Crime, Justice and Media: Debating (Mis) representations and Renewed Challenges

Crime, Justiça e Média: Debates Sobre Representações Mediáticas e Desafios Atuais

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1. Introduction

Understanding the ever-complex relationship between the media, society and crime requires exploring several fluid discussions that connect these domains. How does the media affect the way people think about social issues such as criminality and justice? What is the impact of media coverage of crime on how society responds to it? Do the media have a central role in forming public opinion, does public opinion influence what media report, and/or are there multiple and complex influences within this spectrum? What are the challenges imposed by the several forms of media in the scope of mass communication regarding crime and violence? These and other queries are persistent among media scholars researching this field of study. However, studies have shown no clear-cut answers to these questions as they show complex intersections between them and might change significantly according to geopolitical issues, affected social groups and types of media involved.

A robust field of literature on the relations between media, crime, and justice has shown that media play a relevant and decisive role in the overall perception of crime and justice (see, for example, Greer, 2013). In fact, contemporary views of crime are directly connected to how media represent aspects of the criminal justice system, including violent crimes, police activity, criminal investigations, high-profile trials, prison life and others. News media, social media, fictional representations of crime and justice, and the relatively new but effervescent field of "true crime" depictions (in the form of podcasts, movies, and books) make oppositions between collective security and human rights more visible. These media platforms also reify discourses that rely on notions of

"us" and "others". However, further debate is essential to evidence the profound social inequalities that promote such social cleavages.

Aside from the media's role in representing crime and justice, we have recently witnessed how it can also be used as a platform for promoting and acting upon violence and criminality. Our daily lives have become increasingly reliant on the digital world, thanks to advances in telecommunications, the rapid dissemination of mobile information, and the popularity of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter (Thukral & Kainya, 2022) and, more recently, TikTok. Such a pervasive use of social media has, consequently, changed the way we understand and experience victimisation and crime. Examples of this relate to online gender violence (Afrouz, 2021; Backe et al., 2018; Bound Alberti, 2021) or online hate crime and hate speech (Castaño-Pulgarín et al., 2021; Müller & Schwarz, 2020; Williams et al., 2020), as well as phishing, identity theft, online job fraud, cyberbullying, cyberstalking, and so much more (Thukral & Kainya, 2022).

In this thematic issue of *Comunicação e Sociedade*, we invited social sciences researchers to reflect upon the various forms of interconnection and disconnection between crime, justice and media. We propose to understand how the media play an essential heuristic instrument for understanding crime and justice, as it both (re)presents and impacts our understanding of criminal events and can be a platform for violent and criminal activity.

This introductory article provides a reflection on the pressing issues around the links between media, crime and justice. It starts with a debate around media representations of crime and justice, moves to discuss the impact of media on the public perception of crime and justice, and then underlines how new media can be used to fuel crime and violence. Finally, the structure of this thematic issue is provided, briefly describing and contextualising the 10 articles that comprise it.

2. Media Representations of Crime and Justice

Media representations (a core field in the broad field of media studies) concern how various media platforms portray particular groups, communities, experiences, ideas, or topics from a particular ideological or value perspective. These representations do not necessarily reflect or mirror "reality" but (re)present the reality, creating a new reality. Lippmann (1922) coined this as the pseudo-environment, corresponding to the stereotypical reality presented by the media, which is not the reality in itself, but the reality conveyed to the audience and the reality that the audience perceived as being "real". In this regard, media theorists have long argued about how certain social groups and events are represented in the media (see some examples in Jewkes, 2004).

Because this pseudo-environment becomes the "reality", it is essential to understand how much of this actually impacts and influences our understanding of the world. For many, the media are the main (or only) source of access to certain facts, events, stories, reports, testimonies or images; and it is also in this way that such individuals form opinions, reinforce beliefs, build images, and give meaning to a complex and changing social reality (Carvalho, 2007; Gomes, 2015; Penedo, 2003). Although the way the public

receives information is not completely uncritical and passive (Guibentif, 2002; Sacco, 1995), most of what people perceive about a certain reality is provided by the media, especially in the case of realities distant from their daily lives (Lippmann, 1922). Media may not say how people should think about a certain topic or event, but they are definitely decisive in defining the topics, and events the public should consider through the way information is highlighted and represented (Machado & Santos, 2009b).

As such, media assume key importance in societies, and media representations are worthy of in-depth investigation as we cannot ignore how certain social issues are conveyed (Gomes, 2015; Greer, 2013). The media are a powerful agent of social control (Pina, 2009) and social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966/2004). The media, therefore, constitute a powerful ideological apparatus, as its discourses are based on assumptions with a strong ideological character. On the one hand, media contribute to social control and reproduction and, on the other hand, operate as cultural commodities, entertaining people, keeping them politically and socially informed and reflecting changes in values and identities (Mendes, 2004, p. 153).

In this regard, it is paramount to understand how media are key producers and purveyors of "knowledge" about crime, disorder and control (Greer, 2013). Our understanding of crime — how much crime is out there, what types of crime are most prevalent, who is most at risk, who are the offenders and what are the best responses — derives mostly from sources other than personal experience. Most people only experience criminality through the news. That is, most individuals are subjected to a representation of the crime instead of facing criminality itself (either as offenders and/or as victims). Consequently, the media's coverage of a certain type of crime is directly related to fear of such crime (Chadee & Ditton, 2005). Moreover, how the media represent crime not only shapes community identity but also encourages personal and shared senses of fear and security (Banks, 2005).

News about crime and justice and entertainment centring on it are quite widespread (Robinson, 2018). Crime news is one of the most popular and constant in the total amount of news broadcast by the media (Machado & Santos, 2008; Penedo, 2003; Robinson, 2018). Moreover, crime has become the widest and most competitive area of journalism (Pina, 2009). Besides this tendency to the exaggerated coverage of crime news by the media in general, it is relevant to consider how the media report the stories of alleged criminals and their victims and the feelings they consequently provoke in the audience, feeding people's stereotypes and urban myths about crime (McCombs, 2002). That is why, of the many themes that can be found in the media, that of crime and justice is referred to as being the most revealing of what the ideology of a given society is, involving notions of good and evil, morality, social achievement and social structure (Surette, 1998, pp. 37–38). Wacquant (2000) also adds that the media function like the prison or the ghetto since they are institutions in charge of stigmatising certain groups to neutralise the material and/or symbolic threat they represent or may represent for the surrounding society.

However, why is "crime" so popular in the media? Ericson et al. (2010) argue that the media's appetite for crime stems from a more general concern with the question of order, in which order is conceived in terms of morality, in a procedural way and as a social hierarchy (see also Sparks, 2001). This order is embedded in reality by the particular interests of certain dominant groups and is masked in the name of objectivity, neutrality and balance that the media aim to achieve (Ericson et al., 2010, p. 98). Surette (1998) summarises the following explanations advanced by different authors for the popularity of crime news: (a) crime news is described as serving a positive social function by defining the limiting acceptable social behaviour, deterring offenders, cautioning potential victims, and providing crime surveillance; (b) crime is an important social issue, and therefore crime news is made to reflect the world we live in; and, lastly (c) crime news increase circulation and has entertainment value for companies that own the media. Each of these reasons explains why crime news is so popular, the types of crime that are most favourable to them and the reasons for their coverage (Surette, 1998).

However, as we already alluded to in this introduction, the problem with crime in the media is not only how crime is portrayed but also the frequency in which it is reported, exaggerating the importance of crime in people's lives. Media analysis studies evidence that the news shows a map of criminal events that differs, in many ways, from that provided by official crime statistics (Gomes, 2013; Katz, 1987; Robinson, 2018; Sacco, 1995). Indeed, several studies show that, even when statistics indicate that most crimes committed are non-violent, the media show us exactly the opposite (Sacco, 1995). The media overwhelmingly focus on violent and sexual crimes, which have greater news value (Greer, 2013), and on crimes committed by strangers rather than by acquaintances or family members (cases of domestic violence are, for example, less often reported than street crimes; Pina, 2009). By doing so, media representations exaggerate both the levels of serious interpersonal crime in society and the risk of becoming a crime victim (Greer, 2013). Also, media reports of criminal facts are usually limited to the description of the event and immediate consequences, not focusing on critical perspectives or wider debates around causes, prevention, or policy (Carvalho, 2007; Greer, 2012, 2013). Criminal events are simply represented as a result of aberrant individual deviations (Bortner, 1984; Haney & Manzolati, 1981; Hans & Dee, 2010), practised by crazy or evil people (Pina, 2009) with a vast set of choices (Surette, 1998). In this sense, offenders are often seen as if they were not part of the world in which rules, values and considerations of justice apply and, no less commonly, are associated with the more vulnerable social classes (Machado & Santos, 2009a) and racial and ethnical minoritised groups (Gomes, 2013, 2015). In sum, offenders from the most disadvantaged social groups are portrayed as the culprits for the existence of violence in the streets (Hayward & Yar, 2006; Ramos & Novo, 2008).

Considering the dramatic and emotional potential of criminal stories, the media explore emotionally shocking scenarios, elect heroes, and punish villains, always with an exemplary perspective of restoring order, truth and justice (Ferin-Cunha, 2003, pp. 2–3), being, thus, ideologically imbued. This replacement of the order is again in line with the idea of Ericson et al. (2010) that crime news would have a positive social function of social

control. The darkest side of human nature is scrutinised, stimulating the most voyeuristic eyes (Peelo, 2006) and exacerbating feelings of repulsion towards criminal acts, anger towards injustice and offenders and the shame, remorse or guilt of offenders (Karstedt, 2010).

3. Media Effects on Public Perception of Crime and Justice

Media representations of crime have been a perennial cause of concern (Reiner, 2007). It is undeniable that the media representations of crime end up influencing policy and practice related to crime control in Western societies. That is alarming because coverage of criminological issues by the media is interspersed with moral panics (see Altheide, 2009; Cohen, 2011; Cyr, 2003; Garland, 2008; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994; Hall et al., 1978; Hunt, 1997), a fear-producing process of strong disapproval of moral threats (Garland, 2008) that exemplifies a right-wing inclination of the media (Cohen, 2011). In fact, moral panics can be actually considered more dangerous than the crime itself, as it induces authorities' actions for crime control in the direction of social fears and anxieties instead of in the direction of what statistics prove to occur (Hickman, 1982).

The issue of the media's effects on the public perception of crime has given rise to research on the relationship between levels of exposure to media content and the sensationalist treatment of certain crimes and opinions and public attitudes towards criminal reality (Carvalho, 2007; Ferin-Cunha et al., 2007; Guibentif, 2002; McCombs, 2002; Penedo, 2003; Pina, 2009; Santos, 2009; Webster, 2001). Media are not solely responsible for inducing fear of crime since the risk of victimisation, previous experience as a victim, environmental conditions, ethnicity, and previous contacts with the police and the criminal justice system are also among the many factors that interact through complex processes that influence public anxiety about crime (Rego, 2015). Nonetheless, media play an important role in creating a "cultural climate" in which certain types of criminal behaviour are portrayed more often, and with greater intensity, than others (Jewkes, 2004, p. 167). The same can be concluded regarding certain groups of people, usually poor, foreign and ethnic groups, who are portrayed as deviants, offenders or villains of the stories narrated in the news (Cádima & Figueiredo, 2003; Carvalho, 2007; Ferin-Cunha et al., 2008; Gomes, 2015; Mills et al., in press; Santos, 2008). The media are thus responsible for manipulating and feeding public fears about some crimes and certain social groups (Jewkes, 2004).

As such, crime and justice are at the same very appealing matters for the media and a projective matter of tensions and social imbalances (Penedo, 2003). Surette (1998) identifies five different ways the media influence the collective perception of crime and fear of crime — (a) substitution: people who do not have alternative sources of knowledge to replace fear-promoting media information; (b) resonance: people with a concrete experience of victimisation who corroborate or come across the information conveyed by the media; (c) vulnerability: people less able to prevent victimisation

are more easily frightened by information from the media; (d) affinity: people with demographic similarities to crime victims also become more fearful and more susceptible to being influenced by the media; and (e) maximum effect: people who already feel high levels of fear are, because of that, beyond the reach of the media's influence (Chiricos et al., 1997).

Therefore, the media can be seen as a cause and a way to fight crime (Brown, 2003; Surette, 1998). This paradox stems from how the media are, at the same time, responsible for reporting crime and for telling us how it can be fought. Not only do we learn about crime and justice through the media, we learn to live with it through the same source (Surette, 1998). The media sell the fear of crime while lamenting it (Brown, 2003, p. 26) and demanding it to be fought. The idea of a "socially constructed reality" about crime, in which the processes of information flows create our perception and understanding of the world we live in, is a central and profoundly important aspect of knowing where the truth about crime ends and the truth about the media begins (Surette, 1998).

4. New Media As a Platform for Violence and Crime

In the last decades, the web has transformed the rules of socialisation, defying notions of space and time and setting an over-stimulated imagination about itself as a new medium (Malbreil, 2007). This added complexities and new challenges to everyday life, including the way crime and justice events happen and are portrayed. In fact, nowadays, it is common that crime and justice events are *webcast* as they happen, high-profile "celebrity" trials are tweeted live, and riots and revolutions are orchestrated through social media (Greer, 2013). Furthermore, the web can be used as a platform for criminal behaviour, and a means to prevent and fight crime. To understand how new media enable cybercrime and the social implications of crime and violence mediated by technology, we must first place new media representation in the common imagination.

The web has been feeding people's fantasy and imagination since its earliest predictions: when the novelist Jules Verne talked of a network to send documents through signs in the 1860s; when the documentalist Paul Otlet imagined a telepicture book at the end of the 19th century; when the poet Paul Valery started a discussion about ubiquity almost a century ago. Overall, views of the web have been positive, and cyberspace has been described through optimistic metaphors, such as "digital library", "information highway", "virtual community", "digital ecology", and "narrative stream" (Mosco, 2004). While there were certainly negative uses of the web from its very first days of widespread use — for example, discussions about spam in the middle 1990s (Brunton, 2013) — only recently have negative and positive perspectives become more evenly balanced. Part of the process in which new media's positive meaning is constructed through media representation is responsible for nurturing people's minds and bringing together real and fantastical meanings (Orgad, 2012).

Contemporary debates about the impact of the web finally include emerging negative issues, focusing especially on online social networks and their uses. For instance, de Vries and Schinkel (2019) discuss the imaginary surveillance surrounding social media

applying facial recognition technologies, thereby allowing the rise in "algorithmic anxiety". McGregor (2019) argues that journalists currently co-opt social media activity in their political reporting to reflect and represent public opinion, which attributes to companies such as Twitter and Facebook a legitimised role in creating a general idea of public opinion. According to Oz et al. (2018), these platforms are constantly seen as enabling uncivil and impolite behaviours, especially in interactions with strangers. In addition, these platforms might also be used to enact gender violence (Afrouz, 2021; Backe et al., 2018; Bound Alberti, 2021), hate crime and hate speech (Castaño-Pulgarín et al., 2021; Müller & Schwarz, 2020; Williams et al., 2020), cyberbullying, cyberstalking, economic fraud, and several other types of crimes (Thukral & Kainya, 2022). Recent research also discusses the use of Twitter for the distribution of misinformation, commonly labelled "fake news", now a reality inserted into political discussions and imposing a challenge to democracies (Brummette et al., 2018; Vargo et al., 2018). There is also research showing the negative social and psychological impacts of social media, especially amongst the youth (van Dijck, 2013); the lack of protection of users' privacy by technology corporations such as Google, Facebook and Amazon (Striphas, 2015); abuses perpetrated by governments in liberal regimes (Greenwald, 2014); and individual, corporate and governmental vulnerability to cyber-attacks (Landau, 2017).

Positive representations of new media still focus on how they can be used to protect people's right to private communication and access to information (Floridi, 2014; Hoang & Pishva, 2014; Jardine, 2018; McLeod, 2011; Sharon & John, 2018; Wu & Atkin, 2018). However, new and growing forms of crime and violence through new media exemplify to which extent technological development adds sophistication to cybercrime, promoting more sceptical views and representations of the web (Larsson et al., 2012; Martin, 2014; Morselli et al., 2017; van Hardeveld et al., 2017). Interestingly, Curtis and Oxburgh (2022) argue that victims of online crimes and cybercriminals rely on a sense of security given by both the use of technology and the distance between themselves: while victims feel falsely protected by these things, offenders are actually enabled by them, avoiding any accountability. As mentioned by Dupont and Holt (2022), there is a clear relationship between the increase in the use of new technologies in everyday lives and its appropriation for criminal and anti-social activities, which makes it "vital to increase our understanding of the nature of offender behaviour, correlates of victimisation, and the utility of policies to deter crime" (p. 860). That said, victimisation is a topic that requires special attention and research, considering that it is undeniable that criminals have explored the web. Victims must be empowered to report a crime, which will only happen if cases are dealt with seriously, preventing further victimisation and mental health issues; considering that in a post-pandemic world, most people have to spend time online, this is not optional anymore (Button et al., 2022).

5. Introducing This Thematic Issue

As we argued so far, links between crime, justice and media are deep and complex, as media and social media (re)present, (mis)represent and impact our understanding of crime and justice but can also be used as a platform for violent and criminal acts. This special issue addresses this complexity by comprising research about traditional mass media such as newspapers and television (Luhmann, 1996), as well as new media that is not based on the broadcasting logic (Scolari, 2009), which Manovich (2002) equates to digital media, for instance, social media.

Considering the efforts for decolonisation in academia and the prominent global feature of the media, this special issue brings together research about multiple countries, contexts and realities. As argued by Laidler et al. (2017), research about the crime-media nexus has to include the nuances in the Global North and Global South, taking into consideration not only political and social situations but also geopolitics and economic aspects.

This thematic issue consists of 10 research papers, distributed in three main themes: media representations of crime and justice, online crime and violence, and technology.

The first set of articles explores *media representations* of certain violent and criminal events in news and entertainment media. The first article, written by Célia Belim and Artur Simões, explores two Portuguese newspapers' agenda-setting and framing when representing the Hong Kong protests. These protests originated in March 2019 after the Hong Kong government proposed an extradition bill, which led to citizens' fear that they could become subject to a different legal system, undermining the region's autonomy and the citizens' rights. Reports of attacks on protesters, arrests of activists and communications problems during protests concerned United Nations human rights experts. Regardless of the differences between media outlets, this article provides an interesting debate on the importance of covering protests and social movements. After all, as stated by the authors, "a protest without media coverage is a non-event (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993), assuming the logic that it exists if the protest is represented in the media" (Belim & Simões, p. 44). More than that, the way the media cover these events might strengthen or compromise the cause, and the impact of media representations is discussed.

Then, Gilmar José dos Santos discusses how the online media have been representing corporate manslaughter by focusing on two case studies: Samarco's and Vale's criminal tragedies in Brazil. Among other findings, the author evidenced that online news is reluctant to report the cases as corporate manslaughter, framing the episodes as accidents or tragedies. Although the alternative-independent media appeared to be more inclined to frame it as a homicide, not enough resources were available to produce their own content. As such, it was observed that the reporting approach neutralised and re-signified the crimes, favouring the companies. This article raises relevant debates around what voice is given to the victims in such criminal tragedies, how the transgressors do not fit in the media or society's representation of the criminal and how this ends up impacting the way media convey corporate crime.

Continuing with the focus on news articles, Ester Amaral de Paula Minga explores the social representations around the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in two influential Portuguese newspapers. This Church was the subject of many news reports during the 1990s due to accusations of serious crimes such as charlatanism, connections to drug trafficking and child abduction. Much of the news linked the Church with stereotypes about Brazil and Brazilians and referenced Brazilian soap operas, which were quite popular in the country at that time. Via critical discourse analysis and framing analysis, the author analysed if these same ideas persisted through time. The author concludes that the negative image of the Church identified in the 1990s remained, although the Church's media presence has since reduced. Although the current presence of the Church in the media is less pronounced, recent cases such as the 2017 *O Segredo dos Deuses* (The Secret of Gods) suggest that the emphasis on melodrama in coverage of the Church remains and may come once again, to be associated with contexts of xenophobia and religious intolerance. This analysis over time allows us to discuss the eventual impact media have on public opinion through time.

The following article focuses on the discourse of photographs instead of the common analysis of the journalistic text. Ângela Cristina Salgueiro Marques, Angie Biondi and Ana Paula da Rosa provide an analysis of a set of journalistic photographs about two major police operations in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, one of them at Complexo da Maré in 2014 and the other one at Jacarezinho in 2021, both considered massacres as civilians have lost their lives. Analysing those photographs and comparing the position and attitude of police officers and local people, amongst other nuances, the authors enrol in a philosophical debate around visibility conditions and journalistic context. According to the authors, the presence of ordinary people in those images, while doing their daily chores, gesturing, glancing and simply reacting to the horror of the situation, interfere with the images' enunciative character. The article then takes a step further to discuss these appearances' political and aesthetic power, as they can highlight the nuances between the visible and the readable.

While the previous articles focus on media representations through newspaper articles (text or image), the last two articles within the media representations section of the special issue focus on media representations of entertainment, particularly television series. Melina Meimaridis and Rodrigo Quinan explore the normalisation of brutality and police authority in American television series. The authors argue, for instance, how television series reinforce the police institution's authority treating its actions as unquestionable, or how they normalise police brutality, with narratives often justifying violent acts as an efficient investigative tool. By doing so, this article creates a great platform to discuss the significant role that television fiction accomplishes in mediating and constructing meaning about the police. It also helps question these representations in the face of conflicting events such as the death of George Floyd, a Black man who was murdered by a White police officer who knelt over his neck, suffocating him, and the subsequent debate around the defund the police movement.

Jesús Jiménez-Varea and Antonio Pineda, on the other hand, focus their analysis on the popular television show *Arrow* to discuss the representation of vigilantism, a form of extra-legal crime fighting. This empirical analysis explores the various rhetorical strategies used by the television series to justify vigilantism, such as the representation of legal and governmental institutions as corrupt and inefficient, the multiple rationales whereby vigilantism is practised, and the sanctioning of private crime fighting by institutions. Among other debates, the authors evidence that the show boosts individualism and anti-government neoliberalism ideologies by portraying the state as inefficient and/ or corrupt. Ultimately, this article evidences the importance television series might have in impacting societal views on crime, justice and law enforcement, particularly on who should be in charge of keeping everyone's safe.

The two subsequent articles focus on another important theme of this thematic issue: *online crime* and violence and the existent continuum between offline and online practices. Considering the impact that the involvement of young people on social media might have on the opportunities for delinquent practices and the action of specialised courts, Maria João Leote de Carvalho delves into an exploratory analysis of qualitative information collected in courts of male and female young offenders. By looking at the use(s) of social media in the perpetration of unlawful acts as recorded in judicial proceedings in Portugal, the author concluded that less than a third of the young individuals were proven to have been involved in unlawful acts using social media. Furthermore, there is a significant overrepresentation of girls as perpetrators of unlawful acts, especially those involving a high degree of violence. Regardless of gender, the relationships established in school seem to dominate the interaction between aggressors-victims. Additionally, more than the anonymity afforded by the digital platforms, violent action is the catalyst to gain respect through the instant gratification offered by social media in an online-offline continuum, which characterises the lives of young people today. These conclusions shed light on the gender dynamics of delinquent practices when using social media, as well as the eventual challenges the justice system has in understanding and applying measures to these particular acts.

The other article focuses on online violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic. By analysing in-depth interviews with women victims/survivors of online violence during the pandemic in Portugal, Rita Basílio de Simões, Inês Amaral, Sílvio Santos and Juliana Alcantara explore how women experience the nature, prevalence, and impacts of online violence. The data enabled the identification of 10 types of dynamic and hybrid modalities of online violence against women. By exploring the particularities of the online context as a space of continuity of the dynamics of violence existing offline, this study evidences the continuum of misogyny and gender violence to which women are exposed in their daily lives. It also contributes to deepening the knowledge about the online as a space of power networks, inequalities and gender injustice in a country where online gender violence is still underexplored.

The two last articles are related to *technology and online media*, particularly how we can use these to fight crime and promote a certain social order. Paulo Victor Melo and Paulo Serra discuss the relationship between digital technologies and general security in Brazil by analysing government program proposals of the mayors of Brazilian state capitals, which mentioned keywords such as "facial recognition", "artificial intelligence", "surveillance", "video surveillance", "monitoring", "drone", "camera", "video", "data" and "technology". The study provides important debates around the ethical, social, political, and cultural implications of adopting digital technologies for public security. This debate is especially relevant in countries marked by structural racism so that, in fighting crime and expanding protection, violence against historically discriminated groups is not perpetuated.

Lastly, Tine Munk and Juan Ahmad focus their analysis on the Ukrainian cyber war and how the use of online communication platforms to reach out to populations, within and outside the country, has been instrumental for military success. In fact, as evidenced by the authors, inventive thinking has enabled the actors to utilise the online space and develop new computing tactics to defend the country. This way, Ukrainian leadership has been able to carry out a successful speech act that has activated numerous online users and enabled a new form of online civic activism where online actors fight with the military forces. This article sheds light on the importance of online as a way of promoting a certain social order across borders and trying to surpass offline national constraints.

Finally, this thematic issue presents timely and diverse discussions that connect media studies to criminological research. This combination is not only interesting and relevant but also necessary for a broader and deeper comprehension of social and cultural processes within the criminal justice system. Considering traditional and new media, photographs and television series, from Global North challenges to Global South realities, these 10 articles offer clear contributions to the current understanding of how the media influence perceptions of criminality and security and, therefore, the way that crime is prevented, experienced and controlled.

Acknowledgements

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