

Rob White: *Transnational Environmental Crime: Toward an Eco-global Criminology.*

New York: Rutledge, 2011, 182 pp.

Environmental issues currently have become a much discussed topic, dealt with from various perspectives; i.e., sociological, biological, ecological, criminological, criminal justice, etc. White's book on transnational environmental crime is actually an introduction and an attempt to present a eco-global criminology as a branch of criminology that studies organised environmental crime. White emphasizes that "transnational environmental harm is a crime" and as such represents the primary object of interest in eco-global criminology. Eco-global criminology could be described as the study of transnational harms and crimes against the environment. It is concerned with matters of things as they are; the answers to the 'why' questions are devolved to lower levels of abstraction and supplemented with real cases that specifically frame environmental crime through an ecological lens.

The book is divided into nine chapters. The first chapter deals with the definition of transnational environmental crime and its various types. White emphasizes the problem of the thin line between legal and illegal when dealing with environmental issues, especially in the global context. Environmental crime transcends the normal boundaries of jurisdiction, geography, and social norms. Moreover, much environmental harm is intrinsically transnational in nature. Due to these reasons, criminology needs to take environmental crime seriously (i.e., conceptualisation of harm has to go beyond conventional understanding of crime).

The second chapter, entitled *Eco-global criminology*, includes a discussion about conceptualising environmental harm and crime. White describes the difference between conventional criminological, ecological, and green criminological concepts. Eco-global criminology studies the problem of climate change, the problem of biodiversity and the problem of waste, covering the local, national and global levels. It incorporates interrelated notions of harm, which includes legal conceptions of harm, consideration of ecological well-being and holistic understanding of harm, and justice conceptions of harm. All of these make eco-global criminology a unique branch of (green) criminology.

The next three chapters: *Climate change*, *Biodiversity*, and *Waste and pollution*, present different forms of environmental harm to the reader, caused migration and social conflicts, their connection with eco-global criminology and suggestions for possible solutions. All three environmental crime groups have transnational impacts and effects on all aspects of contemporary life. Social inequality and environmental



injustice (e.g., food shortage, undrinkable water, climate-induced migration etc.) are the most visible consequences of emphasized transnational environmental harm. By Whites' opinion eco-global criminology can provide a sounding board for critical reflection on the changes caused by climate change, destruction and loss of biodiversity, the illegal waste disposal and caused pollution. More activity in the regulatory sphere, such as greater enforcement of international conventions, is necessary. The sustainable development that balances the production and consumption has to become a primary goal.

The sixth and seventh chapters cover two rarely discussed topics; perpetrators of environmental crime and victims (so called 'environmental victims'). When talking about the perpetrators of crimes against the environment systemic perspective on responsibility play a crucial role. If taking in the consideration the highest level of abstraction, the 'actors' responsible for environmental harm are: 1) humans; 2) technology; 3) population; 4) capitalism; and 5) corporations. But the question of responsibility and accountability of the perpetrators remains 'unanswered', therefore studying perpetrators is one of the main tasks of eco-global criminology, trying to answer *who, why, how* committed environmental crime. When talking about environmental victims, the question "Who is an environmental victim?" is still in the forefront of academic discussion. Whether we can discuss human, animal and plant species as victims of environmental crime or not, is still one of the main issues of environmental victimology. White observes critically that "environmental victimology is less concerned with non-human animals and specific biospheres than with the interests and well-being of humans in specific circumstances." Is this correct or not? Should we first help (and save) our own human species and then the other living beings? Or should we treat all biotic and abiotic parts of our planet Earth equally? White notes that deciding just who or what environmental victim is, is partly subjective (decided by the beholder) and partly objective (dependent on the collected evidence).

Criminal justice response and *Transnational activism* are last two chapters in the book. These topics as all previous discussed, belong in the study of eco-global criminology that is especially interested in the ways in which criminal justice institutions and other nongovernmental environment protection movements react and respond to transnational environmental crime and caused environmental harm. In the field of criminal justice environmental law enforcement still causes problems. Because of incomplete implementation of regulations penalties and remedies are still rare. What is more, measuring the value of caused environmental harm reveals another issue. The third, in Whites' opinion, very important fact is that environmental law enforcement is happening only at the national and local level. Environmental justice protection on the global level is missing. The work of NGOs is not enough to stop the organized crime networks and protect the environment. Moreover, transnational activist groups often strike against an issue of morality and walk on a thin line between the legal and illegal. Although the last major cases of corporations against environmental activists ended in favour of the last. Juries have decided that they committed minor damage (or harm) (e.g., destroyed the heating station chimney, damaged the machinery for the felling of





trees, saved animals from the laboratories etc.) to prevent a greater harm (or 'evil') (e.g., air pollution, climate change, illegal logging, animal torture etc.).

White's book on transnational environmental crime is a very important work due to the following reasons: 1) it presents the term transnational environmental crime; and 2) it emphasizes the transnational issues of modern society in the globalized era (e.g., biodiversity, climate change, waste); 3) it continues the discussion about the environmental victim and perpetrator of environmental crime; and 4) it studies the transnational environmental crime from criminological perspective (i.e., eco-global criminology), analyzing the importance of justice response to environmental issues.

At first glance, it may seem to the reader that he has to deal with technical and very demanding literature. In the introductory chapter, White explains the basic concepts, such as environmental harm, environmental crime, transnational crime, and conventional, green and eco-global criminology, which really requires a bit more focused attention when addressing the discussions and arguments. For someone encountering this terminology for the first time, the reading and understanding could be difficult. On the contrary, for the Criminologists and Ecologists, White's discussion opens a new perspective on environmental crime on the global level. In the other eight chapters presented topics are more in detail explained, presented with examples and real cases. The book is thereby much easier to read for everyone, interested in environmental issues, and all the other, discovering present environmental problems and responses. The book can also be useful for postgraduate students, presenting different overview of environmental crime.

When dealing with environment and environmental issues, we have to bear in mind that we talk about the 'living' system, assembled from different elements that are dependent on one another. The special characteristic of the contemporary society in a globalized world is the interconnectedness of people, various systems and networks. According to White, this connectedness is evident as a *butterfly effect*: "what happens in one part of the world, no matter how small or seemingly, will have an impact in other parts of the world". Living according to the theory of sustainable development, trying to catch the balance between the production and the consumption will reduce and mitigate the influence to the entire system in which we live.

Katja Eman

