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0521621259 - The Globalisation of Crime: Understanding Transitional Relationships in Context

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## Introduction: Notions of context and globalisation

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Crime has been a silent partner in modernisation.<sup>1</sup> Within a contracting world, crime and its traditional boundaries are transforming into predictable and active features of globalisation. The analysis which follows charts this evolution.

Globalisation creates new and favourable contexts for crime. This is the consequence of what Harvey refers to as the ‘compression of time and the annihilation of space’ (1989: 293–5). Commercial crime relationships in particular are set free to benefit from opportunities not dissimilar to those enjoyed by multinational enterprise beyond the jurisdiction of the individual state and the limitations of single markets. The globalisation of crime represents the potential to view many crime relationships unburdened of conventional legal and moral determination. Crime operates amongst the other market<sup>2</sup> solvents<sup>3</sup> in globalisation, and as such may now be analysed against general features of ‘commodification’ which are presently expanding and penetrating every corner of the planet.

Were this book to advance a predominant thesis it would be that the process of time-space compression, which is globalisation, has enhanced material crime relationships to an extent where they require analysis in a similar fashion to any other crucial market force. The claim of globalisation is that: ‘Spatial barriers have collapsed so that the world is now a single field within which capitalism can operate, and capital flows become more and more sensitive to the relative advantages of particular spatial locations’ (Waters, 1995: 57–8). The context of crime is such a location.

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of the analysis to follow modernisation is taken to involve a capitalist system of commodity production, industrialism, developed state surveillance techniques, and militarised order (see Giddens, 1991: 15).

<sup>2</sup> As Gilpin agrees, the market here is ‘driven largely by its own internal dynamic’ where the pace and direction of advance are mainly influenced by external factors such as domestic and international political frameworks (Gilpin, 1987: 65).

<sup>3</sup> The use of the word ‘solvents’ here refers to a process whereby conventional distinctions are weakened or destroyed as well as where crime is an agent of flux.

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The globalisation of capital from money to the electronic transfer of credit, of transactions of wealth from the exchange of property to information technology, and the seemingly limitless expanse of immediate and instantaneous global markets, have enabled the transformation of crime beyond people, places and even identifiable victims. Crime is now as much a feature of the emergent globalised culture as is every other aspect of its consumerism. The task of this book is to explore this location in a variety of globalising social contexts in order to better appreciate the place of crime as an agent of social change. In addition, the durability of popular wisdom and its ensuing representations of crime and control are of interest now that a popular culture context is being transformed beyond cultural relativity.

**‘There will be no there anymore; we will all be here’<sup>4</sup>**

Globalisation is changing our understanding of culture and its significance as a context within which crime is constructed and played out. Until recently, and in recognition of the diversity of world cultures, it was safe to say that crime was culturally specific, and to confine contextual analysis thereby. However, in the likelihood that: ‘in a globalised world there will be a single society and culture occupying the planet’ (Waters, 1995: 3), a more integrative and dynamic contextual analysis for crime, particularly as it sits within any universal culture,<sup>5</sup> is required.

The value systems of modernised societies are amenable to a wide range of crime opportunities. With modernisation being a common theme for the development of world cultures, as well as a stimulus for globalisation, the reduction in the diversity of crime contexts in culture has an important bearing on contemporary understandings of crime. Cultures in transition are visited in the following analysis and they suggest an important causal nexus between modernisation and crime.

Having said this, our world is still far from the universalised culture in all quarters. Therefore the recognition of the transitional and relative dimensions of culture in the proposed contextual analysis of crime is of importance. Globalisation is a transitional state. It is illusory and potentially distracting at this stage of the globalisation process only to concentrate on the ‘collapsing’ of time and space without recognising the diversity of

<sup>4</sup> Waters (1995: 124).

<sup>5</sup> ‘A globalised culture is chaotic rather than orderly – it is integrated and connected so that the meanings of its components are “relativised” to one another but it is not unified or centralised. The absolute globalisation of culture would involve the creation of a common but hyperdifferentiated field of value, taste and style opportunities, accessible by each individual without constraint for purposes either of self expression or consumption’ (Waters, 1995: 125–6).

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human consciousness which remains (see Giddens, 1996). 'Globalisation as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole . . . both concrete global interdependence and consciousness of the global whole in the twentieth century' (Robertson, 1992: 8).

It is the Janus-faced nature of globalisation which makes it both confusing and challenging as a context for analysis. It might even be said of globalisation that it is paradoxical in the way it unifies and delineates, internationalises and localises. The features of this process will become clearer and less perplexing as we relate crime to globalisation and vice versa. This is because crime demonstrates a similar duality.

Understandings of crime, and efforts for its control, mean little beyond their social context. 'Globalisation' as the contextual focus for this study of crime reveals a prevailing dilemma for contemporary appreciations of crime in context reminiscent of the duality just referred to. Crime is regularly identified in populist discourse as a 'world-wide problem' requiring international commitments towards its prevention and control. However, the existence of actual crime relationships depends on a spectrum of specific and individual socio-cultural influences which may explain any particular choice<sup>6</sup> made in favour of or against crime. These influences, and the crime choices which they support, are windows through which globalisation as a novel and significant expository context for crime may be realistically and critically viewed (see chapter 6).

The challenge in analysing crime as a problem in a global context, without sacrificing the culturally specific 'reality' of crime relationships, requires more than reconciling perennial debates about universalism and relativity in social science. Present-day crime control agendas have positioned crime in a 'globalised' context whether we like it or not. Globalisation has now been deemed, through the language of international politics, to be an authorised and legitimate regimen of control. Critical considerations of the actual place of crime within globalisation, and globalisation within crime, however, have not always accompanied, or featured in, this development (see Waters, 1995: chs. 1 and 2).

Therefore, in order to investigate and identify crime in its globalised context, it is no longer sufficient simply to seek out its empirical reality;

<sup>6</sup> The analysis of crime and its representation which follows is not limited to paradigms in which crime is the result of free will or rational evaluation. However, the recognition of crime as an outcome which emerges from a process of selection, whether determined by environments of foreclosed opportunity or uninhibited personal preference, is an important counterbalance to suggestions that crime is irrational, ill considered or pathological. In addition, if crime is recognised as choice, then the process of choice is worthy of interrogation. In this way the 'chooser' is not disempowered and the choice is not dismissed.

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nor is it helpful to remain focused on operational distinctions like offenders, offences and where the latter are committed. The globalisation of crime and control has transformed essential representations of crime so as to require the recognition of crime beyond behaviours, jurisdictions and moral refrains. It has elevated the context of crime to a prominence which makes actors, behaviours and labels essentially dependent on their setting.

The declaration of interest in context as a sphere of influence is not a return to determinist crime theorising. Globalisation is both dynamic and transitional and as such its interaction with crime, choice and control goes beyond a web of simple causal links. A search for common themes of crime and control in today's transitional contexts leads to an eventual consideration of globalisation. An analysis of globalisation, it is argued, is not complete without consideration of crime and control.<sup>7</sup>

While crime on the streets might be viewed as a local issue and crime in the multinational boardroom as more global, there remain important contextual themes common to both and inextricably essential to an understanding of either. This is where an interactive appreciation of crime in context is important to an understanding and analysis of crime as a force for globalisation and vice versa, rather than being restricted to representations of crime as criminals, offences or victims – aliens in the 'global village'.<sup>8</sup>

A further development on the local/global duality is to view crime as 'patterns' of behaviour and reaction at the global level, while more as matters of individual variation in the local context. Again, not wishing to construct fields for analysis which artificially delimit the local from the global, there is much about the representation of crime as a global problem<sup>9</sup> which implies a more structural set of relationships than do the localised representations of crime as people and actions.

In an attempt to appreciate the 'globalisation' of crime and control both as and beyond political rhetoric, what follows will identify important themes of change which have shaped the present priorities of the 'global

<sup>7</sup> As will be elaborated upon in later chapters, the regulation and control of crime have a profound impact not only on the nature and incidence of crime, but also on the opportunities for crime and crime choice. Throughout the analysis which follows the dynamic relationship between crime and control will form a focus.

<sup>8</sup> For an understanding of the 'global village' concept beyond cliché, see McLuhan (1964: 93).

<sup>9</sup> In referring to a problem as global, the interpretations of Galtung (1995: 29) are useful:

- global in the sense of 'world-wide', being shared by a high number of societies;
- global in the sense of 'world-interconnected', with causal loops spanning the whole world;
- global in the sense of 'world-system', applying to world society as such.

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village'. One such significant theme is development. More than modernisation, development is a paradigm affecting all world cultures and an international financial dogma intruding on all societies in transition.

Along with development, free-market economics and the reconstruction of centralised economies are current themes of change, particularly in Eastern Europe. Within the discourse generated around these themes of change is a tendency to marginalise crime as a 'foreign import' or a 'black market aberration'. This in turn diminishes the significance of a crime market within these emergent economies and ignores the opportunity for using crime as a critical measure of free-market economics to achieve reconstruction.

Within contemporary cultural and social development in whatever paradigm, global priorities such as economic reconstruction largely define the direction of modernisation. So too are they integral to current representations of crime and crime control, particularly when crime is targeted as a challenge to the realisation of such priorities. However, the place of crime within themes of change is not so simple. For instance, the interaction between development (as a crucial characteristic of globalisation) and the place of crime within developing cultures provides a universal and strategic, if largely unrecognised, back-drop to the analysis of crime and globalisation (see chapter 2).

Crime is a feature of the transitional and the globalised society, and as such should be accepted as a common theme in globalisation. Why this is not so becomes an important theme for analysis. Answers may lie in the relatively positive and purposive representations of globalisation and its 'legitimate' features, such as development, when contrasted against the pathological representations of crime. This is in further need of analysis.

This book is an attempt to disclose crime and crime relationships as common, even normal, features of societies in transition. However 'society' requires contextualisation. The universal context of crime within 'globalised' society reveals the often paradoxical representations of crime and rationalisations of its place in any transitional culture.

In order for the 'globalisation' of crime to be taken seriously (beyond international political rhetoric), and so that globalisation can be offered as a significant theoretical context within which to understand crime, the place of crime in terms of cultures in transition; societies in stages of development; and individuals experiencing marginalisation as a consequence of transition and development, is here ranged against representations of crime as a problem beyond artificial social and spatial boundaries.

The globalisation of thinking about crime, and the manner in which it is represented, invites a three-dimensional contextual analysis. This will move from the comparative level of globalisation and apply the

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internationalised representation of crime, given perspective through visions of culturally specific crime relationships and choices, so as to inclusively explain relative and universal ‘interactions’ of crime and society in transition.

As suggested earlier, the representation of crime reveals how and why it exists in certain contexts. Representations of crime are more often than not transitional; the theoretical ‘postures’ underlying any particular representation of crime and its socio-cultural location are equally so. The context of crime is itself an interactive process, wherein representations are crucial. In what follows (see chapter 1) we commence our analysis with an examination of how crime is represented and why; work our way across a range of contextual assumptions about crime on which such representations rely; and, combined with reflection on globalisation, reveal crime to be as much a recognisable dimension of cultures in transition as it is of globalisation in ascendancy.

### Crime in context

Crime is a social phenomenon involving people, places and institutions. Crime can neither exist nor make sense without its particular social context. This book critically explores popular impressions of crime as a global phenomenon and its impact within the context of communities in transition. It locates crime within actual relationships and real social settings. It evaluates representations of crime in a language which is often meant to be no more complicated than the representations themselves appear.

‘Context’ is employed here as a central concept within the analysis of this study, in preference to overworked notions such as ‘community’, ‘society’ or ‘culture’. The interactive and actual connotations of ‘context’, along with the often artificial and extreme notions of community, society and culture within representations of crime, promote contextual analysis. Michael Mann argues persuasively (1986), that the conception of society as an unproblematic, unitary totality is both unhelpful and illusory. ‘There is no master concept or basic unit of society . . . societies are much messier than our theories of them’ (Mann, 1986: 3–4). ‘Society’, global or otherwise, will not provide an incisive referent for this analysis of crime. ‘Community’ has become pastorate and idealised (see Cohen, 1985); ‘culture’ is too value-laden and perplexing.

Having an identified context, rather than model states declared as the essential location for analysis, enables a consideration of what Mann suggests as the constitution of societies: ‘multiple overlapping and inter-connecting socio-spatial connections of power’ (1986: 1). Crime be-

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comes an important element within such interconnections of power and domination, as well as providing an interesting relationship of power, itself worthy of study. Globalisation is a fertile context within which crime, as relationships of power, and interconnections through which power materialises, may be understood. Globalisation is a power context and a language for asserting hierarchies of power.

In addition, the contextual significance of crime for individuals, for communities in differing situations of social development, as well as for global 'agendas', is understood through a realistic evaluation of popular wisdom about crime and control. By commencing our analysis with a critical review of the representation process, the possibility exists to test the resilience of certain causal explanations for crime from local to global wisdom. Further, the globalised representation of the crime problem can be appreciated in terms of common and constant considerations of crime and control. If the representations of the crime problem remain consistent across contexts, then there must exist reasonably uniform motivations behind these representations which outweigh recognition of the diversity of crime relationships. The reasons for such contested realities and their avoidance may illuminate the transition towards globalisation and the significance of crime within it.

Working down from globalisation as an analytical context for crime, the resultant conceptualisation of crime throughout this book is specific, but far from static. The book discusses how crime relationships which connect players in a crime context are created, are shaped and are reliant on settings wherein a wide range of identifiable 'life' features interact towards crime.

In terms of contextual interaction, it is a purpose of this project to critically analyse the relations and interactions between representations of crime as phenomena beyond individuals, relationships and cultural contexts; selective marginalisation through social development; individual and cultural 'reformation' in response to social marginalisation; and choices for crime, creating opportunity within specific cultural 'reformations', under pressures on society to modernise and develop.

In particular, this study considers common scenarios of crime and social development in select transitional cultures. The context of crime within such transitional cultures is significant through the interconnection of development, marginalisation and traditional sources of cultural reintegration. These 'themes of change' are applied to contextual analysis, recognising their situation within popular representations of crime, and the often ambiguous way in which they are relied upon for the purpose of explaining crime or in justifying certain control strategies.

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A methodology employed in the book is to analyse case-studies<sup>10</sup> of hitherto misunderstood and misrepresented crime relationships in contexts which exhibit these ‘themes of change’. Such misrepresentations betray links between important themes like the marginalising consequences of social development, cultural strains and the development of crime choices, and imperatives toward re-integration (see chapter 4). The case-studies provide interesting and recognisable contexts for such links. In addition, they pose for analysis any of the following conflict situations:

- the clash between traditional value structures and the enticements of modernisation;
- the transition in governance and leadership as a result of urbanisation;
- the fracture of extended family socialisation as a consequence of urban drift;
- the struggle for material purchase in a cash society;
- the closure of legitimate opportunity in fluid states of employment and employability;
- the discriminatory dimensions of state-centred criminalisation;
- the selective social pressures arising from institutionalised economic diversity;
- the active and reactive potentials of traditional cultural re-integration within social settings where community identity remains.

### The globalisation theme

In a social context, globalisation is the progress towards one culture on the planet – a single society. Temporally, globalisation is a social process wherein the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede, and people become increasingly aware of this recession (see Waters, 1995: 3).

The globalisation process of modernisation is of most interest to us for the exploration of crime contexts. The social paradoxes associated with modernisation are particularly significant triggers when analysing crime relationships. For example, where modernisation weakens culture, crime will emerge selectively to strengthen certain cultures and weaken others, depending on the manner in which such cultures foster crime relationships. At the same time, like any other significant social influence, crime acts as a lubricant and a solvent for globalisation in a similar fashion to legitimate features of modernisation.

<sup>10</sup> Where possible, case-studies have been drawn from cultures such as those in the Pacific islands where: custom and tradition are intact and apparent; the interface between forces of tradition and modernisation is sharp and active; cultures are in transition; crime and control are significant features of such transition; globalisation is in its formative stages.



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Globalisation is a reflexive concept. It involves the progression from the political eras of colonisation, the economic eras of industrialisation and the social eras of the state. It might be said that globalisation:

is the direct consequence of the expansion of European culture across the planet through settlement, colonisation and mimesis. It is also bound up intrinsically with patterns of capitalist development, as it has ramified through political and cultural arenas. However, it does not imply that every corner of the planet must become Westernised and capitalist but rather that every set of social arrangements must establish its position in relation to the capitalist West . . . it must relativise itself (Waters, 1995: 3).

And yet, as Giddens suggests (1996), whereas globalisation was initially the province of Westernised cultures, it is now outside and beyond the exclusive control of any particular cultural influence. It is the international influence of consumerist market economics rather than the particular impact of culture which presently fuels globalisation (in a somewhat similar fashion to the way in which it shapes transnational criminal enterprise).

Globalisation is a process of paradoxes. As indicated earlier, while crime may weaken presently existing cultures, so too it becomes a force for globalisation. But more than this, it is the realisation that material exchanges tend to localise, political exchanges tend to internationalise and symbolic exchanges tend to globalise, which suggests an evolution for globalised crime. Consequently, our analysis is directed away from paradox in favour of a transitional and interactive consideration of crime relationships. For instance, corruption, if it is essential to the maintenance of a local black market, will exist as the giving and receiving of material advantage. Where corruption is a feature of government, it transforms beyond local exchanges of advantage into processes of influence which become politics. For corruption to replace the work ethic of the community and the sense of duty of the public official, it challenges the themes of rights and responsibilities which are advanced as symbols of globalised culture.

Given the limitations inherent in the concept of 'society' (see Mann, 1986: 3), the recently popularised 'global village' (see McRae, 1994) may be an even less convincing site for analysing globalised crime. If globalisation is advanced as the preferred new society (an impression common in international politicking), contextual clarity is required or our analysis may not proceed much beyond the major difficulties encountered in utilising 'ideal types'. If it is to work as an applied analytical device, the process which is globalisation, rather than globalisation as a spatial entity, presents a sufficient mix of universal and specific issues to enable and support contextual analysis. Therein any consideration of crime should not be lost within the minutiae of localised priorities, nor within the

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ill-defined landscape of internationalism. Globalisation as a process and a 'place' is specific – certain enough to offer a framework for crime and control relationships, and universal enough to elicit generalisations so essential for contextual analysis.

Much of the recent analysis of crime in society explores its material representations and political positioning. However, the symbolic presence of crime and justice is rarely understood. Symbolic exchanges of crime and justice can be liberated in the context of globalisation from spatial referents essential to particular situations of deviance and control, as well as cultural contexts. This enables crime and control, whether as behaviours, situations or institutions, to be accorded their true symbolic standing when measured against localised representations.

Crime and justice at symbolic levels claim more universal significance than less mobile material or political concepts. Local notions of crime and territorial notions of justice contradict the transition to globalisation. Symbolic exchanges of crime and justice instead realise the transition. As will become apparent from the analysis of crime control (see chapters 6 and 7), state-based criminal justice institutions face criticism and reduction in operational terms, while receiving global endorsement as symbols of democratisation (see Findlay, 1997).

Common mass culture has facilitated the symbolic exchanges of crime and justice. Media representations of crime as a global issue and control as a global responsibility are elements of the wider trend to relativise and universalise all issues in global terms. With democracy promoted as global politics, and free-market economics the preferred paradigm of modernisation, certain symbols of criminal justice and crime problems are reiterated as aspects of globalisation. The value system of globalised society, advertised through a pervasive media web,<sup>11</sup> tends towards universalism and abstraction and thereby is more inclusive. For instance, where economic profit and not humanity is advanced as the purpose of good government, political values are measured in monetary terms and the electorate is encircled by budgetary outcomes. Within this inclusion, crime and control have become a common and constant topic of global communication. Representations of crime, and victimisation as a prevailing threat of world-wide proportions, promote such inclusion. Crime, on a global level, universalises measures of world order and disorder, and offers a further duality for analysis. Crime control, on a global level, builds and endorses uncontested notions of world order.

Yet the reality of crime in modern societies is its challenge to integra-

<sup>11</sup> The value may be commodification, the medium television and the web commercial advertising.