

Introduction and Editorial Overview: Emerging Imaginaries of Regulation, Control, and Oppression

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IN AN AGE OF TRANSITION, SUCH AS OURS, THE ROLE OF THE IMAGINARY IN THE production and reproduction of social order is becoming ever more important. In *The Time of the Tribes* (1996), Michel Maffesoli clearly demonstrates that our age is one of transition. Ours seems to be an age, according to Maffesoli, when dynamic, fleeting, and volatile *Dionysian sociality*, rather than the *systemics* of predictable institutional stasis, provides the space within and the raw materials with which the social is produced and reproduced. This is an age in which institutional certainties and strategies are giving way — and, to a large extent, already have done so — to the unpredictable opportunities, risks, sensitivities, and ad-hoc tactics of what Maffesoli calls *neo-tribes*. Neo-tribal sociality, in all its precariousness, according to Maffesoli, is largely a matter of consumerist selves desperately trying to experience “community,” however short-lived, however surrogate-like, in a world of blurring boundaries, fluid relationships, and fragile networks. Neo-tribal sociality is also a highly emotional matter. This should come as no surprise in an age of sudden movements, of unrelenting reshuffles, and constant restructurings. The age of neo-tribalism, however, is also an age of the imagination. Indeed, precisely when boundaries are experienced as increasingly porous, essences and fixities have broken apart, and systemic regularity has given way to unpredictable connections and the volatile dynamics of consumerist *choice*, “the imaginary is increasingly granted a role in structuring society” (Maffesoli, 1996: 118). Of course, Maffesoli is by no means the only writer who has tried to think through the issue of the place of the imaginary in contemporary social life. The aim of this collection of articles is to evoke and mobilize other voices in this debate, and to apply this notion of the reemergence of the imaginary to issues of crime, conflict, and social order. This edition of *Social Justice* is concerned with the interface between culture, crime and emerging mechanisms, and the structures and imaginaries of control. In particular, what unites these articles is an engagement with the increasingly symbolic, imagined, and metaphorical reconstruction of the subject(s) of criminal justice and criminology.

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Section I engages the evolution, reemergence, or resilience of colonial/imperial ideologies, forms of power, and control strategies. It examines how, on a macro level, changing and persisting imaginaries of empire structure, or at least delimit, the space within which processes of regulation, control, and repression take place. Particular attention is paid to how emerging global neoliberal imaginaries and traces of surviving colonialism and *orientalism* regulate and control crime and terror.

Mark Brown's article unpacks the increasingly punitive, exclusionary attitudes, practices, and criminal justice policies that have emerged in liberal democracies by contrasting the nature and forms of rights and obligations that theoretically underpin the relationship between the modern state and the individual *citizen* with the relationship between the state and *subject* in colonial states (most notably British-controlled India). He convincingly links a range of contemporary manifestations and strategies of exclusion with the re-imagining and rationalization of the excluded as subjects of new forms of power and new apparatuses and structures of control that overtly replicate colonial forms and reconstitute the excluded as "new colonial" subjects. Brown explores recent changes in the nature of the liberal state in the context of the emergence of new colonial structures, mechanisms, and machineries of control, while Lippens charts the same processes and changes, but locates them quite literally in a reconfiguration/re-imagining of the "body politic." He charts the increasing use of biological metaphors to implicitly and explicitly represent the neoliberal state and reconfigure the problems it faces at the start of the 21st century. In this process, he identifies the emerging practices of the naturalization of dominant ideologies, practices, and beliefs, the reconfiguration of oppositional practices as challenges to the natural order, the re-imagining of deviance as disease (and the concomitant use of metaphors of drastic, invasive medical treatments to characterize responses to these challenges), and the implicit reassertion of dominant discourses as natural and inevitable. Mooney and Young's contribution compares the stereotypical imaginaries of *occidental* terrorism with *orientalist* "antiterrorism terrorism." Similarities and differences are systematically spelt out, leading to the insight that both ultimately lead to violence that in turn leads each to mutually reinforce the other in a vicious circle of hate and global conflict.

The focus in Section II is on how, on a micro level, particular groups that find themselves enmeshed in conditions of rapid social and cultural transition imagine communities, negotiate identity, and invent resistance. Contributions explore bourgeois identities, Colombian youth, migrants' tactics and negotiations, and imaginary criminal identities. Contributions by Maggie O'Neill et al. and Shani D'Cruze illustrate how transitory or migrant identities imagine and negotiate sameness and difference in conditions of (often turbulent) change. D'Cruze's article explores this through the negotiating and highly "tactical" voices of immigrant women in early 20th-century New York. O'Neill, Woods, and Webster

focus on early 21st-century Britain, and on the re-imagination of local and global community and *visions* of social justice in and through the interchanges between migrants and local communities. Contributions by Steve Hall et al. and Farid Samir Benavides-Vanegas show how particular groups imagine, construct, adopt, or express criminal identities and/or identities of resistance. Hall and his co-authors, also from the British experience, deal with “radgies, gangstas, and mugs,” *bricolaged* male identities emerging within the context of a disastrous, “anelpic,” meltdown of local social life and a thoroughly globalized consumer culture. As traditional sources of working-class masculinity are eroded, diverse sources of alternative identity work and practice are increasingly mobilized in a negotiated tension between incorporation and resistance.

In a similar vein, Benavides-Vanegas reads political graffiti by Colombian students as assemblages of resistance that — unsigned, deliberately nameless, and hybrid — seem to harbor a capacity to mobilize a wide variety of social grass-roots energy. In Section I, Brown and Lippens engaged with the traces of the (neo-)colonial in meta-narratives of the neo/post-liberal state, while here Benavides-Vanegas examines the ways in which the micro-sociological practices of everyday life become a site of struggle between incorporation and resistance in the face of the inscription of the neocolonial imperative on the fabric of the urban environment. His article explores the ways in which (in a Latin American context) processes of cultural and economic imperialism, symbolically associated with the United States, are resisted through a diverse range of socio-spatial practices, most notably the use of graffiti, to re-appropriate physical spaces and reconfigure them as explicitly resistant, oppositional, and counter-hegemonic. Kearon’s contribution demonstrates how much in contemporary imaginaries of regulation and control finds its origins in particular “bourgeois” sentiments and sensitivities, and in attempts of particular middle-class fractions to culturally distinguish themselves through the continuous construction and reconstruction of their relationships with or to an imagined subaltern other. Much criminological and sociological work has unpacked the increasingly punitive, exclusionary, and hostile engagements with the other on the part of numerous socially included but increasingly ontologically insecure groups. Kearon, however, argues that we also need to examine the ways in which those sections of the socially included that have steadfastly refused to take the punitive “turn” may nevertheless imagine and appropriate the subaltern other in a profoundly problematic fashion.

Themes in Section III include cultural practices and texts, as well as the imaginaries of otherness and exclusion that conclude Section II. Also examined is how, on a meso or institutional level, imaginaries of regulation and control gradually emerge and how they seem to be structuring or delimiting regulatory policies and interventions. At the center of analysis are media images of otherness and exclusion, imaginaries of corporate and state control, and victim ideology. By analyzing press coverage, Greer and Jewkes notice emerging images of “extreme

otherness” that provide additional imaginary space for the regulation, control, and oppression of difference. Sandra Walklate stresses the logic and import of a ubiquitous and pervasive victim discourse in regulatory strategies and policies, while Simon Hallsworth’s contribution (like Greer’s and Jewkes’) focuses on emerging particularities within institutional imaginaries of regulation and control. Hallsworth explores how corporate image and life attempt to appear to be feminizing in a globalizing economy, while state authority and state intervention adopt conspicuously masculine imagery and attitudes.

REFERENCE

- Maffesoli, Michel
1996 *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society*. London: Sage.