**Green Crime**

Green crime is also known as environmental crime or transnational green crime and pertains to criminal activities that have a detrimental impact on the environment. Throughout this lecture, we will delve into various definitions of green crime, and present several examples to illustrate the different types of green crime that exist today. We will also discuss some of the challenges associated with studying green crime, which may involve a complex set of specialist terms. By the end of this lecture, you will have a thorough understanding of this important area of study.

**DEFINITIONS OF GREEN CRIME**

Let us begin by examining the different definitions of green crime. It is worth noting that this area of study lacks a singular definition, as various individuals may perceive green crime in diverse ways, leading to a multitude of definitions. One such definition comes from Situ and Eammons, in 2000, who provide a conventional definition of green crime. According to their definition, green crime is considered an unauthorised act or omission that infringes on the law, much like any other crime. Such crimes involve the violation of statutory or written laws that are prosecutable offenses. An example of this would be fly tipping, where an individual disposes of waste illegally by leaving it on the side of the road, instead of taking it to a dump or recycling centre. This act is punishable by a fine rather than imprisonment, but it falls within the ambit of traditional green crime as it involves breaking the law. However, the transnational nature of green crime poses a significant challenge to the traditional definition, as it can span across several countries. This brings up the question of jurisdiction and which law to prosecute under, which is a problem like that of cybercrime.

The next definition to explore is that of global risk, as described by Beck. Beck postulates that environmental crimes stem from human actions, because of new environmental risks created by our use of technology and manufacturing. It is important to differentiate between natural environmental risks and those caused by human activity. Natural environmental risks include occurrences such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, and wildfires, which are naturally occurring phenomena within the environment. On the other hand, Beck argues that the human species has generated new types of environmental risks, which constitute a form of environmental crime. These risks are linked to the severity of natural disasters such as storms, hurricanes, and tornadoes. In addition, air pollution is a significant problem caused by human activity, resulting from the use of technology and manufacturing. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a significant increase in air quality, resulting from reduced car use and factory emissions. It is worth noting that air pollution has been linked to an increase in asthma cases in children. Beck's concept of global risk defines environmental crimes as negative environmental situations created through human actions, particularly those associated with technology and manufacturing.

Rob White introduced the concept of transgressive green crime, which refers to any action that causes harm to the physical environment and the living beings inhabiting it, regardless of whether it is legally prohibited or not. This definition goes beyond the traditional view of green crime as a violation of laws. White divides transgressive green crime into two categories: eco-centric crime and anthropocentric green crime. Eco-centric crime refers to any harm inflicted on the environment or species, even if it does not directly affect humans. This encompasses acts like animal cruelty or destruction of habitat. Anthropocentric green crime, on the other hand, posits that humans have the right to exploit the environment and other species for their own benefit. This means that any action that benefits humans is not considered a green crime, while anything that causes harm to humans is. For example, clearing rainforests for grazing purposes would not be categorized as a green crime under this framework, as it benefits humans. However, if such actions lead to human harm, they will fall under the umbrella of transgressive green crime.

In the field of sociology, the topic of green crime has multiple definitions depending on the perspective of the sociologist. As such, it is important to consider the context and focus of the research being conducted when selecting a definition to use. It is not possible to determine a single definition that all sociologists can universally apply to the study of green crime. Instead, sociologists must carefully consider which definition is most applicable to their specific research and the issues they aim to address.

**TYPES OF GREEN CRIME**

Various types of green crime have been identified by Nigel South, a renowned sociologist who has classified green crime into two categories. The first category, known as primary green crime, refers to any criminal activity that directly results in the destruction and degradation of the planet's resources. Examples of primary green crime include air pollution, deforestation, species decline, animal abuse, and water pollution, which is a significant issue in the UK at present. The destruction of the ecosystem has far-reaching consequences, with the decline of a particular species having a significant impact on the biosphere by affecting other animal's food sources and pollination. Thus, the conservation of the environment is necessary to safeguard the ecosystem's stability. Efforts to address primary green crime include meadowising backyards, planting flowers for birds and bees to pollinate and legislate against certain forms of air pollution, as all these criminal activities lead to the risk factors Beck has discussed.

The second type of green crime identified by Nigel South is known as secondary green crime, which refers to criminal activities resulting from the violation of existing laws and regulations. Environmental situations often involve regulations that companies are required to follow to be environmentally friendly, such as hazardous waste disposal, environmental discrimination, and state crimes against environmental groups. Secondary green crime focuses on preventing environmental disasters, which occur when regulations are not adhered to. For instance, the Deepwater Horizon, Ocean Ranger, and Alpha Papa oil rigs are examples of secondary green crimes. These oil rigs exploded and sank, causing massive oil disasters in the oceans due to safety considerations not being followed. The flouting of regulations led to these secondary green crimes, not the breaking of any laws. For example, on the Ocean Ranger, the platform's stability was not maintained as required, leading to its toppling and a significant oil spill. Preventing environmental disasters requires compliance with laws and regulations, which when violated, constitute secondary green crime.

**PERPETRATORS AND THE VICTIMS**

Regarding the perpetrators and victims of green crime, sociologist Wolf has identified four primary categories. Individuals: As individuals, our actions can contribute to both primary and secondary green crime. Primary green crime is where an individual directly harms the environment, such as by dumping waste in a river. Secondary green crime is where an individual indirectly harms the environment, such as by purchasing products that contribute to deforestation. Examples of individual actions that can lead to green crime include littering, using cars for short distances, heating homes with fossil fuels, and leaving electronic devices on in standby mode.

Private Businesses: Private businesses can also be a major contributor to environmental harm. This is a form of corporate crime, where companies flout rules and regulations to maximize profits at the expense of the environment. One example is the Bhopal disaster in India, where a chemical gas leak killed thousands of people and had a massive impact on the environment through water and soil contamination. Private businesses can also contribute to environmental harm through runoff waste, such as sewage waste that is pumped into rivers and streams.

States and Governments: States and governments can be one of the biggest institutional polluters through their military operations. Military arsenals, such as unexploded bombs and landmines, can not only be dangerous to humans, but can also leak toxic chemicals into the soil and render land unusable for farming. States and governments can also cause environmental harm through war and the use of military force.

Organized Crime: Organized crime has a long relationship with green crime, often in collusion with local government or government officials. Organized crime groups may get contracts for waste disposal and then dump refuse in places where it shouldn't be, or companies may claim to deal with waste but instead send it off to third world countries. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is an example of how organized crime has contributed to environmental harm by buying and dumping large amounts of plastic waste in the ocean.

As for victims of green crime, Potter argues that environmental harm reinforces social and class inequalities. Those in developing countries and in the lowest socioeconomic groups are more likely to be victims of green crime because they are unable to move away from areas where environmental crime is taking place. For example, the people in Bhopal who were affected by the chemical gas leak were mostly poor and unable to leave the toxic environment. Environmental harm can exacerbate poverty and social inequality, as well as cause physical harm to individuals and communities.

**GLOBALISATION AND GREEN CRIME**

The interrelation between globalisation and crime extends to green crime as well. The underlying principle is that the world operates as a single ecosystem, where activities in one part of the globe impact others. Natural disasters serve as examples of this concept. For instance, the Year Without Summer caused a famine worldwide due to a volcano eruption, which is not an environmental crime. Another example is the Chernobyl disaster in the 1980s, where the nuclear power plant meltdown had severe environmental impacts in various locations globally. The USSR initially tried to conceal the disaster, but radiation meters detected it elsewhere, leading to its eventual discovery. With the advent of globalisation, the analysis of the planet as a single ecosystem must consider the conduct of transnational corporations. The post-Brexit era has seen some firms relocate their operations to areas with less regulation to facilitate the disposal of environmental waste at a reduced cost, thereby increasing profits. In summary, green crime in the globalisation era demands a twofold examination: the planet as an ecosystem and the transnational corporate perspective.

**POLICING GREEN CRIME**

The policing of green crime poses significant challenges, primarily due to the lack of a unified definition of the term. Without a clear understanding of what constitutes green crime, it is difficult to determine whether an activity is criminal or not. This lack of a consistent definition has also resulted in the paucity of local and international laws governing environmental protection. Constructing international laws on the environment is particularly arduous because of the competing interests of various countries based on their economic levels and impacts. Governments also prefer not to over-regulate private transactions by corporations, as it may result in businesses relocating to other countries with less strict regulations. Laws on environmental crime are often shaped by powerful interests that prioritize profit over environmental protection, further impeding efforts to curb green crime. Moreover, the transnational nature of green crime makes it challenging to prosecute offenders effectively. For instance, the Chernobyl disaster had far-reaching environmental consequences, affecting areas thousands of miles away from the power plant, making it difficult to attribute responsibility and prosecute those accountable. These factors contribute to the complexity of policing green crime.

**EVALUATION**

It seems that the lack of a unified definition for green crime is a major obstacle in both studying and policing this type of crime. Additionally, the long-term and often unique impacts of green crimes make it difficult to conduct large-scale and generalizable research. Instead, case studies are often used, which may limit the broader applicability of findings. Furthermore, there are significant value judgments involved in assessing the impact of green crimes, which may be difficult to measure or agree upon. Overall, the challenges posed by green crime highlight the need for continued research and international cooperation in developing laws and regulations to protect the environment.