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

Mark Findlay

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## The Globalisation of Crime

*Understanding Transitional Relationships in Context*

On a contracting world stage, crime is a major player in globalisation and is becoming as much a feature of the emergent globalised culture as are other forms of consumerism. *The Globalisation of Crime* charts crime's evolution. It analyses how globalisation has enhanced material crime relationships such that they must be understood on the same terms as any other significant market force. Trends in criminalisation, crime and social development, crime and social control, the political economy of crime, and crime in transitional cultures are all examined in order to understand the role of crime as an agent of social change. In this first book to challenge existing analyses of crime in the context of global transition, crime is shown to be as much a force for globalisation as globalisation is a force for crime, and an integrated theory of crime and social context is presented.

Mark Findlay is Deputy Director of the Institute of Criminology at the University of Sydney, where he is also Head of the Department of Law. Between 1996 and 1998 he was the Foundation Professor of Law at the University of the South Pacific and he is an Adjunct Professor in the School of Criminology at Simon Fraser University. Professor Findlay has written widely on comparative criminal justice themes and frequently acts as a consultant for international and governmental agencies.

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## Preface: Some themes of method

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Crime cannot be understood outside its social context. For the analysis which follows context is viewed as physical space, institutional process, patterns of relationships and individual variation. Context is a transitional state within which crime influences, and is influenced by, a variety of social, cultural, political and economic determinants.

Contextual analysis is essentially interactive. As an object of such analysis crime is not limited to people or situations or reactions. Crime is more effectively understood as relationships which develop along with the dynamics of its selected context. Essential for the motivation of these relationships is the representation of crime as choice.

In order to appreciate crime beyond its localised manifestations, a contextual analysis needs to be comparative at many levels. The identified interest in globalisation suggests several dualities (local/global; custom/modernisation; market/enterprise) which dominate the comparative contextual analysis to follow. Initially the comparison will be within context (e.g. crime as a feature of social development internal to a particular transitional culture). Concurrently the comparison of context with context (e.g. locality and globe) will evolve. The latter holds out much for critically appreciating the representations of crime and the interests which promote them.

To achieve its fullest potential within the theme of globalisation, comparative research should, therefore, concentrate within a nominated cultural<sup>1</sup> context; across two or more contexts within the same culture; across time and space within a culture in transition; culture to culture; and (not or) simultaneously at the local and global levels.

Crime assumes a variety of social functions dependent on context. These may co-exist while contradicting or challenging any single understanding of crime. With crime being culturally relative, it has the potential

<sup>1</sup> Culture here is preferred to notions such as society and community because, while culture is a relative concept, it relies on common forms and functions which allow for comparisons of civilisation and social development. In the comparative exercise, referent cultures are a useful locator when examining social relationships and behaviours in transition.

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within any particular culture to fragment social order. However, crime's existence and representation at a global level may argue for the unity and generalisation of social problems.

Globalisation is a feature of the current social and cultural condition. As much as any other social entity, crime, its representations and its impact are part of globalisation. However, this has led to further distortion of the representation and utility of crime and control. With the implosion which produces and proves globalisation, crime is moving further away from conventional explanations of criminality.

As with many emergent themes in social science, globalisation has both simple and complex representations. Put simply, it is the collapsing of time and space – the process whereby, through mass communication, multinational commerce, internationalised politics and transnational regulation, we seem to be moving inexorably towards a single culture. One proof is in modern, universal cultural iconography, though this is more likely to represent Coca Cola than universal human rights protection.

The more complex interpretation of globalisation is as paradox, wherein there are as many pressures driving us towards the common culture as those keeping us apart. The resultant move towards globalisation is due to the prevailing nature and influence of internationalised politics and economics.

Globalisation is a reflexive concept. It means modernisation and the marketing of predominant consumerist values. In this respect the influence of modernisation over developing cultures in transition initially destabilises custom and tradition. The benefits and detriments of relentless globalisation, such as crime, should be both important and natural objects for comparative research.

Essential to globalisation and crime is the internationalisation of capital, the generalisation of consumerism and the unification of economies. If crime is to be understood as a market condition, then its place within globalisation becomes more vital as an analytical context for contemporary appreciations of crime and control.

The conventional wisdoms of crime as a product of social dysfunction and marginalisation may be challenged and refined through comparative contextual analysis. Globalisation as a focus for this provides the potential to position crime as a natural consequence of many modernisation paradigms previously considered to be subverted by crime.

Crime is power. Relationships of power and domination which become criminogenic are enlivened through comparative contextual analysis.

An appreciation of crime within globalisation is only partial unless control is considered. Control is more than a response to crime. The

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globalised strategies of crime control tend also to reveal the impetus for globalisation.

The crime/globalisation nexus will be explored so as to challenge contemporary representations of crime, engage popular wisdom about the causes of crime, expose the influence of crime over social and cultural transitions, and demystify both crime and globalisation, thereby offering the potential to rationalise control, diminish crime and reconstruct crime relationships and crime choice.

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