Amur Tiger Poaching in the Russian Far East (RFE) using Crime Script Analysis

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EDITORIAL

Crimes should be viewed as a dynamic process instead of a discreet event. This process unfolds across several distinct acts or steps that cumulatively facilitate a criminal opportunity that offenders take advantage. The identification of these distinct acts or steps that comprise a whole crime event is understood as crime script analysis. Crime scripting as a companion tool to tell situational crime prevention, a framework that details how an offender's option to commit a specific crime are often influenced by changing the environment or situational context during which that call takes place. This includes reducing the opportunities for offenders to commit a criminal offense, decreasing the amount of victims or the accessibility of the victim to the offender, and increasing the extent of monitoring, making crime harder to commit.

Script analysis offers a tool to help with understanding criminal routine by highlighting how opportunity and therefore the characteristics of the immediate environment facilitate a criminal offense. Crime scripts are predicated on being crime-specific, and are produced by creating detailed, step-by-step accounts of crimes, within the specific contexts and environments where they occur and are particularly useful to know complex crimes. Creating a criminal offense script often relies on gathering qualitative data and using that data to follow a scientific methodology where the actions of the criminal event are weakened into stages. Originally ten stages are proposed, but more recently this has been modified into four main stages—preparation, pre-activity, activity, and post activity. Each stage includes the maximum amount information as possible about resources, equipment/tools, actors, activities, and spatial/temporal details. By highlighting the procedural nature of crime, this sort of study offers a framework to account for the alternatives and decisions made by the actors of every stage before, during, and after the commission of the crime they're associated. Since actions along the chain of events are contingent those before, intervention measures are often more acutely focused. The main target on the situational context of criminal opportunities, analysis can support situational crime prevention by detecting unique intervention points that likely go undiscovered when crime is treated as one event in time and space. For instance, intervention measures are broadened to incorporate not just the actors involved, but the physical environments that support crime, including spatial and temporal aspects. Overall, the context provided by script analysis supports understanding the immediate situational variables of criminal actions to control the chance structures that facilitate crime.

This paper builds further on the potential of crime scripting as a model to breakdown the crime commission process of wildlife crimes with the goal of developing context specific policy interventions. The crime script presented here is actor-based and focused on those involved within the poaching of Amur tigers within the Russian Far East (RFE). A sequential criminal event is complex; most criminal decisions or acts begin in noncriminal settings and understanding the variation in choice structuring properties of criminals requires detail-oriented observational and interview data. Therefore, for this study, an ethnographic case study approach was utilized. Data was collected from semi-structured interviews and participant observations with those directly involved—the poachers, buyers, middlemen and smugglers—in tiger poaching to understand the tiny print of this criminal act from the purpose of view of the offenders themselves. By employing script analysis and thereby extending analysis to include all discrete acts of the crime commission sequence, I recognize that a crime-specific approach is required to understand the entire range of intervention strategies to discourage tiger poaching.

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