

## **GERN WORKSHOP**

### **Green Criminology and Protection of Environment - Epistemology, Research, Policy Making and Action – Introductory Remarks**

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Pollution and toxic waste, killing of plants and animals, destroying of soils and other different varieties of injuries and degradation linked to use, misuse and poor management of natural environment are known as environmental harms. These violations against environment occur as a consequence of irresponsible human behaviour and endanger not only environment but also the human society. Furthermore, some of these illegal actions can be crucial for national and global security. When talking about the relationship environment – security, we are talking about the question of direct and/or indirect influence of the environment on national or global security. For Homer-Dixon (1994) environmental degradation represents a central threat to security, because of political and partly physical bond between the environment and security. These bonds cause the impact of environmental degradation and its factors are a source for formulating conflicts. Therefore, the question about the environment and environmental politics is becoming a more and more important part of public policies dealing with the question of survival of the human race. The main need for research on these issues comes from the fact that this field is still largely unresearched, especially from the aspect of social sciences. The field of environmental criminality is also exceptionally wide and, on the whole *interdisciplinary*, which represents a methodological problem in the access to knowledge, where cooperation between natural and social sciences, especially criminology, is necessary.

With the incrimination of harms against the environment, a completely new field of expertise was born for criminology. This field differs from past research work, because it deals with a new deviance, the one that threatens the specially secured goods in a special way, and it also deals with a different causality (Pečar, 1981: 41). Criminology, as a phenomenological and causal-genetic science, which studies phenomena and forms of deviant behaviour, researches causes of this behavior and uses comprehension of empirical researches and experience about caused changes and consequences, was faced with new and unknown crimes – crimes against the environment. Criminological discussions about environmental crime refer to how this criminality manifests itself in real life, how it is measured, explained, prevented, regulated, sanctioned, etc. Different irregularities, harms, violations and crimes against nature are known as *green crimes*, among British (Clifford, Edwards, Groobridge, Lane, South), American (Stretsky, Lynch, Ross, Koser Wilson, Edwards, Fields, Hays, Seis) and Australian (White) criminologists. In the past two decades green criminology, as a branch of criminology whose subject of research are crimes against the environment, shared its research findings and used them in preventing intentional and negative changes of the environment. However, it is worth remembering, what White (2003: 293) points out: *“An individual cannot choose a certain environmental problem and expect from it that it would naturally meet all the aspects of criminological theory and practice.”* As it is shown in White’s statement, the theoretical framework of green criminology is hard to define. For this reason, trying to form a clear definition is very rare. Furthermore, such lack of exact framing of green criminology is one of the reasons that make successful research of green crimes difficult. White (2008: 14) is clear and brief: *“There is no green criminological theory as*

*such.*" Halsey (2004) goes even further and gives a sharp criticism on green criminology because of lack of a (suitable) definition and exposes the need of a clear definition of green criminology. All the above emphasised facts and issues confirm the need and importance of broader development of green criminology as one of the subjects of environmental protection.

One lives in an everyday changing modern society where almost every day something new occurs. Consequently, specifically connected with economic progress, the forms of environmental crime are changing, too. The review of literature reveals the narrowness of research, which covers only a small part of the whole field of environmental crime. This clearly shows the need to extend the methodological approaches in criminological studies of environmental crime. Furthermore, the need for alternative approaches to researching modern forms of environmental threats is expressed. This happened because with human development and modern progress the forms and offenders of environmental crimes are changing, environment degradation and destruction are spreading, and the society must properly respond to this threatening situation. Response to this emerging situation is possible with environmental protection which includes any action for protection and conservation of nature against many human activities. Furthermore, protection of the environment is closely connected with social sciences, especially green criminology. Protecting the environment, no matter if it is on an individual, organisational, governmental or global level has to rely on criminological research results. It refers to intentional acts of harm against natural environment including eco-crime (destruction of the environment on a large scale), eco-cide (destruction of earth) and eco-terrorism (terrorism in support of ecological, environmental or animal rights). No matter on what level or in what form environmental criminality occurs, green criminology is a leading social science, responsible for studying of these deviant behaviors against the environment. Furthermore, it is responsible for providing the answers to numerous questions about environmental criminality and quite so for providing suggestions of possible solutions of this emerging environmental crisis of the contemporary society.

The history of criminology shows that epistemology always was an important concern of criminology. New types of crime, such as environmental crime, induce a reappraisal of criminological concepts, in order to salvage what is good and combine it with new methodology so that this new crime can be better studied, analyzed and predicted (Swanningen, 1997). In addition, the fact that the policy decisions of the past have dictated funding and direction of study, should not be ignored. According to Walters (2003) serious academics in the field of criminology must take control of their study and focus. New modes of governance have come to affect criminological scholarship because, nowadays, economic models of accountability, risk management and profit margin drive some of these governances. Since the mid 1980's economics has played a large role in redefining academic research in general and criminological research is no exception. The fact, that economic development is often so close-related to environmental criminality, raises additional questions about criminological research which has not evaded the phenomena of environmental crime.

Due to demographic pressure and technology, the natural environment is being degraded. Sometimes the consequences are very hard and cannot be repaired, and the environment is permanently damaged; plants and animals are killed and habitats are lost. Faced with this situation governments and world leaders have become very much aware of the danger presented by environmental crime and a destroyed environment. Survival of the human race could be endangered and for this reason governments have begun to support environmental protection and placing restraints on activities that caused environmental degradation. The

governmental courses of actions, regulatory measures, laws and funding priorities have been focused directly on the environment. Because of lack of knowledge in this field, the sciences (especially social sciences) together with green criminology have an important role (and opportunity) to provide the necessary knowledge and facts, gathered through research and study of environmental criminality all over the world.

As described above, in recent years environmental criminality has become an area of general social concern, also for academics and experts, although initial research attempts have met with problems, because researchers did not know or take into consideration the particular features of environmental crime. Some European research centres, such as the Max-Planck-Institute (Germany), the Department of Criminology at Keele University (Great Britain), the Helsinki European United Nations Institute (Finland) and the Institute of Criminal Justice and Security (Slovenia) managed to overcome these first obstacles in criminological research of environmental criminality. It is for these reasons that we propose to organise a workshop on environmental criminality, involving several European research teams and centres, which we hope, will represent an important step forward for research on environmental criminality in Europe.

A first objective of the proposed workshop is to identify green criminology, environmental criminality and environmental protection from the perspective of the social sciences, as a basis for future seminars, conferences, projects etc. A second objective is the establishment of a network of researchers and experts to exchange ideas and identify more efficient responses to threats against the environment and directions for future research and educational cooperation. The main highlight will be given to environmental criminality, especially from the point of view of epistemology, research, policy making and action.