Center for Cybercrime Studies

presents

From cybercrime to cyborg Crime: An exploration of high tech crime, offenders and victims through an actor-network theory lens

Dr. Wytske van der Wagen

Erasmus Law School
University of Groningen
The Netherlands

Date: February 26, 2019
Time: 1:40 – 2:40 pm
Room: New Building 1.125

Bio Dr. Wytske van der Wagen recently completed her PhD project at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. She currently is an assistant professor at the Erasmus School of Law (Department of Criminology). Dr. van der Wagen conducts criminological research on cybercrime, particularly qualitative research on cyber offenders and theoretical issues.
**Abstract** In recent years computer technologies and digital devices have become pervasive in all facets of human existence, including crime and deviant behavior. Technological innovations transformed or digitalized existing crimes, but also co-created various new more ‘high-tech’ types of crimes such as Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks, computer hacking, banking malware and ransomware. While these crimes can be technically sophisticated, some of them are just a mouse click away. Such development poses the question whether criminology is dealing with a new or distinct type of crime, demanding theoretical renewal. In my dissertation I departed from the notion that criminological frameworks are generally too instrumental, anthropocentric and dualistic in nature for a type of crime in which technology is so ubiquitous, where offenders constantly interact with, through and against technology and where the boundaries between the human and the technical, the actual and the fictional, the offender and the victim get increasingly blurry.

Against this background I called upon the constructivist framework of Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which is particularly known for its claim that humans are not the only significant actors in the social world. ANT provides a way of thinking that treats (technical) things in a more active way and also promotes an anti-dualistic, less anthropocentric and more hybrid and complex way of grasping the phenomena that we study. The dissertation explored whether and how ANT can counter the theoretical challenges criminology is facing and can offer a valuable alternative or addition. In this scope I conducted different empirical case studies in which I studied e.g. botnets, hacking/hackers and ransomware. Based on the theoretical and empirical analysis, I presented an alternative approach in my dissertation – denoted as the ‘cyborg crime’ perspective - which (as I argue) enables to grasp and analyze certain aspects of cyber offending and victimization more profoundly than a traditional criminological approach. During my talk at John Jay Cybercrime Centre I will present my dissertation
in a nutshell and will also provide you with information about my current research on cyber offenders and interventions.

Please RSVP to Ms. B. Goodman (bgoodman@jjay.cuny.edu) if you plan to attend. An RSVP is appreciated but not required.