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SARGIN, Ayse

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Activists as knowledge producers: How can grassroots activism contribute to green criminological scholarship?

Ayse Sargin

Abstract

Social movements are sites of knowledge production. Green criminologists are interested in activism both as an informal response to environmental harms/crimes and in their explorations of a possibility of activist green criminology. In this chapter, I call attention to a related issue - the significance of knowledge produced in social movements. Drawing on my research on resistance movements against hydropower in Turkey, I discuss how movement knowledge can contribute to green criminology in relation to the (i) complexity of harm and victimization, (ii) politics of knowledge in identifying harm, and (iii) limits of formal processes in preventing harm. I conclude by highlighting the importance of recognizing activists as subjects who produce knowledge, in academic engagement with activism.

Keywords

1. green criminology
2. activist criminology
3. environmental harm and social harm
4. movement knowledge
5. grassroots socio-environmental activism
6. resistance to hydropower

Introduction

With its roots in radical (see e.g. Stretesky et al, 2013) and critical criminology (Sollund, 2021), green criminology examines questions around environmental crime/harm and justice, with a

renewed interest in the activism-green criminology relationship. This chapter aims to enrich this emergent body of work by highlighting the significance of ‘movement knowledge’ (i.e. knowledge produced by activists in social movements). In doing so I suggest three issues where movement knowledge can contribute to green criminological scholarship and how it can do so.

I start with a brief outline of a few key traits of green criminology, including the activism-green criminology relationship. This is followed with a discussion of knowledge production by activists. I point out that movement knowledge broadly involves three types of knowledge (knowledge of how the existing socio-political order operates, knowledge of how to resist it and policy-oriented knowledge in the form of counter-expertise on campaign issues). In the next sections, drawing on examples from three local resistance movements against hydropower in Turkey, I explore how activist interpretations, insights and practices can contribute to a better understanding of the (i) complexity of harm and victimization by calling attention to the state-corporate practices to control dissent, (ii) politics of knowledge in identifying harm by revealing the constraints of formal expert knowledge and engaging with counter-expertise, and (iii) limits of formal processes in preventing harm by exposing and resisting exclusion from decision-making. In the final section I briefly discuss academic engagement with social movements and co-production of knowledge.

Green criminology, activism and activist criminology

Most basically, green criminology is ‘the study of *environmental crimes* and *harms* affecting human and non-human life, ecosystems and the biosphere’ (Brisman and South, 2019: 1, original emphasis). This involves examination of the causes of environmental crimes/harms and the victimization they entail, as well as how they are addressed legally and institutionally. Green criminology has grown substantially over the last 30 years with diverse studies and epistemological and methodological approaches, frequently pushing beyond disciplinary boundaries (see Lynch and Long, 2022; Sollund, 2021; Brisman and South, 2020 for an overview of the most recent debates and areas of theoretical and empirical focus). While a thorough review is impossible here, a number of key traits of green criminological scholarship for our purposes are briefly outlined below, followed with an overview of the activism-green criminology relationship.

First and foremost, green criminologists recognize that not all environmental damage entails violation of (criminal or other) laws and that there are various activities that are harmful to the environment, despite not fitting strictly within the definition of ‘illegal’ (see e.g. White, 2013). This is in addition to activities which are legal *and* promoted by governments as part of their economic policies (such as the expansion of hydropower in Turkey discussed below). Moving beyond the socially constructed legal/illegal divide (see Hillyard and Tombs, 2004) enables green criminologists to relate environmental crime/harm to state-corporate crime (e.g. Ruggiero and South, 2013) and the inherent structures of capitalism (Stretesky et al, 2013). It also allows new insights on (human) victimization (Hall, 2013), as well as the incorporation of nonhuman species and ecosystems as victims of harm/crime (Beirne and South, 2007. See also White, 2013).

An interest in environmental activism as an informal response to environmental crime/harm has been a continuous feature of green criminology. One of the early contributions by Lynch and Stretesky (2003) argued for a definition of 'green' in line with the prevalent understandings in environmental justice movements. Brisman and South (2013) urged the study of resistance to environmental crimes/harms and McClanahan (2014: 416), additionally, proposed 'engaging with resistance and resisters' and 'forging empathic connections with activists and activist movements'. Along with documentation of cases of environmental crime/harm and resistance (see e.g. Weinstock, 2017), killing (e.g. Lynch et al, 2018) and 'over-criminalization' of activists (Weis, 2019) are also studied.

Additionally, green criminologists are increasingly exploring combining scholarship and activism, in line with Belknap's definition of activist criminology as 'criminologists engaging in social and/or legal justice at individual, organizational, and/or policy levels, which goes beyond typical research, teaching, and service' (2015: 5). For instance, Ozymy et al (2020: 156-161) argue that green criminologists can improve the understanding of environmental victimization through their research, while also helping the victims in their communities by using their academic knowledge and skills. Similarly, Sollund (2021: 311) claims that 'being a green criminologist is...a statement' whereby one 'take[s] a position and aim[s] not to be neutral regarding environmental harms and animal abuse'. The most extensive theoretical engagement with the activism-green criminology relationship to date has been by Goyes who calls for a 'green criminological activism' defined as:

the stance where, through engagement with environmental, ecological or species justice, criminological knowledge and activity is placed at the service of those victimized on the basis of class, species, gender, sex, race, ethnicity or age...to prevent such victimisation by making an impact in the social, political or cultural realms via research, teaching or service (2016: 508).

Combining Belknap's (2015) notion of activist criminology and 'epistemologies of the South', and refusing 'the ideal of a neutral scientific expert' (2016: 511), Goyes argues that not only the (academic) knowledge produced by (green) criminologists engaged in activism is valid and reliable by scientific standards, but 'the oppressed' are also 'producers of valid knowledge' (2016: 508) and that an activist criminology that recognizes the latter 'prevents us from losing valuable knowledge that might be discarded for being "un-scientific"' (2016: 513). As such, Goyes advocates 'advancing academic knowledge by the interaction with the knowledges of the marginalized and impoverished...in which the end is not science or knowledge in itself but the prevention of harm' (2016: 513). While Belknap (2015), similarly, rejects strict interpretations of scientific neutrality (e.g. see her discussion of the way criminologists with personal experiences of crime or identity-based oppression are viewed as 'biased' on pp. 7-12), her focus is limited to academic knowledge. In this sense, Goyes expands Belknap's definition of activist criminology by incorporating recognition of non-academic forms of knowledge as one of its key tenets. In line with and building on Goyes' these insights, this chapter shifts the focus slightly further - *from* criminologists' activism through academic research *to* knowledge production by activists themselves on issues explored in green criminology.

Movement knowledge and activists as knowledge producers

Social movements - whether they seek or oppose social and political change - are sites of knowledge production. As they identify injustices, voice grievances and challenge policies, activists also produce knowledge as an intrinsic part of their mobilization. Knowledge production in social movements - or what Casas-Cortés et al (2008) call movements' 'knowledge-practices' - comprises not only generation of new knowledge on the socio-political conditions and structures movements resist, but also exploring other possible - and novel - ways of seeing and thinking about the existing forms of being and living. In this way, social movement activity is essentially a 'cognitive praxis' (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991) on how the socio-political order operates, how to resist it through mobilization and how to create alternatives (Cox, 2014). Accordingly, knowledge produced in movements is 'knowledge-in-struggle' (Barker and Cox, 2002: 23), as activists learn, unlearn and relearn from their collective experiences of organizing against and challenging power and inequalities (see also Cox and Nilsen, 2014).

Movement knowledge originates from activists' experiential knowledge about life and society in general and the conditions of their own lives in particular, accumulated prior to and remembered, drawn on, articulated and reinterpreted through mobilization (see Conway, 2006). In this sense, it is situated and embodied (Casas-Cortés et al, 2008) and often practical and tacit (Wainwright, 1994 in Cox and Flesher Fominaya, 2009: 5). In the words of Cox and Flesher Fominaya, social movements generate 'subaltern knowledge as against official knowledge' (2009: 4), as they unearth what is lived and known by those below; 'information about society which is inconvenient' (2009: 1) and 'hidden to - or denied by -' (2009: 4) those above. Thus, movement knowledge is also counter-hegemonic, as it publicly lays bare the power relations and inequalities that underpin the hegemonic socio-political structures, enabling resistance and imagining of alternatives.

Knowledge-practices in movements broadly involve three types of knowledge (see Eyerman and Jamison, 1991; Cox, 2014). Firstly, movements generate a greater awareness of the modus operandi, contradictions and limits of the existing socio-political order (Cox and Nilsen, 2014). Secondly, movements produce knowledge on mobilization, specifically which organizational forms, tactics and strategies work and which does not in contesting power. Both types of knowledge entail some theorizing - generalizing and abstraction from time- and space-bound experiential knowledge - by 'stand[ing] back...reorder[ing]it, using concepts like power, conflict, structure, values, and choice' (Choudry and Kapoor, 2010: 3). This allows movements to move beyond their immediate grievances and local struggles by starting to construe them as part of wider social and political processes (Barker and Cox, 2002; Nilsen, 2010; Cox and Nilsen, 2014).

Thirdly, movements generate policy-oriented knowledge (or counter-expertise) on the issues they campaign about. They do this by critically engaging with the relevant, formal techno-scientific knowledge, identifying its gaps, and re-interpreting it in a way that foregrounds recognition of the power relations which cause the initial (intentional or unintentional) gaps (Nilsen, 2010; Casas-Cortés et al, 2008. See also Arancibia and Motta, 2019; Espinosa, 2022). The source of this counter-expertise can be relevant experiential knowledge, such as local/traditional

ecological knowledge gained through hands-on experience with the environment (see Berkes et al, 2000; Fischer, 2000). It can also be new techno-scientific knowledge produced through 'undone science' whereby 'some activists (who may be credentialed experts themselves) fill the gaps in the 'unfunded, incomplete, or generally ignored' areas or aspects of research (Frickel et al, 2010: 445) with new evidence, through applying different methods or novel interpretations of existing data (see also Arancibia and Motta, 2019).

The three aspects of movement knowledge production described above are intrinsically interrelated. Together they create novel understandings of the social reality, which feed into further thinking and acting for alternatives (Conway, 2006; Casas-Cortés et al, 2008; Cox and Nilsen, 2014. See also della Porta and Pavan, 2017). When discussing plurality of knowledges, Santos (2007: 71) perceptively points out that 'all forms of knowledge uphold practices and constitute subjects' and all are 'testimonies since what they know of reality...is always reflected back in what they reveal about the subject of this knowledge'. It is in this sense that the knowledge produced and disseminated by activists in social movements is the embodiment of their counter-hegemonic subjectivities and the will to challenge the hegemonic social and political order both discursively and materially. In the following sections, I discuss three issues where movement knowledge as outlined above can contribute to green criminological scholarship, using examples of resistance to hydropower in Turkey.

Turkey's hydropower boom and resistance

Turkey witnessed a hydropower boom in the mid-2000s with manifold state-sanctioned, corporate-led hydropower generation projects across its streams and rivers, some of which were still pristine until then. This was made possible through an enabling political and legal environment, marked by the extensive liberalization of the electricity market and the concurrent weakening of environmental legislation, as part of the neoliberal growth agenda of the governing AKP (Justice and Development Party). Although hydropower was already one of the main pillars of Turkey's development strategy in its pre-neoliberal past, this new phase was unprecedented with the level of involvement of private enterprises (Erensü, 2017). Various government incentives allowed newcomers into the hydropower market, with companies even from remote sectors rushing to the countryside, while this policy was partly financed by international loans aimed at supporting low-carbon transition (Islar, 2012). 'Water usage right agreements' signed between the relevant public bodies and private companies, through which rivers and streams were leased to the latter for up to 49 years, were effectively 'water grabbing' (Islar, 2012).

Most of the new hydropower facilities were small, run-of-the-river plants (which channelled water of a river - or a stream - through a tunnel to generate electricity, and then released it back downstream), while small and large dams continued to be built. Despite the promotion of hydropower - particularly the small, run-of-the-river plants - as a green source of energy by the government, these new infrastructures dramatically changed the rural landscapes. One of the early studies reported habitat degradation and fragmentation as a major ecological impact, arising from not only the construction process, but also the building of several, consecutive plants on the same river resulting in the separation of water from the riverbed for kilometres along a

valley (Baskaya et al, 2011). The same study also pointed out that despite the requirement that a certain percentage of water was left in the riverbed for aquatic life, this was not monitored rigorously. Furthermore, the projects restricted locals' access to the commons including rivers, riverbanks and the adjacent meadows - which have enabled nature-based livelihoods and shaped the local folklore for centuries - entailing the risk of loss of livelihoods and cultures.¹

This new state-corporate encroachment in the rural areas has been met with resistance in many communities from the mid-2000s onward. A myriad of grassroots movements in distinct villages and towns sprang up to oppose the proposed projects (see e.g. Yaka, 2017; Sayan, 2019). Participants are locals-turned-activists, including subsistence farmers, small business owners and low-level civil servants, among others. Some have never left their villages/towns and others have close social and economic links with urban centres. Essentially, the movements are place-based defences that bring different sections of the rural community together. Most movements use a variety of tactics such as awareness-raising, peaceful protest, litigation and direct action, while many activists face stigmatization and criminalization (Ozen, 2014). In some cases, resistance lasts several years. Some movements achieve to stop the projects. Others fail and ultimately die out.

How can grassroots activism contribute to green criminological scholarship?

Certainly, energy generation harms and resistance against them described above in the context of Turkey are among many different forms of environmental crime/harm and activism. In the following sections, I will explore three issues where knowledge arising from these particular mobilizations might contribute to green criminology: (i) complexity of harm and victimization, (ii) politics of knowledge in identifying harm, and (iii) limits of formal processes in preventing harm. The discussion is based on data collected as part of my PhD research in three local resistance movements against hydropower in North and East Turkey (namely, the movements in the Munzur Valley of Tunceli/Dersim, in the Fındıklı valleys of Rize and in the Ödük Valley of Erzurum). Data collection involved participant observation, informal talks, semi-structured interviews and document analysis in 2017-2019, with sporadic contact with activists thereafter. For the purposes of this chapter, I draw on brief examples from activists' interpretations, insights and practices, rather than an extensive presentation of data and analysis.

(i) Complexity of harm and victimization

White (2013: 5, original emphasis) describes environmental crimes/harms as 'transgressions that are *harmful to humans, environments and nonhuman animals*'. In line with Hillyard and Tombs' (2004) original four-fold typology of social harm on the basis of physical, economic, emotional and cultural needs, many case studies discussing harm in energy generation processes illustrate that the damage to nonhuman species and ecosystems is frequently entangled with various

¹ Although hydropower is promoted as 'green' energy across the world, problems described here are not unique to Turkey (see e.g. Kelly-Richards et al, 2017 for a broader review of the impacts of small hydropower).

harms to humans at the individual- and societal-level, such as physical (e.g. illness or death), economic (e.g. loss of land or livelihoods) and socio-cultural (e.g. displacement, loss of traditional ways of life) harms (see e.g. Rojas-Páez, 2017; Shelley and Opsal, 2017; Heydon, 2020). Hall (2013: 27-38) also discusses environmental victimization in terms of its ‘impacts’ on humans, namely health impacts, economic impacts, social and cultural impacts and impacts on security. While such studies tend to construe harms to humans as a *consequence* of damages to nonhumans and ecosystems (for a recent exception, see e.g. Short and Szolucha, 2019 who additionally discuss the emotional harms arising in the process of struggle), local activists in the resistance movements against hydropower in Turkey reveal that victimization starts from the planning phase of the projects - *prior to* any material activity that damages nonhumans or ecosystems, as discussed below.

Activists in the Findıklı and Ödük Valley movements I studied, point out that the state-corporate disciplinary practices and strategies to control dissent against the projects is a major source of the communities’ victimization, even before the projects start. For instance, they disclose that some hydropower companies have sought to buy off local decision-makers or others who vocally oppose the projects in both communities, while in the Ödük Valley some companies also tried to strike secret deals with downstream villages (which would be affected the least in accessing the river). Activists in both movements frequently lament that these strategies cause friends, relatives and fellow villagers/town-dwellers to turn against each other, damaging long-established interpersonal trust and communal ties. Activists in the Ödük Valley resistance additionally highlight that physical confrontation with the police or gendarmerie in marches and sit-ins have caused overwhelming emotional distress, as well as bodily injury. Stigmatization and criminalization by the state also resulted in some activists losing their jobs and others ending up with a criminal record.

Such disciplinary practices and strategies, in addition to communities’ marginalization in the formal decision-making processes discussed below, are often experienced as a ‘collective trauma’ (see Short and Szolucha, 2019). This is not least due to a stark realization of the pro-corporate bias of the state, which also facilitates a new way of seeing the power relations that constitute the state. For instance, activists in both the Findıklı and Ödük Valley movements indicate that, as a result, they have learnt to be warier of the government’s local economic development policies and public bodies’ assurances about the potential harms of other state-corporate resource extraction or even routine infrastructure projects in their communities. Closer engagement with the way activists experience and interpret state and company responses to dissent in the face of environmental crime/harm can enrich studies of both harm and activism, including in cases where projects are cancelled as a result of successful resistance *without* any damage to nonhumans and ecosystems, whereas the communities are, nonetheless, victimized in manifold ways.

(ii) Politics of knowledge

Socio-environmental struggles over water and land use for energy generation are also political – with politics ‘understood as the practices and processes through which power, in its multiple

forms, is wielded and negotiated' (Paulson et al, 2003: 209). Knowledge emerges as a key site of contestation in such struggles, when the less powerful ask 'whose knowledge informs decisions related to energy resources and infrastructures?...[W]ho decides and whose perspective gets to count'? (Bridge et al, 2018: 8). For green criminologists such as White (2008: 88), the process of identifying environmental harm is further complicated by 'the politics of "denial" – in which ...manifestations of social injury and environmental damage are obfuscated, ignored or redefined in ways which represent them as being of little relevance' by governments or companies. In this sense, collective struggles to prevent environmental crime/harm are simultaneously struggles for equal participation in knowledge production, through revealing constraints of formal expert knowledge and creating counter-expertise, as discussed below.

In the context of Turkey, companies' project information documents and - if available - environmental impact assessment (EIA) reports are the major official sources of knowledge on the proposed hydropower projects. These describe the features of the infrastructure, possible negative effects and mitigation measures (including company commitments). While the EIA reports are comparatively more rigorous, activists point out that the entire EIA process is often viewed as a bureaucratic hurdle by the companies and a mere formality by the relevant public officials (see the below section for more on EIA. See also Elvan, 2018). This is reflected in the content of the reports, whereby anecdotal evidence recounted by the activists across the three movements I studied suggest that several lack significant place-specific details or are incomplete; riddled with omissions or inaccuracies; written without proper desk reviews or actual fieldwork, and many are silent or weak on harms to communities, let alone acknowledging the deep human-nonhuman, human-ecosystem interactions and place-culture-identity connections characterizing most rural communities.

Yet, conclusions of EIA reports are taken as the legitimate, expert knowledge upon which official decisions about the proposed projects are based. Against this, activists engage in producing counter-expertise, such as by adding new techno-scientific knowledge. This is usually done by the credentialed experts among activists, while the initial impetus often comes from experiential, local ecological knowledge (see e.g. Arancibia and Motta, 2019; Espinosa, 2022 on counter-expertise). For instance, local activists in the Munzur Valley and Ödük Valley resistances in Turkey draw on their past experiences of the impacts of (natural) droughts, when they assess and challenge the formal experts' claims about the necessary amount of water to be left in the riverbed for aquatic life. Movement counter-expertise may also embody a proposal for the re-orientation of the focus in impact assessment, as exemplified by the annual Culture and Nature Festival held by the Munzur Valley resistance. The festival combines panels by scholar-activists on the ecosystemic impacts of the proposed hydropower projects, with celebration of the local culture through traditional rituals and artistic events. Calling attention to the interconnectedness of nature and culture in this way, Munzur Valley activists challenge their artificial separation or the substantial lack of attention to the latter in the EIA process (see also Kelly, 2019). In combination, these not only constitute a different body of knowledge, but also signify different needs, priorities and values regarding energy generation.

(iii) Limits of formal processes

Heydon (2018: 69) argues that green criminology should pay more attention to the procedural dimension of environmental justice, identifying it 'as the space in which distributional justice is either ensured or inhibited'. In other words, procedures either involve just and equal participation in or marginalization and exclusion from decision-making. In addition, Brisman (2013) stresses the importance of public access to information as part of procedural environmental rights. In the conflicts around hydropower in Turkey, environmental impact assessment (EIA) is the main stage in which local activists can intervene in project initiation and implementation, but such routes to participation in decision-making are limited due to two reasons.

Firstly, small hydropower facilities were exempt from EIA for a long time in Turkey. From 2008 to 2014, EIA was required only for facilities with installed capacities of 25 megawatts or more (although the threshold was lowered to 10 megawatts in 2014 and scrapped altogether only very recently). Coupled with no legal requirement to consult the relevant communities prior to the official project application, this led to many early instances of locals becoming aware of the projects only when the companies arrived with construction machines. On the other hand, such examples prompted more vigilance in places such as Findıklı: Activists there revealed that as soon as they became aware of the projects initiated elsewhere in the country, they sought information through informal means - for instance, by asking their friends or relatives working in local public bodies whether there were similar plans for their communities. While this compensates for a lack of access to information, activists from the Findıklı resistance also interpret it as further diminishing trust in the state and formal processes of public participation.

A second, bigger problem that has been continuous since the beginning of Turkey's hydropower boom is the tendency of the decision-makers to treat both the EIA and its participatory elements as formalities. While public participation meetings are obligatory before the EIA reports are prepared, the opinions voiced there (or later when the final report is publicly shared) are not binding and have almost no effect (Elvan, 2018: 4-5). Thus, over the years, some local movements have developed a new, subversive stance towards the EIA meetings. For instance, in Findıklı, activists explain that they go to the EIA public participation meeting, but *do not attend* it. Instead, they make a public statement outside explaining why they oppose the project, sometimes followed by a peaceful march with slogans. In this way, activists disrupt the EIA, halting the project approval process. They also assert their agency - and rights to procedural justice - by rejecting this process of controlled participation outright and refusing dialogue unless their agency is recognized.

It should be noted that litigation is a frequent movement tactic to challenge the formal EIA decisions in Turkey, when participation in EIA-related administrative decision-making has not been possible. However, activists across all three movements I studied point out that it is too costly, lengthy and arduous, as well as leading to fragile gains due to the lack of oversight in the execution of court decisions or introduction of new laws that enable companies to continue to pursue the projects (see also Gönenç, 2022). These experiences are in line with the green

criminological critique regarding limits of environmental law-making and enforcement in contexts where states tend to prioritize corporate interests and economic growth (see e.g. Lynch et al, 2020). On the other hand, activist practices described above call green criminologists' attention to the problems in access to procedural justice, as well, in addition to the movements' real-life interventions to overcome them.

Movement knowledge 'in its own right'

Above I explored three issues where knowledge arising from resistance movements against hydropower in Turkey can contribute to green criminological scholarship. In this section I will briefly draw attention to the significance of critical reflections on academic engagement with movement knowledge. As discussed above, a key feature of Goyes' green criminological activism is its stress on 'cognitive justice' which involves 'reassert[ing] the validity of plural ways of knowing' (2016: 514). For Goyes,

an activist stance in which perceptions of victimized individuals are taken as valid knowledge is the only way to coherently implement a harm perspective, where what is considered a problem is not imposed by researchers but dialectically built with the prominent participation of the victims (2016: 514).

As such, an activist green criminology entails an attempt in both the recognition of non-academic forms of knowledge produced by those affected by environmental crime/harm - be it victims or victims-turned-activists - and the co-production of academic knowledge *with* them. Similarly, Belknap (2015: 15) calls for 'practitioner-researcher collaborations' in data collection, data analysis and co-authorship, with the aim of improving both the quality of academic studies and practitioners' work (although her approach to activist criminology does not extend to an explicit recognition of non-academic forms of knowledge). As Goyes cautions, one possible problem here is the treatment of non-academic forms of knowledge as 'raw material and resources' in academic research (2016: 509). How can this be avoided in the case of movement knowledge?

Insights of Casas-Cortés et al (2008) and Chesters (2012) are worth mentioning briefly. Both point out that social movements are often seen as objects of knowledge in academic research. Sometimes this is the case even when their knowledge production is partially acknowledged - such as, in relation to the issues they mobilize about. For Casas-Cortés et al, a key step in academic engagement with activists as knowledge-producing subjects is 'moving beyond the traditional social scientific schema of the explainers and the explained' which entails academics starting to see their work as not 'simply "on" but primarily *with* or *alongside* movements' (2008: 27, original emphasis). As such, academics' engagement with social movements should involve 'listening, tracing, and mapping' their work (Casas-Cortés et al: 2008: 28), as well as their thinking processes, interpretations and analyses. Chesters further stresses that the ethics of co-production of knowledge by academics and social movements requires that academics should both 'respect the ontological and epistemological frameworks' of the movements and 'reflect upon' their own ontologies and epistemologies in their engagement with the movements (2012:

158). This involves, on the one hand, acknowledging the situatedness of both academic and movement knowledges, and, on the other hand, recognizing the latter as 'independent of the academy and valuable in its own right' (Chesters, 2012: 146). In the case of green or other branches of criminology, this would, for instance, entail criminologists engaging with activists or victim advocates in a way that aims to understand and learn from the latter's own reflections, explanations and practices on the manifestations of harm/crime, the socio-political structures that facilitate harm/crime (and impunity) and how to resist these structures - as opposed to solely eliciting information from them to be fed into the criminologists' explanatory frameworks, and, thus, translated into academic knowledge.

Conclusion

Collective mobilization is a key form of informal response to environmental harm/crime. As such, examination of environmental activism has been a continuous feature of green criminological scholarship. Green criminologists' recent explorations to combine activism and scholarship, and more importantly, to establish both the 'possib[ility]' and 'desirab[ility]' of green criminological activism (Goyes, 2016: 515) invite further critical thinking on knowledge production and academic engagement with social movements. While acknowledging criminologists' activism through academic research as paramount for achieving social and legal justice (see Belknap, 2015) and 'cognitive justice' (see Goyes, 2016), this chapter aims to shift the focus slightly further - to knowledge production by activists themselves on issues explored by green criminological research.

As part of their contestation of power, social movements produce knowledge on how the existing socio-political order operates, how to mobilize against it and the specific issues they campaign about in the form of counter-expertise. Drawing on examples from three local movements resisting hydropower projects (in the Munzur Valley of Tunceli/Dersim, the Fındıklı valleys of Rize, and the Ödük Valley of Erzurum) in Turkey, this chapter has explored three issues where activist interpretations, insights and practices can contribute to green criminological scholarship, and how, namely (i) complexity of harm and victimization by calling attention to the state-corporate disciplinary practices and strategies to control dissent even before (or without) harms to nonhuman species and ecosystems, (ii) politics of knowledge in identifying harm by revealing the constraints of formal expert knowledge and creating counter-expertise based on different needs and values, and (iii) limits of formal processes in preventing harm by exposing and resisting exclusion from decision-making. This analysis is also relevant to the growing body of literature on energy harms in green criminology (see e.g. Short, 2020; Setyawati, 2022). As I briefly discussed towards the end, an academic engagement with activists as knowledge-producing subjects requires recognizing movement knowledge - activists' interpretations, insights and practices - as 'valuable in its own right' (Chesters, 2012: 146) and producing (academic) knowledge 'alongside' them (Casas-Cortés et al, 2008: 27).

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