

# McClanahanCTA\_4 REVIEW

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## SPEAKERS

Bill McClanahan, Jenn Tostlebe, Jose Sanchez



Jose Sanchez 00:14

Hi, everyone! My name is Jose Sanchez.



Jenn Tostlebe 00:17

And I'm Jenn Tostlebe.



Jose Sanchez 00:18

And we're the host of The Criminology Academy, where we are criminally academic. In today's episode we're speaking with Professor Bill McClanahan about green criminology, and the intersection between green and visual criminology.



Jenn Tostlebe 00:32

Bill McClanahan is Associate Professor of Justice Studies in the College of Justice and Safety at Eastern Kentucky University, where he teaches courses on rural crime, criminological theory, environmental harm and crime, and music and justice. He earned a PhD from the Department of Sociology at the University of Essex in the United Kingdom and a MS in criminology and criminal justice from Eastern Kentucky University. His research and writing at the intersection(s) of ecology, culture, police, and justice has

appeared in academic journals and popular outlets including Theoretical Criminology, The British Journal of Criminology, Commune Magazine, Deviant Behavior, and Crime, Media, Culture. He is coauthor, with Avi Brisman, Nigel South, and Reece Walters, of Water, Crime, and Security in the Twenty-First Century: Too Dirty, Too Little, Too Much and author of the monograph Visual Criminology. Thank you so much for joining us, Bill.



Bill McClanahan 01:30

Thank you guys for having me.



Jose Sanchez 01:32

So as usual, we'll start with a brief overview of what today's episode will entail. So we're going to start out with some general questions about green criminology. Then we're going to ask some more general questions about visual criminology. And then finally, we're gonna get into one of the chapters that Bill sent our way from his monograph, Visual Criminology. And with that being said, Jenn, go ahead and take it away.



Jenn Tostlebe 01:59

Alright. Thanks, Jose. So Bill, our first question for you is super broad. What is green criminology?



Bill McClanahan 02:07

Well, that's kind of an expected first question. It's probably most easily summarized as the criminological study of harms and crimes that affect the natural environment. So you know, you can think of big picture things like climate change from a green criminological perspective, or you could think of small kind of focused issues like a specific case of environmental harm or crime. So it it's broadly the criminological sociological study of environmental harm and crime, whether that's on large scale, small scale, whether that's the study of a response to the harm or crime, whatever it may be.



Jenn Tostlebe 02:50

Okay, so you briefly started to touch on this, can you just give us a few more examples of what types of environmental issues are included under this green criminology umbrella?



Bill McClanahan 03:01

Sure, I mean, one way to think of it that some green criminologists will kind of frame things using is the distinction between harms to water, harms to air, harms to land, and harms to people that are related to environmental harm. Of course, that's kind of a very, very, very elevated view, right? So in that you could zoom into any number of things. So there are people that have done work on the trafficking of endangered animal species. There are people that have done work in green criminology on a consumption of animals and animal products from an animal rights perspective or a species justice perspective. There are people that have done work on climate change, as it relates to harms to the environment. And then there are people that have done work on climate change as it relates to conventional crime and harms to human populations. Really, there's like an always expanding list of things that have fallen under the purview of green criminology because as it develops, you know, I'm constantly meeting students and other faculty members and researchers that are doing new things. So a quick example is within and related to green criminology, we've started to recently see the emergence of what's tentatively been called astro-green criminology, which is considering environmental harms off of Earth.



Jenn Tostlebe 04:42

Wow. Interesting.



Bill McClanahan 04:44

Yes. So when I say that it's a constantly growing list, I really mean it, right? Like we're no longer, we're no longer bound to the planet. So if you can come up with it, it's probably been touched on by green criminology. I myself, as you said in the introduction, my work focuses generally on police. And I've written a lot about the relationship between police and ecology. There's lots of work connecting prisons and environments. So yeah, it's it's a very, very, very broad field.



Jenn Tostlebe 05:15

Yeah, it's really interesting. And I like to think of myself as kind of an environmentalist, you know, I'm big into the, you know, not just single use stuff. So expanding that out plants and everything in the house. And so actually, Jose and I recently kind of stumbled upon green criminology while we were looking for kind of cool things to bring on as topics for the podcast. And so is green criminology, like new to the field, the discipline of criminology, or has it been around for a while?



Bill McClanahan 05:48

Well, kind of both, honestly. It has certainly seen a recent and I would say ongoing kind of explosion that I would say, it's probably happened over the last maybe, oh, maybe 10 years, or something like that. But it was actually proposed as a field first in the 1990s. The first kind of proposals for what would become green criminology came from Mike Lynch from Florida, who's most associated with kind of a quantitative critical criminology. And in 1990, Mike Lynch wrote a short piece in the Critical Criminologist newsletter, like just a couple of 1000 words, kind of proposing the critical criminological study of the environment. And then in 1998, Nigel South published a paper kind of, again, proposing that and naming it green criminology. And in the eight years between the two, of course, you know, Lynch had continued to work and the foundation had continued to build so so by the late 90s, it was named, and it was green criminology. But the real the real kind of explosion that I would signal to in the field, more or less over the last 10 years, I would say, and I think I mean, this is just off the cuff, and my guess is it just corresponds to the kind of growing social understanding of climate change and protecting it [the environment].



Jenn Tostlebe 07:26

Right, that was gonna be my guess because I feel like so many more people have become interested in the topic.



Bill McClanahan 07:32

Well, like you said. You know, you said that you consider yourself an environmentalist. And nowadays, I feel like you'd be pretty hard pressed to find people who didn't, right?



Jenn Tostlebe 07:40

Right. Yeah.



Bill McClanahan 07:42

Like everybody, everybody in their own way exhibits some degree of care and concern for for the natural environment.



Jenn Tostlebe 07:50

Totally. Hopefully, that is the case. Yeah.

**B** Bill McClanahan 07:54  
We're not perfect.

**J** Jose Sanchez 07:56  
Yes. So you mentioned that a couple of times, especially the work with Lynch, that he wrote pieces, you know, like the Critical Criminologist. And so critical criminology, we typically think of it as sort of this area that like really centralizes biases and oppression based on gender, race and ethnicity, class. How does green criminology sort of fit into the category of critical criminology?

**B** Bill McClanahan 08:27  
That's a good question. I think there's a few ways that you can kind of track green criminology out of critical criminology. One just has to do with the people involved, right. So those first two pieces were from Nigel South and Mike Lynch. Mike Lynch was already, you know, well established or on his way to being at that point, well established as kind of a leading kind of foundation or critical criminologist in the US. And Nigel South had already been that in the UK through work on other topics. Mostly in Nigel South's case, he had been associated with research on critical research on drugs, and cultural criminology. So both of those two first examples of green criminology came from people in critical criminology.

**B** Bill McClanahan 09:18  
So that's one very clear connection, right. But the more meaningful connection, I think, is that it turns out that you don't really have to be, you don't have to be a communist to look around at the ecological conditions of the world and realize that political economy and specifically capitalism is a very, very, very--this is understating it--a central part of the problem. Right, like, and it's I think that's also why you tend to find relatively and there could be a useful discussion about whether or not this is a good thing necessarily, but you find relative ideological uniformity, I would say across green criminology because of those factors. But interestingly, I think that, you know, in my experience, you tend to find that same ideological dimension in people that work in field ecology, that work in wildlife biology that work in climate science, right? You tend to, you won't find a lot of even like, hard earth science based laboratory climate scientists, who if you sit them down, they're all going to say, look, capitalism's the issue here. Right? So as critical criminologists, it's very easy. We have this foundation of critical criminology, so we can draw on the kind of critiques of capitalism in particular.



Bill McClanahan 10:52

But then also, you know, you started the question by mentioning less material things like race, and gender, and sexuality. Those all have very, very, very clear environmental dimensions at this point, right. So we all know, whether we know it through the formal study of it, or just through everyday observation, we all know that racial minorities, for example, have a much more negative daily experience of the natural environment. Right? We know that we know that it's poor people in Appalachia, and, you know, poor white people in Appalachia and poor black people in South Chicago and South Los Angeles and Houston, who deal with the brunt of environmental harms. That holds true around the world. You look at Africa and Asia and the Indian subcontinent, and you consistently find that it's women, and kind of marginalized ethnic populations. And even increasingly, we're seeing through research that, you know, marginal people, people with marginalized sexual identities are experiencing the environment in unique ways.



Bill McClanahan 12:04

So it seems to be to me, I think that, that green criminology connects with and grew out of criminal critical criminology because of some of the same people, but maybe more importantly, the insights of critical criminology work as an explanatory framework for the kind of harms that green criminology looks at. And quickly, that's another connection, I would say is that both green and critical criminology, one of the kind of foundational points is that both both orientations are interested in harm. Right, it doesn't always need to crime. In fact, I've very rarely research crime. I'm much, much, much more interested in kind of thinking through harm as a metric as opposed to crime. And I think that's, that's very consistent in green and critical criminology.



Jenn Tostlebe 13:00

Yeah.



Jose Sanchez 13:01

That's interesting. So when you say "harm," can you give us a few examples of what would fit under that category?



Bill McClanahan 13:10

Sure, totally. It's remarkably easy, especially from a green criminological perspective. Because it's, it's everything, right? Like, if we just think about, if we just think about, like

climate change, as kind of the issue of the day, we know that it's exacerbated immensely and caused and driven by gasoline engines, right. I know that I know that intellectually. I know that scientifically, I know that experientially, I know that. There's no conflict with my ideology, and that fact, but there is an obvious conflict with the fact that I drive a pickup truck that gets 12 miles to the gallon. But you know, when we're done with this interview, I will certainly drive somewhere. I don't need to, there are more efficient options available to me, right? Like, we all engage in these harmful activities. But no one's going to come arrest me. You know, I'm not I'm not going to be concerned that I'm going to get pulled over for wasting gas. Right? Because it's not illegal. But the classic way to think of it is lawful, but awful, right? Like, and we see it all the time with things that aren't I teach a lot of undergraduate theory courses. And it's it's a point that I always make, that we see this stuff all the time. And we react to it all the time by saying, right, like, you see people do stuff all the time, and you say like, oh man, that should be illegal. Those are the harms that kind of intrigued me as a green criminologists I would say.

J

Jose Sanchez 14:49

Okay, so you mentioned theory, which kind of segues nicely into our next question. So, you know, like Jenn and I, we have sort of been taught and I think a lot of criminologists get taught, you know, you start with like the big three, social learning, self control, general strain, then you get into the popular but not predominant perspectives like labeling, maybe some biopsychosocial, how can we understand environmental crimes and harms? Like, do they fit in with these, like sort of mainstream theoretical perspectives? Or do we need to come up with a new way of thinking about it?

B

Bill McClanahan 15:33

Well, again, and I think this once again, illustrates one of the strengths of green criminology as a sub-discipline. We, meaning green criminology, we've done very well at adapting existing theory to suit our purposes. And we've done well at developing theory. And despite the kind of basic ideological kind of sameness across the field, there are, of course, lots of distinctions. And so we've seen a lot of very, very, very productive work in green criminology specifically using things like situational crime prevention. To the extent, in fact, that eventually that became such a popular perspective in green criminology. And it, it felt like there was a bit of a tension between that and the more critical perspective that eventually a lot of green criminologists who were interested in situational crime prevention, more or less developed a parallel but very related sub discipline of conservation criminology. Right. So things like that have been used a lot.

B

Bill McClanahan 16:47

And then we've seen things like some of the first and still most kind of foundational, an influential work in green criminology on climate change is from Bob Agnew, and is an application of his general strain theory to the problem of climate change. He wrote two papers doing that early on in the development of green criminology. And so I think that the question kind of reveals this interesting thing, which is, in this very critical, you know, occasionally radical, not at all mainstream, not at all, yeah, not at all mainstream orientation. When you peel back the layers a little bit, you don't have to go far before you find a name like Bob Agnew, right? Which I think, again, kind of illustrates the point that that I made earlier, which is like, it's not like a it's not a concerted effort, that there's that ideological sameness, it's just like I said, that there are a limited number of conclusions that one can reach when studying environmental harm broadly. And that's usually the conclusion that's been reached. That said, it's happened through many, many, many existing theoretical frameworks, including I think all of the ones that you mentioned, you mentioned, things like labeling theory, right. So since about 2013/2014, we've seen the emergence of green cultural criminology. And like, other forms of cultural criminology, that's, in a lot of ways, kind of a development in and of labeling theory perspectives. Yeah. So I think that, that there's really a lot of a lot of theoretical diversity. In fact, really the way to characterize it, and I'm borrowing this from Avi Brisbane, but I think he's correct is that green criminology is "theoretically promiscuous," right, like, and it really is like, we kind of tend to pick up what's in front of us and what looks appealing in the moment and we use it, and we use it the way it works for us. And if it's something else the next day, then it's something else the next day. And that's not to say that there hasn't also been development of distinct theory within green criminology, there's been plenty of that as well.



Jenn Tostlebe 19:09

Alright, so in one of your more recent guest, editor introductions on the topic of green criminology, I'm pretty sure it was for International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, you mentioned that perhaps the most commonly held assumption about the environmental dimension of crime is this temperature-crime hypothesis. Can you kind of talk a little bit about what this hypothesis is and what it speculates?

B

Bill McClanahan 19:38

Sure, sure. So again, this is this is one that for anybody that teaches or has taught, intro level kind of criminological theory or methods courses. This is something that lots of



people have gone to. And it's just the basic idea that everyone kind of has in their mind that as temperature increases, so does crime. We see it repeated all over the place. I mean, all over. It's like it's a little bit of criminological common sense, right? I can think of just off the top of my head, I can think of like, no less than half a dozen songs with lyrics that mention it, right? There's a 50 Cent song where he says, "Summertime, it's the killing season," right? Like that idea that like, Oh, it's summer, everybody. And famously, I apologize for not actually knowing the origins of the myth here. But you know, there's this kind of mythology of the assertion through statistical data, that as the consumption of ice cream increases, so does crime, right? It's always used in those introductory courses, as an example of like, this is why you need to understand the distinction between causal relationships and correlation, right. And so so that idea that high temperatures correlate to violence, in some causal way, it's really firmly lodged in our cultural imagination. I mean, we might know intellectually that "no," ice cream and crime are not related. But we still, again, this is another another example of how, you know, acculturated thinking can really overpower our intellectual and academic judgments. You know, I mean, I know I, obviously I know that there's not that that causal relationship. But still, there are plenty of times when I think to myself, it's getting hot out, like people are, right, like they're locked the doors. It doesn't make any sense. But it is it is a very persistently held belief. And interestingly, it's one of the easiest avenues to get people that are already thinking criminologically, to think about the natural environment, right. It's a great illustration of one of the most important things about green criminology and one of the important assertions, which is that our entanglement with the environment, it's all encompassing, right? It's not something we can step in and out of, it's not something that only kind of affects us. It is us, it is part of us, we are part of it. And so, you know, the simple hypothesis of high temperatures caused high crime is very simple. It's very, it's an attractive, simple explanation. It feels logical, it feels like common sense. But as we've, as we've started to learn from research, in fact, by Mike Lynch and some of his colleagues, it's in that special issue of the journal that you mentioned, there's not a lot of actual support for that, for that idea. That's important for a lot of reasons, right? One of one of the reasons it's important for green criminologists, is because we want people to be concerned about climate change. But we don't want them to only be concerned about climate change, because it might make crime rates go up. Right, but there's other there's other concern. Yeah, they're non human concerns at play that the crime rates don't catch.



Jenn Tostlebe 23:21

Yeah, absolutely. So on that note, and given that a lot of your work has to do with policing, is green crime, or green harm difficult to police?

B

Bill McClanahan 23:32

Yes. I mean, for one, if we just briefly go back to the distinction between crime and harm. Among my many kind of ecological interests, my biggest research interests when it comes to environmental stuff is mountaintop removal, coal mining. And it's a horribly ecologically destructive process, it has a massive environmental and human and economic cost. But it's not at all illegal. And so the policing of it, it's it's like, it's not even, it's not even a factor. That said, That's not at all the case for all examples of green criminology. To go back to the example earlier of work on the kind of transnational smuggling of endangered wildlife species. Right. Like, I have lots of colleagues in Europe that have done work on that topic, where their entire methodology is interviews with police and Border Patrol people who spend their entire lives successfully policing that environmental harm that environmental crime. So it runs the gamut. It is very difficult to police. Thankfully, as we know with all kinds of other examples from from criminological research, policing is rarely the best way to solve a problem anyway. So chances are the more effective ways, you know, we've seen and this is kind of a foundational bit of critical criminological insight that meshes well with green criminology as we've seen that just social shaming works really well. You know, in fact, to go back to that thing about, like, everybody kind of, we all think of ourselves as environmentalists. A good part of that is because the social consequences of doing anything else are bad, right? Like, it would be hard to have friends if you aggressively made yourself, someone who openly didn't care about the environment, right? So yeah, policing, policing plays a role, of course, but in a lot of kind of core issues at the heart of green criminology, it's just not that much of a factor because of that harm versus crime issue.

J

Jose Sanchez 25:52

Okay, so when Jen and I were sort of tossing the idea of doing an episode on green criminology, and, you know, we didn't want to go into it completely blind, so we dug into it a little bit. And one of the things we sort of noticed was that a lot of the people that study or engage in green criminology are either based in Europe or Australia, and not a lot of them here in the US. Is that accurate? And if it is, why do you think that is?

B

Bill McClanahan 26:23

That's a good question. I think that is accurate. I think it's the balance is kind of rapidly finding itself, I think, I think we're, we are beginning to reach a little bit more equilibrium there. Mostly. Because there, there have been a lot of kind of newly minted PhDs in the US that are people doing green research. And in a small discipline, you know, if you add four or five new new people to the to the pool, then suddenly it shifts the balance. To be honest with you, I don't exactly know the explanation for why, my guess is that, my guess

is that it's a reflection of the ways in which European criminology tends to, I think critical perspectives tend to be integrated kind of more fundamentally into European criminology than they are in US criminology. You know, it's totally possible to successfully go through a full graduate education in US criminology without ever really substantively encountering critical criminology. You can't do that as easily and in Europe, and the UK, and Australia as well. And then again, same as same as with my response earlier, a lot of it just kind of has to do with the personalities. Back to Nigel South, you had this kind of founding figure in the UK. So students have come to work with him. He is he's, you know, developed young scholars. In Australia, you have people like Rob White, who's, you know, probably probably one of the most prolific criminologists, alive, green or otherwise. And, you know, I mean, Rob White publishes two books a year on average or something. And so when there's that kind of output, and because there's been this kind of momentum, the fields grown, and I think it's just kind of grown geographically in those places, where those people are, so yeah. I mean, we've also seen a lot of growth in green criminology coming out of Florida because of Mike Lynch. So yeah, I really think that a lot of it just has to do with its coalesced around those people. But I do also think it's important to say that there is, the network in green criminology is very important. Everybody tends, we all kind of know each other. And I think everyone thinks of it generally as kind of a collaborative project. And so all of the people really involved in green criminology, I tend, I think, tend to think of their own work, as no matter how local, localized it gets, they're still talking on it to like a global audience and trying to sort these these problems out at a global scale.



Jenn Tostlebe 29:21

That's really cool. I think that's probably more unique.



Bill McClanahan 29:25

I think it probably is. Yeah.



Jenn Tostlebe 29:27

Yeah. Interesting. All right. So let's start to move then into visual criminology spend a couple of minutes on that, and then we'll combine these ideas together. So when I first thought of visual criminology, and it's funny, because I don't remember if it's in the monograph that we read, or something else that I was reading of yours, but you actually point out that a lot of people think of it as like criminology that's just visually presented. And that's honestly where my first thought went before reading your work on this, and so can you kind of describe what visual criminology is?

B

Bill McClanahan 30:02

Yes. And so everybody, all visual criminologists included, that is their first thought, right. I remember, my first exposure to visual criminology was I took a graduate course during my master's on it. And, you know, I don't think anyone, including the professor walking into it really knew what what we were going to be doing. And my first thought was the same thing. My first thought was like, okay, so instead of writing a paper, I'm going to assemble a collage, or like a photo essay, or, you know, I even I even thought of it in terms of like, Well, you know, I've been through lots of poster sessions at conferences, and I was thinking, this is this where it's going? And to some extent, it's hard to say that that is not visual criminology, right? I don't want to, anybody who does that and thinks to themselves, I'm doing visual criminology, I don't begrudge them that, that's fine.

B

Bill McClanahan 30:59

In terms of as a distinct orientation and kind of perspective and something that will maybe coalesce into like a sub discipline, what we really mean by visual criminology is criminology that's engaged with the visual, but by the visual, we don't just mean the image. Right. So it doesn't just mean the criminological analysis of pictures. But it means the criminological analysis of all of the processes of the visual. So if you think about, like, if you think about what happens just to use a very kind of rudimentary example, if you think about what happens when you stand there and take a picture of something, it's a lot more than just your finger pushing a button, right? Like, there are all of these historical and social and political and technical processes that have gotten you to the point where you have that device in your hand. And that's where visual criminology is interested. And to me that encompasses everything that happens from the moment that you encounter the image, you perceive the image, you react to the image, the whole world reacts to the image, in a lot of ways, it's very similar to kind of the criminological study of media. But, again, extending that basic interest much, much, much further, and in a much more conceptual direction, I would say. So my interest as a visual criminologist is in Yeah, in the sorts of, of social, historical, political, and technical processes that coalesce to make the image and the ways that the image then kind of conditions and configures the totality of our understanding of the world. So basically, to me, everything exists in the image. In the visual.

J

Jose Sanchez 33:12

It's an interesting way of thinking about things that we take for granted. Like your like your camera example, like, as soon as you start talking about I started thinking about all the pictures that I've taken, like, just this morning or yesterday with my phone. And you know, it's like, oh, let me whip up my phone real quick and take this picture. And as far as I...



Jenn Tostlebe 33:38

It's so simple!



Jose Sanchez 33:38

Yeah, like, as far as I ever thought about it was some dude that I don't even know at Google, like designed this block in my hand. Yeah, like, this thing was on the internet, I ordered it, and now it's in my hand.



Bill McClanahan 33:54

Yeah, it's really strange, right? If you think about just that one little technical, technological innovation, how, I mean, think about how for all four of us or all three of us. Our lives are completely conditioned and configured by that power. People, just one generation previously, that was not the case. Their lives were conditioned and configured by other powerful images. And like you said, You know, I mean, that issue of things that we take for granted. The image is really central to that, you know, we have, especially when we're talking about crime and justice, you know, every every thing that we know, and we assume we know about the life of crime and justice, it all comes from the image, like think about how many people, think about how many people will talk to you as though their everyday understanding of criminal justice is every bit as good as yours because they've watched cops. Right, like your fourth and fifth year PhD students in the field. Right? But I'm sure that you both have family members that are like, No, no, no, no. I know every bit as much as you because I've watched Training Day like six times, right?



Jenn Tostlebe 35:12

Or when you're sitting next to someone on like an airplane and they ask you what you're doing, or they see what you're doing, they automatically assume they know everything about what you do.



Bill McClanahan 35:21

Absolutely, absolutely, that's the you know, this has nothing to do with visual criminology, but I always say it was the most useful thing anyone told me in grad school was I had someone tell me that getting a PhD in criminology and criminal justice was a terrible idea because if you had a PhD in neurosurgery, your uncle was never going to like disagree

with you about the fundamentals of neurosurgery. But if you have a PhD in criminal justice, your uncle is going to aggressively disagree with you about the fundamentals of criminal justice.

J

Jose Sanchez 35:56

Oh, yeah, absolutely. Yeah. I remember this conversation I had with one of my cousins who found out that I was getting a PhD in sociology, but I explained to them that, you know, I focus in criminology and even more that my area of research is gangs. And of course, this cousin watched like all the episodes of Gang Land. Okay, like, we're about to go 12 rounds on who's right on what a gang member is, how we should deal with gang crime.

B

Bill McClanahan 36:27

Absolutely, absolutely. And that's and that I mean, that anecdote speaks powerfully to the power of the image, right, like an important thing about visual criminology is also that that relates to kind of the camera in your pocket and the 12 episodes or the full season of Gang Land thing, the ubiquity of images of crime and justice is just crazy, right? Like, think about think about the last 18 months and all of the kind of rebellion and upheaval that we've seen. And just think about how clearly the image and the the processes of the visual are implicated there. It's everything, right? Like, none of it, none of what's happened would have happened if it weren't for this intersection that is produced by and that then produces the image.



Jenn Tostlebe 37:20

Yeah. That's perfect for the next question, because you've basically already answered it, but I just want to dig into it a little bit more. So the focus, obviously, on this podcast is green criminology and visual criminology. But do you believe that visual criminology can extend to other aspects or other sub parts of criminology? And if so, how can visual criminology enrich like other people's criminological areas?

B

Bill McClanahan 37:50

Yeah, absolutely. In fact, I think that, I think that that green criminal or visual criminology rather, you know, can a visual perspective can enrich and, and enliven and pretty much any criminological inquiry that is looking to be enlivened, I guess. And, you know, I mean, I think I am a firm believer that proper visual criminology needs to be more than criminology that includes pictures. But at the same time, I think we all understand the

value of just including pictures, right? Just, I mean, I talk a lot in the book about the problems with kind of the illustrative image. But despite all of that, there's a lot of value. You know, I mean, even even just thinking about people that do purely quantitative work, right, which I don't do at all, like I can, I can barely do simple math, and I cannot and do not do quantitative work. But I've seen people do quantitative work, where they've engaged with the visual, whether that's like, Oh, you know, big, massive media analysis projects, where people are coding images, all the way down to just people putting some thought into infographics and how they present. You know, like, when we started out talking about, you know, does this mean just presenting criminological research visually, and it doesn't, but if we do that, great. So yeah, I think that any any area of criminological inquiry can get something from a visual perspective and in the, in the monograph, I deal with drugs, police, environment, and prisons as kind of distinct areas that can be approached visually. And I think that part of why I organized it that way was to attempt to illustrate that this is a very, very broadly applicable perspective.

**J** Jose Sanchez 40:01

Alright, so then speaking of the monograph, shall we move into it? So, the monograph is titled Visual Criminology. It was authored by our guests, Bill McClanahan, and it was recently accepted for publication and was published in the New Horizons in Criminology Series at Bristol University Press. And it's coming out July 16, 2021, if that's correct? So our time is actually pretty good because this episode is going to air 10 days after that date on July 25. So for everyone listening, pick up a copy. It's an interesting read, for sure. And within this monograph, and we will be primarily focusing on chapter four, which is titled "Environmental Harm and the Visual." And in that chapter, Dr. McClanahan argues for including visual and visually attuned thinking within the green criminological paradigm, and does so with some of the most pressing environmental issues of our time, including climate change and its harms, species loss, and declines in biodiversity, and droughts and water crises. They're all discussed in ways in which they have or can be investigated and understood visually. So in this monograph, Bill, you mentioned that in the late 2010s, a visual green cultural criminology was established. And given that this is the central topic of your chapter, what exactly is a visual green cultural criminology?

**B** Bill McClanahan 41:35

Yeah, so that's a good question. So I don't know how familiar you are with cultural criminology, but I'll just give you you know, just the very brief kind of glossing over there. So cultural criminology came out of and as a part of critical criminology largely in the 80s but really kind of hit its stride in the 90s kind of based on foundations from the 80s. The main figures associated with cultural criminology are in the UK in Europe, Jock Young and

Keith Hayward, and in the US, in the US, Jeff Ferrell and Mark Ham and [?], and so the cultural criminological perspective in critical criminology, looks at the ways and looks to culture for the ways that culture and crime interact, in a lot of ways is theoretically kind of an offspring of labeling theory. Cultural criminology is very interested in how definitions of crime are produced culturally, how they're communicated culturally, how resistance to those definitions, forms, culturally, tends to be also very influenced by work by Jack Katz on the seductions of crime. So kind of kind of founded on the idea that for, for certain types of criminality, cultural explanations are probably the best, right? Like, you know, you all both have an interest in gangs. So there's probably, it's probably not terribly difficult to understand the kind of assertion of likes, you know, sometimes people engage in crime, because maybe it seems fun in the moment, right? Like, there are these culturally performative aspects of it. And so cultural criminology had really developed kind of on its own alongside and out of critical criminology.

B

Bill McClanahan 43:30

And eventually starting around probably 2012, some green criminologists, particularly Nigel South in the UK, and Avi Brisman, and my colleague here in the US, started to really work on developing a rigorous orientation towards the study of the intersection of environmental harm and culture. And they decided to do that through cultural criminology. So what we got was a green cultural criminology. So Brisman and South started thinking about things like, oh, like, if you know, to go back to the example of climate change and the small combustion engine, the reasons why I drive my inefficient truck, and why after this interview, I'm going to go drive it somewhere, those are all more or less cultural, right? They're cultural factors that have led me to make those choices. And so Brisman and South started thinking about those kinds of things like, how does a culture of consumption that comes along with global capitalism, how does that impact the environment, ecosystems, etc, etc.

B

Bill McClanahan 43:55

And then, after maybe five, four or five years of kind of growth and green cultural criminology, there was the further kind of refinement tweak with the addition of visual, which got us to what I guess in the book I call green visual cultural criminology, to be honest with you, that's that's probably at least one adjective too many. It doesn't really need to be all of that. But that is kind of like an anti shorthand way to communicate the full scope. To me, though, I imagine that as kind of referring to and what I mean, when I say, visual green cultural criminology, is a criminology that looks specifically at cultural relationships with the image and the visual, and how those relationships affect our interactions with the natural environment. So, so I guess, I guess, in a lot of ways, it



probably says too much on the package. But I think it does exactly what it says on the package. If that makes sense.



Jenn Tostlebe 45:52

Can you give, like, easy, simplistic example of something that would qualify under this banner of visual green cultural criminology?



Bill McClanahan 46:04

Yeah, so like, do you mean, like an example of what that might look like?



Jenn Tostlebe 46:08

Yeah. Exactly.



Bill McClanahan 46:09

Yeah. I think probably my go to example would be I have a colleague who I've who I've worked with a lot in Italy, named Lorenzo Natali, who has a book out that's about green visual criminology and Lorenzo's research methodology, which I think is pretty unique, I think is a great example of how a green visual cultural criminology takes shape. So what he does is he does photo elicitation interviewing, where he sits with with interview subjects. And he shows them a series of images. And he through those images, engages with the the subject, right? So it's not just, he doesn't, it's not passive, he doesn't hand them images, and then sit back and say, Oh, they, they blinked and cross their arms or whatever, you know, it's "What does this image mean to you? What can you say to me about it?" And so I think that's a great example of what he does. It's clearly green criminology, because he's interested in contamination and environmental change. So it's, it has a very obvious environmental dimension. But it's also very cultural, because what he's interested in, is the kind of emotional core and that's the thing in cultural criminology. It's like the emotions of crime, the emotions of justice. And Lorenzo tries to get at that through this process. But then it's also very visual, because it's all happening through the image. And because of the way it happens, the respondents talk to him through the images, you know, they say, Ah, this image shows this. And that reminds me of this from my life. So every, it's like, everything ends up being totally bound up with just this small series of images that he's showing respondents. But in the end, he's able to make claims about an environmental harm. And he's able to make kind of assertions about the affect, and the kind of emotional experience of it from a more cultural perspective.



Jenn Tostlebe 48:23

Yeah, that's really interesting. And that helps, I think, kind of bring it more practical in a way.



Bill McClanahan 48:30

Yeah, definitely. Yeah. You know, with each with each kind of descriptor tacked on to the field, a little further into the weeds about what the hell it actually is.



Jenn Tostlebe 48:42

Alright, so a question that we kind of ask everyone is, you know, why they're, why what they're doing is important. So why is it important to bridge green criminology, or the environmental perspective with visual criminology?



Bill McClanahan 48:59

Well, I think the main reason, the main reason it's important is is for things that I've already alluded to or said, right? I think there's only so much that we can understand about our relationship with the natural world without really thinking about how it comes to us. And how it comes to us is very frequently through the visual, because of, as I said earlier, because of the way that we're so bombarded with images, right? Like think about, think about how many images, meaning reproductions of a real thing, you see in a given day, compared to your grandparents. It's crazy.



Jenn Tostlebe 49:45

So many more.



Bill McClanahan 49:47

It's like exponentially. And that's a condition that's always increasing. Right? It's like, at this point, the entire purpose of most consumer technological development is to give us more images. Give us images at a more efficient, effective, endless pace. And so I really think that if we don't understand our relationship to how the world looks, and to the world that is made up of those visual processes, then our ability to understand anything in the world will be limited, I guess you could say.



Jose Sanchez 50:27

So we're gonna bring the conversation back to theory, because, you know, we, we love our theory. So in this chapter, you mentioned symbolic interactionism. And, you know, just briefly symbolic interactionism is a theory of communication through language or symbolic behaviors, and subjective meaning making. This sort of develops the way that we view the world, that we see others, that we believe others see us. And so is symbolic interactionism, like the primary theoretical explanation for a visual green criminology? And if it is, can you describe how it plays into a visual green phonology?



Bill McClanahan 51:17

That's a good question and reflects, I would say, an astute reading of the of the theoretical portion of the chapter there. So the short answer is that no, I don't think that symbolic interaction provides the kind of theoretical foundation. But that's not because there's something else that does. Again, I would say that it's really a reflection of the theoretical promiscuity of green criminology. So you absolutely will see as you picked up on in the chapter, a big influence from like, kind of early work in symbolic interactionism. And we are as green cultural criminologists and visual green criminologists, very interested in those processes of interaction that happened through signs and symbols and semiotics. And we're frequently very interested in the semiotics of nature. One of the really interesting examples, there is a guy named Piers Beirne, who's very, very prominent foundational figure in green criminology, especially research on animals, who's done a lot of work on the relationship between the gendered language that we use for animals, and the way we use gendered language for people. So he talks about, like the word "bitch," and about how it clearly has these animal and human dimensions that are both gendered. So semiotics and kind of symbolism and social interaction through those signs and symbols is very important. But not in the sense that green criminology has really or visual green criminology has really, like latched on to dogmatically if that makes sense. There's Yeah, I don't think I can really identify a specific theoretical core for green visual criminology. I think the relationship to symbolic interaction partly comes from the role of symbolic interaction in early visual sociology, which visual criminology kind of grew out of. And also visual anthropology. And even just like work in linguistics and semiotics, you know, has all been very important for communication studies, for visual studies. And thankfully, for visual criminology, all of those fields existed when we came into being. So we kind of had a buffet of things to choose from. And so instead of seeing, like one main dish on the plate, I think you just see a lot of little side dishes, basically.



Jenn Tostlebe 54:00

Yeah, it reminds me a lot of like disciplinary integration, where you're taking ideas from all different, you know, fields and bringing them together to help explain what you're looking at. Yeah.

B

Bill McClanahan 54:11

Certainly. And I think that I think that kind of interdisciplinarity is really central to visual cultural green criminology. I mean, you know, when I say visual, cultural green criminology, there's like, maybe half a dozen people who that would describe their work. But for that half dozen people. I think that those are important foundations and that interdisciplinarity is a really important part of it.



Jenn Tostlebe 54:38

Yeah. Alright. So let's kind of bring it back to like, to life. Let's bring visual criminology to life for a little bit and talk about some examples. So in the monograph you talk about, like the Deepwater Horizon disaster in 2010. You talk about climate change due to human caused global warming. The 2019 fires in both Brazil and Australia. And so can you talk about how those events contribute to visual green criminology and environmental justice?

B

Bill McClanahan 55:10

Yeah, yeah. So again, those are events that so so if you think about, just from a, a communications perspective, and this is obviously very, very far from a novel insight, but we are more visually connected every day than we were the day before. Right. So the ubiquity of those images, those are, of course, global images. So that constant flood of pictures that's hitting us, those come from around the world. If you think back to, I guess I'll talk about this in the sense of like affect and feeling. So think back to like, 10 months ago, we're at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, everything's locked down. There's significant rebellion and unrest happening in response to you know, violence of policing going on, etc, etc. Add into the mix, right? So imagine, as you I'm sure both did, you wake up on a Wednesday, there's nothing to do, you're you're locked in your apartment, the world is burning outside, you open your Instagram, and you flip through it. And what you get is like, you know, social unrest in Louisville and Minnesota, environmental catastrophe in China, literally hundreds of millions of acres of land on fire in Australia, right? Like all of those things contribute to your affect and your experience of the world. And so, you know, these images get produced and then just fly around the world at literally, at light speed. And they collide with us, and they cause things to happen in our lives, regardless of the location of the harm. So there really is a very global scope to images of environmental

harm and environmental crime. And I think that trying to wrap our head around those problems without understanding the global nature of them doesn't really get us anywhere. It's a, you know, kind of one of the one of the central assertions of of any ecological theory is just the assertion of ecology, right, that things effect other things. And in some sense, I think green visual criminology is an attempt to consider images as ecological objects. Like, the image of the I don't know, I mean, just think back to the Gulf, the BP oil spill in the Gulf, right? I mean, those images, those images had material effects. They don't just, they aren't just meaningless cultural products, they actually have an effect and an impact on material life.



Jenn Tostlebe 58:08

Yeah, I follow. So talking about Instagram, I follow a few, like A) environmental groups, and then B) a few animal rights groups. And every day, it's just pictures. Some of them are like, incredibly difficult to look at just because of what they're doing.



Bill McClanahan 58:24

There's probably times when in order to do what you feel like you need to do you have to like actively not... right? Like...



Jenn Tostlebe 58:32

Yeah.



Bill McClanahan 58:32

And that's, that's something that I talked about in the book a lot, that's a big part of all of this is those kind of processes of disavow and the way, you know, we see the images, we know what's happening, but we take a lot of steps to distance ourselves.



Jenn Tostlebe 58:49

Yeah, absolutely.



Jose Sanchez 58:51

So what are the implications? Or what sort of implications can green criminology have not

just on academics and researchers, but also on practitioners and policymakers?

B

Bill McClanahan 59:06

That's a great question. And also one that, you know, is, I guess that any any social scientist should probably always anticipate that question. You know, for myself, I don't actually consider my work, I really have no concern at all if it's having a policy influence or an impact on practitioners. I'm, I'm much more, I'm motivated by internal needs, right? Like, I'm motivated by an internal drive to think about these things and understand them.

B

Bill McClanahan 59:40

But the impact of green criminology on policy has actually been pretty significant. You know, thankfully, there are a lot of scientific disciplines that are beating the same drums that green criminology is. So it's not as though, it's not as though it's up to green criminologists to prove the existence of climate change, right? Like, we're very, very, very lucky to be able to, and a lot of what we do ends up being kind of trying to think through the social side of an environmental problem, right? We just, we see an environmental problem, like climate change, and we think, okay, what's gonna happen socially, you know, so there's, there's endless criminological predictions about how will climate change affect crime in the future, right. And all of those things, I think, are deeply embedded in, in policy conversations and practitioner conversations. And I think, frankly, a lot of the assertions of green criminology are going to be accepted one way or the other, because they're just going to kind of begin to reflect the reality of environmental life, especially as it relates to climate change. Green criminology, I think, has a pretty good handle on what to expect, in terms of the the climate crisis. And I think that, you know, because we are in, we're like, one voice in a chorus with all these other Earth Sciences on these topics.

B

Bill McClanahan 1:01:24

And, you know, I also think that, increasingly, we do communicate visually. And so I think that, increasingly, the the, the kind of distinctly visual, green criminology will probably become more and more mainstream, more and more evident, more and more visible. And with that, I definitely anticipate that, when I think about just the fact that, so I teach here at Eastern Kentucky University (EKU), we have a phenomenal faculty, including me and Avi Brisman, who's probably the most, the most important contemporary American green criminologist. And at EKU at our university, the vast majority of our students are not going on to academic careers, they're going on to be practitioners, and predominantly, police, parole, probation, a lot of them, you know, hope for kind of federal enforcement jobs. And amongst those students, they're constantly you know, Avi teaches classes on wildlife

crime, we both teach classes on climate change and crime. We both teach general overview courses for undergraduates on green criminology; Avi's taught classes on harms to animals. So you know, just thinking about that, I've been at ECU for four and a half years. Every semester, I'm teaching, you know, 60 to 100 students, the kind of fundamentals of green criminology, and then those students are going out and becoming parole officers and probation officers and practitioners and all these various careers. So I think that there probably is, while I personally may not really concern myself with that impact, I think it's probably there. And in the discipline more broadly, I'm certain it's there. And we've seen it, we've seen, you know, pretty significant engagement with green criminology. And it's unfortunate because it means that we are increasingly needing to be engaged with, which means that things are not getting better. But yeah, it does seem to me as though the field is making and is poised to continue to make contributions to practice.



Jenn Tostlebe 1:03:56

Yeah, absolutely. When I was reading your monograph, I mean, green criminology seems very attuned to policy and it seems very applicable.



Bill McClanahan 1:04:08

It does. And, and, you know, also I don't, I don't know, but if you have any listeners that are that are like students that are trying to, to settle on specialties. Green criminology is a good one because like I said, you know, some problems come and go, but the ecological problems that we're looking at right now, are not going anywhere. So if you're if you're looking for kind of a grim sort of job security become like a climate Doomsayer.



Jenn Tostlebe 1:04:36

Yes. Well, hopefully, hopefully, things will start to at least somewhat improve, who knows.



Bill McClanahan 1:04:43

But then I'd be out of work. \*laughter\*



Jose Sanchez 1:04:48

But you know, I always say that we're one of the few disciplines whose end goal is probably to make ourselves be unemployed. But I think a lot of us would be okay with

that.



Bill McClanahan 1:05:01

Yeah, yeah, yeah. There's, you know, I have kind of these these various fields that I'm active in and yeah, some some I would like to see continue to thrive for longer than others.



Jenn Tostlebe 1:05:14

Alright. Well, that is all the main questions we have for you. Is there anything else that you'd like to add to our discussion whether it's on green criminology, visual criminology, or visual green cultural criminology?



Bill McClanahan 1:05:26

No, I don't think so. I think that your all's questions reflect, like I said, reflect refreshingly rigorous degree of engagement with the material. And as a result, I think cover all of the, all of the essentials.



Jenn Tostlebe 1:05:40

Well, that's great to hear. That's what we were hoping to do. It's a little bit different when you're prepping a podcast episode for something you don't really know very much about. I wish I could sit in on one of your classes, because they sound really interesting.



Bill McClanahan 1:05:54

They're fun I think. I try to be at least. I guess the one thing that I would say, as it relates to visual criminology that I didn't mention, is that the most I would say, the most important critical and most recent turn, there has been actually a turn away from the visual in an effort to think more about the entire sensory environment. So I've recently done some work a little bit in the monograph, and then recently published a paper with Nigel South in the British Journal of criminology on sensory criminology. And so kind of trying to extend the same interest that visual criminology has into things like taste and smell and touch. And to my surprise, that's something Nigel and I started about four years ago, and we published this paper just a year and a half ago or so, maybe a year ago. And suddenly, it's exploded, and there's a new book on sensory criminology. And suddenly all of the interest seems to be coalescing there. And so I would say that, as appealing and interesting as



visual criminology is, it's kind of quickly being subsumed into this broader sensory framework.



Jenn Tostlebe 1:07:11

Yeah, I feel like I saw that book sensory criminology on Twitter somewhere floating around, I feel like someone shared it or something.



Bill McClanahan 1:07:20

That book is called--I'm not involved in it--it's an edited volume. I believe it's called Sensory Penalties. And it's been it's been getting heavy Twitter promotion from what I've seen. So it seems to seem to have caught on. So yeah, I would say for anyone interested in visual criminology also kind of keep an eye on sensory criminology.



Jose Sanchez 1:07:42

Well, I guess that ties into, Is there anything you'd like to plug anything coming out soon that we should keep an eye out for?



Bill McClanahan 1:07:49

Yeah, so I think the main plug, especially given what you said earlier about the timing. I have a new monograph out with Bristol University Press called Visual Criminology. As we've said, I have chapters in the book dealing with drugs, environmental harm, prisons, police, methodology, visual methods, the kind of social science history of the visual. And I would encourage anybody, of course, to get your hands on a copy of that. And other thing I would plug is there's a forthcoming book from New York University Press called Ghost Criminology. That's an edited volume, that it's been edited by Travis Lindemann and Theo Kindynis, and Michael Fiddler. And it's a really, really fantastic and compelling collection of what I would say are very, very unique essays from from probably some of the most kind of groundbreaking criminologists active today. And they all concern to some degree the visual and a lot of them also incorporate kind of environmental and ecological thinking. So I would encourage anybody to check out Ghost Criminology. And yeah, other than that, I don't have don't have much to plug. Do try to get the Visual Criminology book, anybody listening. And yeah, I think that's it. That's all my plugs. I don't use any social media. So I won't, I won't direct anyone to my Twitter or Facebook because I don't have them.



Jenn Tostlebe 1:09:21

I am or we're linking your monograph on our website. So for anyone who's curious, go ahead and check it out there.



Bill McClanahan 1:09:29

Perfect.



Jose Sanchez 1:09:30

And we'll also link your email in case anyone would like to get in touch with you.



Bill McClanahan 1:09:36

Absolutely. If anybody has any lingering questions, or in particular, if anybody's, any students out there have questions if you're interested in doing graduate work. If you're interested in just talking about criminology and your criminological future, I'm always up for that. I enjoy it.



Jenn Tostlebe 1:09:54

Awesome. Thank you so much, Bill.



Jose Sanchez 1:09:56

Thank you very much.



Bill McClanahan 1:09:57

Yeah, great. Thanks, you guys. It was really good to meet you and I look forward to hearing more.



Jenn Tostlebe 1:10:01

Yeah, you too. Thank you.



Bill McClanahan 1:10:03

Thank you, all.



Jose Sanchez 1:10:04

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