



Afterword: The political economy of countering transnational organized crime in Africa

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Africa has long been portrayed in international policy discourse as an epicentre of security problems, which increasingly include that of transnational organized crime (hereafter: TOC) such as drug trafficking or migrant smuggling (Duffield 2013). According to this view, security and development in Africa are undermined by the conflict and violence fuelled by organized crime. Consequently, the imperative invoked by UN Sustainable Development Goal 16.4. to “combat all forms of organized crime” is understood to contribute to peace, security and development throughout the Global South (Blaustein et al. 2018). As straightforward and intuitive as this may seem, empirical studies from around the world have called this imperative and its basic assumption into question. It has been well-documented that ‘wars on crime’ are mostly ineffective and often harmful to local communities, economies and ever-expanding prison populations (Bowling 2011; Felbab-Brown 2009; Franz 2016), while illicit economies do not have a straight causal arrow to violence and conflict but can even have stabilizing and developmental effects in conflict and high-level violence contexts (Bhatia 2021; Vigh 2012; Raineri and Strazzari, this issue). Some of this documentation regarding the problematic repercussions of orthodox anti-TOC policies that ostensibly fight ‘the bad’ is decades old yet seems to have little effect on the direction of international policy reformulation. The 60 years long global war on drugs is a case in point.

Against this background, this special issue contributes towards a more critical understanding of TOC and the fight against it. The special issue’s primary analytical focus is the sociology, politics and economy of the production of data, categories, narratives and discourses as well as policies and measures concerning TOC in the African context. The papers unpack, discuss and problematise the accuracy of the data used by official agencies (International Organisations, states) on which the fight

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against crime - and the resulting criminalisation - is based; the politics which drives the process; the effectiveness of anti-TOC measures; and the impact of the criminalisation trend on politics, society and economy in the respective countries. The issue contributes to a range of scholarships including criminology, international relations, political science, political economy, development studies, anthropology and African studies.

The articles in the issues show how, in the case of Africa, international counter-TOC objectives and agendas are sometimes transposed into national agendas (though rarely enacted comprehensively), in ways that can be detrimental to affected social groups, communities and societies. Furthermore, they present empirical evidence to argue that the international counter-TOC agenda has actually contributed to the proliferation of specific (often Western-derived) criminal categories and, often quantitative, success metrics. This, in turn, contributed to processes of criminalisation of livelihoods and economies in Africa, i.e., a drive towards a criminalisation of various local contexts and networks, and particular professions, actors and practices (that are locally regarded as normal, not criminal, etc.) (Cohen; Diagboya; Frowd et al.; Raineri and Strazzari, this issue). The criminalisation is largely brought about from places and by actors and frameworks that are external to the continent: international conventions, Western states (including the global hegemon the USA, but also the EU and former colonial powers France, UK, Italy and Spain, among others), the European press, the European crime control agencies, and related corporations (also Woodiwiss 2003, 2005, 2007; Beare and Woodiwiss 2014). Further, going beyond the politics and political economy of international categories, the articles also ethnographically unpack the phenomenology of illicit economies in various African contexts (Frowd et al.; Costa et al.; Diagboya, this issue). They illustrate why, how, and in which contexts, various communities and countries had to grapple with the political, economic and social consequences of criminalised economies, professions and practices. In the following, we pick up and comment in more detail on some issues raised in the articles.

The political economy and violence of categorization, data and narratives

In the interview with the editors, Etannibi Alemika recounts the genealogy of how the concept of organized crime came about and travelled to Africa. Whilst the concept originated in the USA in the early 20th century in connection to ethnically based ‘mafias’ (see also von Lampe 2016), it has come to expand in both meaning and geographical scope, furthered especially through the ‘transnational moral entrepreneurship’ (Andreas and Nadelmann 2006) of the USA and international agencies, like the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). TOC now encompasses a broad catalogue of cross-border crimes like trafficking in drugs, humans, weapons, wildlife and the smuggling of migrants. Most recently, we have seen the labelling of the Wagner mercenary company as a TOC organisation by the USA, thus seeing a similar political instrumentalisation of the TOC term as that of ‘terrorism’ with the repertoire of sanctions and other coercive governance tools this implies, here in the

context of geopolitical competition and conflict. As noted by Raineri and Strazzari in this issue, there is a tendency for what constitutes organized crime to change according to the security agendas of donor states and institutions, like the USA (Woodiwiss 2003) and the European Union (Russo and Stambøl 2022). The measurement of the extent of TOC itself, and the metrics put in place to measure success in containing TOC, are prompted by the same law enforcement-oriented agencies who receive funding according to how the threat is portrayed and measured.

Significantly, the category of TOC is carefully defined to serve, protect and avoid confrontation with certain interests. For example, as noted by Alemika, TOC is not usually understood as (or mobilised as a category to counter) the crimes of political elites and multinational corporations. Rather, the international agenda of counter-TOC is regularly targeted at crimes carried out by individuals and groups with very low power capacities (i.e., those who are marginal in national let alone global power and political-economic structures). In their article, Frowd et al. (this issue) provide an example of how the criminalisation of migrant smuggling in Northern Niger (instigated by EU aid conditionality) was met with futile protest from syndicates of transporters whose livelihood (that is, transporting migrants from A to B) had suddenly become illegalized. These patterns of principally targeting precarious populations in the war on TOC are the same across the world, with the arrest of drug users, drug mules on airports, coca farmers in Colombia or opium farmers in Afghanistan as other examples. Still, criminal categories like smuggling of narcotic drugs and migrants are remarkably difficult to contest internationally by those local actors who are at the receiving end of counter-TOC repression. There are too high stakes in the political and economic usefulness in keeping the criminal categories in place. Decriminalisation and de-penalisation remain politically difficult in this state of affairs. The authors question the official analysis and the criminalisation process, in terms of both their empirical evidence base and underlying assumptions. Official narratives are often alarmist and sensationalise reality (see also Woodiwiss 2013).

But irrespective of these inaccuracies, alarmism, and forms of grassroots contestations, the data sticks. As the papers in this issue explain, such data - which is mobilised to identify threats, risks, and illegalities - has a tendency to reproduce itself, and consequently gets locked in and established as fact. This concerns data such as numbers of arrests, seizures, hectares of illicit crops grown, amount of people passing through routes for trafficking and smuggling, and so on. Once 'locked in' and a 'social fact', this data can be deployed to produce an 'objective' empirical basis for (de-facto inaccurate) narratives and (ill-fitting) analytical categories which in turn underpin particular policy approaches, and inform the launching of a series of anti-policies (Walters 2008) - anti-smuggling, anti-money laundering, anti-corruption, anti-counterfeit, anti-slavery and so on.

This is a process that is not only expansive and goes on for many years, but is rolled out in both Africa and globally within a particular structure of power and interests that is dominated by a few actors and alliances (Kuldova 2022). Indeed, it is important to note that the violence of the TOC category (and anti-discourse and -policies) is not only epistemic. Its epistemic violence translates into concrete material consequences in terms of the harmful effects of criminalisation and crime wars, wrongful arrests, disproportionate sentencing, or undemocratic and imperialistic

changes to politics, governance, and economies. Notably, there is a larger coloniality of power at play here (Quijano 2000; Mignolo 2007; Stambøl 2021); the dominant literature and discourse demonstrate that the notion of TOC in Africa is occidentally constructed. As Achebe (2000) argues: ‘There is such a thing as absolute power over narrative. Those who secure this privilege for themselves can arrange stories about others pretty much where, and as, they like’.

At this stage, it is worth reminding ourselves that fighting TOC has become a transnational business. By that we mean a business for the agencies, companies and consultancy firms that have emerged in order to cater to the perceived security needs generated by the ever-expanding framing of TOC as a threat. Like those who are in the professions and part of a broader industrial complex that generates profits, power and influence through the monitoring, governing, and fighting of ‘bad things’ (and thus ostensibly ‘doing good’) (Walters 2008; Kuldova 2022; Mykhalchenko and Wiegatz 2022). As Raineri and Strazzari note, many of these agencies - like UNODC, EMCDDA and EUROPOL - are employed in the production of data about TOC which, in turn, justifies their *raison d’être*, growth and increased funding and thus bolsters the careers of staff in these organizations. In a competitive funding environment, it is easy for actors within the anti-TOC arena to become forces for themselves, acting in the interest of their own survival, relevance and influence. This is not only the case for international and government agencies, but also for an increasing amount of private and semi-private companies and institutes, many of which are closely linked with the security industry.

For example, in his research on the transnational security consultancy industry, O’Reilly (2010) demonstrated how a state-corporate symbiosis allowed leading security firms to influence the agendas, discourses, methods and ideologies of the global policing environment. In the context of Francophone Africa in particular, Stambøl and Jegen (2022) have documented how the company Civipol - co-owned by the French state and major security companies Thales and Airbus - is, on the one hand, influencing EU policy-making in Brussels to frame migration as a problem of TOC and, on the other, winning millions of euro worth of project contracts to implement EU aid in Africa, directed to fighting migration and TOC, and selling security technology and know-how for this purpose. This arguably constitutes a set of interwoven complexes; for example: security-, military-, and compliance-industrial complex (e.g., Kuldova 2022).

The lock-in effects and perpetuation of anti-TOC

Defining something as TOC automatically means that it is treated as a matter of criminal justice, to be targeted by the police, criminal courts and prisons. Considering that in the African context many of the people that end up being caught due to TOC-legislation are income-poor and marginalised, the result is effectively a criminalisation of social and economic problems - problems often themselves produced by neoliberal reforms, a point to which we return below. Research has shown that the growing amounts of ‘penal aid’ (Brisson-Boivin and O’Connor 2013) given by Western donors like the EU to countries in Africa predominantly goes to transposing international penal legislation, such as the Palermo Protocols into national legislation, and training police and border guards to more effectively intercept and interdict trafficking and smuggling (Russo and Stambøl 2022).

Much less aid goes to criminal courts, and disappearingly little goes to prisons. But where do all these newly criminalised people go? For many, the answer is nowhere.

As Alemika points out, West African countries in practice tend to ignore fighting TOC altogether and the general rule is that little is done in practice. However, those who are caught and successfully prosecuted end up in highly problematic conditions in overcrowded prisons. Not only is pre-trial detention common and long, but in some countries, like Mali, arrestees also spend time in pre-pre-trial detention, that is, detention before the paperwork has even started. Across Africa, there is also the problem of ‘overstayers’ – people who finished serving their sentence and should have been released a long time ago but have simply been forgotten in prison (e.g., Adetayo and Akinwotu 2021). While there are a few organisations which do the important work of lobbying African governments to empty prisons of overstayers, like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and Justice & Empowerment Initiatives (JEI) in Nigeria, such tasks are not popular among international donors and agencies who prefer to demonstrate themselves as ‘global crime fighters’.

That an activity is defined as TOC renders it extremely difficult to deal with it, either officially or legally, in ways other than through coercion and criminal repression. Knowing that repressive approaches to TOC tend to exacerbate levels of violence (Bhatia 2021; Lessing 2018), this should worry us. In his interview, Alemika points out that the debates about alternative ways to deal with illicit economies based on ameliorating social and economic root causes and conditions, like programs of Alternative Development (that is, illicit crop substitution) as we know them from Latin America since the 1980s, have completely disappeared. Yet, as Frowd et al. show, this alternative development logic has to some extent been resuscitated in some EU projects in Niger aimed to create alternative livelihoods for transporters leaving the migrant industry. However, just as AD projects in Latin America have generally provided meagre results, so have the EU projects. Their failure can in part be attributed to providing an individual-actor-focused response to a systemic problem. If you criminalise an economy, you create a lucrative black market, and if you take out its players, there will always be new ones to step in. No alternative commodity is lucrative enough to substitute the income generated by the illicit economy (this is what decades of experience with AD in the Andes countries has shown). In other words, you (re)create the very crime that you attempt to fight. Moreover, criminalisation and penalization can also sometimes effectively block alternative attempts to deal with illegalized economies and groups, such as for example peace negotiations with crime and armed groups (as we see today for example in Colombia), already very much practiced in Africa - just under the table (e.g., Raineri and Strazzari 2022; see also Kelly, this issue).

This brings us to the final point in this section: anti-TOC has become a matter of core state affairs – e.g., internal security – and a matter of national sovereignty. It can affect in multi-faceted ways highly sensitive issue areas and political-economic arrangements (e.g., ‘political settlements’). It can disrupt existing governance practices and technologies of rule. The local turmoil related to implementation of anti-policies (and related discontent from affected groups/communities) can have national political repercussions and be reflected in national politics. An example is the social discontent, anti-imperialist activism and military coup d’états in the Sahel against

Western-led anti-terrorism interventions (often coming together with anti-TOC in the same policy package), which ultimately provoked the expulsion of the French military operation from Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, and now also the end of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). These expulsions can be regarded as a direct reaction to and rejection of Western-led foreign security frames, matrixes, indicators and apparatuses (and its compliance complex). Anti-TOC measures are not neutral with regard to but interact with domestic interests and power structures.

Criminogenic Capitalism

As pointed out by various contributors to this issue (Alemika; Cohen; Frowd et al.), the social and economic problems that have partly become criminalised through TOC framing, can themselves be attributed to some extent to the effect of neoliberal reforms. These were advanced by International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and Western donors like the EU and the USA, starting with the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) that plunged many African countries into crisis in the 1980 and 1990s. The SAPs regularly eroded the state apparatus, weakened a number of economic sectors and instigated widespread unemployment and destabilisation of livelihoods. The effect of this political intervention and all-encompassing societal engineering (Harrison 2010) is evident in and shapes the 2020s as well, as the public debt crisis of many African states illustrates. Notably, the advancement of the neo-liberalisation process since the 1990s has turned out to be crime-enabling in various economies. Uganda, for example, has experienced high levels and new forms of economic trickery and fraud in several neoliberalised sectors (Wiegratz 2016; Whyte and Wiegratz 2016). Relevant donors are thus causally implicated in the intensification of crime in the particular sectors and places that they now design and implement anti-programmes for. Add to that the analytical layer that sections of domestic elites have been co-producers of the neoliberalisation as well, that is, they are also directly or indirectly causally implicated in the making of contemporary market societies and their ‘crime problem’. They too have become anti-policy proponents for problems that some of them had a hand in producing in the first place, yet not seldom put blame upon external agencies (Wiegratz 2019).

Anti-TOC might thus have some de facto restructuring effects not dissimilar to conditionalities-policy advice packages from over thirty years ago (that were also justified by IFIs and bilateral donors on grounds of declaring parts of local economy, polity and culture unfit, illegitimate and corrupt). This includes the repercussions for affected actors of loss of income - and loss of partner, parental figure etc. - if a major household member is criminalised, loses her/his source of income, goes to jail (rendered immobile), or must relocate to another city or country. The restructuring impact is not just due to the effects of one but several anti-policies (and respective penalties) that can affect a community: anti-TOC, -corruption, -fraud etc. Similarly, it is not one but several (global) anti-policies that are rolled-out (relatively simultaneously) in a given locality, with their sets of criteria, matrices, rankings, compliance

measurements, and policy preferences. This can magnify the disruption and restructuring effect.

Our next observation is that the TOC scholarship in the African context is occupied with phenomena of trafficking of drugs and migrants and mobilises concepts such as failed, weak or narco state; but, notably, rarely the capitalist state. That preoccupation and framing is analytically restrictive in the sense that it does not sufficiently build analytical bridges between two major empirical and theoretical issues: capitalism and crime, and the crimes of corporations. The issue of TOC needs to be seen in relation to the criminogenic character of capitalism (Tombs and Whyte 2015; Bittle et al. 2018).

It seems that the TOC orthodoxy (but perhaps also part of the critical scholarship) makes too little of a core phenomenon of the last decades, the institutionalisation and intensification of capitalism on the continent – that is, the transformation of more and more African states from countries with capitalism to capitalist countries (Parisot 2019). The repercussions concerning organized economic crimes, especially in the ‘formal’ sector, by large players, including the giants of global, regional and national economy has been largely overlooked. The world of powerful corporate tycoons, cartels, mafias, transnational corporations (TNCs), monopolists and oligopolists across major sectors seems relatively underexplored and, significantly, not yet brought squarely into the realm of TOC scholarship. That is, for example, the irregularities, illegalities and trickeries of large businesses in the production and/or trade of legitimate, *legal* everyday products and services such as cement, pharmaceuticals, telecommunication services, or minerals. These illegalities can concern matters of contract bidding, price setting (cartels, collusion, mispricing, market/price rigging), product content and safety, or the treatment of competitors, suppliers, workers, communities and the environment. Do TNCs’ health, safety, green and accounting crimes (e.g, Bayelsa State Oil and Environmental Commission 2023), mispricing (Sharife and Bracking 2016), or the ‘anti-competitive’ practices of members of regional cartels (Vilakazi and Roberts 2019) in several cases not also constitute instances of TOC? Are these crimes too often ‘routinized away’ (Barak 2017) in (anti-)TOC debates?

What TOC is (usually) not: corporate crime

The extent to which ‘organized’ corporate crimes in everyday sectors are excluded from the analytical, and often also policy, radar of orthodox TOC scholarship and debate is notable. This applies to sectors such as banking/finance (Ndikumana and Boyce 2022; Soares de Oliveira 2022; Behuria 2023), agriculture/food, electricity, telecommunication, construction, oil, gas & minerals, and waste disposal. Yet, such sectors can be characterised by significant and routine corporate crimes and irregularities, that often go unpunished (Ezeonu 2018; MacManus 2018).

This analytical ‘gap’ (or rather, analytical pattern) exists while key sectors of criminogenic global capitalism that de-facto have a ‘TOC problem’ have their power centre in the capitals of the North. Many TNCs have their headquarters, and historical origin as corporate entities, in countries in the North – the very countries that have executed large-scale historical crimes and harms against African societies during the

era of slave trade and colonialism. Further, entities that drive (anti-)TOC analyses and agendas also often have their headquarter in the North. What, then, is the relationship between the political economy of (semi-)criminal global wealth production and appropriation of corporations, and prevailing anti-TOC analytics, frameworks, agendas and policies (that are shaped significantly by home governments of these TNCs)?¹

Notably, the TOC discourse does not typically speak of banks as TOC-actors, and yet, there are court cases, convictions and settlements, not against individuals but against bank entities, that have proven that they fall under the definition of TOC as it is presented in the Palermo Convention. Banks sometimes come into the TOC debate, especially when there is talk of criminals laundering money in banks: yet banks are then usually not considered as a part of the criminal network but are seen as having been used or exploited by those criminal networks.

We also note that the corporate crime literature (e.g., Pearce and Snider 1995; Snider 2000) currently seems underutilised in informing TOC research projects including case selection and analysis. Generally, corporate crimes in African settings are understudied. One consequence is that the TOC of the capitalist/business class – beyond aspects of a few slightly better-explored phenomena such as illicit financial flows, tax evasion or mispricing - is understudied too. This might also be a matter of research funding: support might be easier to obtain for research about smugglers than corporate criminals. This limits our understanding of not just anti-TOC but also TOC under current global and local capitalism, especially if one widens the TOC category to include corporate crimes (what could be called ‘TOC+’). It limits the analytical account in various ways: for example, how these crimes - and measures (not) taken against them - relate to structures, agencies and dynamics of global political economy (and particular sectors therein) as well as capitalist state, polity, economy, society and culture. Meanwhile, public discourses and press reports in various countries focus on corporate cartels and mafias of a kind that TOC orthodoxy neglects. There are public debates that are on target so to speak (and thus ahead of some conventional TOC literature); think of discussions and enquiries in South Africa about corporations and

¹ See Young and Woodiwiss (2021) for an instructive case analysis in relation to this issue. Their historical analysis highlights the role of major political-economic interests of the USA and UK (e.g. Britain’s financial services industry) in the making of today’s anti-money laundering (AML) regime: ‘The core of the current, global AML regime, was not the destruction of drug money laundering and banking secrecy, nor the ending of criminal financial enablers and with it hot money; rather it was the protection and leverage of national trading interests on both sides of the Atlantic... Both the US and the UK, ultimately undermined the international AML framework they helped to construct. While the intention may not have been to subvert their own AML policies, it is clear to the authors of this paper, that the US and UK prioritised economic power and relations with the banking sector, above effective, international efforts to combat organized crime.... The US and UK would seek to balance their financial interests with the moral crusades being waged against organized crime, drugs and drug money laundering. Trying to balance these priorities has ultimately led to the monumental failure of the current AML framework.Much of the world’s dirty money gets washed in the financial institutions of two of the leaders in the global campaign against organized crime and dirty money – the US and the UK. Both the UK and US have retained strong financial secrecy laws in various jurisdictions’ (ibid.: 70, 91–3).

the deep state (e.g., Chipkin and Swilling 2018, Buthelezi and Vale 2023; Marchant et al. 2023).²

The underdeveloped analytical account – and the political economy of aspects of TOC analysis and anti-TOC measures - is exemplified in matters of TOC in tax havens. According to Soares de Oliveira's (2022) review of the academic field, the offshore world (a hotbed of crimes and malfeasance) has 'limited presence' in the scholarship on African politics, political economy and international relations. Studies of the offshore world have mostly ignored Africa, while most international relations, and political science scholarship on contemporary Africa has not studied the consequences of offshore crime for the political economy of African states and their linkages to the world economy (ibid.). And yet, the empirical reality of the politics of (anti-)TOC in this case would call for greater use of the analytical lenses of these strands given, for example, that powerful countries protect (the malfeasance-crime hubs that are) their own tax havens and direct anti-policies against particular others (ibid.; Behuria 2023).

'demands for transparency and reform (and threats of blacklisting) are mostly targeted at the smaller tax havens. OECD economies and the dependencies of some major economies such as Hong Kong, which engage in similar practices, are subjected to less scrutiny.... Whether articulated by bodies such as the US Treasury Department... or the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force ..., reform drives have mostly concentrated on stemming the provision of financial services to so-called rogue states, terrorist groups and criminal organisations' (Soares de Oliveira 2022: 269).

This pattern to protect powerful northern states (and their interest in protecting certain forms of shady wealth accumulation and hoarding) and target small southern states via anti-policy is evident in the case of Mauritius (Soares de Oliveira 2022; Behuria 2023): the country has been black- and grey-listed by northern (tax haven) powers - i.e., Mauritius' tax haven competitors - and their anti-agencies and -measures; and subject to the compliance pressures of the likes of OECD. The tax haven industry is also an example of how global political economic changes (deregulation etc.) - advanced by legions of powerful bankers, lawyers, consultancies and governments - facilitate the setting up and/or flourishing of crime-enabling structures in the African context (that however, as mentioned earlier, can produce developmental outcomes as well, as Behuria shows). That some of these global crime-enabling and -overseeing actors and actor alliances then 'come back' and double as crime-fighters in Africa constitutes a core aspect of the politics of the anti-TOC complex, which requires analysis of the kind that is currently in short supply. Political economy (for example, the material interests of powerful actors

² Some recent measures are taking into focus high-power domestic political actors in the context of anti-TOC. It is beyond our text to analyse how that sits against the past pattern of dealing with (alleged) elite crimes. As noted before, some of these measures go for the core of domestic political-economic order, are politically sensitive and potentially destabilising. Note this example: 'Kenya plans to track the financial dealings of high-ranking politicians... from next year in fresh commitments to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) aimed at preventing the country from being locked out of the global financial system for money laundering' (Business Daily 2023).

in respective African countries) also helps explain why, as Lopes and Soares de Oliveira (2021) observe, Africa-led policy initiatives to deal with illicit finance have lost momentum at the post-analysis level.

Against this background, we make the case that critical TOC scholarship would benefit from stronger bridges and engagements with literatures on: corporate/white-collar crimes, crimes of the powerful/middle-class, state crimes, neoliberalisation of economic crime, political economy (African, international, global) and international relations, and from a respective broadening of the analytical problem formulation and toolset. We also advocate to analyse anti-TOC as part of ‘economic statecraft’ of powerful states and international politics at large (Woll 2023). A firm integration of relevant literatures into analytical enquiry and discussion, we expect, will give a better account of “TOC+” in capitalist Africa. That would also allow us to put, analytically and politically, the TOC of orthodoxy (smuggling, subaltern livelihoods, etc.) in relation to the TOC of grand accumulators (in boardrooms, factories, mines, ports and public offices). It could help bring the TOC debate closer to processes of class (and state) formation, consolidation and transformation, and respective structures, agencies and dynamics concerning power, wealth, and crimes under contemporary capitalism (e.g., Bracking 2019; Prelec and Soares de Oliveira 2023). This, in turn, could help account for TOC differences and similarities across and within African regions. This would also aid the analysis of the political economy and effectiveness of anti-policies and -measures at national and regional level to contain economic irregularities (Mykhalchenko and Wiegatz 2022).

Such an enquiry necessitates a broader analysis of the implication of a wide range of actors - including donor/aid agencies, the national and regional agencies charged with product/service standards, market competition, consumer protection, or private sector development, and enabling professionals (lawyers, bankers, real estate agents, PR experts etc.) - in the (re)production of corporate/elite-level TOC in specific instances. (e.g. Young and Woodiwiss 2021; Prelec and Soares de Oliveira 2023) In short, it requires a better account of the collective co-production of crimes (and crime containment and reduction) under present-day capitalism. That includes the collective making of the societal structures of contemporary ‘market societies’ on the continent; a set up that, in line with broader historical patterns of the capitalism-crime nexus, has turned out to be crime-conducive (Wiegatz 2016, 2019; Breckenridge 2021).

Finally, worth exploring further is how particular streams of research funds are associated with the analytical treatment of TOC+in, development studies or African studies. Questions here include: what has the political settlement scholarship – that explores elite/ruling class actors – to say regarding TOC+?; in what way have donors funded corporate crime scholarship?; how have donor funded research projects theorised and labelled (organized) crimes in the corporate world?; what are the analytical accounts and policy prescriptions on trickeries and crime in the private sector?; and how do donors perceive, relate with, and engage with malpractice/criminality among the corporations they work with in their private sector development programmes?³ Such an enquiry would give

³ This includes cases of contemporary corporate criminality that in various instances donor/aid actors were historically implicated in producing, as advocates of neoliberal reforms. Examples of this include fraud in the microfinance in South Africa (Bateman 2019) or the seeds sector in Uganda. The ‘fake seeds’ problem in Uganda in the 2010s and 2020s is to a significant extent a product of the privatisation and deregulation

insights into the political economy of knowledge production and anti-policy concerning corporate TOC, the crime phenomenon that has remained significantly under the radar and off-debate, arguably also due to the ‘strategic ignorance’ (McGoey 2012) of various members of TOC orthodoxy.

Concluding remarks

What we are seeing in the above outlined analysis is a chronology of aspects of the political economy of (anti-)TOC – and the making of the TOC problem in the first place – in aid dependent countries in Africa under neoliberalism. First, IFIs/donors imposed SAPs that have, as one key effect, created economic processes and conditions that intensify unemployment, poverty and precarity. These processes have also had criminogenic effects: they produced actors that needed to find other livelihoods, and thereby resorted to illegal means of income generation. Second, the drive to harmonize and spread global anti-TOC legislation criminalised survival economies and produced new ‘criminals’, – and in doing so perpetuated ‘production’ of the TOC problem. Third, the anti-TOC complex comes in to fight repressively – and selectively – against those poor-people-become-criminals in ways that benefit them economically and politically. As such, anti-TOC generates its own political economy– including both its ‘illegal’ (criminalised groups) and ‘legal’ components (police agencies, security companies, anti-TOC experts and firms).

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of the sector in the earlier phase of neoliberalisation. Agencies such as USAID have run several anti-fake-seeds programmes in recent years, with mixed results (e.g., USAID 2015; The Independent 2023).

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