

# TECHNOLOGY AND ORGANISED CRIME IN THE SMART CITY

**BERRY, M., 2018. TECHNOLOGY AND ORGANISED CRIME IN THE SMART CITY: AN  
ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE ILLICIT DRUG TRADE. *CITY, TERRITORY AND ARCHITECTURE.***

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# THE SMART CITY

- 'Future cities' providing new state control
- Technological fix for the modern city
- Limited insight from criminologists
- Key absence is voice of criminal actors
- Studies of virtual markets ignore offline life-worlds



# THE SMART CITY

## A Commercial Construct

- 1) employs pervasive digital technology to monitor and coordinate its infrastructure
- 2) Development of the knowledge economy – potentiating capacities of citizens & government



# UTOPIA?

- Smart City - Commercial construct
- Emergent technology - negative side effects
- Criminal actors can capitalise upon new tech



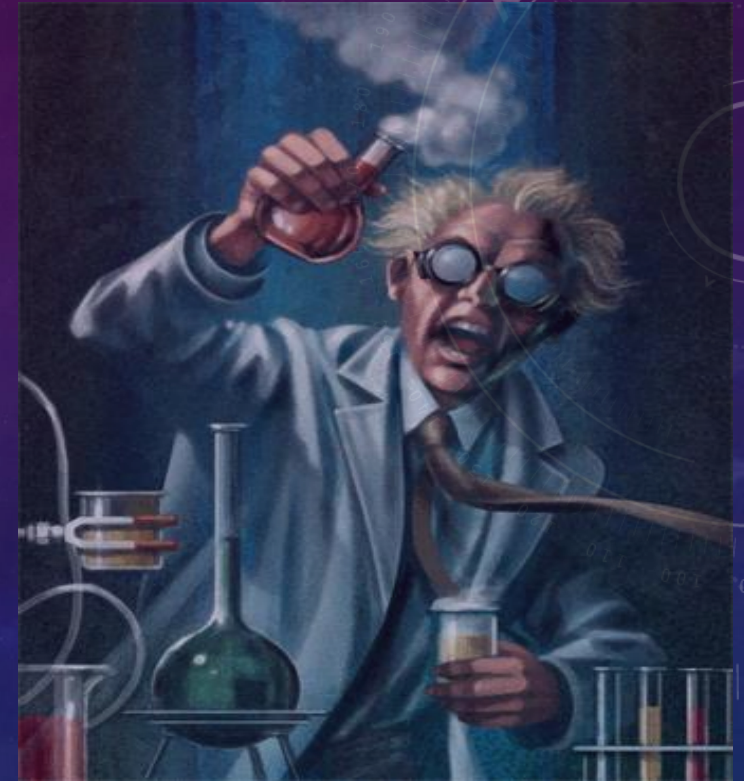
# RESEARCH METHOD

## Field work –

- 5 years semi-covert observations of drug dealing

## Interviews –

- Drug dealers N=21
- Drug manufacturers N=5
- Official actors – criminal justice N=4, private sector N=4, third sector N=4,



# ONLINE DISTRIBUTORS

## Chris – anabolic steroids

- 5 members of staff
- Distributes globally
- £1000000 annual turn over

## Max – nitrous oxide

- 6 members of staff
- Distributes locally
- £400000 annual turn over

# THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

- Actor-Network Theory
- Accounts for the agency of material objects
- Dissolves ontological divisions
- Avoids social determinism and methodological individualism
- (routine activities and rational choice theory)



# MOBILE PHONE

- Shifted open markets into closed networked economy
- Reduces risk - allows dealers to be more mobile
- Increases risk - Trace data, source of intelligence
- Digital informants
- Mobile phones = risk object





Max: When I started back up again I was more clued up about surveillance, buying a sim card isn't enough. If you're stupid enough to put your sim card from your burner in your contract phone the IMEI number would match up with it, so just being aware of the trail how a phone number can lead back to you. If you carry your contract phone around with you as well as your burner, they can trace it back to the cell sites, and they can show that both phones took exactly the same path, and it's very hard to dispute you aren't the same person. I always had two phones one phone for selling drugs and contacting my mates and another for contacting family and paying bills things like that. I had a clean phone for that stuff. I was always very careful about how I used the burner.

# MOBILE PHONE

- Mobile technologies as *digital alibis*
- Dealers can block and subvert information trails
- Other criminal actors can pose threats
- Technologies targeted by these predators



Rocco: I can remember one time the phone was going quiet and I was like what the fuck how can be that quiet, this kiddy basically saying fuck you he's gonna be taking over

Mark: your patch?

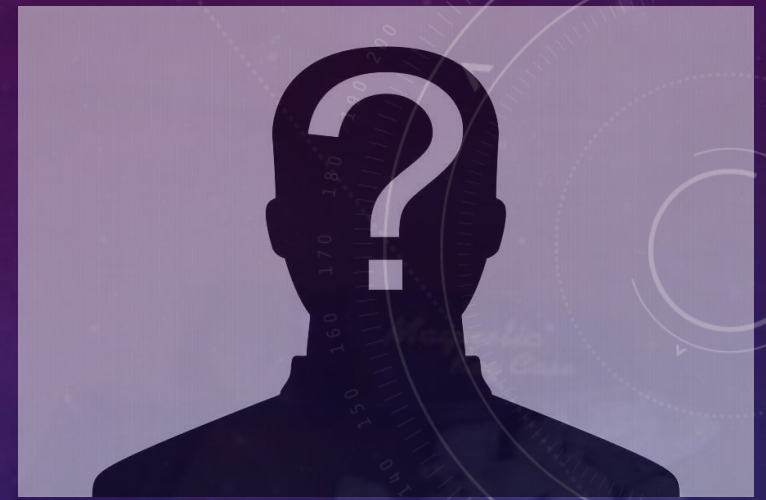
Rocco: yeah, so I went round with a couple of mates went through the door with a fire extinguisher, smashed him in the head and knocked him out, with that the two mates who I was with grabbed what he had there and a bit of cash and the most important thing I wanted was his phone

Mark: yeah?

Rocco: Cos obviously that's their line so they would have to set up and go round again.

# ONLINE SALES

- Provides anonymity
- No face to face transactions
- Drugs sent in post
- Operate alongside and extends traditional drug markets
- Drugs available on 'darknet' and 'clearnet'



- Mark: Do you think there's more risk going online, does that create more risk or do you think it's less risky for getting nicked?
- Charley: Well the more branches you got of the tree I guess... The websites, all the IP addresses they are all like covert like the silk road... They have the servers in other countries so they can't be traced... You know the people who run the website the people whose name it's in is somebody that's nothing to do with us, they get paid, they get a percentage, so that person gets a percentage off the sales and because obviously they are taking the risk. You know it's the same as what you'd do if you gave someone a cut off a crop of weed that you grow in their house...

Mark: How's business?

Charley: Things are hot at the minute there's a month long internal investigation going on at royal mail, they are looking for drugs so we can't send anything out... It's cost me a fortune.

Mark: How did your mates (bosses) find out about this?

Charley: Another online distributor told them and gave them the heads up they know people in royal mail so passed on the information. Obviously it's a big risk if I post stuff with this is all happening so I don't know what we're gonna do about it

Mark: So have you put it up on you website that you are closed for the moment?

Charley: I don't know what's going on with that, the guy in China who runs the website doesn't like to close it because if he does he wont be making any money and he'll lose out. I can't use Royal Mail and using a different courier is too risky, I'll have to wait it out. (Looks distressed)

# ONLINE SALES



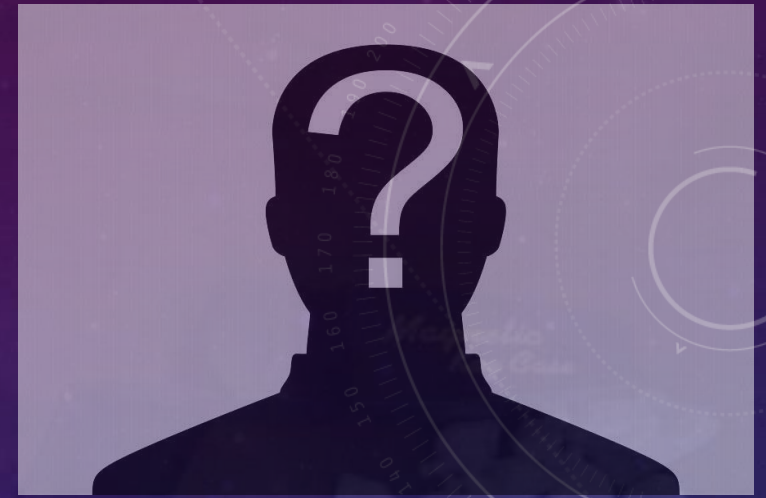
- Controlling physical territory still important
- Local infrastructure needed to distribute products
- Growth means more integration with legitimate economy
- Corruption of postal services

Mark: how did you build your custom base?

Max: The website was the key element and other than that it was word of mouth, People are more likely to search online these days as its becoming more commonplace. There was a transfer of customers from my friendship groups, people I knew to kickstart it, then after that it was just building upon reputation. I have a friend who told me the fundamentals of search engine optimisation and what to consider when making a website. I nailed it, put the font in all the right places, it's given me a very high profile on the google search engine..



# ONLINE SALES



- Anonymity changes power relations between customer and supplier
- Customer must give up personal information
- Suppliers in better position to deter threats
- Scammers list as panoptic shaming device

# SCAMMERS LIST

## Bryan Renolds Scammer from Brighton:

Package was sent 06/08/17 but could not be delivered as no one was at address, royal mail left collection card. This scammer immediately issues a charge back from his credit card and has the cheek to slag us off online saying his products were not sent...

Bryan could have emailed us for the tracking number instead he is BANNED and is indexed online as a steroid scammer. Well done Bryan...

# SCAMMERS LIST

Bryan Renolds

13 Grenfell Street

Woodingdean

Brighton

BN2 8TL

bryanrenolds@outlook.com

<https://www.facebook.com/bryanrenolds84>



# TYPES OF 'SCAMS'

- Charge back
- Product cloning
- Defamatory remarks about product or brand
- Targeting/stealing customers



# SCAMMERS LIST



- People do things online they would not do in the real world
- Allows distributors to reach across and penetrate territories
- Powerful way to erode sense of security

# MANUFACTURE

- Domestic production more commonplace
- 3D printers can produce pharmaceutical drugs
- Opium & coca synthesized from yeast
- International supply chains may become redundant



# CONCLUSION

- Drug markets evolved in the smart city
- Technology extends, enhances and reconfigures crime
- Online markets are still developing. VR? Virtual nightclubs?
- Online distributors grounded & operate in physical world





THANK YOU

Berry, M., 2018. Technology and Organised Crime in the Smart City: an ethnographic study of the illicit drug trade. *City, Territory and Architecture*.