The role of plural art/heritage crime policing
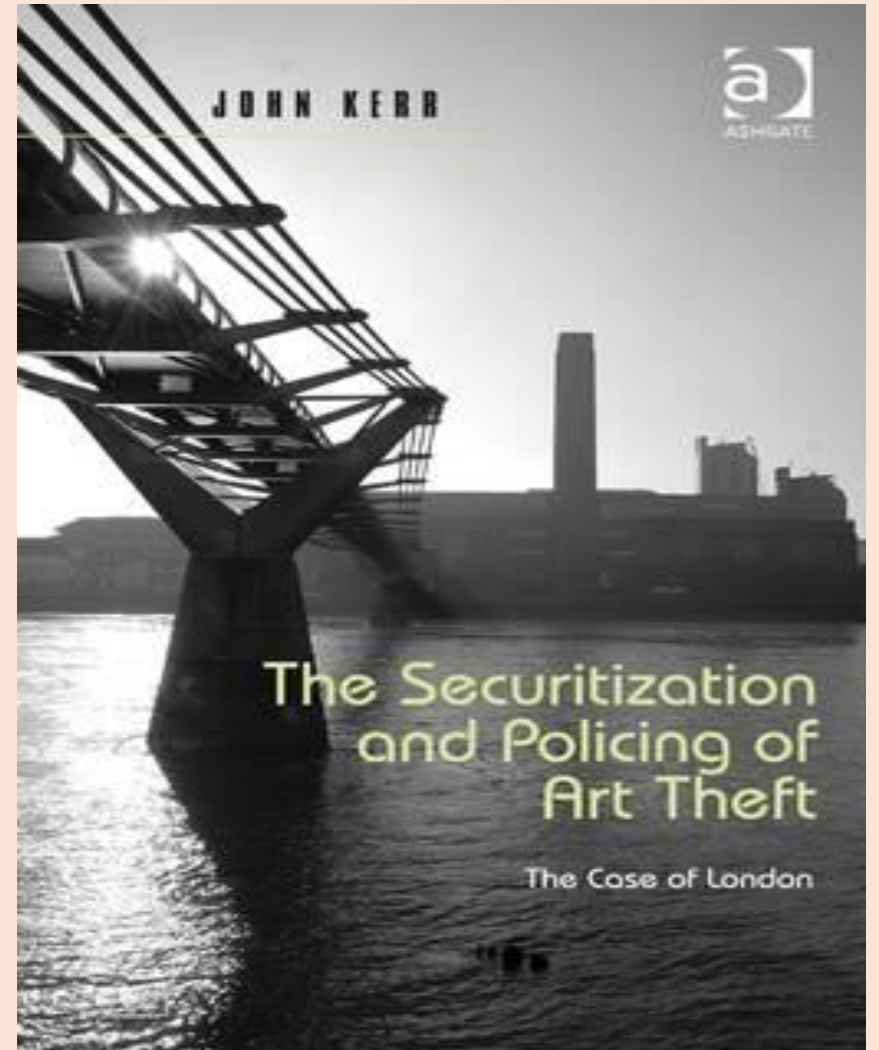

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My research

- Transnational crimes, Art/Cultural heritage crimes, Policing, Transnational/Global policing, Protest

- Research in Brazil, England & Wales, France, Italy

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The Securitization and Policing of Art Theft

The Case of London

Definitions

Definitions

'Art crime'

'Cultural heritage crime'

'Heritage and cultural property crime'

'Heritage crime'

'Art/heritage crime'

'Organised crime', 'Crimes that are organised', 'Criminal gangs', 'Crime groups'

'Policing', 'Security governance' *('governance of security exclusively by state governments is no more than a hiccup in history' (Wood and Shearing, 2007:7))*

Context

- More professional and academic knowledge than previously
- Policing/security governance can be made up of relationships between security providers. This can be complex. *The securitization and policing of art/heritage in London is a good example- complex matrix of security providers which co-exist together in producing a security and response network (Kerr, 2012, 2016, 2020)*
- Policing arenas in a globalised world- vital question: 'who should the police be?' (Shearing and Marks, 2011:210)
- Not seeking a one size fits all model- 'learning from differences' (Hufnagel, 2013:14)
- Challenges in comparative research: 'International comparative research brings with it unique challenges and shortcomings' (O'Neill, de Maillard, van Steden, 2023:1686)

Significant criminal entrepreneurs in the art/heritage world

- Crime groups

- Insiders who work at art/heritage locations

Brazil, England & Wales, France and Italy- insider thefts particularly happen at museums, country houses, churches, outdoor locations with art, and cultural sites

- 'Receivers' or 'fences'

- People who work in the art, antiques and antiquities market

- Buyers of art *('techniques of neutralisation' Sykes and Matza, 1957; Mackenzie and Yates, 2015; Kerr, 2023)*

Links with other criminal activities

Who does the public policing?

- Italy (Carabinieri Unit)

- France
(OCBC Unit made up of Gendarmerie
and Police Nationale officers)

- England and Wales (1 Unit in MPS and
Heritage Crime Liaison officers)

How do they do the policing?

Italy and France

- Intelligence gathering - proactive policing- databases (Leonardo/Treima) - recoveries
- Intelligence sharing- nationally/internationally informally/formally
- Working with other agencies and private sector (e.g. insurance companies)
- Training/educating public and private sector agencies, organisations and companies, the public - nationally/internationally
- Promote their work (television, exhibitions etc.)
- *Examples of monopolistic or anchored pluralist policing models?*

How do they do the policing?

England and Wales

- Nodal governance framework (Johnston and Shearing, 2003; Kerr, 2016, 2020)

Public sector and Private sector (e.g. private recovery and database companies)

- Public police still needed (investigative powers + approval of rewards)

- MPS Art and Antiques Unit. Heritage Crime Liaison officers

- England & Wales public policing approach: the criminal first, recovery second

- Different in private sector

-A private art detective: 'recovery of the masterpiece is the important thing'

England and Wales
Nodal Governance policing theoretical framework (Johnston and Shearing 2003)

| State centred policing | Networked governance | Shifting alliances (co-production) |

England and Wales
Insurance

- 'And who polices it? Certainly insurers do' (Loss Adjuster)

- 'They are the main driver in crime prevention today' (Private Art Detective)

- 'we don't police the art world. We have information about the art world, and about art theft, art damage, all those kinds of things….we're not going around arresting people or anything like that. We don't want to have that power…we are an insurance company' (Insurance employee)

- 'it is important that the police maintain an active, proactive role in seeking…seeking out the criminals responsible for art theft…because without them you know you could see it proliferate as a crime' (Insurance employee)

Co-production- different forms?

- 'Policing co-production was defined as private actors providing an active, and direct contribution to public actors' policing activities, as part of a stable relationship between the two aimed at leveraging each other's abilities in the pursuit of delivering more effective policing' (Van Herzeele, 2024)

- The co-production of art/heritage security in London- an example of how security nodes form a matrix with an overlapping of 'multiple tops' and many 'downs' (*using nodal governance work by Wood and Shearing, 2007*).

- Importantly, this matrix is not constant. It adapts as the stratification of the nodes changes (Kerr, 2012, 2016, 2018)

- Different forms of co-production in different policing arenas?

Why do the public police do the policing (or not do the policing)?

- Prioritization and Problematization (Foucault, 2002)

- 'Governing takes place through particular problematizations' (Bacchi 2012:5) – Choose and then frame the problem

- Nationally and internationally (cultural diplomacy)

- Motivation of 'govern'ment and policing agencies- why are art and cultural heritage crimes considered /or not considered to be a problem?

- Continuing framing/reframing of a problem (even French OCBC has to fight to maintain its existence, OCBC Officer)

- Money

Prioritisation Italy and France

- Private Sector -Plural policing not always welcomed on the continent (Terpstraa, 2015)

- Soft power- nationally and internationally

- Ownership (Constitution)

- 'When you show up with the blue lights – it has an impact' (OCBC Officer)

Prioritisation- England & Wales

Community policing?

- Problems with self-policing - The market has many shades of grey and has been labelled as 'criminogenic' (Brodie 2019; Mackenzie 2011; Oosterman, Mackenzie and Yates 2021; Tsirogiannis 2016)

- 'Crimes of the suites' (see work by Tombs and Whyte- not on art crime)

- 'Corot painted 2,000 canvases, 5,000 of which are in America.' (ArtNews 1953)
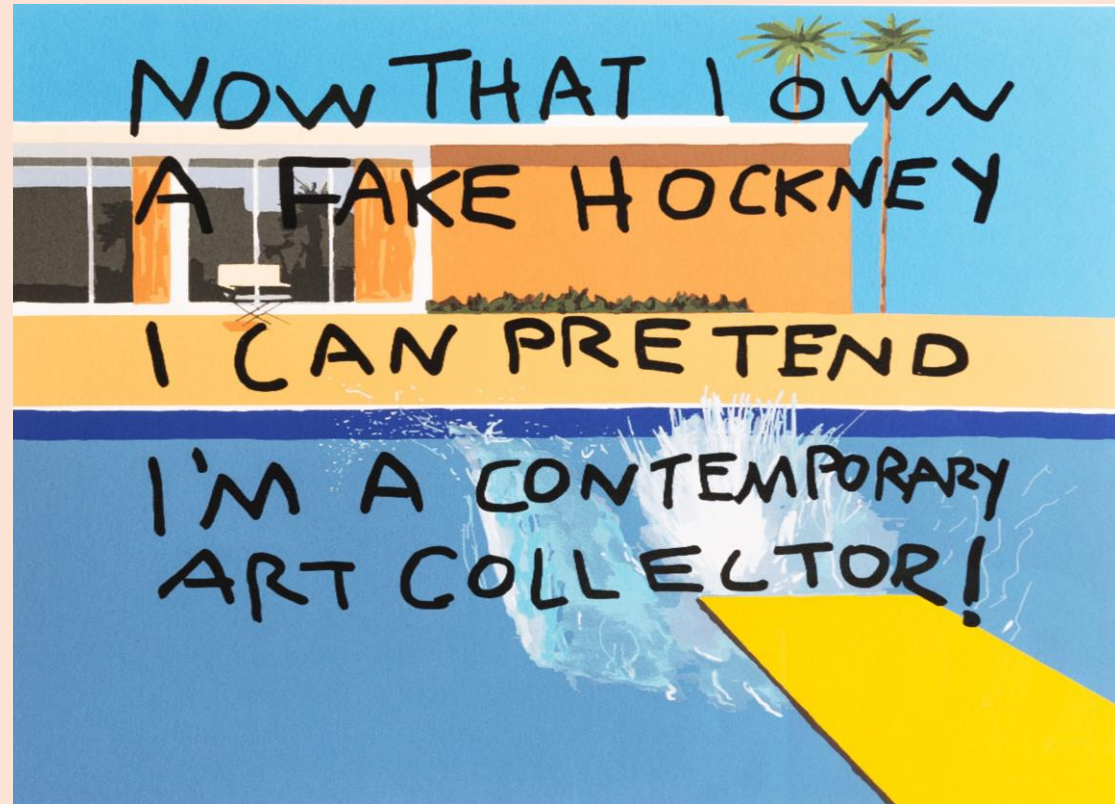
Crime groups' 'Achilles' heel' can be stealing art/heritage

- A private art detective said: 'It took so long for police to do anything. Drugs, armed robberies, thefts, violent crimes. Achilles' heel was art. Police should have realised this long ago.'

- Two large crime groups arrested for their art/heritage thefts in England & Wales

- Large crime group in Brazil arrested for religious art/heritage thefts

Crimertainment

- Art/heritage crime attracts attention but is it the right attention?
- Is this attention helpful?

Conclusions

- Is attractive to crime groups looking for 'imaginative pursuit of profit' and 'high profit low risk' activities + reinforces that crimes cannot be seen in isolation as crime groups acting as criminal entrepreneurs are involved in many activities and are looking for opportunities

- Is attractive to a range of criminal entrepreneurs. Is attractive for its use in many criminal activities. 'Tech-crime nexus' enhancements could increase this further

- Ideally, would be a public policing priority but does not have to be a public police priority. However, it needs to be seen as part of wider crimes and seen as an opportunity for public police to tackle crime groups and their wider activities

- Danger is if public police completely leave and create policing gaps (Kerr, 2016, 2020, 2023; Van Herzeele, 2022)

- Offers government and policing agencies soft power opportunities nationally/internationally

Conclusions

- The nodal governance (Johnston and Shearing, 2003) framework, with its adaptability, allows the public police to remain an important part of the policing matrix when they are suited to being so, but also allows them to play a lesser role in some areas e.g. other nodes in the policing matrix are better suited to do some of the 'policing' as they (such as insurance) can either impose security measures on the art or they have the capacity to gain better access to information.

- 'Focused team model' (Van Herzeele 2024)

Conclusions

- Regarding 'organised crime', Felson: 'Focus on the acts, not the group engaging on it'. No- Major focus needs to be on the crime groups and the acts- Public police (nationally and internationally) more capability to do this?

- No one 'ideal' or 'one size fits all' art/heritage crime property policing model does not exist because of the different policing challenges, practices, terrains, histories

- Aspects from different approaches can be taken to improve the policing in countries (e.g. recording procedures, intelligence gathering/sharing, training/educating, promoting the problem via the media, use private sector for their expertise)

- Degas once said: 'Art is not what you see, but what you make others see'. Art/heritage theft is often viewed by potential criminals as presenting an opportunity with a low risk of punishment, something not helped by different media frequently misrepresenting the crime as entertainment