occasionally elusive—orientation and perspective that has developed over the last fifteen years and that seeks to comprehend how crime and
crime control are constructed, enforced, and resisted (e.g., Ferrell, 2001a: 75; Hayward and Morrison, 2009; Presdee, 2000; Tunnell, 2004). Drawing inspiration from the work on subcultural symbolism and mediated social control by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the 1970s, cultural criminology provides a bridge between subcultural theories of deviance and explorations of postmodern ironies and contradictions (South, 1997: 92–3), while investigating how various cultural forms and cultural expressions (such as art and music) become criminalized and the ways in which perceptions and understandings of crime and crime control are constructed (Ferrell, 1995: 29; Ferrell, 1998a, 2001a: 72, 76; Ferrell et al., 2008: 59–60; Greer, 2004; 2009; Hayward and Morrison, 2009: 97–8; Presdee, 2000: 15, 17). Although cultural criminologists conceptualize crime as a subcultural phenomenon and concentrate on the dynamics of subcultural style as defining both the internal characteristics and external, mediated constructions of subcultures (see Hebdige, 1979), cultural criminologists do more than simply suggest greater criminological attention to media dynamics and the cultural practices of criminals; they question the possibility and merits of objective, value-free social science exemplified by vapid data sets, and argue that regression models and other statistical tests miss the excitement, sensuality, and “sneaky thrill” of criminality (Katz, 1988). Following Becker’s (1963: 183) interactionist directive that “we look at all the people involved in any episode of alleged deviance” (emphasis added), cultural criminologists frequently undertake ethnographic research “to develop a form of criminological verstehen, whereby the researcher approaches an empathic, appreciative understanding of the meanings and emotions associated with crime and crime control” (Ferrell, 2001a: 75; see also Ferrell, 1998b: 20–42, 2003: 72, 2004a: 299; Hamm and Ferrell, 1998: 270; Kraska, 1998: 89; Lyng, 1998: 224; Tunnell, 1998: 214–15)—although cultural criminologists also make it clear that “cultural criminology ... is not ... and should not be defined, by the particular methods of conventional ethnography” (Ferrell et al., 2008: 179).

In this article, we are most interested in mapping a green criminology onto several key dimensions of cultural criminology and, in the sections that follow, we consider (a) the contestation of space, transgression, and resistance; (b) the way(s) in which crime is constructed and represented by the media; and (c) patterns of constructed consumerism. While there have already been some attempts by green criminologists to integrate cultural criminology into their work—or, at the very least, to apply a cultural lens to their environmental inquiry and/or conduct research falling under various cultural criminological “motifs”—more could be done in this direction and the following are offered as examples and possible building blocks.

The Contestation of Space, Transgression, and Resistance: Ways in which environmental harms are resisted on the streets and in the day-to-day

In an early contribution to the literature, South (1998: 226) suggested that green criminologists should be “particularly sensitive to cultural politics and the emergence of new social movements concerned with lifestyle, identity and visionary protest.” But with few exceptions (e.g., Yates, 2007; Brisman, 2010a), green criminologists have yet to fully respond to this call to examine either (new) social movements or resistance or both. While this may be due to the fact that green criminologists have devoted much attention to illuminating, locating, and describing environmental
crimes and harms and those corporate-state entities most responsible, we would urge green criminologists to document resistance to these environmental crimes and harms—whether it be resistance from traditional socio-political organizations, resistance from “pervasive movements” lacking central command structures (Castells, 2004: 153), or “do-it-yourself” (DiY) activism (see, e.g., McKay, 1998; Ferrell, 2011). Cultural criminology offers a useful model for how to proceed.

According to Ferrell (2003: 79), “the disparate conflicts over crime and cultural space reveal the prevalence of contested public meaning in contemporary society, and something of the work of control in the age of cultural reproduction.” Ferrell (2003: 80) continues by explaining that “cultural criminologists emphasize and explore the various forms which resistance to the complex web of social control may take” and they expose the tensions that exist between various forms of control and resistance to that control. While cultural criminologists have been criticized, perhaps rightly, for “exaggerating the coherence” of some acts of resistance or for “seeing politics where others (including, in some cases, perhaps the perpetrators themselves) only see crime” (Fenwick, 2004: 379), they should be lauded for their recognition of and attention to the “widening horizons of resistance within late modernity” (Ferrell et al., 2008: 60). With Fenwick’s criticisms as a cautionary reminder, we would urge green criminologists to follow cultural criminology’s lead—to investigate examples of late modern resistance that challenge the systems and forms of control responsible for environmental harm. An obvious place to start might be with the direct action of decentralized animal liberation/rights cells (see, e.g., Best and Nocella, 2004; Gaarder, 2011) or the efforts of grassroots environmental justice organisations (see, e.g., Lynch and Stretesky, 2003), but for the purposes of strengthening the connections between cultural criminology and green criminology, we suggest that green criminologists explore those actions that “rupture the normalcy” of everyday life (Ferrell, 2001b: 114)—actions more playful, celebratory, festive, theatrical, and “carnavalesque” than the traditional political rituals of the left (Jordan, 1998: 140; St. John, 2008: 168; see also Ferrell, 2001b: 96, 109; 2004a, 2011; Presdee, 2000, 2001). According to Ferrell et al. (2008: 60),

a new generation of activists is not so much interested in older models of mass social movements as they are in mining the hyperplurality of everyday life ... These activists also understand the particular dynamics of late modernity—understand that moments of leisure and pleasure can hold radical possibilities, that the street can talk politics with the internet, that mediated representations can be subverted and reversed.

Below we provide two examples of this type of playful, pleasurable, and celebratory activism, protest, and resistance.

**Reclaim the Streets**

Imagine a packed city street in London, where shoppers walk the tightrope-thin pavement separating store-fronts from the busy road. All of a sudden, two cars crash into each other, blocking the road. The drivers get out of their vehicles and start to argue. Tensions appear to escalate and one of the drivers reaches inside his vehicle, grabs a hammer and, brandishing it wildly, begins to smash up the other driver’s vehicle. Shoppers stop in their tracks and storeowners peer out of the windows of their shops. Suddenly, people begin rushing out of the anonymous, impersonal
shopping crowd. Some jump on the cars, others fling paint. Music begins and jugglers, clowns, poets, prophets, and performers of all kinds sporting sartorially outrageous costumes fill the street formerly occupied by motorized traffic. Thus begins a “Reclaim the Streets” (or “RTS”) “protestival” (St. John, 2004: 422; 2008).

RTS street parties are spontaneous events—or “autonomous convergences” (St. John 2008: 184)—held on stretches of busy streets and highways or in major intersections (see Brisman, 2010a). Often accomplished by faking a car crash in order to cut off motorized vehicular access to a particular throughway, participants seek to turn “the pavement into a playground” (Ferrell, 2001b: 139) and regard their hijacking of roads as an expression of their shared vision of communal “ownership” of public spaces:

We are basically about taking back public space from the enclosed private arena. At its simplest, it is an attack on cars as a principal agent of enclosure. It’s about reclaiming the streets as public inclusive space from the private exclusive use of the car. But we believe in this as a broader principle, taking back those things which have been enclosed within capitalist circulation and returning them to collective use as a commons. (London Reclaim the Streets agitprop, 1996, quoted in Fourier, 2003: 54)

Essentially, while the blocking of roads and intersections might be regarded as excluding individuals (in cars and buses) from public space, RTS considers motorized, rather than pedestrian, traffic to be the real source of obstruction and exclusion. By commandeering a stretch of asphalt or pavement usually reserved for motorized vehicles, participants claim to have liberated the space for broader public use and enjoyment (Brisman, 2010a: 209–10).

RTS should not be regarded as simply an anti-car movement, however. While RTS “target[s] the most conspicuous symbol of material wealth, fossil fuel consumption, and critical source of carbon emissions—the motor car—obstructing its progress” (St. John, 2008: 172), the real issue is the erosion of neighborhood and community, a disintegration that is accelerated by the isolation of the car (Klein, 1999). As Ferrell elucidates,

Even in the midst of actively retaking streets from the automobile, they acknowledge that cars are only the most visible and tangible representative of an inhuman consumer society which is smashing community, constricting human spontaneity and freedom, and destroying the Earth’s life support system. (Ferrell, 2001b: 138)

Similarly, St. John explains,

since cars are a tangible manifestation of the loss of communal space, liveable streets and sites of free expression, these [are] more than simply “anti-car” or “anti-road” protests. RTS protests [a]re efforts to counter the otherwise inexorable tide of privatization clear-felling remnant public commons—a tide in which young people in particular have been regarded as a menace to patterns of uninterrupted buying. (St. John, 2004: 424)

Thus, RTS views the struggle for car-free space as part of and inseparable from the struggle against global capitalism (see generally Presdee, 2000: 52). As such, RTSers have held street
parties to protest ecological destruction and human rights violations, as well as to show support for striking London Underground workers and sacked Liverpool dock-workers (Klein, 1999).

**Critical Mass**

Critical Mass (CM) is a world-wide bicycling event typically held on the last Friday of every month. Although each ride has its own local flavor—depending in part on the number of participants, nature of traffic laws (or lack thereof), interaction with motorists, and relationship with (i.e., intervention by) police—these exuberant monthly bicycle rides seek to celebrate cycling and to assert cyclists' right to the road.

Like RTS, CM is “foremost a celebration, not a protest” (Ferrell, 2001b: 116, 146; see also http://critical-mass.info/)—an “organized coincidence” (Ferrell, 2001b: 106; McGrath, 2006) or “‘organized coincidence’ headed ‘to wherever’” (Ferrell, 2001b: 146)—or “a disorganized coincidence—a ‘happening,’ a temporary reorganization of public space” (McGrath, 2006). Similarly, like RTS, CM lacks an identifiable leadership (see Ferrell, 2001b: 136; McGrath, 2006). In every city that has a CM ride, some locals pick a date, a time (often in the early evening), and a location for the ride. They do not, however, seek permission or obtain a permit for their ride, frequently rendering the ride illegal in the eyes of local authorities. In order to keep law enforcement from thwarting the ride, publicity is usually quite minimal—riders hear about meeting places via word-of-mouth, xeroxed announcements, or the website http://critical-mass.info/. Ride routes are also not publicized in advance—in part, to prevent police intervention. Rather, at some juncture after riders have assembled, one rider—or a few riders—feeling inspired, will set off in one direction or another, and others follow. The riders cycle into and through the city, “seeking to create celebratory moments in which the unplanned pleasures of spontaneous interaction retake the streets from the drudgery of traffic and commerce” (Ferrell, 2004a: 298; cf. McGrath, 2006, who claims that when CM conducts these “monthly political-protest rides,” they “render … each street they enter momentarily impervious to through traffic”).

Just as RTS does not view itself as an anti-car movement, neither does CM, and the spirit of both RTS and CM events is less protest than the presentation and experience of possibility—the possibility of “bicycling as a collective alternative to the car” (Ferrell, 2011: 96) and the prospects of refreshing and stimulating unplanned and unprompted interpersonal exchanges between strangers, which are virtually impossible when public space is converted to automobile routes. CM events, like RTS events, are “large illicit gatherings designed to salvage city streets from the automotive traffic and to reinstate instead public life founded on fluid, face-to-face community” (Ferrell, 2004a: 288). While the automobile is “a deadly problem in itself,” activists in RTS, CM, and similar groups emphasize that it is “in reality symptomatic of a larger set of contemporary problems regarding the mass extermination of human spontaneity, the routinization of everyday existence” (Ferrell, 2004a: 288). RTS and CM thus seek to temporarily disrupt the antisocial individualism of car culture (see Monbiot, 2005), remind people of what once was normative of and in public commons, and offer a vision of what could be (see generally Hofrichter, 1993a: 89).

Indeed, what is significant about the large-scale, decentralized grassroots movements of CM and RTS is not so much that they eschew representational politics and long-range planning in favor of direct action that disrupts the normalcy of everyday life (although this is important) or that
they have *fun* by embracing and incorporating elements of chance, decoration, music, and play into their carnivalesque events (although this is also important), but that they *enact* the alternative forms of living that they wish to experience and see unfold more regularly or permanently. As Talen explains,

> in New York the Critical Mass improvisatory ride/parades are monthly, and out of that bonding (and police-hounding) have come rich networks of intimate cooperation ... gardens, living communities, art-making, and skill-sharing—i.e., a new economy. Thus, a single brave ritual is the seed of a society that would create a transportation alternative—and a whole lot more. (Talen, 2006: 80)

In other words, rather than existing just in *opposition* to something (e.g., the privatization of public space, the mass extinction of human spontaneity, the routinization of daily life, the environmental harm spawned by pervasive automotive use in urban areas), CM and RTS are *for* something—“a more directly inclusive and environmentally appropriate form of urban mobility” (Ferrell, 2011: 96)—which they seek to enact and create, and which, in so doing, opens up avenues (literally and figuratively) for other types of cooperation and living. This is a profoundly important dynamic for green criminologists to contemplate because environmentalism (at least, its US flavor) has often been viewed in terms of its *adversary*—whom or what environmentalists have been against—rather than in terms of its independent *identity* and *vision* (see generally Castells, 2004; Talen, 2006). While we contend that green criminologists should make CM and RTS and other do-it-yourself celebrations part of their research agenda—for CM and RTS do resist environmental harm—we also maintain that CM, RTS, and other “counter-tribes” or “DiY tribes” (to use St. John’s (2004) terms) can help spur new green criminological initiatives.2

According to Castells (2004: 147), “where there is domination, there is resistance to domination; where new forms of domination emerge, new forms of resistance ultimately surge to act upon the specific patterns of domination.” As environmental and social problems have become more varied and more pervasive, a growing number of activists have come to believe that “change will be brought about, not through the mediation of professional politicians, but by individual and collective participation in social affairs” (Jordan, 1998: 148; see also Ferrell, 2001b: 133; Hofrichter, 1993a: 89–96). RTS and CM represent two types of collective participation in social affairs; other examples of playful and pleasurable activism, protest, and resistance might include Reverend Billy’s “guerrilla theater” (e.g., actions, exorcisms, interventions), and guerilla gardening/avant gardening (including seed-bomb throwing). It would seem appropriate for green criminologists to become familiar with this new orientation and these new methods and, if need be, immerse themselves in the ways that activists push back against the systems and forms of control responsible for environmental (and social) harm, retard or arrest the rhythms of globalized late modernity, and carve out room for living in increasingly privatized urban public space. Just as green criminology has stayed abreast of the causes and consequences of environmental harm, documenting and illuminating corporate and state environmental domination, it needs to engage with the dynamics, mechanisms, and nuances of resistance to such environmental harms and the potential that these forms of resistance
hold for change. Cultural criminology has made some initial forays and can offer a model for green criminology.

**Media Constructions and Representations of Environmental Crime, Harm, and Risks**

Cultural criminologists claim that mediated representations of crime affect individual and collective behavior, and they have therefore endeavored to understand “the emotions engendered by mediated images and collective representations of crime” and its control (Ferrell et al., 2008: 71), contending that these images and representations influence attitudes regarding crime, generate individual and collective feelings of fear and vulnerability, and shape criminal justice policy. Cultural criminology, then, aims to “understand the ways in which mediated processes of cultural reproduction and exchange ‘constitute’ the experience of crime, self, and society under conditions of late modernity” (Hayward and Young, 2007: 108). One reason why cultural criminology pays considerable attention to images of crime and crime control is that when subcultural activity (and subcultures more generally) are criminalized, “they are primarily criminalized through the mass media, through their presentation and re-presentation as criminal in the realm of sound bites, shock images, news conferences, and newspaper headlines” (Ferrell, 1999: 405). Indeed, as Greer (2004: 109) explains, “Media forms and representations are instrumental in the creation of deviant identities and the subsequent stigmatisation and demonisation of whole groups of individuals.” But cultural criminological attention to images of crime and crime control is also driven by a desire to know what mass media is not reporting on—what is not being depicted, why such stories are not being told, and what are the consequences of these decisions (see Brisman, 2010/2011).

As Barak explains,

> [the] news is not uniformly reported. It is not a mirror on reality but rather a prism [through which] the news media do not cover systematically all forms and expressions of crime and victimization. They emphasize some crimes and ignore others. They sympathize with some victims while blaming others. (Barak, 1995: 162)

Similarly, Greer (2004: 114) remarks that “[i]t is only those cases featuring a particular type of victim that will attract sustained media attention and collective outcry.”

The applicability of these insights extends beyond street-level and violent crime. As Fitzgerald and Baralt (2010: 346) observe,

> the media do not report on some risks. Whether or not a risk will be reported depends upon contextual issues, such as whether there are questions of blame, whether a visual image illustrating the impact of the risk is available, whether a large number of people are exposed to the risk, and whether there is conflict among experts regarding the risk.

Of particular interest here is the reporting or non-reporting of certain kinds of “green” story. It is not that media coverage of environmental issues is absent, but rather that, as in the case of many other contested public issues, such coverage is selective (see Hofrichter, 1993a: 89, 1993b: 6). Hence,
The attention paid to environmental risks varies depending upon how a given risk resonates with the larger culture [i.e., whether an environmental issue can be framed in a manner consistent with cultural givens] ... The media underestimate ... long-term risks from environmental toxins and pollutants, while more dramatic risks, such as accidents or natural disasters, are overestimated. (Fitzgerald and Baralt, 2010: 346, citing McCarthy et al., 2008)

Similarly, Simon (2000: 637) claims,

One reason why corporate crimes of all types flourish within certain industries is that the mainstream press underreports both individual incidents of crime and the seriousness of such violations ... The lack of stories is also accompanied by vigorous public relations efforts that function to cover up environmental harms.

Illustratively, Safina (2011), documents how, following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in April 2010, BP posted private guards to close public beaches to keep journalists and witnesses away, leading Safina to remark that “the flow BP is getting good at stopping is the flow of news” (2011: 127). As Walters (2010b: 315) observes, at the same time that BP was engaging in vigorous and aggressive efforts to cover up or diminish the perceived extent of the spill, it continued to maintain “a website with images of green, community-friendly and responsible partnership initiatives”—hardly the first instance of an egregious corporate polluter using ecological images in its advertisements and marketing (see, e.g., Hofrichter, 1993a: 86; Lynch and Stretesky, 2003: 220–2).

A similar argument can apply in the case of climate change, with Hulme remarking that:

the media do not operate as a neutral conveyor of scientific knowledge to a passive audience. They actively and continuously engage in framing, filtering and interpreting messages about climate change using affective and emotive language and imagery ... By definition, frames select and emphasise certain facets of an issue and must therefore de-select and de-emphasize others. Communicating climate change can therefore never be merely “raising awareness” or simply presenting “the facts”... [it] always carries a message ... any communication about climate change will always frame the issue in a particular way. (Hulme, 2009: 219, 227–8)

Hulme (2009: 209, 215) thus attributes societal disagreements about climate change to “the multiple and diverging ways in which climate change is talked about and portrayed in our media,” to “the different ways the issue is framed, the different audiences targeted, the different language, stories and visual imagery adopted,” and to the different ways we interpret these messages and images. Lowe and colleagues (2006) take Hulme’s perspective one step further, arguing that people in the United States have been misled by “newspaper reports that tend to give equal weight to both sides of the climate change debate” (Lowe et al., 2006: 436). This “journalistic practice of balancing the scientific consensus with a comparatively small number of contrarians,” they contend, “has acted to overstate the actual degree of disagreement” (Lowe et al., 2006: 436; for more on the perspective, see, e.g., Antilla, 2005; Boykoff and Boykoff, 2004; Brisman, 2012; McCright and Dunlap, 2000, 2003; Moser and Dilling, 2004).
In sum, the mainstream press underreports environmental risks, individual incidents of environmental crime and harm, and the seriousness of such violations, as well as misrepresents the extent of disagreement among scientists over environmentally destructive phenomena, such as climate change. Even though the result of media underreporting, downplaying, and misrepresenting may be conflicting messages about climate change that probably contribute to public (and political) uncertainty, apathy, or skepticism about climate change (see, e.g., Lowe et al., 2006: 435, 453), green criminologists have largely neglected the study of this and other mediated representations or constructions of environmental crimes and harms. Despite the fact that many environmental battles are “won” or “lost” in the press (compare Castells, 2004: 186–7, and Smith, 2005: 1473, with Boekhout van Solinge, 2010: 271) and, that according to some, direct confrontation and the media are “essential qualities” of today’s environmentalism—especially today’s radical environmentalism (see, e.g., Castells, 2004: 186–7; McKay, 1998: 9, 11; Scarce, 1990: 48)—green criminologists have actually devoted relatively little attention to the media and political dynamics surrounding the presentation of various environmental phenomena. Given the increasing role of media in shaping attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors (see Greer 2009), it is incumbent on green criminologists to tease out which, why, and in what ways various media representations of “environmental crime” and “environmental harm” become (or fail to become, as the case may be) salient and influential.

**Constructed Consumerism: Ways in which the “goods” of consumption are constructed and sold and the “bads” are hidden and (literally) buried**

Cultural systems, such as production and consumption of goods, interact with environmental systems in many ways, in turn producing “mutual feedback ... with shifts in one commonly leading to changes in the other” (Pilgrim and Pretty, 2010: 1; see generally Lorenzen, 2012; Owen, 2012: 74). In this part of the article, we are concerned with our relationship with one exemplar of a local and global resource—water. In this case, we are interested in how consumers create conditions that lead to harm to others, how we create markets that generate variants of white collar or corporate crime, and ultimately how humanity is remaking the world in what scientists now call the Anthropocene epoch (Crutzen, 2002: 23) with implications for environmental damage and disaster and for human morbidity and mortality.

**Water as a Cultural and Criminological Issue**

Our relationship with water is not as straightforward as might be assumed. To take just three examples: (i) the symbolic power of water purity is enormous and yet it is routinely, recklessly polluted; (ii) it is vital to all living organisms, yet its power as a destructive force is frequently underestimated in terms of the risks and threat levels posed by flooding, tidal waves, and climate change; and (iii) despite its ready availability through purification and pipe systems in advanced countries, water has become commodified on a huge scale via the bottled water industry responding to a culturally-created consumer demand that is less than twenty years old, which in turn contributes to a waste disposal problem that we find increasingly difficult to manage.
We live in a world where water is (almost) everywhere, yet where, alongside air, it is the most precious commodity on the planet. The consequences of not having access to it are poverty, starvation, disease, and death. In other locations, it is unpredictably over-abundant, leading to risks of flooding and pollution of clean water—again with consequences that include disease and death (Mares, 2010). As Ward (2010) reminds us, billions of people, huge areas of fertile land, and unique ecosystems are found along narrow coastal strips. Climate change and melting polar ice caps are likely to pose serious threats to these strip-regions and mega cities (e.g., London, New York, Mumbai, and Shanghai), while the effect of ocean bed earthquakes and tsunami tidal waves was tragically illustrated by the devastation experienced by Japan in 2011.

Continuing population growth and expanding affluence (at least in some parts of the world) will lead to major challenges to society. Extra pressure on water supplies will come not only from increased requirements for food production, which uses 70 percent of water consumed globally, but also from a growth in demand for drinking water and industrial processing as we strive to satisfy consumer aspirations. Globally, demand for water is projected to rise 30 percent by 2030, while rainfall patterns are changing due to global warming-induced climate changes that are difficult to predict. Furthermore, with cities in the developing world expanding at an unprecedented rate—adding another three billion urban consumers by 2050—solutions are needed to relieve the pressures of overcrowding, sanitation, waste handling, and transportation if we are to provide comfortable, resilient, and efficient places for all to live and work (IME, 2010; see also Specter, 2012: 101).

In such a world, one would think we would treat water with respect. Yet, we promote cultures of excessive consumption that are hugely dependent on water throughout production and manufacturing processes and we take water for granted and misuse it in various ways via behaviors that include pollution, over-use in industry and the home, and selfish waste of water even during times of scarcity. Our strange relationship with water also gives it value that is turned to profit via commodification—most obviously in paying public or private bodies for collecting, purifying, and supplying water, but also in recent decades, through the phenomenal growth in the market for bottled water (Gleick, 2010; Opel, 1999; Wilk, 2006). And this is what takes us to a further link between a cultural criminology and a green criminology, in this case the cultural commoditization of nature.

As Ruggiero (2013) notes, Andre Gorz (2010) recalls:

how the reading of a 1954 article in an American weekly contributed to his becoming an ecologist before the term even existed. The article explained that, if the US was to make a return on investments, consumption would have to grow by at least 50 per cent in the following eight years, although people were quite incapable of identifying what that additional 50 per cent of consumption would consist of. “It was up to the advertising and marketing experts to summon up new needs, desires and fantasies on the part of consumers, to deck out even the most trivial commodities with symbols that would increase the demand for them” (Gorz, 2010: 6). (Ruggiero, 2013)

The selling of water provides a perfect example of the creation of such needs, desires, and fantasies. As Wilk nicely points out:

Years ago advertising executives could jokingly praise an expert by saying that he or she “could sell ice-cubes to Eskimos.” Now that kind of feat, getting people to pay for things that they already have in abundance around them, for which they have no manifest need, has become
commonplace ... Today marketers recognize that goods have magical powers that have nothing to do with ‘needs’ and they have become magicians who transform mundane and abundant things into exotic valuables. (Wilk, 2006: 304–5)

Cultural anthropologists have shown this in many investigations and debates (e.g. Douglas, 1966; Smith, 1999). This is, after all, a process based on the magic of totems, of symbols of power and status, and of tokens of identification and belonging, characteristics that drive the competitiveness and group-mentality of consumerism (see, e.g., Lorenzen, 2012; Mares, 2010; Neilson and Paxton 2010: 5, 6, 7, 9). So, in this case, the magic has been performed on water, taking its abundance and availability and transforming it into something scarce and valuable. But how?

**The Myth-Selling of Bottled Water**

Various messages are directly given or strongly implied: for example, that tap water is unsafe and that bottled water comes from pure, unpolluted sources; that there is a taste difference between tap and bottled waters; that bottled water is “ethical” and “green” and so forth. Such messages are questionable, if not simply untrue. Tap water is very safe when from a purified and filtered source, whereas bottled water can come from contaminated sources and may be stored for a long time—which is less “safe” than using a fresh, running supply. Tap water is usually placed high in “best taste” choice tests. The energy used in the bottling of water, the manufacture and disposal or recycling of plastic bottles as well as the transport miles used in delivering crates of these bottles across nations and around the world, all adds up to an enormous energy toll that cannot be justified given the low-cost and energy-efficient ways in which water can be delivered immediately via a tap (see, e.g., Main, 2008). According to the Pacific Institute, a US-based environmental nonprofit organization, consumption of bottled water requires the equivalent of more than 17 million barrels of oil to produce the plastic containers (not including the energy for transportation) (http://www.pacinst.org/topics/water_and_sustainability/bottled_water/bottled_water_and_energy.html); it takes three litres of water to produce one litre of bottled water, while cross-country transportation adds millions of tons of carbon dioxide emissions each year. Such mis-selling is clearly neither ethical nor environmentally “green.” In fact, the bottled water phenomenon highlights a key concern arising from the mismatch between consumer culture and the “free goods” of nature. In the past thirty or so years, water has been pulled between being a free public good and a privatized commodity, with the latter development producing protests and popular movements in countries as diverse as Bolivia and Canada. As Wilk observes:

In poor countries [bottled water] represents the failure of the government to provide basic public services to citizens. While for the wealthy [countries] it has often come to represent waste, environmental destruction, the corruption of children by marketing, and the bankrupt absurdity of mass-consumer society as a whole. (Wilk, 2006: 305)

**Branding, Marketing, and Lying**

In nearly all cases and entirely predictably, the marketing of bottled water will play into popular and shared fantasies about purity and unspoiled environments, such as springs, glaciers and
snowscapes, lakes and lagoons, islands and mountains, tropical jungles and ocean seas. This is not necessarily deceitful advertising, for it could be argued that pitching bottled water as a desirable consumer product assumes an interested market audience that is fairly sophisticated and aware about the role of attractive fantasy in advertising. In some of these instances, the brand and cultural connotations of bottled water as lifestyle accessory, “cool,” and somehow “green,” produce a compliant co-conspirator with the supplier. This does, however, position the marketing message in a particular way that may not always be entirely or easily defensible and in some cases the claims made for the bottled water product really are simply spurious, misleading or untrue. So consumers may well know that brands such as Dasani, Aquafina, Pure-Life are just tap water (labeled in the US as PWS, meaning public water supply), but still buy them. Others will not, however, and this could be seen as a culturally marketed version of the kind of quasi-fraudulent commerce that concerned Sutherland (1949) as an abuse of the public and of the trust they should be able to place in respectable suppliers of goods and services. Gleick (2010: 116), for example, argues that in the USA “the bottled water industry seems to produce more than its share of cons” and reports that regulation is hazy and inconsistent, with responsibility spread across a variety of agencies such as the Federal Trade Commission, the Food and Drug Administration, the Internet Fraud Complaint Center and others, with a record of ineffectiveness that has failed to protect the public from instances of contamination or “obvious charlatans peddling false claims and pseudo-science about bottled water.”

According to Gleick (2010: 116), the mass consumption of bottled water is “an act of economic, environmental and social blindness.” It is economically rational only to producers and retailers, not to consumers; it is environmentally damaging in producing a staggering amount of plastic containers for which there is no further use and which have to be collected, some buried and some recycled; and it is anti-social in creating distrust of public water supplies. As in the cases Sutherland considered, the latter point concerning the abuse and erosion of trust is one of the most easily overlooked yet potentially most damaging aspects of “fraudulent” transactions (Friedrichs, 2010). Consider that one of the major nineteenth-century breakthroughs in public health was the contribution that improved municipal supply of good-quality water made to the control of cholera and other disease. Today,

The most visible irony is that at the time when a vast organized public and private effort, at a cost of trillions of dollars and euros, has given most Europeans and North Americans clean, cheap and safe drinking water in their homes, these same people go out and buy their drinking water in shops, at a price higher than an equivalent amount of beer, soda or even gasoline. (Wilk, 2006: 305)

Water Poverty, Waste Excess, and the Economic Cause of Environmental Harms
But what about cases where public supply is unsafe or unhealthy? Undoubtedly, there is a sensible case for bottling and distributing water here, but it is not the most sensible and certainly not the most equitable. The better response would be to ensure that safe water supplies are available to all on a global basis. To return to the opening remarks on this topic, the planet does not lack water—indeed we may find land and populations threatened and overwhelmed by it in this
century. Nor does science lack the relatively cheap technologies required to pump, purify, and pipe water—but still too many people lack access to drinkable water. There is more profit to be made in selling it to them in plastic bottles than helping them to establish local systems of supply and purification that would provide water, literally, “on tap.” In the process, we use enormous amounts of energy, make large profits for companies that sell a product that the planet produces for free, and manufacture hard-to-dispose-of receptacles that damage the environment and accumulate in waste bins and landfills. The double tragedy is that there are the poor of the world who will go thirsty and there are the poor of the world who will forage among the garbage waste of the wealthy to recycle and sell in order to survive. As Ferrell (2004b: 177) comments, “the same economic order that creates the possibilities of boundless consumption for the privileged relegates others to picking among the discards of this consumption.” These discards, he continues, are the “unwanted” product of an “intensification of general wastefulness” that has, in turn, produced an escalating “increase [in] environmental degradation in terms of natural resource extraction, waste disposal, and shrinking natural habitats” (2004b: 167). While “Americans remain the world’s waste champions,” Ferrell (2004b: 167) laments, “their spreading habits of profligate hyperconsumption now seem to herald environmental destruction and material accumulation on a scale as yet unimagined” (quoting Worldwatch Institute 2004). Castells (2004: 169) would agree and argues that regardless of efforts (genuine and specious) made to address issues of waste, poverty, and environmental damage, “most of our fundamental problems concerning the environment remain, since their treatment requires a transformation of modes of production and consumption.”

To conclude this section, consider Presdee’s (2000: 24) contention that cultural criminology should “examine the dynamics of a consumer culture that demands the irrationality of the commodification of more and more of social life” at the same time as this process “stands alongside an economic system that demands more and more order and rationality.” There are many ways in which we can see this mix of irrationality and rationality expressed through cultural production, consumption practices and the subsequent jettisoning, disposal, and destruction of the embodiments of this process, whether clothes, phones, cars or plastic drinks bottles. As Thompson (1989) notes, once desired things lose the significance and symbolic values that once made them desirable, they may also lose their economic value but they do not lose their physical value in the sense of being an artefactual presence until decay or destruction removes this as well (see also Groombridge, 2013; Lorenzen, 2012). But this juxtaposition of “irrationality” and “rationality” may also be misleading, for production, commodification, and consumption are the basis for modern economic order (see, e.g., Hofrichter, 1993a, 1993b: 85–7; Lynch, 1990). As current economic conditions illustrate, it is the real (or perceived) success or failure of these barometers of economic performance that influence the rational and irrational behaviors of markets and hence of economies.

Conclusion
According to Ferrell (2006: 255), “cultural criminologists continue to explore new ways of conceptualizing and undertaking criminological scholarship, and to imagine new ways of confronting critically the intersection of culture, crime, and justice.” We argue that green criminologists should seek to imagine new ways of confronting critically the intersection of culture, crime, justice, and
the environment. We have begun to consider how to incorporate a concern with the cultural significance of the environment, environmental crime, and environmental harm into the green criminological enterprise. A green criminology-cultural criminology cross-fertilization would be mutually beneficial. As Henry and Milovanovic (1991–2: 294) observe, “in constructing distinctions between different theoretical positions, criminologists must be cautious not to overlook the connections that exist between them.” To us, it seems evident that this advice applies very well to green criminology and cultural criminology, as both are explicitly open, interdisciplinary, and intellectually liberal. Cultural criminologists should not mind the suggestion that they adopt more of a “green flavor” nor should green criminologists have reason to find a “cultural” perspective unwelcome.

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Notes
1. This article is not an exhaustive account of green criminology-cultural criminology interrelationships or nature-culture connections more generally, nor do we claim that cultural criminology holds a monopoly on cultural analysis. We attempt an indicative integration of cultural criminology and green criminology rather than, for example, green criminology and anthropology or green criminology and political ecology, because both share common ground within the (admittedly interdisciplinary) field of ‘criminology’ and its concern with the causes, control, extent, and meaning of crime, deviancy, and harm. We hope that others will also investigate cultural understandings and interpretations of environmental crime and nature with tools both from within and from outside the discipline of criminology.

2. This is not to suggest that green criminologists have never considered phenomena such as RTS. Rather, we contend that they could move beyond the comments by Groombridge (1998: 258), whose laudatory focus on masculinities and (their links to) crimes against the environment unfortunately leads him to reduce RTS as representing an “aesthetic” or “romantic” concern for “landscape”, rather than a “political” one. For more on Critical Mass, see Carlsson (2002); Ferrell (2001b: 105–31); http://critical-mass.info/.


References


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