

APPENDICES

Diāna Bērziņa*

d.berzina@maastrichtuniversity.nl
orcid.org/0000-0002-9614-285X
Faculty of Law
Maastricht University
Bouillonstraat 3, 6211 LH Maastricht
The Netherlands

“Trafficking Transformations” Project

“Trafficking Transformations: Objects as Agents in Transnational Criminal Networks”, or simply the TRANSFORM project (grant agreement no. 804851) is a five-year project funded by the European Research Council. TRANSFORM is based at Maastricht University (the Netherlands), in collaboration with Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand) and the University of Cape Town (South Africa). The TRANSFORM project aims to explore a rather unusual question: Do objects cause crimes? Since the beginning of the project, team members have moved into diverse areas of research such as cryptocurrency and NFTs,¹ art crime,² vandalism,³ and wildlife crime to explore this question.

* **Diāna Bērziņa** is a Researcher on the project “Trafficking Transformations: Objects as Agents in Transnational Criminal Networks” based in the department of Criminal Law and Criminology at Maastricht University. She studied Archaeology and History at the University of Aberdeen and graduated with MSc in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the University of Glasgow.

¹ S. Mackenzie, *Criminology Towards the Metaverse: Cryptocurrency Scams, Grey Economy and the Technosocial*, “The British Journal of Criminology” 2022, Vol. 62(6); S. Mackenzie, D. Bērziņa, *NFTs: Digital Things and Their Criminal Lives*, “Crime, Media, Culture” 2021, Vol. 18(4).

² D. Bērziņa, *More Than Just Money: Human-Object Relationships in Low-End Collecting*, in: N. Oosterman, D. Yates (eds.), *Crime and Art: Sociological and Criminological Perspectives of Crimes in the Art World*, Springer, Cham 2021; D. Yates, *Crime and Its Objects*, “Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez” 2021, Vol. 51(2); D. Yates, S. Mackenzie, *Crime, Material and Meaning in Art World Desirespaces*, in: N. Oosterman, D. Yates (eds.), *Crime and Art: Sociological and Criminological Perspectives of Crimes in the Art World*, Springer, Cham 2021.

³ D. Yates, D. Bērziņa, A. Wright, *Protecting a Broken Window: Vandalism and Security at Rural Rock Art Sites*, “The Professional Geographer” 2022, Vol. 74(2).

Criminology often focuses on social aspects of lawbreaking, with some arguing that “criminal conduct is predominantly a social behaviour”.⁴ Therefore, not surprisingly trafficking research tends to focus on social and criminal networks. However, what is missing generally in this research is the role that the objects themselves play. Most of the time objects are viewed as passive, and as accumulating increased financial values as they move through these networks. However, while objects accumulate financial values, they also accumulate histories. The same way as one can write a biography about a human, it is possible to write a biography of an object asking many of the same questions.⁵ These biographies have the potential to reveal relationships between humans and objects, and can illustrate how meaning and values are accumulated and transformed.⁶ This is not a widely explored perspective in criminology, with the result that commodities – which are traded in and through criminal networks of people – are seen as passive objects with a price tag. However, our research shows that objects exert a degree of influence on people, and that this might be instrumental in understanding why some types of crime occur.

To exemplify this idea, I will use one of the on-going research areas of the project. Many strategies of crime prevention focus on situational crime prevention, and rely on modifying physical environments. Similarly, in the case of art crime, and especially art theft, it has been suggested that specialists such as museum managers should have an understanding of crime prevention strategies that then can be adapted to their own institutions.⁷ In the case of museums, these are very visual strategies – ropes, metal barriers or glass cases that separate visitors from the displayed objects. These interventions, however, mediate what senses we are allowed to use to engage with the art – our engagements are expected to be mostly visual. In reality, our interactions with the world are influenced not only by the visual but also by “*nonvisual* sensorial interactions [...] [that] condition and configure human interpretation and meaning-making”.⁸

However, this is mostly not reflected in our studies of crime, including art crime. There thus seems to be a discrepancy between how we experience the world and how we study it. Bill McClanahan and Nigel South⁹ argue for the need to engage with “the totality of our sensory perception” when analysing crime. They argue

⁴ M. Warr, *Companions in Crime: The Social Aspects of Criminal Conduct*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002, p. 3.

⁵ I. Kopytoff, *The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process*, in: A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1986.

⁶ C. Gosden, Y. Marshall, *The Cultural Biography of Objects*, “World Archaeology” 1999, Vol. 31(2).

⁷ D. Garrett, *Protecting Works of Art from Theft*, in: S. Hufnagel, D. Chappell (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook on Art Crime*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2019.

⁸ B. McClanahan, N. South, “All Knowledge Begins with the Senses: Towards a Sensory Criminology”, *The British Journal of Criminology* 2020, Vol. 60(1), p. 3 (emphasis in original).

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

APPENDICES

Diāna Bērziņa

that one approach to do this is through the concept of “atmospheres”. These are defined as “a connective factor, linking people, places and things together”,¹⁰ and they are “spaces configured in the totality sensory information”.¹¹ To understand atmospheres, we need to “engage more actively and analytically with architecture, colours, lighting, humidity, sound, odour, the texture of things and their mutual juxtaposition”,¹² Alistair Fraser and Daniel Matthews propose a move towards a criminology of atmospheres that would allow us to embrace “the agencies of non-human actors and the affective force that they can impart”.¹³

Atmosphere, sensory experiences, and their affect in relation to art-related crime is one of the theoretical spaces where we explore the project’s broad research question “Do objects cause crimes?”. Building on the work done by TRANSFORM team members, Donna Yates and Simon Mackenzie¹⁴ – who explored the emotionally charged atmospheres of the art market and conceptualized art worlds as “desirescapes” – we zoom in on one space of the art world, namely art fairs. We explore the affective atmosphere of an art fair and how it shapes human-object relationships. Art fairs create affective atmospheres that engage with all of our senses. The affective atmosphere of the art fair not only creates and sustains the desire, but also disturbs the rational thinking that in some cases provides a fruitful environment for a crime to occur. We argue that we must engage with full sensory experiences to understand art crime. In many cases art crime is not a purely objective crime. Although criminology is characterized by the “ocular-centric way of thinking”,¹⁵ where information is gathered through vision, art crime is not a phenomenon that can be understood through only an ocular-centric way of thinking. While this is a work in progress, with targeted observational fieldwork still ongoing, by looking at the atmosphere of the art fairs we hope to reconceptualize the way human-object relationships are formed, viewed, and addressed when it comes to art-related crime. By exploring these relationships, we hope to create a new and more accurate model of the networks that form around and with these objects. A more effective policy that addresses their relationships with crime can follow from this.

¹⁰ M. Bille, P. Bjerregaard, T.F. Sørensen, *Staging Atmospheres: Materiality, Culture, and the Texture of the In-between*, “Emotion, Space and Society” 2015, Vol. 15, p. 33.

¹¹ B. McClanahan, N. South, op. cit., p. 13.

¹² M. Bille, P. Bjerregaard, T.F. Sørensen, op. cit., p. 36.

¹³ A. Fraser, D. Matthews, *Towards a Criminology of Atmospheres: Law, Affect and the Codes of the Street*, “Criminology & Criminal Justice” 2021, Vol. 21(4), p. 13.

¹⁴ D. Yates, S. Mackenzie, op. cit.

¹⁵ K. Herrity, B.E. Schmidt, J. Warr, *Introduction: Welcome to the Sensorium*, in: K. Herrity, B.E. Schmidt, J. Warr (eds.), *Sensory Penalties: Exploring the Senses in Spaces of Punishment and Social Control*, Emerald Publishing Limited, Bingley 2021, p. xxiii.

References

- Bērziņa D., *More Than Just Money: Human-Object Relationships in Low-End Collecting*, in: N. Oosterman, D. Yates (eds.), *Crime and Art: Sociological and Criminological Perspectives of Crimes in the Art World*, Springer, Cham 2021.
- Bille M., Bjerregaard P., Sørensen T.F., *Staging Atmospheres: Materiality, Culture, and the Texture of the In-between*, “Emotion, Space and Society” 2015, Vol. 15.
- Fraser A., Matthews D., *Towards a Criminology of Atmospheres: Law, Affect and the Codes of the Street*, “Criminology & Criminal Justice” 2021, Vol. 21(4).
- Garrett D., *Protecting Works of Art from Theft*, in: S. Hufnagel, D. Chappell (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook on Art Crime*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2019.
- Gosden C., Marshall Y., *The Cultural Biography of Objects*, “World Archaeology” 1999, Vol. 31(2).
- Herrity K., Schmidt B.E., Warr J., *Introduction: Welcome to the Sensorium*, in: K. Herrity, B.E. Schmidt, J. Warr (eds.), *Sensory Penalties: Exploring the Senses in Spaces of Punishment and Social Control*, Emerald Publishing Limited, Bingley 2021.
- Kopytoff I., *The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process*, in: A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1986.
- Mackenzie S., *Criminology Towards the Metaverse: Cryptocurrency Scams, Grey Economy and the Technosocial*, “The British Journal of Criminology” 2022, Vol. 62(6).
- Mackenzie S., Bērziņa D., *NFTs: Digital Things and Their Criminal Lives*, “Crime, Media, Culture” 2021, Vol. 18(4).
- McClanahan B., South N., *‘All Knowledge Begins with the Senses’: Towards a Sensory Criminology*, “The British Journal of Criminology” 2020, Vol. 60(1).
- Warr M., *Companions in Crime: The Social Aspects of Criminal Conduct*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002.
- Yates D., *Crime and Its Objects*, “Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez” 2021, Vol. 51(2).
- Yates D., Bērziņa D., Wright A., *Protecting a Broken Window: Vandalism and Security at Rural Rock Art Sites*, “The Professional Geographer” 2022, Vol. 74(2).
- Yates D., Mackenzie S., *Crime, Material and Meaning in Art World Desirespaces*, in: N. Oosterman, D. Yates (eds.), *Crime and Art: Sociological and Criminological Perspectives of Crimes in the Art World*, Springer, Cham 2021.