

Call for Papers - SPECIAL ISSUE

Rivista di Criminologia, Vittimologia e Sicurezza¹

Complex & Serious Crimes: a Cultural Perspective

1. Introduction

Serious and complex crimes cannot be understood through legal or economic frameworks alone. These phenomena are embedded in cultural meanings, narratives, and social construction that shape how such crimes are enacted, perceived, legitimized, contested, and represented. This special issue approaches complex and serious crimes through a triple lens: **cultural meanings, narratives, and representations**. We are inviting contributions that engage with complex and serious crimes through this triple lens, exploring how these crimes, their perpetrators, and their victims are culturally constructed, narrated, symbolically represented but stigmatized and criminalized - and by whom, with what consequences. The aim is to bring together scholars working across criminology, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, media studies, and law, interrogating how complexity and seriousness of crime are culturally constituted, contested, and lived, and opening a genuinely interdisciplinary conversation on the subject.

2. What Do We Mean by "Complex and Serious Crimes"?

For the purposes of this call, "complex and serious crime" is understood here as a deliberately open and plural category.

"Complex crimes" typically involve multiple actors, jurisdictions, or layers of activity; they may be characterized by organizational sophistication, technical expertise, concealment strategies, or entanglement with legitimate institutions and practices. Complexity may also refer to the challenges these crimes pose for detection, prosecution, and comprehension—both legally and publicly.

"Serious crimes" are conventionally understood as offenses that carry significant legal penalties, cause substantial harm, or threaten core social values. Yet seriousness is not an inherent property of an act—it is socially constructed, culturally variable, and politically contested. What is deemed "serious" depends on who defines it, in what context, and with what consequences.

Rather than imposing rigid boundaries, we recognize that what counts as "complex" or "serious" is itself culturally, politically, and historically contingent—shaped by power relations, institutional interests, media representations, and collective anxieties. We welcome contributions that critically examine how these categories are constructed, mobilized, and contested across different contexts.

Our interest in complex and serious crimes encompasses contributions on (but not limited to):

- Organized and mafia-type crime
- Corruption and white-collar/corporate crime
- Transnational and cross-border criminal networks
- Cross-border illicit trade
- Financial crime and economic fraud

¹ <https://www.vittimologia.it/Rivista>