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New geographies of crime? Cybercrime, southern criminology and diversifying research agendas

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Abstract

This paper argues that reconsidering the disciplinary significance of the geographies of crime is timely. It has three aims. First, it identifies recent developments in the geographical study of crime, arguing that they both challenge and extend its intellectual traditions. Second, using the example of cybercrime, it identifies new forms of crime that deserve scrutiny by geographers. Third, it draws on ideas of Southern criminology to identify how research agendas can be diversified to advance how geographers study crime. In doing so it proposes that geographers' renewed interest in crime over recent decades is appropriately labelled 'new geographies of crime'.

Keywords

geography of crime, criminology, policing, cybercrime, slow violence, Southern criminology

I Introduction

Crime is spatial. It occurs in and between localities, affects the ways that we behave in places and is masked or revealed by space. It is therefore of little surprise that geographers' interest in crime has produced longstanding, rich and diverse bodies of analysis. Beyond revealing aspects of the spatialities of crime and adding to our understanding of particular crime issues, geographical analysis of crime also, with varying degrees of implicit and explicitness, addresses a wider set of questions about the relationship between place, society and crime. The answers that have emerged to these questions have varied considerably, reflecting the manifestations of new theoretical and methodological approaches since the geographical analysis of crime in its early phases. This richness has enabled geographers to make significant contributions to the analysis of crime alongside those working in cognate disciplines, most notably, criminology.

At times the analysis of crime has occupied prominent disciplinary positions within geography.

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This arguably has not been the case for some decades now, however. LeBeau and Leitner (2011: 164), for example, felt able to argue, with reference to the 1980s and beyond, that 'the geography of crime was viewed as a less-than-important endeavour, which might or might not have a political taint. The geography of crime was displaced'. The orthodox reading of the geography of crime's historiography posits that it has continued to fall away as a predominant locus of disciplinary discussion in subsequent decades and now finds itself at the margins of geography or even beyond the discipline in the realms of other social sciences (Bosworth and Hoyle 2011). However, in this paper we review extensive and diverse bodies of geographical analysis from this period that suggest reconsidering the disciplinary significance of the geographies of crime is timely.

We contend that since the mid-1990s, and particularly since the early 2000s, geographers have made significant contributions to understanding contemporary criminality and its policing, particularly, but not exclusively, transnational criminality. In addition to the considerable empirical insights to emerge from this work, it has also raised conceptual challenges. Namely, recent geographical analysis of crime points to it representing a more embedded, inherent quality of the economic, social and political mainstream than previous geographical analysis has suggested. Despite this, this work has prompted little reflection upon its disciplinary significance to date.

This paper has three main aims. First, we identify recent developments in the geographical study of crime, arguing that they both challenge and extend the intellectual traditions of the geographies of crime. Second, using the example of cybercrime, we identify new forms of crime that deserve scrutiny by geographers. Third, we draw on ideas of Southern criminology to identify how research agendas can be theoretically and empirically diversified to advance how geographers study crime. Drawing these points together, we question whether 'new geographies' of crime, both as subject and ways of study, are emerging or are warranted.

With this in mind, the next section reviews the recent directions taken by geographers studying crime. Drawing upon work produced from, roughly, the mid-1990s to the present day, we argue that new theoretical advances and empirical foci point to new ways of understanding crime and place. We then exemplify these ideas by exploring literature on criminalisation as a spatial practice and organised crime and cybercrime, the latter two illustrating the transnational nature of much contemporary criminality. What emerges from these reviews is a need to (re)position crime within global formations of social, economic and political space. This reveals critical voices about crime and policing as well as the imperatives and potentials for geographers to engage with them. In doing so, it illustrates the need for the (new) geographies of crime to reclaim a more prominent place in the study of human geography. Based on these reflections, we draw the paper together by outlining a research agenda for these new geographies of crime.

II The Geographies of Crime: Lost, Misplaced or Stolen?

The contributions of geography to the analysis of crime first rose to prominence through the tradition of crime mapping, which was initially developed by spatial scientists in the 1960s (Bernasco et al., 2015; Ceccato et al., 2002; Chainey, 2021; Harries, 2006; Herbert, 1982; Kannan and Singh, 2020; LeBeau and Leitner, 2011). It continues to make significant contributions to the present day, spurred on by the development and democratisation of digital mapping technology, the expanded availability of official crime data and its applications to the fields of policing, crime prevention and community safety (Braga and Weisburd, 2010; Chainey and Thompson, 2012; Doran and Burgess, 2012). Critical responses to this tradition by Peet (1975) and later Lowman (1986) saw the emergence of more radical approaches, reflecting wider disciplinary shifts, which located crime, not as discrete events to be mapped or managed in space but as the product of systemic contradictions and the structural inequalities produced and exacerbated through policy and systems of criminal justice and law enforcement (Pain, 2000; Smith, 1984; Valentine, 1989).

In his 1986 intervention, John Lowman called for an expanded critical geography of crime. Central to

this he argued is the 'study of alternative types of deviance' (89). Here he primarily had in mind geographers' engagement with forms of state and corporate deviance, a call that remains largely unanswered over 35 years later. However, rather than Lowman's intervention heralding the emergence of more expansive geographies of crime, the conventional narration of its history posits the study of crime slipping down geography's disciplinary agenda in the late 1980s and 1990s as those who identified themselves as geographers of crime declined in number and geographical interest in crime seemed to wane. We would take issue somewhat with this reading though and would argue that it overlooks significant continuing geographical engagements with a range of crimes, processes of criminalisation and cognate issues, many of which had not previously drawn geographers' attention, in the years following Lowman's intervention. An alternative take on the evolution of the geographies of crime over the last three decades, we would argue, is that, alongside a shift in its disciplinary positioning, we have also seen the expansion of its criminological horizons.

Rather than the geography of crime being displaced as LeBeau and Leitner (2011: 164) argue, it might be more accurate to suggest that it has become fragmented and dispersed, that it has continued to evolve in less linear and dichotomous ways than previously. Instead of a recognised corpus of work on 'the geographies of crime', then, the geographical study of crime has become situated within the wider, critical analysis of social, political and urban change. For example, understandings of crime, fear of crime and policing have been used to study terrorism (Pain 2014); security (Philo 2012); the criminalisation and oppression of minority groups (Beckett and Herbert, 2010; Hall 2019; Lee et al., 2022; Kaufman 2020; Mitchell, 1997; Proudfoot, 2019; Smith, 1998); incarceration (Moran, 2015); environmental damage (Potter et al., 2016); migration (Blazek, 2014); economic inequalities (Hall 2018); and informal urban development (Daniels, 2004; Meth, 2017; Roy, 2005).

The ongoing centrality of crime and law to geographical analysis can be seen in, for example, that significant body of work that emerged in the 1990s on the geographies of criminalisation. This analysis charted the growing processes of marginalisation through criminalisation of certain behaviours, bodies and populations, including most prominently homeless people, in the revanchist city (Beckett and Herbert, 2010; Mitchell, 1997; Smith, 1998, 2002). This work illustrates the ways in which the category of crime is not given but rather is actively constructed by, in this case, urban authorities and cognate interests to serve the needs of capital. It traced how the mutually reinforcing spatial practices of design, development, management, surveillance, security, policing, use, regulation and legislation served to criminalise and exclude those uses and users deemed undesirable within the spaces of postmodern urban development (Atkinson, 2003; Belina and Helms, 2003).

At the same time, work in a rural context revealed that what is deemed criminal, such as travelling or raving, often reflects behaviours that are deemed 'out of place' within hegemonic visions of rurality (Halfacree 1996; Vanderbeck, 2003; Yarwood and Gardner, 2000). Particular constructions of rurality and community also serve to hide, or even justify, forms of gender-based violence (Little, 2017; Owen and Carrington, 2015). Rural policing, where it exists, is often focused on perceived threats from outside rural communities and, in doing so, reinforces widely held tropes about criminality and rurality (Yarwood, 2022, 2023).

This focus on criminalisation as a spatial practice maintained a powerful critique and line of analysis from the 1990s which continues today (Giamarino and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2023; Henkin and Overstreet, 2021; Hennigan and Speer, 2018) in the face of the extension of governance through criminalisation across a range of international settings. However, despite this, this is a body of scholarship that is conventionally located primarily within the disciplinary trajectories of urban, rural and political geography, rather than the geographies of crime, to which it is, at least, equally suited.

In addition to analyses such as these in the spaces of the Global North, we have also seen, during this period, challenges to geography's previous northern orientations in the study of crime, with greater acknowledgement of the centrality and significance of

southern environments to crime (Ceccato and Ceccato, 2017; Ceccato and Yarwood, 2022; Hastings, 2009; McIlwaine, 1999; Nogueira De Melo et al., 2017). Whilst this highlights the partiality of previous geographical knowledge of crime, studies arising in the Global South also reveal the situated, colonial and parochial nature of its intellectual traditions. This raises questions for geography of crime that parallel those challenging other disciplines from nascent critical perspectives such as Southern criminology (Carrington et al., 2016).

After Peet, then, crime becomes viewed as an outcome of structural inequalities, a symptom rather than a cause of social unrest. Most clearly, and most publicly, this has been revealed by the global Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement that has drawn attention to, and campaigned against, forms of racist policing and oppression (Steinberg 2022). Geographers interested in crime have, then, over the last three decades, stepped increasingly into new empirical, methodological, theoretical and geographical terrains, and engaged with their associated challenges. At the same time cognate disciplines have displayed growing interests in the criminologies of space, place, environment and scale (Bruinsma and Johnson, 2018; Lynch et al., 2013; Moran and Schliehe, 2017; Weisburd et al., 2012), inspired to a significant degree by the work of geographers of crime. Yet there has only been limited reflection upon the ongoing development of the 'geography of crime', or indeed upon whether the label retains any currency and meaning in relation to the work that geographers have produced in this time. We argue though, that the need for such a reflection is pressing. Indeed, we later argue for 'new geographies of crime', guided by new conceptual ideas, to understand new or hitherto hidden forms of crime.

In the following two sections we explore a major recent development within geography's ongoing engagement with crime, namely, its growing explorations of the geographies of various forms of transnational organised crime. Later we include a case study of one such crime, cybercrime. These two sections sketch out one strongly emergent avenue of analysis of a 'new geographies of crime'. We acknowledge that we could, in these sections, have focused on any one of a number of the new avenues of crime research that geographers have pursued that we outline above. Our choice of transnational organised crime and cybercrime illustrates a series of important themes that characterise new geographical scholarship of crime, though. It demonstrates how such scholarship is taking geography into new empirical terrains and also illustrates attendant theoretical and methodological challenges new to the discipline. It demonstrates that whilst geographical explorations of this literature have produced strongly emergent literature studies, its contributions, relative to those of more established disciplinary perspectives, remain somewhat limited. Further, our choice of transnational organised crime is reinforced by its global significance, both in terms of its economic worth and the complexity and extent of the harms it generates, and our choice of cybercrime by the extent to which it has fundamentally reshaped the landscape of crime, fear of crime and victimisation both locally and globally (Cook et al., 2022; Rao and Reiley, 2012; Shan-A-Khuda and Cliffe Schreuders, 2019).

III Geographical perspectives on transnational organised crime: Hiding in plain sight

Empirically, recent geographical analysis has started to reveal the spatialities and global significance of activities, such as organised crime, cybercrime and corruption, that have hitherto been neglected by geographers. We now have growing bodies of scholarship, produced by geographers and/or appearing in mainstream disciplinary journals, which include empirical studies of specific forms of organised and transnational crime, including drug production and trafficking (Allen, 2005; Ballvé, 2012; Boyce et al., 2015; Corva, 2008; Davila et al., 2021; Goodhand, 2009; Rengert, 1996; Slack and Campbell, 2016),[1] illicit trades in formally legal commodities (Holden, 2017), corruption (Brown and Cloke, 2004, 2007; Chiodelli and Gentili, 2021; Corbridge and Kumar, 2002; Doshi and Ranganathan, 2019; Robbins, 2000; Warf, 2016), money laundering (Roberts, 1995; Warf, 2002), human trafficking (Blazek, 2014; Blazek et al., 2018; Cockbain et al., 2022; Manzo,

2005), maritime piracy (Hastings, 2009), cybercrime (Hall et al., 2021; Zook, 2007), customary illegalities embedded within mainstream trade and commodity networks (Brooks, 2012; Gregson and Crang, 2017; Hudson, 2019) and terrorism (Cutter et al., 2003; Ettinger and Bosco, 2004; Gregory, 2011), in addition to some wide ranging conceptual reflections and critical reviews (Hall, 2010, 2013, 2018; Hall and Hudson, 2021; Hudson, 2014). These studies represent some of the first substantive explorations of these forms of deviance by geographers and take the geographical study of crime into new empirical terrains.

Many of these studies share interests in the ways in which the regulation of processes of extraction, production, circulation, consumption and development creates opportunities for and shapes illicit presences within the economic and political mainstream. As such, many studies lean towards theoretical traditions in political economy and political ecology (Davila et al., 2021), whilst commonly rejecting Weberian state-centric binaries such as legal–illegal and licit–illicit, and their economic equivalents which posit any categorical empirical break between 'clean' and 'dirty' economies (Ballvé, 2012: 604; Chiodelli, Hall, Hudson and Moroni, 2017b). These developments have brought geography into growing contact with other disciplines where these concerns have been more central for some time. We might think of the parallels between anthropologies of embedded illegality within the architectures of globalisation (Nordstrom, 2007), for example, and work by geographies exploring customary illicitness and embedded corruption within commodity trade networks (Brooks, 2012; Gregson and Crang, 2017). Crime, in this more recent geographical analysis, is repositioned from the margins of economy and society to its centres.

This work rejects hyperglobalist renditions of these processes and their regulation. Rather it sees them as spatially embedded and contingent (Hudson, 2014, 2019; Warf, 2002) reflecting earlier approaches emergent within economic and political geography. Part of this is a recognition of criminality, illegality and illicitness, as spatially contingent qualities that vary across complex, multifaceted and uneven transnational terrains of formal and social regulation (Chiodelli, Hall, Hudson and Moroni, 2017). Further, this work also tends to reject Euclidian conceptions of space in favour of relational or multi-scalar ontologies. None of these positions individually offers any degree of disciplinary uniqueness, indeed these geographical literatures draw heavily upon other disciplines, such as economic and political sociology and criminology. However, their deployment together across these literatures tentatively points towards a more uniquely geographical perspective on these forms of deviance and one that offers both a degree of internal commonality and some degree of distinction from those that have arisen in other, cognate disciplines.

These geographical literatures of organised crime do not situate themselves within the disciplinary trajectories of the geography of crime, to which they make little, if any, explicit reference. Their intellectual lineages instead lie within geographical literatures of development, political governance, conservation and natural resource management and the contemporary global economy, where they argue they reveal previously overlooked but significant illicit presence. They display both cognate and divergent characteristics. Whilst there are commonalities and overlaps within the empirical terrains of these literatures, 'shared commitments to understanding uneven development' (Davila et al., 2021: 502), and, to an extent, cognate theoretical orientations, they differ in other ways including their subdisciplinary origins, methods, sources of data, scales of analysis and their relative orientations to economic, urban, ecological and political realms. Despite this diversity, though, it is possible to detect evidence that these literatures see themselves as also parts of shared disciplinary endeavours and developments. For example, it is common for them to acknowledge that they are reflective of a new and growing recognition across economic, political and urban geography of the salience of the illicit to their core concerns (Chiodelli, Hall and Hudson, 2017; Hall, 2018) and to find explicit attempts to demark terrains of commonality and dialogue around the methodological challenges (Brooks, 2012; Dev et al., 2022) and theoretical developments associated with exploring illicit spatialities.

The development of new geographical interest in these forms of deviance, which has largely emerged as two distinct sub-groups within economic and

political geography (Davila et al., 2021: 501), has produced emergent rather than strongly distinct bodies of work to date. They certainly seem less strongly canonised than earlier iterations of the geography of crime. However, we should be wary of the tendency for the narration of disciplinary histories, through which we now experience these earlier iterations, to overstate their coherence and to remove them from their messy, situated, dynamic everyday realities (Hubbard et al., 2005; Lorimer, 2003; Purcell, 2005). Perhaps the apparently neat, taken for granted, division of the geography of crime into crime mapping and radical traditions, followed by a period of displacement, is one that is ripe for critical scrutiny as we suggest above? The interest that geographers have shown in these various forms of deviance since the mid-1990s, then, constitutes 'geographies of new crimes'. Later we return to the question of whether they constitute 'new geographies of crime'.

IV New spaces of crime: The case of cybercrime

By way of example, to illustrate both the inherently geographical natures of these forms of crime and the contributions that geographers might make, we consider now the case of cybercrime. Cyberspace has offered a new realm onto which both existing crimes, such as various forms of fraud, have been able to migrate and where new forms of crime, such as hacking, have been developed and practiced (Wall, 2007). The global growth in internet use has meant that much more extensive patterns of victimisation are now possible for cybercrimes than 'traditional', offline crimes, profoundly changing the crime threat landscape in recent decades. UK citizens, for example, are now more likely to become the victims of cybercrime than they are of theft, burglary and robbery combined (Cook et al., 2022: 1). Cybercrime is a broad term which has been widely used to refer to a diverse range of online deviance with, variously, socioeconomic, geopolitical and psychosocial motivations (Ibrahim, 2016: 45). Predatory forms of socioeconomic cybercrime, particularly online frauds, have generated a significant, spatially informed multidisciplinary literature, but curiously one to which geographers have made very little contribution to date (though see Chen et al., 2023; Hall et al., 2021; Zook, 2007). A revitalised approach to the geographies of crime would not only strengthen the analysis of cybercrime but also, more widely, underline the significance of geography to understanding contemporary criminality and, conversely, how the coherent study of crime contributes to the theoretical and empirical development of geography.

Cyberspace, and the activities that take place within it, has been subject to some utopian-technocratic rhetoric which has erroneously presented it as a disembodied, hyperconnected, flatscape, which has somehow eluded the quotidian pulls of geography. Geographers have long made important contributions to countering this rhetoric and have reminded us that cyberspace is actually a 'sociotechnical network' (Ferreira and Vale, 2021: 15; see also Dodge and Kitchin, 2001; Malecki, 2017). Here the 'socio' refers to people, who are both online and offline simultaneously and through whom cyberspace remains, inevitably and inherently, grounded, subject always to the influence of the offline world. Cybercrime demonstrates this inherently grounded quality of cyberspace and is thus an appropriate subject for geographical scrutiny. Whilst the utopian-technocratic rhetoric would have us believe that cybercrime poses a universal threat with attacks potentially being launched from anywhere in the world that is connected to the internet, the empirical reality of cybercrime, reflecting its origins, always, in the offline, is of a geographically uneven phenomenon. It is associated disproportionately with a relatively small group of nations (Kigerl, 2012, 2016a; 2016b; Kshetri, 2013a, 2013b, United Nations, 2023) and displays distinctively regional and clustered distributions at the sub-national scale within these high cybercrime nations (Leukfeldt, 2014; Loggen and Leukfeldt, 2022; Lusthaus and Varese, 2021; Nguyen, 2022). Lazarus and Button (2022: 5-6), for example, identify Nigerian cybercrime as primarily originating from the south. They cite the regionally uneven political legacies of colonialism that disadvantaged the southern region, the greater embrace of Western education and

Christianity in the south and the cycle of boom and bust associated with Nigeria's oil economy in the 1970s and 80s. This, they argue, produced a cohort of educated but economically frustrated graduates concentrated in the south, some of whom turned to cybercrime. Others have identified tightly clustered agglomerations of cybercriminals, such as that in the neighbourhood of Ostroveni in the Romanian city of Râmnicu Vâlcea, where, it is estimated, between 1000 and 2000 cybercriminals are active (Lusthaus and Varese, 2021), and the concentration of scam call centres in the Ukrainian city of Dnipro, which has been described as the 'capital' of telephone scammers' (Oreanda-News, 2023, np; see also Antoniuk, 2022). Whilst policing, journalism and, to some extent, the academic literature have begun to identify such clusters, little is yet known about the localisation processes that drive them, beyond the importance of offline social ties within these groups (Leukfeldt, 2014), nor about the economic advantages that derive from these clustered geographies.

The spatial literature of socioeconomic cybercrime has predominantly emerged from anthropology and criminology, international relations and political economy and statistics and has also included some examples from investigative journalism (Glenny, 2008, 2011; Kigerl, 2012, 2016a, 2016b; Kshetri, 2013a, 2013b; Lazarus, 2018; Lazarus and Button, 2022; Leukfeldt, 2014; Loggen and Leukfeldt, 2022; Lusthaus and Varese, 2021; Nguyen, 2022, for a fuller discussion of this literature see Hall and Ziemer, 2023). These studies have largely concentrated on online frauds originating in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and West Africa and have included a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods and sources such as interviews with and ethnographic observations of cybercriminals and law enforcement officers, surveys of members of the communities within which cybercriminals are active, court and police case files, textual analysis of representations of cybercriminals in films, social media and music and global statistical databases. Despite these differences, these studies all share a common theoretical interpretation of the geographies of cybercrime, namely, that they are the product of the spatial co-presence and interaction of combinations of certain cyber-criminogenic conditions. The interactions between developed sociotechnical conditions and impoverished legitimate economic conditions in high cybercrime countries is attributed particular causative significance (Doyon-Martin, 2015; Glenny, 2008, 2011; Ibrahim, 2016, 2016b; Kshetri, 2010; Kigerl, 2012: 482; Kshetri, 2010: 1071; Lusthaus and Varese, 2021, though see Hall and Ziemer 2023 for a more expanded range of potentially cyber-criminogenic factors).

Despite the considerable insights that this literature offers into the geographies of predatory socioeconomic cybercrime's origins, we can recognise three primary limitations. First, this literature remains somewhat trapped within a series of disciplinary silos. There has been, to date, little meaningful cross-disciplinary dialogue within this literature, despite these studies all advancing a fundamentally similar cyber-criminogenic thesis. We can observe, therefore, some differences in the combinations of conditions that these studies attribute causality to, something that remains largely unrecognised, unremarked upon and unscrutinised. Each of the disciplinary perspectives present has looked, primarily, inwards rather than outwards and across this literature. Second, and reflective of the disciplinary parochialism noted above, studies within this literature are conducted exclusively at a single scale. Whilst the anthropology, criminology and investigative journalism studies all examine the interactions between cybercriminals and their regional communities at the local scales of the neighbourhood, cyber-café and university (Adeniran, 2011; Aransiola and Asindemade, 2011; Armstrong, 2011; Jafarkarimi, et al., 2015; Lusthaus and Varese, 2021; Ojedokun and Eraye, 2012; Tade and Ibrahim, 2011), the international relations and political economy and statistical studies all operate at the transnational, global scale. This single scale orientation, though, runs counter to nascent geographical perspectives on the illegal economy. Hudson (2014: 780) argues, then, that 'the contemporary illegal economy is grounded in a subtle interplay between activities at different scales'. This multi-scalarity, axiomatic to the literature of economic geography, is something that has largely eluded those of socioeconomic cybercrime to date. Finally, despite showing an upward trajectory in recent years, spatially informed studies of

socioeconomic cybercrime remain relatively limited in extent (Perkins, et al., 2022: 197).

We can recognise specific contributions that geographers might make in developing more sophisticated understandings of the spatialities of cybercrime. Most fundamentally, we can argue that any exploration of the spatialities of cybercrime should acknowledge the 'interplay between activities at different scales' (Hudson, 2014: 780) noted above. Whist the literature currently provides us with plentiful discussions of the interactions between potentially cyber-criminogenic conditions within scales, there is little systematic reflection, to date, on the interactions between these conditions at different scales. We might, however, suppose that such interactions do shape the spatialities of cybercrime but in ways that we are yet to fully appreciate. Cybercrime from West Africa, for example, of which Nigeria is the most well-documented case, seems to be the product of complex and multiple interactions between local processes of recruitment and practice, typically rooted in the spaces and cultures of higher education institutions and cyber-cafés, sub-national histories of genocide, marginalisation and uneven policing (Peel, 2006; Zook, 2007: 79), national conditions of sociotechnical development and economic marginalisation within the context of the normative influence of materialism within the cultural realm (Adeniran, 2011; Aransiola and Asindemade, 2011; Armstrong, 2011; Burrell, 2008; Ibrahim, 2016; Lazarus and Button, 2022; Tade and Ibrahim, 2011; Warner, 2011) and regional narratives of victimhood and practices of spirituality (Armstrong, 2011; Glenny, 2008: 207-210; Oduro-Frimpong, 2014). Such insights, though, currently remain dispersed across the literature of West African cybercrime and have yet to be brought together through any systematic analytical framework, specifically that focuses on inter-scaler interactions between these factors. Advancing such a multiscalar perspective is an obvious contribution that geography might make to the extant literature of socioeconomic cybercrime, which would, in doing so, extend the empirical range of geography's own economic analysis into these new spaces of crime.

However, as geographers, we might recognise more fundamental conceptual limitations within this work. Despite their inherently spatial orientations, theoretically, these literatures all draw upon criminological rather than geographical traditions. They consequently display somewhat limited conceptualisations of the spatialities of cybercrime, beyond those related to questions of scale noted above. These literatures say little about the nature of the networks that connect the perpetrators of cybercrime to their victims. This silence brings to mind Massey's criticisms of much discussion of time-space compression and its technologies. She argued, for example, 'the concept of time-space compression remains curiously unexamined. In particular, it is a concept which often remains without much social content' (1993: 59). In remaining so 'unexamined' the networks of cybercrime are rendered, in these literatures, little more than unproblematic technologies of connection. This ignores, however, the social worlds into which these technologies are enmeshed, and their roles in remaking these social worlds, not to say their agency within cybercrimes. If we return to Ferreira and Vale's (2021: 15) notion of cyberspace as a sociotechnical network, here we see that the technical is assumed, whilst the social only considered as an empirical outcome. Are, then, these technologies of connection merely conduits through which information flows, that have no agency of their own?

The most fundamental role that technologies of connection in cybercrime play is to connect perpetrator and victim in ways that facilitate deception within their communication. We would argue that this deception is shaped by interactions between the social worlds of the perpetrator and victim, the degrees of difference or overlap between these social worlds and the nature of the specific technologies of connection employed within cyber scams. This is well illustrated by the case of socioeconomic cybercrime perpetuated from West Africa and targeting victims in the Global North through practices such as phishing emails and romance scams. Here these technologies lie across vastly unequal socioeconomic and historic terrains and connect perpetrators and victims who occupy profoundly different places in the world, representing what Massey (1993) has called a highly uneven 'power geometry'. To subvert their disadvantaged position within this power geometry, scammers employ forms of 'problematic

empowerment' (Burrell, 2008). It has been well documented that the deception practiced within West African cybercrime draws upon widely consumed mythologies of the region as war-torn, corrupt and the source of large amounts of extractable wealth, or of the sexual prowess of young African men and women (Pope, 2022), projecting back a Northern gaze upon cybercrime victims (Zook, 2007). Such mythologies are employed by scammers to bridge the uneven terrains across which they communicate with their victims and to establish and sustain the connection essential for the scam to succeed. The technologies of connection – email, dating websites, chat rooms, messaging services and video calling apps and software – are agential in shaping the nature of the deception within these scams. Email allows the mass routing of phishing messages through servers that disguise their true origins (Kigerl 2016b) and the copying or forging of official looking logos and other information to create a plausible visual scam text. Dating websites used in romance scams allow the registering of anonymous profiles, the posting of unverified information and copied photographs. Video calling apps and software offer the possibility of plausible contact that perpetrators can influence by cancelling at the last minute, offering various excuses when doing so, by calling from locations with high levels of background noise or in low lighting conditions which make recognition, comprehension and identification difficult through the limited sound quality and blurred images typical of such technologies at present, but which are sufficient to sustain the illusion of genuine contact, through the positioning of laptop or smartphone cameras so that only parts of the perpetrators face are visible or are shown only in deep shadow, by calling victims and showing them seemingly official documents when they know they will be distracted by other tasks such as cooking (Cernik, 2022) and through the use of collaborators, for example, young females if the victim is an older male, who may be prompted by the perpetrator off camera. Collectively, these are technologies that allow the maintenance of long-term connections between perpetrator and victim, lasting months and in some cases years (Cernik, 2022; Dellinger, 2019; Pope, 2022), across terrains of significant difference through the careful crafting of deception.

A distinctive characteristic of West African email phishing scams are patterns of bulk emailing and mass victimisation. It has been estimated, for example, that 88% of global email traffic represents some form of spam (Rao and Reiley, 2012: 87). This is again something enabled by the specific technologies of connection employed in these scams. So serious has the issue become that it has been recognised that such scams have caused reputational damage to those countries with which it is particularly associated (Zook, 2007: 84). If we consider the international condemnatory discourse of cybercrime, here again we see the uneven treatment afforded to the various social and technological dimensions of the networks of cybercrime. This discourse tends, overwhelmingly, to locate the problem of cybercrime in the social spaces of cyber-cafés, scammers' offices and universities of West Africa, and their equivalents in Eastern Europe and beyond (see e.g. Dellinger, 2019). The technical infrastructures upon which these scams rely, and the uneven social practices of legislation, regulation and policing that make those located in some regions, including significant proportions in North America, Western Europe and Australia (Chen et al., 2023: 5), particularly attractive and available for use by cybercriminals, draw little, if any, attention within this discourse. Once again, these social and technical dimensions of cybercrime networks, and their associated spatialities, remain largely unexamined, perpetuating the myth of technological neutrality and lack of agency. Here, again, we acknowledge Ferreira and Vale's (2021) argument that cyberspace represents a sociotechnical network and argue that analysis of the networks of cybercrime should include and connect both their social and technological dimensions.

We would argue, then, in the light of examples such as this, that theoretical traditions from within geography, such as Massey's power geometry, offer the potential for socially richer, more critical, historicised understandings of the sociotechnical networks of cybercrime than has emerged within its criminological multidisciplinary literature to date. The same applies potentially to other forms of transnational organised crime that geographers have increasingly examined in recent years. However, we would argue that these concepts alone are only able

to partially destabilise the hegemonic Northern gaze that has produced such partial understandings of new crimes such as cybercrime. By engaging with new theoretical concepts and critical perspectives that are gaining increasing traction within criminology and cognate disciplines, such as those of Southern criminology and slow violence, we are able to more fundamentally reorientate our understandings of the nature, causes and harms of crime and criminalisation, revealing hidden dimensions. It is to the potential contributions of such new theoretical and critical voices to revitalised geographies of crime that we now turn.

V The (extra)ordinary geographies of crime

In their call for a Southern criminology, Carrington et al. (2016: 8) comment that academic research has:

> 'largely confined its attention to the relatively minor delinquencies that troubled the internal peace of stable liberal states (mostly without seriously threatening them), to the more efficient measurement of these problems (crime statistics, surveys and the like) and to refining the instruments for policing, controlling, punishing and treating those (mostly poor, young and marginal) individuals and groups who transgressed'.

This statement has four implications for the geographical study of crime.

First, some geographies of crime have been underpinned by a normative assumption that society is, or should be, peaceful and crime-free. The tradition of spatial mapping, for example, seeks to identify exceptions to this norm by mapping 'hotspots' or outbreaks of crime in relation to a backdrop of minimal or non-existent crime. Much research on policing has also drawn attention to the ways in which the police are organised as an *emergency* service, a term that implies a dangerous break, or threat, to a normal state of affairs (Fyfe 1991; Herbert 1997; Jefferson 2018; Yarwood 2007, 2010).

Of late, this orthodoxy has been challenged by activist movements that have stressed that, for many, crime is an everyday experience that limits and constrains their lives (Black Lives Matter, 2024; Boyer 2022; De Maio, 2023; Derickson, 2017). For example, movements such as #MulaiBicara, #NiUnaMenos and, more widely, #metoo have sought to highlight and counter sexual and physical violence against women. Similarly, #Blacklivesmatter (BLM) developed as a response to inequalities in the criminal justice system, reflected in the persistent and aggressive policing of black people. The alarms raised by these movements have highlighted the relevance of work by geographers on these issues. There is a rich tradition of work on, for example, women's fear of crime (Valentine 1989), domestic violence (Little 2017) and racist policing (Kaufman 2020) that challenges the idea of crime as extraordinary and maintains Peet's (1975) critical and radical approaches to understanding crime.

At the same time, questions remain about whether these movements, and their study, continue to perpetrate 'a range of inequalities and power dynamics relating to race, gender, class and sexuality' (Fileborn and Loney-Howes 2019). Derickson (2017: 232) argues: 'when considered at the planetary scale … the killing of an unarmed black teenager by a police officer in Ferguson and the invigoration of the nascent "BlackLivesMatter" movement protests in that city may seem a rather arbitrary, parochial, or even western/Global North-centric moment'. Although inequalities in victimisation and policing are present at all scales – the body, neighbourhood, city and nation (Pain, 2014) – they are starkest at the global level. Although the experience of crime should not be trivialised in any locality, the key point is that for many people, especially those living in the Global South, crime is an everyday, ordinary activity that shapes and determines their lives. Warf (2016: 661), for example, notes that 5.2 billion people, or 72.9% of the world's population, live in countries with very corrupt governments, arguing that 'corruption is the norm in most societies in the world'. The World Bank (2011: 2) estimated that 'one in four people on the planet, more than 1.5 billion, live in fragile and conflict-affected states or in countries with very high levels of criminal violence' (from Carrington et al., 2016: 7). In 2020, Brazil recorded a homicide rate of 23 in 100,000 (approximately 44,000 people), mainly of young, poor, black men (Ceccato et al., 2021). These horrifying rates reflect what Mbembé

and Meintjes (2003: 40) have referred to as necropolitics, or governance through death to bring about 'new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*'. In these places, murder, far from being extraordinary, is a means of controlling and dividing populations. This 'substantial body of international evidence .. suggests that various forms of crime threaten the health, prosperity and happiness of many residents of the Global South' (Blaustein et al., 2018: 773), yet the geographies of crime traditionally remained stubbornly fixated on what are seen as extraordinary events in the Global North.

Second, therefore, geographers should pay closer attention to crimes outside the West. In doing so, it should be recognised that many criminology theories were developed to explain particular empirical circumstances in the Global North. Consequently, efforts to apply these ideas to places in the Global South have been criticised for attempting to apply universal ideas from the Global North to very different sets of geo-political circumstances (Carrington et al., 2016; Connell, 2007).

The emerging paradigm of Southern criminology offers ways of rectifying these gaps. Southern criminology attempts to wrest investigation away from 'geo-political specificities of the metropolitan centres of the global North' (Carrington et al., 2016: 4). This approach recognises that the Global North and South are interconnected and have been shaped by unequal power relations (Carrington et al. 2016, 2018; Moosavi, 2019), including the production of academic knowledge (Connell 2007). Southern criminology aims to make criminology more inclusive 'of the histories and patterns of crime, justice, and security outside the Global North' (Carrington et al., 2018: 25). Its purpose is 'not to denounce but to re-orient, not to oppose but to modify, not to displace but to augment' (Carrington et al., 2016: 3). Thus, Southern crimonology seeks to democratise the study of crime by ensuring that it takes account of the lives and experiences of people living outside metropolitan areas of the Global North.

Southern criminology draws on a diverse range of theoretical perspectives to understand the ways in which colonialism and post-colonialism have contributed to the structural violence of crime and its contemporary spatialities. Specifically, Carrington et al (2016) call for more work on crime and policing in non-metropolitan areas, the deployment of feminist perspectives to tackle victimisation, particularly of women and indigenous people, in the Global South and, finally, a more nuanced approach to understanding punishment, penal practices and unbalanced power relations in judicial systems that impose them.

Yet, if perspectives from Southern criminology have the potential to inform the geographies of crime, then geography has the potential to inform Southern criminology through its understandings of space and place. In particular, crime and its analysis have frequently been considered in bounded terms, whether through crime-pattern analysis or situational or community forms of crime prevention. Instead, geographers recognise that places are not fixed or bounded but rather are constantly being 'thrown together' by 'constellations of processes' (Massey 2005: 141). This challenges us to consider how crime connects, and is connected by, different places at a global level. Although some work has begun to explore connections between global migration, crime and the fear of crime (Adamson, 2020; Estrom et al., 2023), there is a need to challenge binary thinking and recognise the connections, rather than the boundaries, between the Global North and South.

Thirdly, in doing so, there is also a need to emphasise the significance of temporality and crime. Understandably, most geographical research has examined the spatialities of crime with only minor consideration given to time, such as annual changes in crime rates (Cahill and Mulligan 2003) or diurnal variations in particular crimes (Nelson et al. 2001). These relatively short time scales have drawn attention to particular crimes, such as alcohol-related violence in the night-time economy (Bromley and Nelson 2002), whilst overlooking the impacts of criminality across longer spans of time. By contrast, Massey (2005) has called on geographers to become more attuned to the slow, subtle and sometime imperceptible ways in which places change over longer periods of time. Given its emphasis on temporality, Rob Nixon's (2011, 2) work on slow violence is helpful in this context. Originally applied

to environmentalism, Nixon's ideas have been widely adopted by geographers to analyse the impact of long-standing social and environmental inequalities on people and place (Davies 2022; Pain 2019). Nixon states:

> 'By slow violence I mean a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all. Violence is customarily conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibility. We need, I believe, to engage a different kind of violence, a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales' (Nixon, 2011, 2).

Slow violence offers insights into a whole spectrum of crimes that have yet to be considered fully by geographers, either because they are 'new' (at least new to the geographer's gaze) or because they are processes, such as ecological and climate change, that have yet to be framed in criminological terms. Here geographers might reflect on the implications of the growing legal and political movement to define ecological destruction as the crime 'ecocide' for the conceptual framing of their analysis (Kaminski, 2022; Mehta, 2023). Another example is modern slavery, which reflects the slow violence of 'capitalist accumulation geared to profit maximisation through the exploitation of vulnerable migrant labour originating from peripheral and subjugated locations in the global space-economy' (King et al. 2021: 55). Victims of modern slavery are not only less visible in the countryside but are more likely to be viewed as perpetrators, rather than victims, of crime (Yarwood 2022). Geographical scholarship is only implicitly, within recent work, beginning to acknowledge these longer temporalities of crime and has yet to begin, in any systematic way, to consider their attendant spatialities.

Slow violence 'demands we look beyond the immediate, the visceral and the obvious in our explorations of social injustice' (Davies 2022: 410). We might also look to a diverse body of historical and sociological scholarship that has traced the relationship between long-term societal change and the geographies of crime. For example, historians have documented the roles of organised crime in the formation of modern America (Woodiwiss, 2001) and the implication of transnational drug economies within its international Cold War geopolitical ambitions (McCoy, 2004: 31), whilst sociologists and security studies scholars have scrutinised the historical roles of the drugs trade in the emergence of capitalism (Bhattacharyya, 2005), the significance of opium revenues to the maintenance of colonial administrations (Inkster and Comolli, 2012: 37) and the facilitating roles of organised crime in the transition to market economies across post-Soviet space (Castells, 2000). Such scholarship affirms the assertions of theorists such as Charles Tilly (1985) and Dwight C. Smith Jr. (1980) that the illicit should be considered an inherent quality of historical political and economic processes of state formation and development.

Finally, the geographies of crime reflect a set of disciplinary power relations that have privileged the work of some groups over others (Kaufmann 2020). Crime and policing have often been written about by elite groups people who are often far removed from its worst excesses and, consequently, are more inclined to see it as extra-ordinary rather than everyday. As Davies (2022, 411) asserts, many people's 'stories do not count' in discourses of crime. Thus many of the issues discussed above are not new nor neglected as there is a substantial body of work on, amongst other things, racist policing (Kaufman 2020; Paasche et al., 2014), sexual harassment (Boyer, 2022) and gender-based violence (Fluri and Piedalue, 2017). There is a need for a more diverse geography of crime that empowers people to amplify concerns and voices on the everyday realities of crime in order to challenge 'a range of inequalities and power dynamics relating to race, gender, class and sexuality' (Fileborn and Loney-Howes 2019).

VI New geographies of crime?

This paper has shown that crime is an enduring geographical concern. The history outlined in this paper contrasts somewhat with accepted narratives of

the disciplinary evolution of the geographies of crime. These accepted narratives tell of an initial paradigm-driven linear, dichotomous evolution during a period of disciplinary prominence, of a battle between quantitative crime mapping and radical schools, followed by a decline in prominence and interest and a retreat to the margins of the discipline and beyond (LeBeau and Leitner, 2011). Rather, in this paper, we outline a more central, significant, continuous and ongoing, if increasingly diffuse, geographies of crime story. As we allude earlier, for some thirty years the geographies of crime have been hiding in plain sight.

Geography has undoubtedly seen an expansion of the volume and range of its criminological engagement in recent decades. This represents newer phases in geography's long-standing, if uneven, engagement with crime, rather than a direct evolution of previous traditions. These later phases differ markedly in their nature to its earlier phases, however. These subsequent phases have evolved in more rhizomatic ways across the discipline, rather than within a single subdiscipline, and in a range of cognate disciplines, most obviously criminology. The hegemony of the paradigm model of disciplinary evolution has, we would argue, failed to fully acknowledge these subsequent phases in the story of the development of the geographies of crime. In evolving differently, we might think, then, of these more recent phases as representing 'new geographies of crime'.

What unifies geography's recent engagements with crime is a recognition of crime, illegality and illicitness as embedded qualities of, rather than disruptions to, the economic, social and political mainstream. Geography's initial engagements with crime had seen it as a socially marginal, spatially discrete, given phenomenon, albeit one that came to be contextually understood. Now the clear, stable, categorical distinction between legal and illegal, that circumscribed and defined geographies of crime in its original iterations, no longer stands. Geographical analysis has become increasingly comfortable with the idea of criminal and non-criminal, legal and illegal, licit and illicit, as contingent, mobile, constructed properties (Chiodelli, Hall, Hudson and Moroni, 2017), but ones with agency to shape the spatialities of socioeconomic processes (Davila et al., 2021). This is a step that aligns geographical interest in crime more closely to recently emergent concerns within cognate disciplines, such as the criminologies of harm, than it does to previous phases of the geographies of crime. On this basis also, we argue that the label 'new geographies of crime' is an appropriate one to attach to the work that we have seen emerge over the previous 25–30 years and which this paper reviews.

Labelling a body of work in this way is not a straightforward matter. For a label such as 'new geographies of crime' to gain any legitimacy requires those working in the areas that it is intended to demark to identify with it and to use it in ways that allow it to gain traction and visibility within the discipline. This has not occurred to date. We have not seen the term appear, for example, in conference sessions, journal special editions or within publications. Ultimately, the currency of this label depends upon how, if at all, it is used by geographers whose focus includes the analysis of crime, illegality or the illicit.

Proposing this label, then, is only a first step. Proposing it though does draw together the work this paper reviews in a way that has not occurred to date. In doing so it potentially demarks a space for dialogue within the discipline, for testing the cognate natures of the works we discuss here, in ways that have only occurred to a patchy and limited degree so far. It also allows the possibility that this work gains external visibility in the disciplines, such as criminology, to which it is closely aligned. For this to be achieved, perhaps, requires those geographers whose work we review here to be willing to transport their ideas and perspectives beyond the discipline, through, for example, the journals they publish within. This has happened, with the authors we discuss in this paper, to only a very limited degree so far. There are institutional forces mitigating the cross-disciplinary transfer of these ideas, however, such as, in the UK, the Research Excellence Framework. Geographers, though, evidenced by the literature this paper has reviewed, are increasingly speaking to each other across a terrain, or series of cognate and overlapping terrains, that we refer to here as 'new geographies of crime'. The label does not feel like an artificial confection. Whether its use grows organically remains to be seen. An important

first step though is to outline what its research agenda might be.

Based on our literature discussed in the paper, we propose that new geographies of crime should be guided by five assumptions.

1. Crime is normal. The fear, threat and reality of crime are a significant part of everyday life for most people. As well as recognising how the severity and nature of crime reflects and affects social and spatial inequalities, it is important to acknowledge that crime and criminal actions are a significant influence on many places, shaping spaces and people's lives within them. Consequently, the influence and impact of crime on place should be much more central to the study of human geography. This critical gaze, though, should not be restricted to those crimes that have traditionally drawn the attention of geographers of crime. Rather, they should pay particular attention to the crimes of slow, structural violence.
2. Crime is unbounded. In the past, geographers have sought to identify and explain local *differences* in crime between places. While this work continues to be informative, it is important to recognise the unbounded nature of place and, consequently, how mobilities, rather than borders, shape the geographies of crime. This requires consideration of the ways in which crime connects, rather than separates, places. At a global level, far more attention is needed on the ways that illicit activities and forms of organised crime connect the Global South and Global North. These perspectives draw us away from situational, bounded responses to policing (that have led to the labelling of places and the displacement of crime) and towards perspectives that aim to address structural and spatial inequalities that cause crime in the first place.
3. Temporality. Understandably, space has been the main focus for geographers researching crime. At the same time, new geographies of crime should be alert to the significance of time to crimes and, in particular, the long-term impacts of crime in and across space. As we have noted, many crimes represent a form of slow violence that can often go unnoticed or ignored by geographers. A clearer focus on these issues will provide better understandings about the structural and global nature of crime.
4. Different crimes. Geographers should be alert to new forms of crime. We have highlighted the significance of cybercrime in this paper and, as new forms of technology and artificial intelligence emerge, it seems likely that new crimes and geographies of crime will emerge. Equally, existing behaviours, such as sexual, physical or emotional harassment, that have hitherto gone unchallenged are now being recognised or defined as criminal. Geographers should not only be alert to the consequences of these societal changes but, as radical scholars, be leading the way in identifying and countering conduct that represses others or limits the way they use space.
5. Diverse voices. Although this paper has sought to reveal and highlight the significance of diverse approaches to crime, we concur with Kaufman (2020) that although 'the topic has never not been "timely," there may be new potential in today's climate to embrace alternative imaginings' (no page) of how crime and policing are studied. The growth of movements such as #Blacklivesmatter and #Metoo have revealed a need to include a much wider range of voices that is by, rather than about, people who have experience of crime and its affects.

The rise of Southern criminology and other critical forms of scholarship lends momentum to geographies of crime, providing geographers with the theoretical tools to reveal and explain the relationship between crime and space. At the same time geographical perspectives on space and place, especially in relation to globalisation and mobility, have the potential to inform work across other disciplines. The call for 'new' geographies of crime is less about recognising crimes and situations that are

'new' to Western scholars but, more widely, for a study of crime that is determined to overcome exclusive scholarly practices. As such, a new geography of crime should form an intellectual space where theoretical ideas are generated, rather than a subdiscipline where ideas from elsewhere are simply applied to a topic. Indeed, the export of theories and methodologies to other areas of geography and disciplines beyond would truly mark the emergence of a new geography of crime.

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Note

1. Geographers had almost never previously examined such forms of criminality. For rare exceptions, see Wishart (1974) and South (1977).

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