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Simon Mackenzie (2020) *Transnational Criminology: Trafficking and Global Criminal Markets*. Bristol: Bristol University Press, pp.163, ISBN:978-1-5292-0378-3, £60.00 (hardcover)

Reviewed by: Georgios A. Antonopoulos, *Teesside University*, UK

Transnational Criminology: Trafficking and Global Criminal Markets by Simon Mackenzie is a book of great ambition: to develop a social theory of transnational criminal markets. In his endeavor the author, as he generously acknowledges, has been influenced by “many great works on transnational crime” (p.18). Mackenzie organises his study into eight chapters: A robust introduction, six substantial chapters each focusing on a distinct illegal market (chapters 2-7), and a conclusion titled ‘a social theory of transnational criminal markets’.

Chapter 2 focuses on drug trafficking, chapter 3 on human trafficking, chapter 4 on wildlife trafficking, chapter 5 on diamond trafficking, chapter 6 on arms trafficking, and chapter 7 on Mackenzie’s research ‘bread-and-butter’, antiquity trafficking. Chapters 2 to 7 are based on a functional structure that the author follows with military discipline: (a) the nature and extent of the harm; (b) the structure of the market: source, transit, market; c) regulation and control of the market; and (d) the market as business enterprise. Within some of these substantive chapters, the author reproduces quotes by criminal entrepreneurs, as these quotes appear in the original works cited in the book. These quotes are the very “framework that serves to obscure the individual’s [criminal entrepreneur’s] perception of the harm they are doing” (p.35) in the context of their business. In these chapters, which are a rich distillation of previous research and can be very easily read as standalone works on the illegal markets focused upon, as parts have an encyclopaedic feel, the reader can see Mackenzie’s serious intellectual grapple with the literature.

The change from one criminal market to the other (from chapters 2 to 7) allows neither the energy of the book to wane at any point, nor repetition. In this main body of the work, each illegal market is, of course, different to the other but the author occasionally highlights some of their structural similarities or similarities in their architecture. A couple of chapters very briefly acknowledge the role of information and communication technologies (ICT) in illegal markets (e.g. ch.2; ch.3) but do not engage much with the issue. A colleague I discussed the book with, considers this a limitation of the work in the COVID-19 era, its house-bound customers, and its enhanced virtual economy. Within the context of the book, however, I consider it a positive aspect, contributing to the great focus and discipline of the work. It is obvious (at least to this reviewer) that Mackenzie is content to set this issue aside because he sees technology as merely a ‘tool’ and as something that is integral neither to the core of the (particular) illegal markets he pays attention to, nor the entrepreneurial psyche of their protagonists (despite their diverse range and position in these markets, their differential business acumen, and their tribal or cosmopolitan instincts).

The selection of (some of) the criminal markets might look as slightly ‘arbitrary’ to some readers. Although focusing on drugs or human trafficking may seem ‘obvious’, one may wonder why there is a chapter on the trafficking of diamonds and not, for instance, on gold, enhancement pharmaceuticals or luxury ‘fakes’. Of course, Mackenzie cannot be criticised for this market selection for two reasons: firstly, because it would be impossible for all empirical manifestations of ‘organised crime’ having entrepreneurial characteristics to be covered in a book; and, secondly, because anything this book lacks in range, it makes up for in depth, detail and substance. Throughout the work, there are sources aplenty for the author to point out links between the different markets and scaffold his argument. All these markets together form part of *one* story, the many strands, levels (macro, meso and micro) and interpretations of which,

as well as their zemiological implications, are very efficiently woven together by the author in the conclusion.

While reading the book, I found myself smiling at the route of the synthesis of some familiar arguments and even Mackenzie's choice of words. Trafficking, as Mackenzie suggests, is a form of "morally indifferent capitalism" (p.126); in a generally "hostile and uncompassionate world" (p.53), criminal markets are underpinned by a "globalisation of indifference" (p.16); crime and the harm caused by illegal markets is "compartmentalised" (p.8) and, as such, overlooked:

"...in criminal business, just as in conventional business, humans are constructed and construct themselves as stripped-down versions of full beings, feeling (and saying to criminologists who interview them) things like that they just have to look out for themselves and their families; they don't have the luxury of thinking about whether other people are getting hurt by what they do...it's not personal, it's just business" (p.131).

For Mackenzie, crime and commercial activity are "half-brothers" (van Duyne, 2005: 1), and the relationship between licit and illicit markets is a symbiotic one. If one were willing to put aside for a moment the fact that involvement in the illicit economy typically involves a formal transgression and thus the crossing of a subjective barrier posed by regulation or prohibition, it is not difficult to see that black markets (and grey markets of various shades) are not organised around a value system that is radically different from that defined by societal norms (see van Duyne *et al.*, 2018). Entrepreneurship is cherished equally by those involved either in the legal or the illegal economy, and those involved in the later often construe their involvement as 'providing a service' (Ruggiero, 2001) precisely on the basis of this substantive consensus. Demand for illicit goods and services, in the cases considered by Mackenzie, is driven by complex motivations, "the binding of conspicuous consumption to social status in western and westernised societies" (p.65), symbolism, culturally-specific meanings and emotions, and a diverse range of legitimate, lifestyle aspirations for many of which corresponding legal markets already exist. Illegal markets are not always as 'sexy' as they are being portrayed in the media and Hollywood blockbusters, and criminal entrepreneurs are not always as 'cool' as their cinematic incarnations. What makes illegal markets and marketers remarkable is their very un-remarkability.

Transnational Criminology, which links the local with the transnational, the illegal with the legal, and the market with the individual, is written with economy, clarity and calmness, and is refreshingly kept at a safe distance from apocalyptic, emotionally and ideologically charged accounts on manifestations of 'organised crime' and figures that serve specific agendas, are produced or invented out of 'thin air', and are 'legitimised' through mere repetition. It is a book offering fascinating insights and it is most definitely a welcome addition to the literature.

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