CRIMINOLOGY AND THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: THE NEED FOR SUPPORT AND CRITIQUE

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The UN Sustainable Development Goals address a number of criminological issues. This article accounts for why criminologists should contribute to this agenda in a way that might benefit the international development community. We acknowledge a heightened risk of crime in parts of the Global South but argue criminologists should cautiously embrace this agenda as a platform for achieving human and sustainable development outcomes. Supporting this agenda means assisting with the design, implementation and evaluation of projects that contribute to safe, just and sustainable societies. From a critical standpoint, it also means challenging harmful or inappropriate initiatives and resisting attempts to capitalize on this agenda for political gain. Both modes of engagement are informed by the values of 'caution', 'scepticism' and southern epistemologies. The article then proceeds to examine three areas where criminological research can make important contributions: building safe and just societies, eliminating gender-based violence and promoting environmental justice.

Key Words: sustainable development goals, crime control, rule of law, international development, gender-based violence, green criminology, southern criminology

Introduction

In September 2015, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly 70/1). The 2030 Agenda comprises 17 Sustainable Development Goals (henceforth 'SDG's; Table 1) and 169 targets that provide a universal framework for the realization of human rights and environmental sustainability across a range of issue areas. This article considers why criminologists should contribute to the 2030 Agenda and how their knowledge and experience might benefit the international development community. This discussion is timely because multiple SDGs address issues relating to crime, justice and security. By comparison, criminological themes did not explicitly feature in the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that preceded the SDGs (see General Assembly 55/2). Implied in the SDGs is the notion that enhancing the capacities of developing countries to combat various forms of crime and promote the rule of law are now policy priorities for the international community. To achieve this vision, the UN calls for a 'culture of shared responsibilities, collective action and benchmarking for progress' that requires international development actors like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and member states to cooperate with other UN agencies including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (UNODC 2016: 2).

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Table 1 *Sustainable development goals*

SDG 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
SDG 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
SDG 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
SDG 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
SDG 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
SDG 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
SDG 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
SDG 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth,
full and productive employment and decent work for all
SDG 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
SDG 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
SDG 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
SDG 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
SDG 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
SDG 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
SDG 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage
forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
SDG 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access
to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
SDG 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the
global partnership for sustainable development

(UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1)

In contextualizing these developments, it must be acknowledged that crime control and development have, since the early 1990s, constituted two relatively distinct spheres of international policymaking and practice. The international development community's interest in crime was therefore peripheral and primarily limited to 'security sector reform' (SSR) projects in post-conflict societies (Ellison and Pino 2012; Gordon 2014). To this effect, Jesperson (2015: 39) observes that immediately before the adoption of the SDGs, many development actors remained hesitant to incorporate criminological issues into their formal mandates because they feared that doing so would render development 'a means to achieve security outcomes' rather than 'an end goal' in its own right. These concerns were not unfounded because the 'securitization' of other development issues is well-documented (Duffield 2007) and many criminological issues are highly susceptible to political manipulation and moral entrepreneurship (Pickering 2007; Simon 2007).

In acknowledging these developments, we suggest there are two important roles that criminologists might play when it comes to helping various stakeholders navigate this crime-development nexus. Criminologists can play a *supportive* role by contributing to the design, implementation and evaluation of projects that contribute to safe, just and ecologically sustainable societies. They can also play a *critical* role by helping development actors and their intended beneficiaries including domestic policy makers, criminal justice practitioners and citizens of the Global South identify and resist attempts by international organizations, sovereign donors, national governments and other empowered stakeholders to politicize criminological elements of this agenda for self-interested strategic and political purposes. Performing these roles necessitates a combination of direct engagement with the work of the development sector and increased scholarly attention by members of the discipline to work that is undertaken by organizations like UNDP and UNODC in the name of crime control and sustainable development. We contend that both modes of engagement should also be informed by

core criminological values such as 'caution' and 'scepticism' (Cohen 1982/1998) and southern epistemologies that aspire to de-colonize the production and dissemination of knowledges about development and crime (Carrington *et al.* 2015).

We begin by reviewing the development sociology literature to provide criminologists with a critical introduction to this field of scholarship. This review accounts for influential historical development paradigms before distinguishing between two key 'alternative' development perspectives that remain influential today: Sen's (1999) capability approach and the post-development approach associated with the work of Escobar (1992). We acknowledge the problematic legacy of the development system and its political and operational shortcomings but conclude that the capability approach that underpins the SDGs provides the best available framework for balancing local development and security needs with global priorities of criminological concern, including the protection of human rights and environmental justice. Citing a body of international evidence that indicates a heightened risk of crime and violence in many parts of the Global South, the article proceeds to account for why criminologists should support this agenda through a combination of support and critique. The remainder of the article proceeds to discuss three important areas where criminological expertise can make an immediate contribution to the 2030 Agenda. The first area is broadly concerned with controlling crime and building safe and just societies. The second area focuses on the elimination of gender-based violence, and specifically intimate partner violence, as a precondition for achieving gender equality. The third area relates to the issues of environmental crime, ecological degradation and environmental justice. We conclude by briefly identifying some additional areas that may also benefit from criminological expertise and call for criminologists to approach the SDGs as framework for *global governance.* This means acknowledging that crime, social harm, injustice and environmental degradation are not exclusively 'Southern' problems but rather, global issues that often also manifest in the Global North but often have a disproportionate, adverse impact on the capabilities of residents of the Global South.

A Critical Primer on Development

Criminologists have historically studied the impact of development on crime (e.g. Clinard and Abbott 1973; Shelley 1981; Liu 2006) but have had comparatively little to say about the impact of crime on development or the dialectical, two-way relationship between these phenomena (for a critical review of the criminological literature on development see Blaustein *et al.* 2017). This is problematic because the SDGs are grounded in a set of discourses that construct crime, violence and the absence of the rule of law as obstacles to development (Jesperson 2015). It is also important to note that historical contact between criminologists and the international development sector has been limited when it comes to research engagement. The international development sector (sometimes described as a 'community') is a loose assemblage of international organizations, international financial organizations, bi-lateral agencies, non-governmental organizations (both international and local), private contractors, grass-roots charities and independent consultants working to promote and/or profit from development in the Global South. Consistent with the development studies literature, any of these organizations or individuals might therefore be described as 'development actors' (McMichael 2008).

Our claim that criminologists have neglected the work of the international development sector is not to overlook the documented past efforts of criminologists and members of aligned disciplines to support criminal justice reform efforts internationally and locally throughout the Global South (e.g. Lopez-Rey 1985; Jefferson 2017). Rather, we observe that only rarely have criminologists taken an interest in the work of international development actors (e.g. Wardak *et al.* 2007; Blaustein 2015). This is attributable to the fact that international development remains a peripheral issue within criminology with the effect that most criminologists are only vaguely familiar with the history of the international development system, its workings and its ideological underpinnings. Accordingly, this section presents a critical primer on international development to contextualize the SDGs.

Colonialism, modernization, economic liberalization and crime

It is a truism to suggest that 'development' has no universally agreed upon definition, but a 'developed' society has been described as having 'the ability to produce an adequate and growing supply of goods and services productively and efficiently, to accumulate capital, and to redistribute the fruits of production in a relatively equitable manner' (Jaffee 1998: 3). Development might therefore refer to processes of structural and cultural transformation that a society undergoes in pursuit of this ideal. It may do so at the behest of others, by its own accord, or due to some combination of both. How this transformation might be achieved remains hotly contested and competing models and theories of development have been advocated since at least the 19th century.

It is important to acknowledge the colonial origins of development as a modern idea, along with the asymmetric power relations that have historically underpinned its 'social engineering impulse' (McMichael 2008: 25). To this effect, many development policies and practices are rooted in a colonial perception that 'non-European native people or colonial subjects were "backward," trapped in stifling cultural traditions' (McMichael 2008: 26–7). The moral devaluation of colonial subjects went together with the fact that the socioeconomic development of European countries as colonizers benefitted immensely from imperialism. In other words, the 'progress' of the metropole was fuelled by the exploitation of labour and natural resources throughout its subjugated peripheries (Amin 2011). That these exploitive practices ultimately served to increase inequalities between the colonizers and the colonies (as well as within the colonies themselves) and establish enduring relations of economic dependency would thus contribute to and reinforce the 'underdeveloped' label attached to the latter. To this effect, Amin (2011) has argued that colonizers reaped short-term profits from exploited labour and the land. Colonial policing, prisons and even early positivist criminology collectively played a role in regulating the conduct of colonized subjects (Alemika 1993; Brown 2014).

The flawed colonial belief that the 'progress' of the metropole should subsequently be replicated throughout the periphery informed the paradigm of development known as modernization that was dominant from the late 1940s until the late 1970s (McMichael 2008). According to proponents of the 'Modernization Thesis', development necessitated the diffusion and adaptation of Western values, and developing nations lacking resources, education and infrastructure must create institutions to help risk-taking (and Westernized) entrepreneurs produce goods and services for the purposes of economic growth (Rostow 1960). To these theorists, development required reforms such as technological advances,

increased specialization of labour, the transition from subsistence to commercial industrial farming and increased rural to urban migration (Smelser 1963). It is also worth acknowledging at this point that modernization served as an important theme of criminological scholarship during 1970s and 1980s. To this effect, criminologists including Clinard and Abbott (1973) and Shelley (1981) argued that rapid industrialization and urbanization generated criminogenic consequences for developing countries including anomie, social disorganization and the resulting reductions in informal social control. Acknowledging the criminogenic consequences of rapid modernization, the UN Social Commission actively worked to promote 'social defence' policies throughout the recently de-colonized 'Third World' during the Cold War (Walters 2001; Lopez-Rey 1985).

Dependency theorists criticized the Modernization Thesis contending that the strategic concerns of donors, rather than recipients, were prioritized in development aid schemes, and that modernization-inspired development programmes served to increase debt and inequality both within and between nation states (Dos Santo 1970; Cordoso 1972; Wallerstein 1974). They argued that developing countries were responsible for purchasing inputs for new industries, but multinational corporations that ran production repatriated profits outside of the country rather than reinvesting it locally thereby leaving the countries in debt. Developing countries were also overly reliant on exporting goods with fluctuating prices, creating economic instability and increasing debt further. Dependency theorists therefore called for alternative economic policies designed to promote independent development such as import substitution industrialization and export-oriented industrialization, but for a variety of reasons these ended up being unworkable alternatives (McMichael 2008). Critical criminologists like Sumner (1982) drew from dependency theory and criticized the Modernization Thesis on crime by contending that political elites uphold their privilege and interests by defining crimes and shaping responses to it.

Partly in response to its perceived failures, modernization was superseded in the early 1980s by the (neoliberal) globalization project, driven largely by economic liberalization (McMichael 2008). An important debate within the development studies literature concerns whether neoliberal globalization should be understood as an alternative to modernization thinking or as an updated version of it, rooted in similar ideologies promoting Western, capitalist hegemony (Phillips 1998; Harvey 2005). In our view, both the modernization and neoliberal paradigms share some common meta-assumptions about the transferability of Northern experiences and knowledge to the Global South but they differ with respect to the nature of the capitalist interventions they prescribe. Whereas modernization treated the developing state as the primary architect of its socioeconomic development (albeit an architect that was expected to base its designs on blueprints for prefabricated institutions and economic structures), its neoliberal successor, bolstered politically by the Washington Consensus, recast the role of the state as that of facilitating participation in world markets. This meant that throughout 1980s international financial institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund as well as sovereign debtors 'encouraged' many developing countries to implement 'structural adjustment programmes' (SAPs) in exchange for debt forgiveness. Governments of other developing countries including Chile and Singapore adopted these policies voluntarily, in part because they believed that fuelling economic growth was necessary for legitimizing authoritarian forms of government (Liow 2012; Connell and Dados 2014).

Policies associated with SAPs emphasized austerity, deregulation, the privatization of state industries and services, and low taxes designed to attract foreign investment (Babb 2005). The impact of these reforms was varied but in many cases, economic liberalization resulted in decreased expenditure on social welfare; the weakening of labour, environmental and legal protections; increased private ownership of social and public services; outsourcing of public services; enhanced private property rights; the deregulation of international trade, labour markets and capital flows; and the devaluation of labour (Williamson 1997; Lindhert and Williamson 2003; Harvey 2005). One effect of this has been greater inequality, both within and between states (Wade 2004). From a criminological perspective, a further consequence has been the emergence of new forms of conflict, violence and harms that disproportionately affect economically and socially marginalized people around the world (Friedrichs and Friedrichs 2002; Currie 2015). The perpetrators of these harms include not only deprived individuals, but also corporations and states (Chambliss *et al.* 2013).

The capability approach: Overview, legacy and criticisms

Awareness of the shortcomings and consequences of both modernization and SAPs prompted the articulation of alternative visions for development that gained popularity in 1980s and 1990s. The most influential of these critiques is the capability approach. Originally developed by Indian economist Sen (1973; 1999), the capability approach challenged mainstream development thinking by arguing that economic growth was only desirable insofar as it enhanced 'what people are effectively able to do and be', improved their 'quality of life' and removed any 'obstacles in their lives so that they have more freedom to live the kind of life that, upon reflection, they have reason to value' (Robeyns 2005: 94). In other words, eliminating poverty and reducing inequalities are treated as prerequisites for maximizing the enjoyment of individual freedoms (Sen 1999) and social justice (Nussbaum 2007; Sen 2011). The capability approach thus treats socio-economic development as a means rather than an end (Robeyns 2005) and it emphasizes the importance of fostering participation and empowering collective agency locally to address these issues in a flexible manner (Fukuda-Parr 2003).

Sen's ideas were subsequently incorporated into the first *Human Development Report*, which stated that the aim of development should be to enable individuals to 'live a long and healthy life, to be educated and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living' (UNDP 1990: 4). To achieve this aim, the report argued that 'restructuring budget priorities to balance economic and social spending should move to the top of the [UN's] policy agenda for development in the 1990s' (UNDP 1990: 4). The capability approach would later inform the eight MDGs adopted in 2000 (General Assembly 55/2). The MDGs 'put human development-poverty and people and their lives-at the center of the global development agenda for the new millennium' and established a framework of accountability for the international community that included 'time limits and quantifiable outcomes, by which progress [could] be objectively measured and monitored' (Fukuda-Parr 2004: 395, 397). The method for measuring progress is known throughout the international development sector as 'results-based management' (RBM) and plays an important role in structuring the design, implementation and evaluation of development projects (Hulme 2010). Both the impact of RBM on the work of the development sector and the legacy of the MDGs remain important topics

of debate amongst development scholars (Attaran 2005; Weber 2015) but the capability approach nonetheless underpins the SDGs which succeeded the MDGs in 2015. This is despite the fact that 'sustainable development', a term that was also originally coined in the 1980s, in this case to denote approaches to development that are in their design ecologically, economically and socially sustainable (Lélé 1991), has recently emerged as the sector's dominant buzzword. Accordingly, no fewer than five of the SDGs explicitly address human development issues (Table 1). The remaining 12 goals concern them indirectly by addressing issues such as environmental sustainability, gender equality, and of particular relevance to criminologists, justice, safety and security. The implication is that the once controversial capability approach is now dominant throughout the international development sector. It is not however without its ideological detractors.

An important ideological critique of the capability approach is the radical 'post-development' perspective that combines the arguments of early dependency theorists with post-modern thinking about the political economy of knowledge production. One of its leading proponents has been Colombian-American anthropologist Escobar who argues that the concept of development 'has functioned as an all-powerful mechanism for the production and management of the Third World in the post-World War II period' (Escobar 1992: 24). The solution, according to Escobar, is not to modify development as a concept or a set of practices but rather, to 'contribute to the transformation or dismantling of the discourse' to create a space for genuine social movements to emerge (Escobar 1992: 25). For democratization of this nature to occur, Escobar (1992: 26–7, original emphasis) calls for 'alternatives *to* development' as opposed to alternative models *of* development. In other words, people at the local level should be able to define development and progress for themselves without it being imposed on them. Post-development therefore presents itself as an emancipatory project, one that aspires to insulate the discourse and practice of development from 'the political, economic and institutional regime of truth production that has defined the era of development' (Escobar 1992: 28). From the post-development perspective, the very existence of a global framework for development is problematic and the capability approach represents an extension of the imperialist systems that preceded it.

A Criminology for Sustainable Development

The globalizing tendencies of the international development system must be acknowledged by criminologists but so must the substantial body of international evidence which suggests that various forms of crime threaten the health, prosperity and happiness of many residents of the Global South. For example, UNODC's 2013 *Global Study on Homicide* found that 'less developed' sub-regions including Southern Africa, Central America, the Caribbean and South America had the highest homicide rates in the world (UNODC 2013). A 2013 report by the World Health Organization also estimates the combined lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence among women in almost all low- and middle-income regions to be higher than in high-income regions (World Health Organization 2013: 20). With few exceptions, the 50 worst performing countries in Transparency International's 2016 Corruption Perceptions Index were also from the Global South (Transparency International 2016).

In citing this body of evidence, we are not suggesting that 'underdevelopment' is at the root of these problems or that they can easily be addressed through the work of

development actors or national and local governments. In fact, many of these problems appear to be, at least on a structural level, attributable in-part to the problematic legacies of colonialism, modernization and neoliberal globalization discussed in the previous section. Furthermore, we acknowledge that these problems are not unique to developing countries of the Global South and that solutions, if indeed they exist, will not necessarily originate in the Global North. Rather, we feel there is a moral imperative for criminologists to engage with the SDGs insofar as they provide a valuable framework for addressing these issues in a coordinated and systematic manner. Failure to do so would mean that the expertise of academic criminologists remains largely superfluous and inconsequential to development actors. It must also be acknowledged that other sources of knowledge about crime and its control do exist and that these are not always preferable to the knowledge of academic criminologists. Indeed, the international development sector's historical efforts to promote police reform projects in post-conflict countries throughout the Global South highlights its tendency to turn to active or retired criminal justice practitioners from the Global North and other policy entrepreneurs or consultants for advice (Ellison 2007). Greater academic engagement with the development sector may therefore reduce demand for commodified knowledges about crime, justice and security which, in the context of SSR programmes, have previously been associated with the securitization of local development issues (Ryan 2011) and otherwise undesirable results (Ellison and Pino 2012). Thus, while we feel that it is important to acknowledge the post-development critique, our position is that criminologists should work within the capability approach if they are to make the most impact through their research.

There are two primary ways that criminologists can support the 2030 Agenda. First, criminologists can actively assist with the design, implementation and evaluation of projects that support safe, just and environmentally sustainable societies. This is not to suggest that criminological knowledge alone is sufficient for achieving these outcomes. Rather, it must be combined with the expertise of development actors and aligned with the interests and knowledge of local stakeholders.

Second, criminologists can assume a critical role by helping members of the development community and local stakeholders recognize and resist attempts by international organizations and NGOs, sovereign donors, private corporations and policy entrepreneurs to politicize criminal threats: strategic or political reasons that deviate from or outright conflict with local development needs. This latter role is largely informed by Cohen's (1982/1998: 30) identification of 'skepticism' and 'caution' as core values of criminology as an 'intellectual enterprise'. A critically minded criminologist might therefore help to identify ill-conceived, inappropriate, criminogenic, oppressive, unjust or otherwise harmful crime control policies and practices that might otherwise be promoted in the name of sustainable development. Our advocacy of this two-pronged approach is further informed by southern epistemologies that value local perspectives on crime, security and development without succumbing to the moral pitfalls of a purely relativistic stance towards these issues (Connell 2007; Carrington *et al.* 2015). The remainder of article reveals three important areas where criminologists are well positioned to make an immediate contribution in this respect.

Peace, justice and strong institutions

SDG 16 is fundamentally concerned with reducing the threat that crime and violence pose to sustainable development and enhancing the delivery of justice and security throughout the Global South. The specific targets assigned to SDG 16 include:

SDG 16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere

SDG 16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children

SDG 16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international level and ensure equal access to justice for all

SDG 16.4 By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organised crime

SDG 16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms

SDG 16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

SDG 16.a Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime

(General Assembly Resolution 70/1: 25–6)

Reducing violence, promoting the rule of law, fighting corruption and improving access to justice are hardly controversial aspirations but SDG 16 is neither prescriptive nor restrictive about how these targets should be met. This means it provides no indication of how the international development community might contribute to an overall reduction in the global homicide rate or how a reduction in violence might be achieved in specific countries such as El Salvador or Honduras that feature some of the highest homicide rates in the world (UNODC 2013). This flexibility is intentional and informed by the capability approach that acknowledges the need for development practices to be tailored to local needs and circumstances (UNDP 1990). Ironically, this flexibility risks undermining the aspiration to democratize the global governance of crime because stakeholders from the Global South are at a strategic disadvantage when it comes to ensuring that their needs and preferences influence the work of development actors (Ellison and Pino 2012; Blaustein 2016). Rather, it is international organizations like UNODC along with sovereign donors and the aforementioned consultants and policy entrepreneurs from the Global North with extensive track-records of contributing to SSR projects who are strategically positioned to dictate which issues should be prioritized, what interventions should be funded, and how they should be implemented (Jakobi 2012).

Criminologists may not be empowered to change these structural dynamics but in certain circumstances they may be able to help development actors and local stakeholders negotiate these pressures and translate them into policies and practices that align with local values and needs (Blaustein 2015).

It is also important to acknowledge that the targets listed above encompass a variety of political agendas and the neutral language of the SDGs serves to mask the political complexities and fault-lines of the crime-development nexus. For example, SDG 16.2 includes a reference to the term 'trafficking'. No criminologist would contest that the exploitation or abuse of children is deeply problematic but 'trafficking' is a messy concept that eludes simple definition and measurement (Segrave and Pickering 2012). The evidence-based underpinning the global anti-trafficking norm is relatively thin

(Wylie 2016) yet the concept is frequently invoked by moral entrepreneurs, including those who advocate the 'abolition' of sex work (Weitzer 2007). This resort to value laden language can at times result in law and order government responses that prioritize the enforcement of immigration laws over the welfare needs of migrants (Pickering 2007; Davidson 2011), including the very children that SDG 16.2 is designed to protect. Failure to interrogate these targets and approach them with scepticism and caution may therefore result in the validation and dissemination of harmful and counterproductive policies. Criminologists thus have an important role to play in reminding international development actors and international organizations like UNODC that crime is a political issue.

We also wish to draw attention to the fact that SDG 16 harbours an implicit assumption that problems associated with criminal violence and corruption are at least partially due to the absence of functional state institutions including those of the criminal justice system. By extension, organizations like UNODC have adopted the stance that strengthening these institutions through international cooperation, local capacity building and technical assistance programmes will help to resolve these issues (United Nations 2015a). Evidence from the Global North indicates that enhancing state control vis-à-vis the implementation of proactive, evidence-based policing models may lead to statistically significant reductions in violent crime (Weisburd *et al.* 2008; Braga *et al.* 2012). However, further research is necessary for assessing the impact of policing and crime prevention strategies on violence in low- and middle-income countries of the Global South (Higginson *et al.* 2015). This includes the issue of long-term sustainability in the absence of ongoing financial support from international donors.

There is also a risk that any proactive policing strategy may be used to disproportionately target ethnic minority (Bowling and Phillips 2007) and indigenous communities (Cunneen 2001), thereby resulting in human rights violations and potentially undermining the legitimacy of the police (Gau and Brunson 2010) and the state in the eyes of the over-policed and the international community. Indeed, it is widely accepted amongst criminologists today that increasing the power of the criminal justice system can be counter-productive when it comes to addressing the underlying structural causes of crime and disorder (Clear 2007). The assumption that strengthening state institutions is necessary for achieving peace and stability throughout the Global South must therefore be recognized as a remnant of modernization thinking, one that is grounded in a romanticized understanding of the nature of social order in the Global North. While strengthening democratic institutions and accountability mechanisms may in theory help governments of less-developed countries increase state legitimacy and citizen participation in co-productive activities to proactively reduce crime, the idea that strengthening the power of criminal justice systems will necessarily reduce crime or promote social cohesion is misguided. Rather, increasing the state's coercive control may undermine the rule of law rather than enhance it, particularly if criminal justice system agents such as the police see themselves with their enhanced powers as more accountable to a regime or political party than to their fellow citizens in a democratic context, or if enhanced police and other state powers encourage the removal of impartiality in the administration of law or the restriction of civil liberties (Bayley 2001). Criminologists might therefore encourage development actors to exercise caution when working to enhance the capabilities of state institutions.

Gender-based violence

Violence against women is an important area of criminological inquiry that aligns with SDG 5, which deals with gender equality. It includes two targets that specifically seek to eliminate violence against women:

SDG 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

SDG 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

(UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1)

These targets provide a clear directive at the international level of the need to better respond to, and prevent, violence against women and in so doing represent a shift from domestic priorities which often overlook interpersonal violence committed against women in favour of preventing more 'public' forms of violence, such as acts of terrorism (Walklate *et al.* 2017). As noted earlier, the need for immediate action in this area is evidenced by the number of women who experience violence globally and in particular, throughout the Global South (World Health Organization 2013; see also Carrington 2015). Research has also documented that despite the gains made in the decades since the rise of feminist movements in 1970s and 1980s, a significant proportion of women continue to experience human rights violations, including genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced sex work, rape and other forms of sexual and intimate partner violence (Goel and Goodmark 2015). To this end, violence against women must be understood as a *global* issue that impacts upon the security and well-being of women from *all* countries, cultures and socio-economic statuses.

Feminist criminologists have made important contributions towards identifying the contexts, at the local, national and international level, within which women are particularly vulnerable to male violence (Renzetti and Bergen 2004). Reflecting an understanding of the vulnerability of women who experience violence, the importance of the gendered lens and the need to adopt a risk sensitive approach, criminologists have argued that, to be effective, responses to men's violence must be informed by and tailored to the experiences of diverse communities (see, inter alia, McCulloch *et al.* 2016). This criminological, risk-sensitive approach holds valuable lessons in terms of the need to bring together both specialist and generalist services, government and non-government bodies, as well as provide whole of system responses that support the prevention, identification, assessment and management of women's risk of violence. From the outset, a criminological perspective highlights the need for multi-agency responses and prevention initiatives—tackling violence against women is no one ministry, organization or service providers' responsibility (see, inter alia, Robinson 2006; McCulloch *et al.* 2016). Recognizing the value of multi-agency responses further highlights why the work undertaken by non-specialized bodies assists in addressing many of the goals and targets contained in other areas of the Agenda, which in turn contribute to reducing the risks associated with gender-based violence and addressing its underlying causes (on this, see also Babu and Kusuma 2017). For example, prevention of violence against women is advanced by work undertaken to eliminate poverty (SDG 1), achieve good health and quality education (SDG 3 and 4), reduce inequalities (SDG 10) and through

the achievement of SDG 11 targeted at making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

A risk-sensitive approach is certainly relevant to an international context given the likely diverse experiences of women victimized. As such, working towards targets 5.2 and 5.3 requires an appreciation of cultural and contextual risk factors and a rejection of homogenous group assumptions (Mohanty 1984). To this effect, Barberet has argued that criminologists must look beyond the rhetoric of development policies and programmes developed to address these targets if they are to ensure that the vulnerabilities of 'women from the Global South are not essentialized or instrumentalized for the purpose of legitimising the political agendas of development actors' (paraphrasing Barberet 2017; see also Barberet 2014). Without such a focus, the interests of development actors in and of themselves may become the focal point of SDG 5 as opposed to the needs of women. To this end, we argue, that the criminological lens assists in bringing to the fore experiences of victimization that have often been overlooked, unaccounted for and/or silenced in official accounts of gender-based violence in the Global South, but for which criminological research has long sought to understand. By extension, we acknowledge that effective policies, programmes and interventions need not originate in the Global North. Examples such as women-only police stations in Brazil (Carrington 2015) and 'Houses of Brazilian Women' (Pioerobom de Avila 2017) illustrate the potential advantages of looking to the Global South for innovative ways of responding to this issue.

Three final points are worth emphasizing here. First, as with SDG 16, the targets on gender-based violence are drafted using vague and outwardly innocuous language that often masks contentious issues. For example, there is an ongoing debate between radical and intersectional feminists about whether or not commercial sex should be treated as a form of violence against women. The consequence, argues Weitzer (2005: 934), is that 'Too often in this area, the cannons of scientific inquiry are suspended and research deliberately skewed to serve a particular political agenda'. UNODC has intentionally avoided adopting an official stance on this issue and does not endorse a particular regulatory approach but SDG 5.2 may nonetheless provide a platform for moral entrepreneurship. Criminologists might therefore help development actors separate evidence about commercial sex work from ideology and ensure that the language of these targets is not misconstrued for ideological purposes.

Second, applying a gendered lens to *all* the goals contained within the SDGs is essential to ensure that any progress made is done so with the experiences of women in mind (UN Women 2015). To this end, it is important to consider the dialectical relationship between gender equality in a social and economic sense and the elimination of gender-based violence. Gender equality is requisite for eliminating violence against women on a structural level but also contingent upon the elimination of violence against women.

Finally, we feel it is important to recognize that the SDGs provide a starting point for the international community to address the high levels of violence and discrimination experienced by members of the LGBTQIA+ community worldwide. This includes state-sponsored homophobia and the persecution of sexual minorities in both the Global North and the Global South (Gledhill 2014). While none of the targets for SDG 5 explicitly address the victimization of sexual minorities and non-binary individuals, the preamble to the SDGs acknowledges the right of '*all* human beings [to] fulfill their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment' (General Assembly

70/1: 2, emphasis added). The issue has also been officially acknowledged by twelve UN agencies in a joint-statement on LGBTI discrimination and violence that was issued around the same time that the SDGs were adopted (United Nations 2015b).

Environmental crime and green criminology

Insofar as environmental sustainability lies at the heart of the SDGs, it is logical that criminologists with expertise on environmental crime would have much to contribute to this agenda. The most obvious contribution relates to three targets that focus on species protection and biodiversity:

SDG 14.6.1 Progress by countries in the degree of implementation of international instruments aiming to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing

SDG 15.7 Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products

SDG 15.C Enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities

(UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1)

Each of these targets denotes a different form of wildlife crime, which is an established area of empirical research and scholarship within criminology. Examples of criminological research on wildlife crime include studies of illegal poaching (Lemieux and Clarke 2009), illegal wildlife trafficking (Wyatt 2013), and illegal fishing (Petrossian 2012). Sophisticated analyses have also provided insight into how situational crime prevention techniques and measures can be deployed to prevent wildlife crime (Pires and Clarke 2012). Other work has concentrated on the importance of multi-agency participation and collaborative efforts to combat environmental crime, involving both government and non-government agencies at the local through to the international levels (Pink and White 2016). This body of work is directly relevant to the collaborative efforts of UNODC and governmental environmental law enforcement agencies to combat wildlife crime but it simply denotes a starting point for thinking about how criminological research can contribute to a sustainable future.

It is in relation to overarching environmental issues such as ensuring universal access to clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), sustaining oceans and marine resources (SDG 14) and protecting and preserving territorial ecosystems (SDG 15) that we feel criminological research has much more to offer. These issues are central to research, scholarship and activism associated with green criminology which refers to the study by criminologists of environmental harms (that may incorporate wider definitions of crime than are provided by strictly legal definitions); environmental laws (including enforcement, prosecution and sentencing practices); and environmental regulation (systems of criminal, civil and administrative law designed to manage, protect and preserve specified environments and species, and to manage the negative consequences of particular industrial processes) (White 2008; 2011; South and Brisman 2014). The methods of green criminology are diverse but such an approach frequently analyses discourses on power, harm and justice in order to explore the ways in which the natural environment is compromised, manipulated and abused (Walters *et al.* 2013). This means that green criminology is intrinsically concerned with issues of social and

ecological justice, the impediments to these, and how best to structure interventions that will bring environmental health and human security. For example critical green criminology has accounted for disturbing trends towards the 'militarization' of anti-poaching efforts the negative impact that certain types of conservation efforts have on traditional users of land (McClanahan and Wall 2016; Pohja-Mykra 2016). It is also worth noting that the scope of study for green criminologists is often global and/or transnational due to the interconnections of communities and corporations, and the fluidity and integrity of the Earth's natural environment. A key focus of green criminological research is harm, since many activities that threaten environmental sustainability and result in lasting ecological damage are perfectly legal (e.g. clear-felling of forests and coal-seam gas fracking).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, climate change, described by some green criminologists as 'ecocide', that is human actions that destroy specific eco-systems within defined geographical areas (Higgins *et al.* 2013), represents an important area of green criminological research. Green criminologists have undertaken analyses that demonstrate the impact of 'contrarianism' (i.e. intentional obfuscation of issues and responses to global warming) on preventing adequate action to mitigate the causes of climate change, such as carbon emissions (Brisman 2013). Related work has looked at who the 'carbon criminals' are, and has argued for the criminalization of activities that contribute to global warming (White and Kramer 2015). This research holds relevance to the SDGs because it draws attention to the fact that changes to the biophysical environment are not 'natural' or 'inevitable'. It therefore raises questions about culpability, responsibility and accountability that are pertinent to the efforts of international actors working in the area of global climate governance. Green criminologists have also considered the de-stabilizing effects of climate change including climate-induced migration and conflict over natural resources (White 2011). These are issues that hold obvious implications for human development outcomes, especially for residents of the Global South who stand to be most affected by the effects of climate change in the coming decades.

A closely related topic within green criminological research concerns the political economies of advanced capitalist societies and their contribution to 'ecological disorganization' (Lynch *et al.* 2013). For example green criminologists have exposed the injustices associated with the production, transfer and disposal of pollutants and waste materials, and their material impact on human populations, nonhuman species (such as plants and animals), and eco-systems (Ruggiero and South 2010). Their research further demonstrates that what happens to land, air and water vis-à-vis industrial and trade processes that have polluting and waste outcomes affects the health and wellbeing of specific people and habitats (Ruggiero and South 2013a). Shifting of the problem through both legal and illegal means is one concern of green criminologists (Bisschop 2015). So, too, is the manner which traditional, non-Western and Indigenous peoples are disproportionately impacted upon by land grabs and by industrial processes outside of their own making (Gedicks 2005; White 2011). This body of work is directly relevant to the international development community, in particular international financial institutions like the World Bank and regional-investment banks, because it serves as an important reminder that lacking adequate regulation and oversight, economic growth as an important structural and cultural contributor to ecological degradation, a source of environmental injustice and a threat to public health may generate conflicts that

ultimately undermine Sen's (1999) ideal of 'development as freedom' (Ruggiero and South 2013b: 370).

Conclusion

This article has considered the potential contribution of criminological research to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The issues identified herein merely denote some logical starting points for criminological engagement with the SDGs but there are clearly other development priorities that might benefit from criminological expertise. For example, criminologists might contribute to the realization of SDG 11.7 that aspires to 'provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities'. They might also assist the international community in its efforts to 'eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour' (SDG 8.7) and 'promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women workers, and those in precarious employment' (SDG 8.8; UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1). Our point is that criminological expertise has the potential to be an important and dynamic resource for the international development community, its international partners and its intended beneficiaries.

As we have argued, one impetus for criminologists to engage with this agenda is that the effects of crime and violence appear to be especially pronounced in many parts of the geographical Global South. We wish to reiterate however that these issues are not exclusive to the Global South and nor is their pathology necessarily 'Southern'. Rather, criminological harms, including those perpetrated by states and corporations, are an inherent feature of any society, regardless of its overall economic or social prosperity. Their consequences may transcend national borders and impact the well-being of humans and ecosystems alike. There is little reason to assume then that criminological interventions, development programmes or economic reforms can ever fully resolve the underlying causes of many criminological harms that affect developing or developed countries, unless and until they lead to greater freedom, equality and justice. Our call for criminologists to engage with the 2030 Agenda is therefore linked with the fact that the capability approach privileges these ends over the aspiration to stimulate economic growth which, in the context of previous development paradigms, has historically served as an indirect structural and cultural contributor to criminological harms.

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