



Guest Editorial

Green Criminological Dialogues: Voices from Africa

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Introduction

This is the third special issue of the IJCJSJ seeking to engage in global ‘Green Criminological Dialogues’, succeeding ‘Voices from the Americas and Europe’ (Goyes, Sollund and South 2019) and ‘Voices from Asia’ (Goyes et al. 2022). The focus for this collection is Africa, a continent of enormous diversity—in Indigenous peoples and local communities (hereafter, IPLCs), environments, non-human species, and resources—that has fuelled the dynamics of exploitation, conflict, crimes, and harm for centuries.

In this issue, as in its predecessors, we aim to continue the project of criminological knowledge democratisation. The issue responds to calls for international criminology to reflect upon and address cultural bias (Carrington et al. 2019; Goyes 2019; Goyes and South 2017; van Swaaningen 2021). This is achieved by increasing the visibility of authors who, due to their cultural, linguistic, or national belonging, face barriers to publishing their work in international journals. Second, we once again embrace the idea that it is through engagement with the variety of cultures and ways of living around the world that we understand different ways of looking at the world, different ‘ways of seeing’ (Beckerman and Lizarralde 2013; Berger 1973; Haraway 1988; Smith 1987), and different ‘ways of living’ (Morizot 2022). Beyond broadening our understanding and horizons, however, the additional aims of opening dialogues are to place cognitive justice, social justice, and eco-justice alongside each other. Invited contributions set out the arguments and visions of those who may be following non-Western-centric grammars and scripts. To achieve cognitive justice means acknowledging that valid knowledge can be produced anywhere and can represent different pathways to explanation and understanding. This includes acknowledgment of non-Western philosophies, methodologies, and Indigenous knowledge systems. The contributions to this special issue, with emphasis on Southern Africa, illustrate this point. Before we summarise these papers, we note some recent developments in commentary and research concerning the vast richness of Africa’s lands, ecosystems, and wildlife, and the tragedies of their plunder and exploitation.

Environmental Crimes and Harms in Africa

The recent literature on environmental crime in Africa seems surprisingly limited, but, less surprisingly, studies of harms and crises driven by colonialist extraction and pollution are far more numerous. Namusanya (2023), for instance, connects the environmental harms of tea states in Africa with the actions of colonisers who disrupted ecological balance for the sake of production. In addition, the terrible histories and legacies of colonialism related to the impositions of laws and punishment are well documented (Roberts 2013; Waller 2014). However, as noted by Hynd (2017: 12) in a comprehensive literature review essay on ‘Future Directions in African Crime and Criminal Justice History’, it remains the case that one ‘area of pressing future research would be the threats posed to the environment and sustainable development across the continent by criminal and illicit activities’.

There are some examples of such work in important and pioneering investigations and interventions by various non-government organisations (NGOs) and in the green criminology literature on power and resource extraction. For example, as Clapp (1994: 17) illustrated 30 years ago, there was scope for the introduction of trade bans and legal prohibitions, as well as coalitions between NGOs and states, to try to conserve wildlife and ecosystems. There is also—as we know with hindsight—a recurrence of questions about whether legal traders and criminal groups, as well as state institutions themselves, will actually comply with any such goals and measures. Clapp's main focus was on the waste trade. NGOs and scholars have been actively campaigning against waste dumping from the Global North to the Global South, particularly in Africa. This issue was raised by organisations such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International in 2012, as well as by Tabuchi, Corkery and Mureithi in 2020 and Okafor-Yarwood and Adewunmi in 2020. In the past decade, attention has been drawn to the interrelated crises of climate change, water depletion, food shortages, resource conflicts, and population displacement (Oxfam 2023; Ruhweza and Mukhier-Abuzein 2022).

Reports by NGOs (e.g., Collins and Fleischman 2013) and studies from writers within the field of green criminology (e.g., Brisman and South 2013) have discussed the complexity of oil economies and environmental and human rights abuses in parts of Africa (Nurse 2016; Onwuazombe 2017; South 2016; Usman 2021). Specific resource-related conflicts that have occurred across various states such as Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe have also been studied (Brisman et al. 2015; Enor, Ellah and Otor 2014; Mabey, Sundufu and Lashari 2020; Olanrewaju, Joshua and Olanrewaju 2020). These conflicts usually leave few benefits from resource wealth and more of an impact often referred to as a ‘resource curse’ (Montague 2002; Wenar 2008). As Bedford, McGillivray and Walters (2020: 481) show in a discussion of Australian mining companies operating in southern Africa, ‘the corporate tentacles of transnational mining corporations circumvent and subvert regulatory oversight to exploit people, land and natural resources—with devastating environmental and social impacts’.

Issues on the global agenda that particularly involve or affect Africa have been explored in an interdisciplinary body of literature that often brings together criminology, law, and environmental sciences. Climate change is an obvious example that highlights not only the urgency of the United Nations *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* but also, as Raftopoulos (2023) suggests, the opportunities and challenges entailed for African states as they meet REDD+ (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in so-called ‘developing countries’) goals alongside fulfilling human rights obligations (see also, Gizachew et al. 2017). Climate change will also impact global water resources—availability, scarcity, and related conflicts and crimes (Brisman et al. 2018). This will be vitally important across the continent but also with regard to ‘ocean conservation and sustainable marine and coastal resource management’ for Africa (Barendse et al. 2023).

The African Union recognises the crucial role of the oceans and their resources in the sustainable development of the African people. Yet, these contributions are threatened significantly by the impact of climate change and unsustainable exploitation of the continent's marine resources. Africa, despite emitting the least greenhouse gases, will undoubtedly face the most severe consequences of climate change (United Nations Environment Programme 2022). The impact of climate change is such that West African countries are likely to experience a reduction of up to 26% in fisheries production by 2050. Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Togo, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone are projected to suffer substantial reductions in landings, of up to and over 50% of their current production, according to the current special report on emission scenarios (Lam et al. 2012). This is a cause for alarm, given that illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing by foreign vessels poses a significant threat to the continent. In West Africa alone, IUU fishing accounts for 40–65% of legally reported catch (Agnew et al. 2009; Doumbouya et al. 2017). Perhaps the most substantial body of work relates to issues such as species sustainability, poaching, and wildlife trafficking. Beyond major overviews of relevance here (Duffy 2010; 2022; Ramutsindela, Matose and Mushonga 2022; Somerville 2016), there are studies that examine the complexity of the economic, social, gendered, and legal dynamics at play. Much of this complexity is based on claims of ownership and access. One early contribution to the discussion of such issues in green criminology (Beirne and South 2007) is an essay by Hauck (2007) that describes the complexity of abalone fishing and poaching

in a post-apartheid South Africa. Small-scale fishing rights were still in need of adjustment and the value of the mollusc to the Asian market was so high that it attracted the involvement of organised crime and drug supply networks into traditional local fishing communities. More recent scholarship (de Greef and Abader 2018; Lambrechts and Goga 2016) criticises the focus on Asian networks as the drivers of the escalation of abalone poaching. The studies trace its origins to the architecture and policies of the apartheid state and the lack of development in fishing communities along South Africa's west and east coasts. Limited state capacity and legitimacy continue to facilitate poaching in communities that feel unsupported and marginalised.

Divisions based on power, social strata, and race (Dlamini 2020; Kazimbasi 2023; Rose 2023) have shaped Africa's hunting, poaching, and conservation histories. Recent studies (Anneck and Masubelele 2016; Ramutsindela 2016) highlight the complex social repercussions emerging from unjust conservation practises and green militarisation in response to the illegal hunting of charismatic megafauna (rhinos and elephants). Forceful evictions of IPLCs from conservation lands, farms, and forests are a persistent issue legitimised by claims that IPLC evictions aid anti-poaching objectives and the adage that local people and wildlife cannot live sustainably side-by-side (Hübschle 2016; Witter and Satterfield 2019). Human-wildlife conflict, associated 'harmscapes' (Berg and Shearing 2018; Dore, Hübschle and Batley 2022), and heavy-handed anti-poaching initiatives in some parts of Africa have led to social unrest, a rise in illegal activities including retaliatory action (e.g., wildlife poisoning), forms of contested illegality when it comes to natural resource use that is socially and culturally legitimate but deemed illegal in the rulebooks (Hübschle 2017; 2022), and unhappiness with conservation authorities. There is also a growing body of scholarship on the elite's monopolisation of management, ownership, and benefits derived from protected areas while denying IPLCs' rightful access and participation in conservation-related decisions and benefits (Hübschle 2017; Travers et al. 2019). The systemic exclusion of IPLCs from meaningful engagement in the management and benefits of protected areas and related supply chains not only undermines the rights of communities but also jeopardises the sustainability of conservation efforts. Scholars have also been focusing on gendered dimensions of wildlife trafficking (Masse, Givá and Lunstrum 2021, 2022; Agu and Gore 2020) and the role of corruption in facilitating nature crimes. In critiquing and responding to the systemic and pervasive exclusion of IPLCs from wildlife economies that cultivate an 'ethos of care' (Harrington and Shearing 2017), Hübschle and Shearing (2018, 2024) have developed a set of design principles to enable, and reward, the inclusion of IPLCs' knowledges and capacities in African conservation.

Contemporary green crimes in Africa do not exist in a void but are the product of, or are at least contextualised in, a centuries-long trajectory of colonialisation, plundering, and racism. Understanding the geopolitical position of Africa, since colonisation and up to today, is fundamental to interpret the existing literature and the contributions in this special issue.

Colonisation, Neo-colonialism, and Environmental Harm in Africa

All knowledge about environmental harm in Africa, including the articles comprising the special issue, *Green Criminological Dialogues: Voices from Africa*, needs to be historically and materially contextualised. This must start from the colonisation that set the continent's current geopolitical positioning until today's massive extraction of raw materials. As Thiong'o (2021: 24) explains, while mass media portrays conflicts, violence, and war in Africa as an outcome of fights between 'tribes' or religious groups, the real roots of the conflict reside in Western 'imperialism'.

It is easy to forget or overlook the links between environmental harm, victimisation, and colonialism. Violent local uprisings—by people who drown in poverty and sickness derived from extractivism—seem an endogenous problem of 'exotic' populations. What are the continuities that allow us to argue that most environmental harms in the continent derive from coloniality, neo-colonialism, and imperialism? The key resides in remembering that Western nations have enjoyed—since the colonial era and up to today—the benefits of resource extraction from Africa. The former colonial powers are now joined by a new set of plunderers including China, Russia, Australia, Canada, and multi-national corporations that are not only stateless but also pay little to no tax or profit share in Africa or abroad. Illicit financial flows, transfer pricing, and tax evasion are some of the ills that have been documented as stymying African wealth retention and economic growth (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa 2015; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development 2020).

Africa has been the geographical point at which Western colonisation and colonialism have been implemented and impacted most harshly. The first major colonial encounter that started in the Americas (Goyes 2023; Goyes, Sollund and South 2019) rippled to Africa in the mid-17th century. A full-fledged colonial campaign then started which was more pronounced than anywhere else in the world (Arowolo 2022). The Dutch initiated the colonisation in Cape Town in 1652 (Zaffaroni 2022) and were joined soon after by other European nations. The popularity of colonial campaigns among Europeans led to the 'Scramble for Africa', in which European powers arbitrarily divided the continent. As Iliffe (2007: 193) explains, 'during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, European Powers swiftly and painlessly partitioned the map of Africa among themselves'. The colonisers used firepower, transportation technologies, and literacy. The European conquest of Africa, explains Iliffe (2007:

193), produced economies based on the idea that ‘each colony became a specialised producer for the world market’ with a structure that ‘often survived throughout the twentieth century’. Therefore, Arowolo (2022: 1) states, the colonial invasion ‘clearly defined and shaped the role of Africa in global economic relations and world politics till today’ (Arowolo 2022: 1).

The Contributions

Busisiwe Kamolane-Kgadima and Thandeka Kathi write about mining and the Necropolitics of extraction for colonial wellbeing. In the article, ‘The Mpumalanga Highveld air pollution crisis: A South African Reparation Framework for environmental state-corporate harm’, the authors investigate the deep colonial dynamics pushing air pollution in South Africa’s Mpumalanga Highveld. Air pollution in South Africa, explain the authors, has its roots in colonialism, apartheid, and capitalism. Apartheid, formalised in 1948, solidly marked the tracks of social stratification in the country. White people appropriated the fertile agricultural and recreational lands and forced the black population to peripheral regions in rural hinterlands. One of those ‘inadequate’ territories was the Mpumalanga Highveld, where white entrepreneurs established coal mines and chemical industries seeking to extract as much wealth as possible.

The drivers of South African environmental apartheid, as materialised in the Mpumalanga Highveld among other places, exist also beyond the country’s borders. In an all-too-familiar dynamic that characterises the relationship between *extractors*—Europe and North America and, more recently, Australia—and *mines*—Africa, Latin America, and some Asian countries—coal extraction defaces locations in the South while it nourishes the conspicuous consumption of the North. The state is located between those who benefit from coal extraction and those who pay the costs. In the Western theory of the state, as posited by Hobbes (1651), the state should buffer the drive of corporations and protect its inhabitants (human and non-human) but, regrettably, Western theorisation about the nation-state crumbles in the Global South (Morrison 2006). In global relations where corporations have more power than some states, the latter work at the service of the former, deregulating injurious actions, overregulating social protest, and failing to implement the existent regulations (Ruggiero and South 2013).

Kamolane-Kgadima and Kathi highlight that repairing environmental harms requires not only undoing environmentally deleterious actions but also demounting the structures of racism, marginalisation, and oppression. Repair measures must be informed by an acknowledgement that extractivism has been built on racism and furthers racism, and that the state and corporations have both played a central role in it. But, when all the means to claim justice have been established by the colonisers, how can the black population resist the colonial forces? If colonisation imposed Western logics, decolonisation must rediscover the logics of the colonised. Kamolane-Kgadima and Kathi therefore suggest that *Ubuntu*—the African philosophy that highlights interconnectedness, mutual care, and respect—can inspire repairing policies that undo racism and exploitation.

Kamolane-Kgadima and Kathi, with this article, remind green criminologists of the highly racialised nature of environmental harm. ‘Mining in South Africa’, write the authors, ‘is intrinsically linked to the oppression of black people’.

This article contains three insights for green criminology.

- 1) Extractivism in Africa is a mixture of Achile Mbembe and Meintjes’ (2003: 11) *necropolitics* and Lessenich’s (2019) *externalisation*. Mbembe defines *necropolitics* as ‘the use of social and political power to dictate how some people ‘may live and how some must die’, while a third group is conferred ‘the status of living dead’ (40). *Externalisation* is described by Lessenich as ‘exploiting the resources of others, passing on costs to them, appropriating the profits, and promoting self-interest while obstructing or even preventing the progress of others’ (2019: 12). Power—along the lines of race, class, and nationality—dictates that racialised bodies must die, or live as living dead, for the comfort of white oppressors.
- 2) Racism and economic deprivation go hand-in-hand. Decolonial theorists (e.g., Mignolo and Walsh 2018) demonstrate that colonisation created, simultaneously, racism and poverty through plundering. While formal apartheid no longer stands, environmental injustice and economic inequity keep the segregational policies alive.
- 3) Scholars have primarily associated the term ‘environmental racism’ with the situation in the United States of America. However, African scholars have, in recent times, adopted this concept to address the issue of indiscriminate dumping of toxic waste, including e-waste, on the continent by Western countries (e.g., Okafor-Yarwood and Adewunmi 2020). Kamolane-Kgadima and Kathi also introduce the term ‘environmental apartheid’, that combines ‘environmental racism’ and ‘environmental injustice’, highlighting that inequalities and injustices interact and intertwine in victimising human communities and ecosystems. Environmental justice is a crucial element in ending racism and colonialism.

Catherine Dzerefos writes about mopane worms as a source of nutrition and income. Through this description, Dzerefos draws attention to the weak protections that environmental legislation offers to local inhabitants in the face of foreign ‘development’ projects. The continuity of harms brought about by ‘development’ projects in Africa since early colonisation and up to today are also noted. In this article on ‘The biodiversity, food security, and poverty nexus in the Musina-Makhado Special Economic Zone of South Africa’, Dzerefos studies the Vhembe district and its mopane worms. Mopane worms depend on the sustainability of trees to thrive and provide an ecologically healthy source of nutrition and income for the local population, with their commercialisation mainly undertaken by women. In a culture with patriarchal structures, this is a triple win: for the environment, the economy, and the women. But the Musina-Makhado Special Economic Zone ‘development’ project advanced by Chinese investors on the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve threatens the survival of mopane trees and worms, and the humans depending on them. The Economic Zone will host industrial and manufacturing facilities.

The South African Political Constitution (1996) establishes the right to a healthy environment. Further laws establish the Environmental Impact Assessment processes to ensure that development projects do not breach this fundamental right. Part of impact assessments is public participation, intending to secure the right of local communities to have a say in the assessment and, ultimately, in decision-making about the development project. However, sanctioning the Special Economic Zone has ignored the voices, needs, and interests of locals who have submitted evidence about the importance of mopane worms but have been ignored. The decision-makers have preferred to hear ‘experts’ and disregard the importance of the mopane worm.

‘Development’ projects, concludes Dzerefos, promise benefits to locals but serve only those who extract mineral and natural resources and their local facilitators. Today’s development projects were the mining initiatives of the past, with the same logics: colonisers arrive promising benefits, local knowledge is disregarded, colonial knowledge is imposed, colonisers take the profits, and the locals end up even more impoverished. As Kamolane and Kathi (in this special issue) also describe, colonisers—old and new—enrich themselves by taking the natural resources of the continent with them. Meanwhile, locals are left inhabiting polluted ecosystems, lacking access to health services, and losing their sources of income.

Dzerefos’s article reminds us of the triad of modernity/capitalism/racism described by Mignolo and Walsh (2018). Modernity only counts Western knowledge as valid, capitalism seeks to increase profit, and racism allows exploitation of racialised populations. Modernity/capitalism/racism enabled mining projects upon colonisation and permits development projects today.

Dzerefos’s article offers four insights for green criminology:

- 1) Food security sovereignty is threatened not only by biopiracy (Goyes and South 2016; Goyes 2018; South 2007) but also by myriad other dynamics, such as development projects, in which traditional ways of nourishment perish.
- 2) Once food—the most basic of human needs—is endangered, communities can be monopolised (Goyes 2020) by external providers. Food insecurity is therefore a common byproduct of most types of environmental harm and enables the deepening of the colonisation of society.
- 3) ‘Expert’ languages—those that monopolise the narrative and logic of decision-making (Christie 2009)—usually enable environmental harm (see also, Goyes 2023). Environmental impact assessments conducted only by ‘experts’ deepen the knowledge abysses between segments of the population by treating community knowledge as ‘no- knowledge’. The erasure of local knowledges and Indigenous knowledge systems has been a colonisation strategy from the 15th century to today (Grosfoguel 2013), enabling the disenfranchisement of those already marginalised, and the plundering of resources.
- 4) A neo-colonial power has entered the scene but has received relatively little attention from green criminologists (see Mao and Zhao 2023; Wong 2021). China drives the Musina-Makhado Special Economic Zone described by Dzerefos and is strongly embracing the logics and practices of Western colonial powers.

Lindi Hendrix and Tlou Masehela write about bees and how the capitalist system pushes beekeepers to engage in criminalised acts that endanger insects, ecosystems, and humans. In the article, ‘A synopsis of crimes in the South African beekeeping industry: Contextualising the industry harms, malpractices, and risks’, Hendrix and Masehela discuss three types of crimes in the beekeeping industry: adulteration, theft, and vandalism.

In South Africa, the authors explain, the main actors in the honey industry are beekeepers, bottlers, farmers (who own the lands where the hives are), and pollination brokers (who arrange contracts between beekeepers and farmers). Beekeepers rent small portions of marginal lands for their hives and depend on landowners for their activity. Actors in the South African honey industry suffer from a competitive global market. China's exports of artificial honey are eight times higher now than in 2007 and it also exports products with added substances as natural honey (García 2018). China's influence pushes prices down in the honey market and makes South African beekeepers uncompetitive, forcing them to become more productive and efficient, even if that means cutting corners.

Hendrix and Masehela analyse three honey crimes. *Adulteration* value-enhances honey through cost-cutting measures to make it more attractive to the consumers but introduces a health threat to consumers even if it allows beekeepers and bottlers to remain competitive. *Sabotage and theft* see hives destroyed to gain an advantage over competitors or stolen to be used for pollination by others. This is a way of accommodating the need to survive in a system with low remuneration, high competition, and scarcity of means. The victimisation of beekeepers at the hands of other honey producers has ripple effects for humans, bees, and ecosystems. Humans consume adulterated products, bee populations are reduced, and entire ecosystems suffer from the lack of pollination necessary to grow foods on which living beings (including humans) depend.

Six decades ago, Rachel Carson warned in the classic *Silent Spring* (1962) about the ecological crises that would follow from a world without bees. Bees pollinate and spread seeds—two of the fundamental ecological processes that sustain diversity and contribute to food security through honey and the array of crops that depend on pollination. The honeybee crimes that Hendrix and Masehela describe hurt nature through the loss of pollination, hurt bees through their killing, and hurt human health through adulterated processes. Appallingly, considering the centrality of Carson's book for environmentalist movements, bees have been under-researched in green criminology, but this article offers a remedy.

Hendrix and Masehela's article offers three lessons for green criminology:

- 1) Bees are not only threatened by pesticides, agrochemicals, and the transformation of forests into pastures. The capitalist system also—indirectly through market pressure—leads to acts of survival from honey producers in economically impoverished countries that actually result in diminishing the bee population.
- 2) Green criminology, reflecting the same speciesism it criticises, has been slow to research crimes around insects. The field has been filled with studies about harms to humans, ecosystems, and non-human animals other than insects. Slowly, green criminologists have expanded scholarship to include 'blue' matters. But the importance of insects—which cannot be overstated—has received little attention in the field.
- 3) Small components of the planet, like bees or seeds (see Goyes 2018; South 2007), have a significance that has been lost to green criminologists. Paradoxically, not only speciesism but also a concern with 'the big'—forests and oceans or megafauna and flora—has informed the discipline. In South Africa—a country plagued by injustice and defaced by acts of colonialism, exploitation, and plundering—both Hendrix's and Masehela and Dzerefos's articles remind green criminologists that harms of 'small' components of the planet can have huge repercussions for ecological and environmental justice.

Zainab Mai-Bornu writes about African women's voices and what they can teach to green criminologists worldwide. In the article, 'Green criminology in the Niger Delta of Nigeria: Why African women's voices matter', Mai-Bornu listens to 'ordinary women'—those who inhabit the countryside, crop the lands to survive, and are affected by oil drilling and gas extraction—to gain a deeper understanding of the harms of the extractive industries in Africa. All Niger Delta inhabitants are victimised by extractivism, but women are the most vulnerable of them all, argues Mai-Bornu. Women in the Nigerian Niger Delta live in a patriarchal system, suffer the consequences of racism and racialisation, and inhabit one of the most exploited countries in the world. The triple disadvantages of gender, race, and nationality combine to make women the group that suffer the harshest consequences of oil and gas exploitation. But deep victimisation gives them deep knowledge about the dynamics of environmental harm. Failing to account for the experiences of racialised women amounts to an 'epistemicide', Mai-Bornu argues, because it entails missing out on important—and uniquely produced—lived experience.

Nigeria gained its independence in 1960, but its borders and political system followed the caprices of European states and were designed to serve Western extractive interests, explains Mai-Bornu. The Nigerian Niger Delta Region, for instance, has been the scene of large-scale oil extraction since 1958 at the hands of the British oil and gas company, Shell. Oil extraction provides

90% of Nigeria's foreign revenue, but the revenue stays in the hands of corrupt political elites while most profit goes to the corporation. Meanwhile, oil drilling pollutes rivers, farmlands, and the air.

How is it to be a woman and live in the middle of the environmental pollution and destruction that results from oil and gas exploration and extraction? Mai-Bornu interviewed 55 women in the locations experiencing the worst consequences of extractivism. She found that extractive projects, when they arrived, provided people with hopes of better lives, but resource exploitation actually provided pollution and social turmoil. As their surroundings were made toxic, the inhabitants' health deteriorated, and women—despite living amidst this harsh reality, struggling to feed their children, and dealing with disease—were sidelined from every aspect related to the extraction of oil and gas in their territories. Men decided how to react to toxic oil spills, men received information, and men were also the ones to receive monetary compensations.

Engaging with different 'ways of seeing' does not require travelling far; every community is full of diversity and women's voices provide 'ways of seeing' that are different from men's. As Mai-Bornu's article proves, women's voices allow new and deeper ways of understanding environmental harm and victimisation.

This article leaves us with three lessons for green criminology:

- 1) Everything is gendered. It is difficult to inform every bit of green criminological research with gender considerations. However, not doing so means that green criminologists are blind to the depth, complexity, and multiple dimensions of green harms. New and important work within green criminology raises awareness about the gendered dimensions of environmental harm (Milne et al. 2023). Mai-Bornu's article reminds us about the importance of intersectional gender analyses, in which people are more vulnerable due to gender, race, social strata, and ethnicity. Gender-blind theorisation in green criminology generates blind analyses.
- 2) The ethics of 'empowering' and 'giving a voice' to 'marginalised' and 'vulnerable' communities remains a topic that green criminologists should further discuss. 'Empowering' means that the only power worth having is the one Western academia concedes—a highly colonial way of thinking. How can we enlarge the voices of those not present in academic work without furthering the coloniality of knowing?
- 3) The widespread description of the situation of countries rich in biodiversity but economically poor receives the name of 'the resource curse' (Auty 1993). Countries over-rely on resource exports and, when a trade boom ends, they face an economic crisis. Green criminologists must rethink this thesis. The 'resource curse' implicitly blames Southern countries for their poverty. A decolonial, African interpretation rather demonstrates that Southern countries rich in biodiversity have been *impoverished* by the century-long plundering by Western and 'new' colonisers, and left with no other option but to sell their natural richness.

We also include an article inspired by African activist voices and a book review.

'Voices from the frontlines in the Okavango River Basin' is an article on the oil and gas explorations and drilling by a Canadian company in north-eastern Namibia and western Botswana near the Okavango Delta. Reconnaissance Africa commenced their exploratory drilling operations in the Kavango regions of Namibia during the COVID-19 pandemic in December 2020. This was done without the required institutional permissions or free prior and informed consent by directly affected communities. Grounded in Southern green criminology, authors **Annette Hübschle, Kakuna Kerina, Emmanuel Mogende and Kekgaoditse Suping** highlight the power differentials between Northern corporations and Southern territories, underscoring the exploitation and marginalisation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. As evidenced elsewhere in the world, Western/Global North NGOs and their satellite outlets in the Global South often run or dominate environmental campaigns due to power, access, and financial differentials. The article focuses on the increasing visibility of local and Indigenous environmental defenders, their daily lived experiences, and the need to co-design interventions and support broad-based community upliftment. It advocates for genuine collaboration and prioritising local perspectives in environmental activism, calling for a shift in power dynamics to ensure equitable and sustainable outcomes.

The book review essay takes on the challenge of summarising a huge contribution to the literature on climate change. *African Handbook of Climate Change Adaptation* (Filho et al. 2021) is a volume that is impressive in scope (covering the continent and a wide range of climate challenges) and scholarship (involving writers from various countries and disciplines), as well as length and accessibility—it is over 2,800 pages and free to download. **Jane Hindley** engages with chapters, themes, and key messages from the book that resonate well with the articles in this special issue.

Conclusion

Organising this special issue was no easy task. Green criminology is relatively unknown in Africa and African intellectuals disseminate their knowledge through myriad forms (articles being one of the least important). Additionally, producing a special issue in English continues the ‘neo-colonial situation in which Western bourgeoisie co-opts African talents and geniuses’ (Thiong’o 2021: 20). The contributions in this special issue contain, however, a unique richness that could have only come from a unique setting. All the texts are diverse in topic and approach—a departure from the standard Western green criminological research on Africa that focuses on poaching. ‘Extracting’ these intellectual gems does not leave a field of despoliation, as most extractivism in Africa does. Extracting intellectual richness through the ethical way of global dialogues not only increases the epistemological richness of Africa but also enriches us all, across borders.

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