

**ONLINE DRUG TRAFFICKING :
THE ONLINE TRADE IN ILLEGAL DRUGS, NPSs &
COUNTERFEIT PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTS**

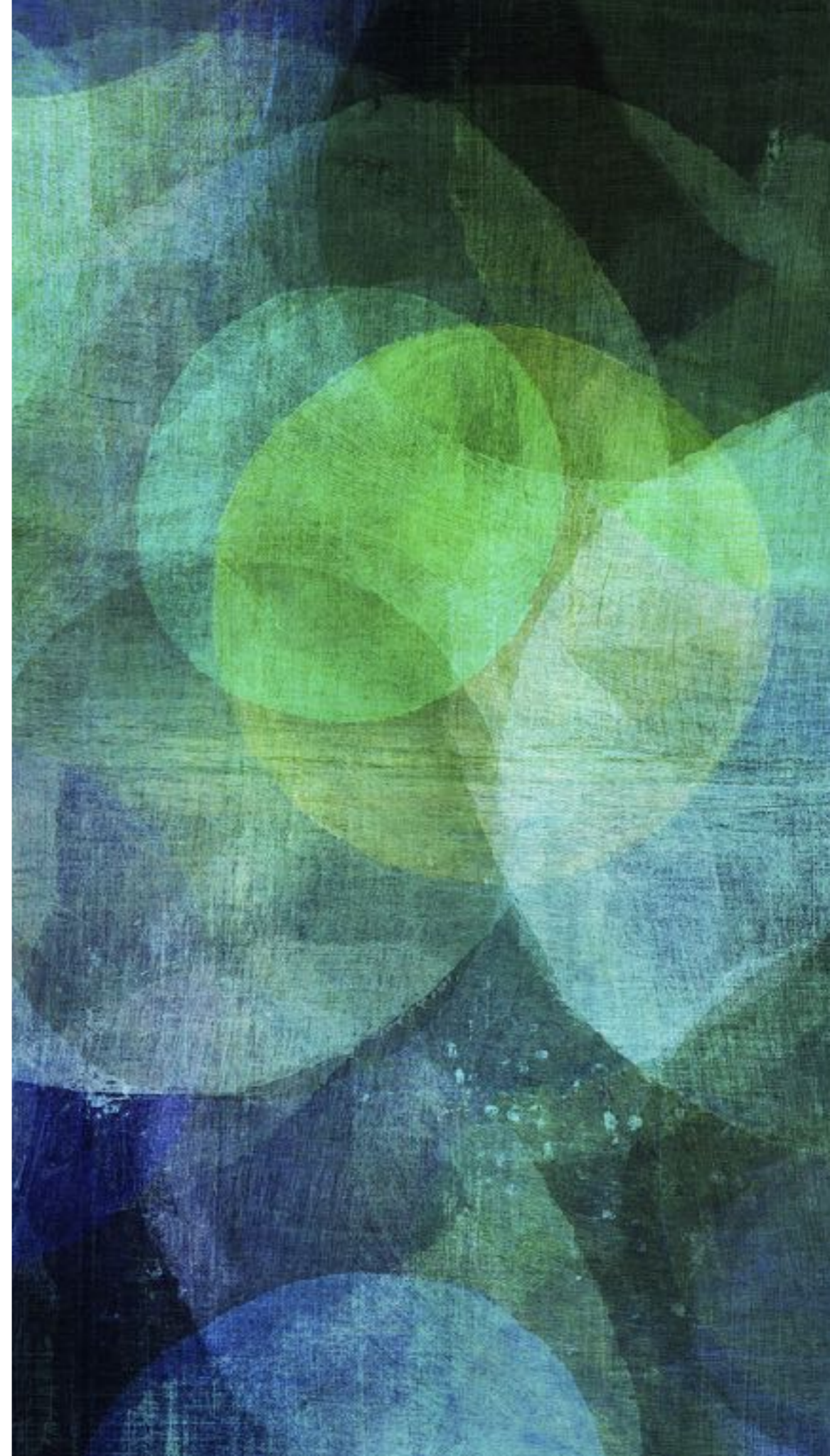
*Dr Anita Lavorgna, University of Southampton
Web Science lecture, 9 March 2018*



Lavorgna A (2014) Internet-mediated drug trafficking: towards a better understanding of new criminal dynamics. *Trends in Organized Crime* 17(4): 250-270

Lavorgna A (2015) The online trade in counterfeit pharmaceuticals: new criminal opportunities, trends, and challenges. *The European Journal of Criminology* 12(2): 226-241

Updates



What kinds of criminal opportunities the Internet offers for drug trafficking to occur? *How* these opportunities affect the organisation of drug trafficking?

1) To what extent does the Internet provide new criminal opportunities for drug trafficking? What kind of criminal opportunities are provided? What specific phases of drug trafficking are facilitated by the Internet?

2) How do actors involved in drug trafficking exploit these new criminal opportunities?

3) Does this new opportunity structure change the relationships between actors involved in drug trafficking? If so, how?

What are the main challenges for researchers and law enforcement to better understand/counter this criminal activity?

Recreational illegal drugs + new psychotropic substances (NPSs)

1961 Single Convention on Narcotics Drugs

1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances

... all modern nations have regulatory frameworks that prohibit the importation, manufacturing, growth, distribution, sale, and use of a variety of recreational drugs

NPS is “*a new narcotic or psychotropic drug, in pure form or in preparation, that is not controlled by the United Nations drug conventions, but which may pose a public health threat comparable to that posed by substances listed in these conventions*” (EMCDDA)

Counterfeit pharmaceuticals

“*spurious/falsely-labelled/falsified /counterfeit (SFFC) medicines are medicines that are deliberately and fraudulently mislabeled with respect to identity and/or source*” (WHO 2012)

50% sold online are counterfeits , 100,000-700,000 deaths per years (?)

USD 75billion/year (10%global trade in medicines)

North-South divide

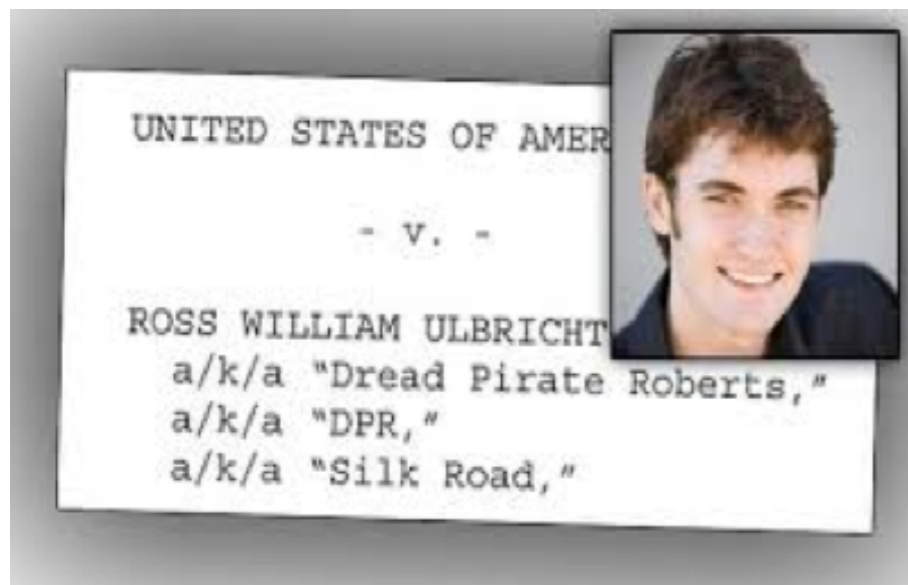
Over The Counter (OTC) & Prescription Only (POM)

Internet-mediated drug trafficking: the state of the art

(INCB 2001, Rider 2001, Britz 2008, Walsh 2011, Christin 2012, Dipartimento Politiche Antidrogo 2013, UNODC 2013... EMCDDA 2013, 2014, 2015)

Focus on the Deep Web

E.g. **SILK ROAD**



An eBay for drugs?

B2C or B2B?

Silk Road 2.0, Agora, Abraxas, Outlaw, Silk Road Reloaded, ...

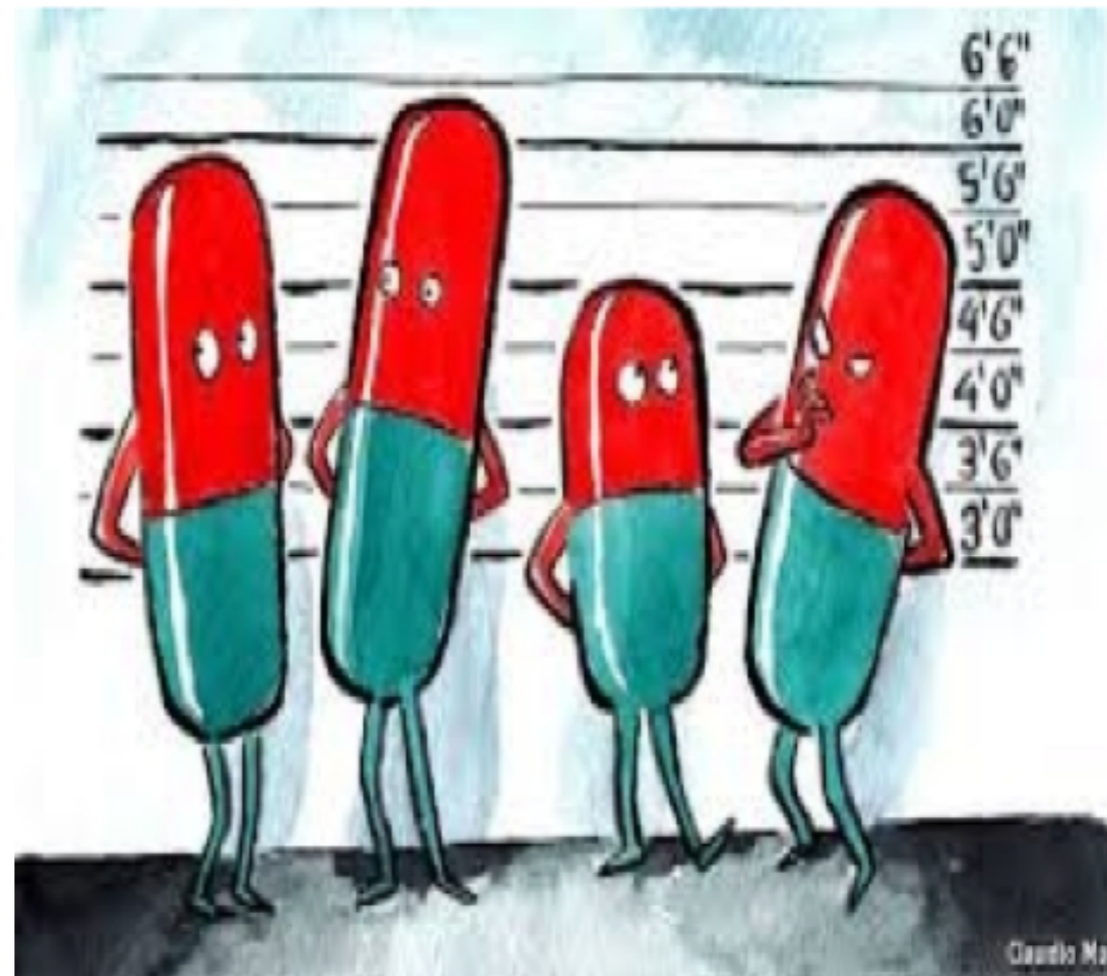
Environmental Criminology & Situational Crime Prevention
 (opportunity as cause of crime)

Crime scripts (Cornish 1994)

STAGE	FUNCTION	SCRIPT CATEGORY	ACTION
0 - preparatory activities	Preparation Entry Precondition Instrumental precondition Instrumental initiation Instrumental actualization Doing Post-condition	Crime	Actions in which the Internet has been used (including HOW or WHERE)
1 - cultivation/production			
2 - intermediate passage			
3 - trafficking		Lifestyle	
4 - intermediate passage		Network	
5 - distribution			
6 - consequential activities			

► Opportunities

- Communicative
- Informational
- Managerial
- Organisational and relational
- Promotional, marketing, persuasive and loyalty-building
- Targeting
- Technical
- (Countermeasure)



► Trends

- Transnationality
- Continuous transformation
- Especially in the distribution & intermediate passage stages, everything can be managed from the destination country
- On cyber-hotspots and convergence settings
- Actors (as retailers/ segmentation of the market)
- Relationships with clients
- Trust



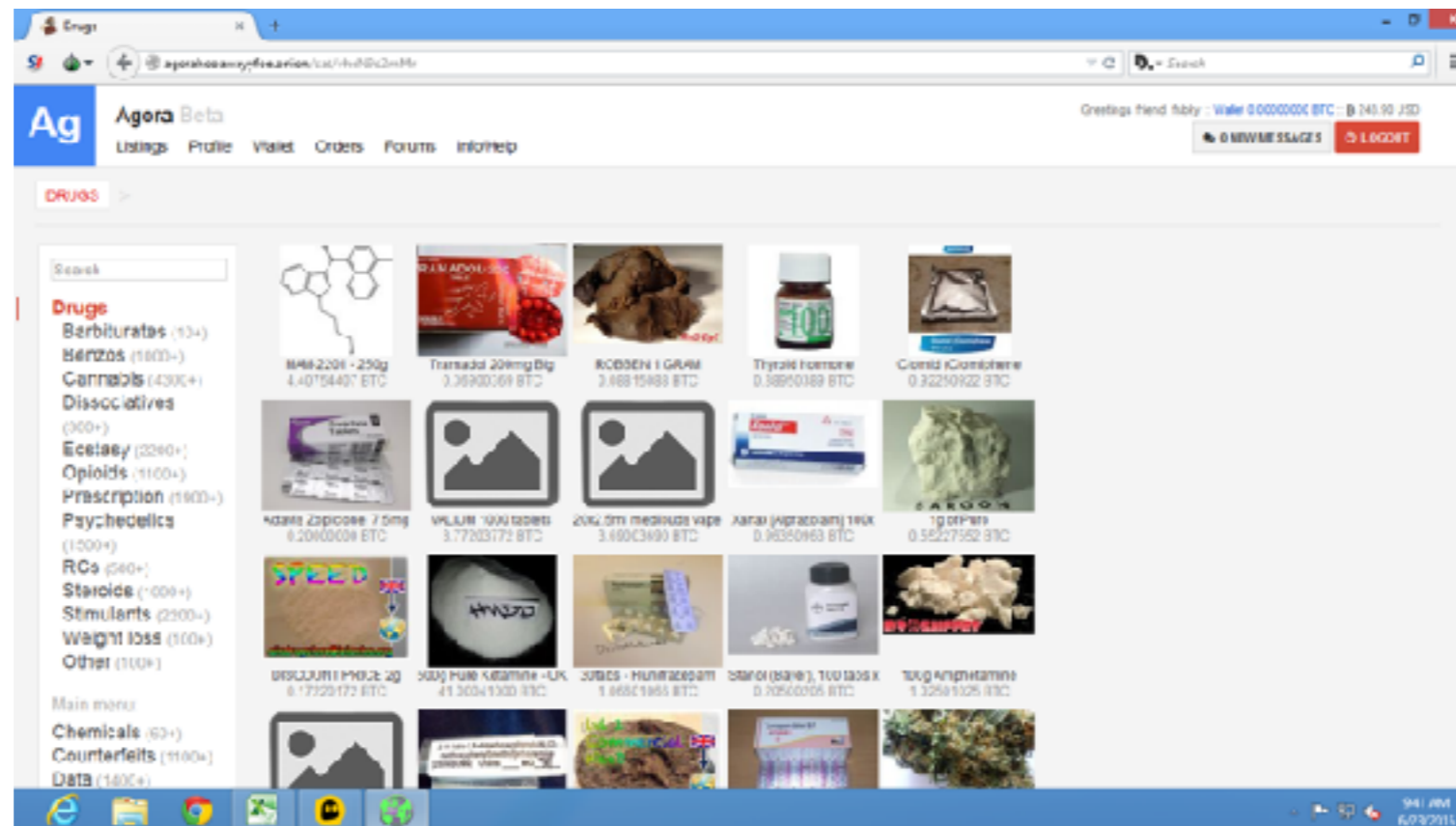
**LOWEST
PRICES
GUARANTEED!**

Più venduti

 Viagra Generico sildenafil €0.56 Informazioni	 Cialis Generico tadalafil €0.70 Informazioni	 Levitra Generico vardenafil €1.06 Informazioni
 Viagra Generico Dapoxetine €2.12 Informazioni	 Viagra Generico Oral Jelly €1.41 Informazioni	 ED Trial Pack Viagra/Cialis /Levitra €21.31 Informazioni
 Acompla Generico rimonabant €0.95 Informazioni	 Xenical Generico orlistat €1.11 Informazioni	 Reductil Generico sibutramine €0.69 Informazioni

► Cyber hotspots

- Surface + Deep Web
- “Convergence settings” (for offenders)
+ hubs for relational opportunities
- New (online) hotspots
+ extension of traditional (offline) hotspots
- Convergence settings for users (e.g. forums)



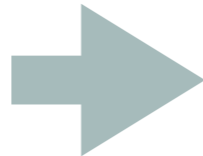
➤ Exploiting legal loopholes

- “Drugs that run on the edge of legality”
- Buyers' awareness / social perception
- Dissemblance
- Taking advantage of differences in national regulations

➤ Criminal actors involved

- “Organised crime” narrative
- A distinction should be drawn!
 - a) OCGs
 - b) Other types of offenders

Different use of crime opportunities



different MOs

➤ Law enforcement perception/ policing

- Nationality
 - different experiences
 - online monitoring is something “new”
 - building experience as they go
- Ranking / generation
- New criminal opportunities: new vulnerabilities, but also new dynamics of social and institutional control



Traditional policing online:

- occasional, complicated, costly (McMullan & Rege 2010).
- Lack of: culture, expertise, resources; vastness of cyberspace

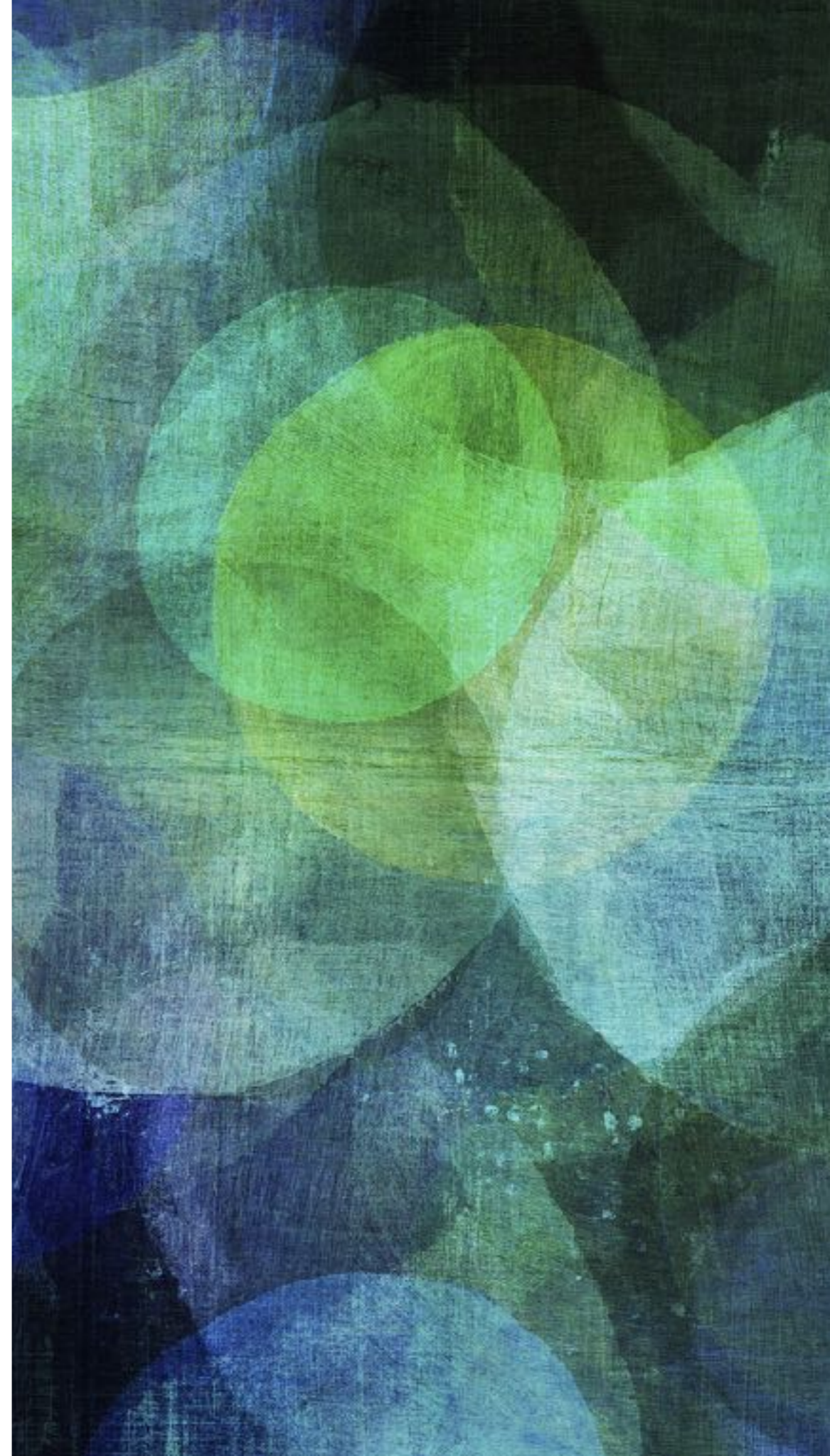
- Also new opportunities for intelligence gathering.
- Surveillance?
 - Profiling, “intelligence-led” searches
 - Substantial + procedural rules for gathering and handling the data
- More responsibility to informal/ alternative ways of social control
- Challenge!
- Research-informed good practices for LEAs , self-policing (Brenner 2006), reporting
- Civilian policing on the Internet (Huey et al. 2012), sense of shared responsibility in online communities (Wall & Williams 2007)
- How to be proactive?
- Towards an hypothesis-based approach?

Cyberspace is also a source of data for academic research

- Manual collection of online traces
 - ◆ E.g., virtual ethnography (passive/active)
- Automatic collection of online traces
 - ◆ Mirroring
 - ◆ Monitoring
 - ◆ Leaks
 - ❖ E.g., Web crawlers
- ★ Technological challenges
- ★ Ethical consideration

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*RESEARCHING CRIME &
DEVIANCY ONLINE*



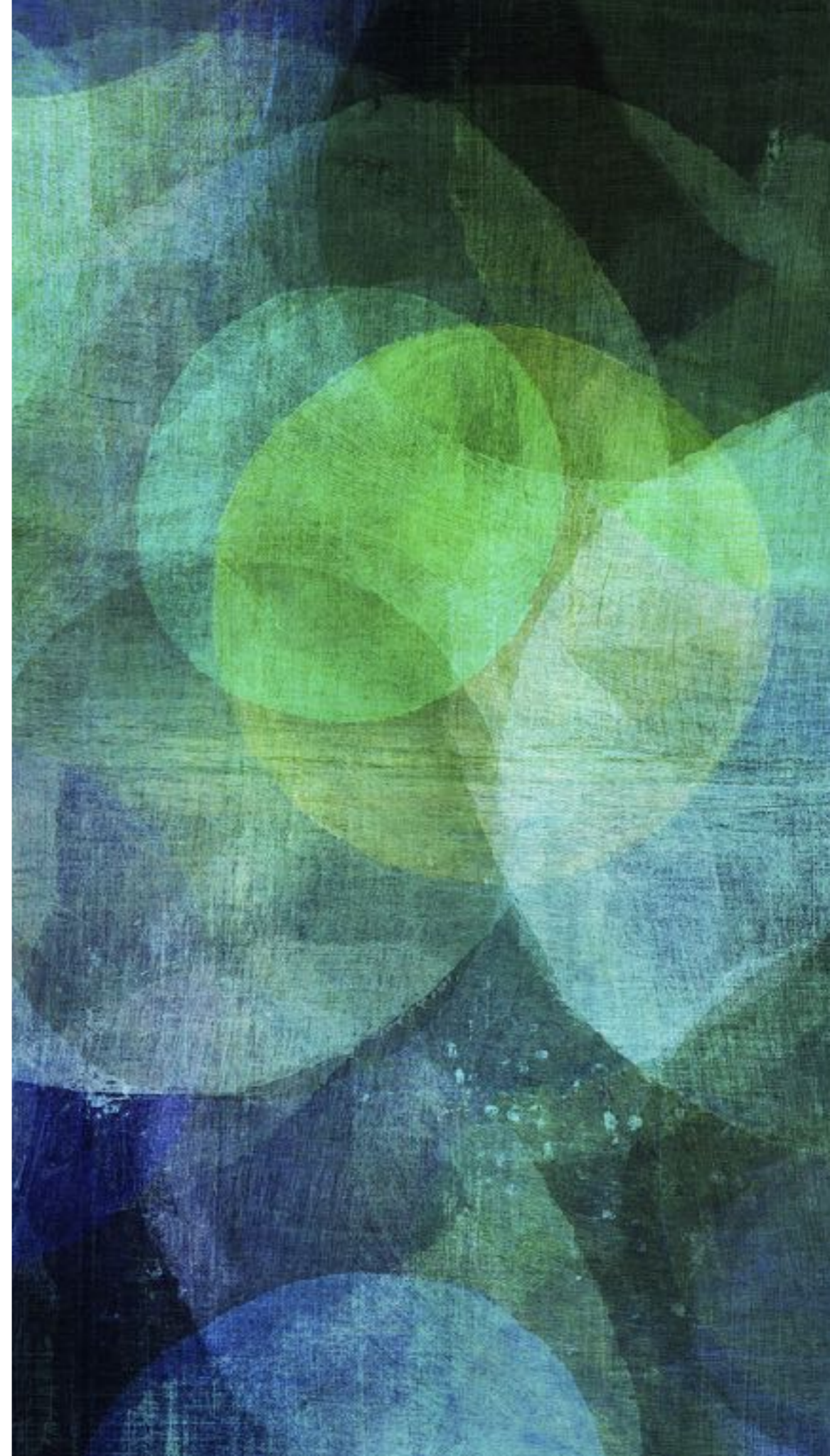
ETHICS

Just some food for thought”:

- Is the content private/public?
- Consent (lower threshold - lower expectations of privacy?; risk displacement)
- Changing/under development ethical practices
 - ◆ Potential harm
 - ◆ “Seriousness” of the criminal activity
 - ◆ Problem if deception
 - ◆ Country specific, different LEAs’ practices - it depends!

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*RESEARCHING CRIME &
DEVIANCY ONLINE*





Q & A