

In February Global Financial Integrity (Washington, DC) released their long-awaited report ***Transnational Crime In The Developing World***. It examines and ranks 12 illicit world markets. Intellectual property theft, piracy and weapons sales (other than light weapons) are not included but would surely rank high in a more comprehensive survey. Given that many authorities believe that, world-wide, illicit economies account for about 20% of our total commerce (see, M. Glenny, *McMafia*, 2008) crime has dissolved borders much like any other 'business'.

The report's three-page section on the illegal art market is not especially well-done but the overall results stack up as follows:

1. **Drugs** \$320 billion
2. **Counterfeiting** \$250 billion (which includes pharmaceuticals, electronics & cigarettes)
3. **Humans** \$31.6 billion
4. **Oil** \$10.8 billion
5. **Wildlife** \$7.8 to \$10 billion
6. **Timber** \$7 billion
7. **Fish** \$4.2 to \$9.5 billion
8. **Art & Cultural Property** \$3.4 to \$6.3 billion
9. **Gold** \$2.3 billion
10. **Human Organs** \$0.614 to \$1.2 billion

11. **Small Arms & Light Weapons**
\$0.3 to \$1 billion

12. **Diamonds & Colored Gemstones**
\$86 million

Illegal art issues, taken in this context, appear to be less intractable problems than many that face us. In any case spreading financial opportunities to the world's poor areas will go a long way toward solving the most vexing illegal digging, looting and smuggling issues; if archaeological looting is perceived as your only chance to feed your family, it is going to be hard to pass up.

In the final analysis, however, I believe we have to look to the rich dealers, collectors and museums of the world to take the steps toward really breaking the cycle of antiquities pillaging that exists. Let's face it, while there are thousands of little, relatively inexpensive items potted throughout the world, every digger is looking for the next Getty Aphrodite. And such an item is not something that will be purchased by the average dealer, collector or museum. Taking those rich players out of the equation would be a big step in the right direction. That still would leave us with the 'weekend' potter but behavior is something addressed in the long term, I think, by education and, perhaps, 'feedback loops'.

The basic premise is simple. Provide people with information about their actions in real time (or something close to it), then give them an opportunity to change those actions, pushing them toward better behaviors. Action, information, reaction. It's the operating principle

behind ... the consumption display in a Toyota Prius, which tends to turn drivers into so-called hypermilers trying to wring every last mile from the gas tank. [And, the very effective roadway dynamic speed displays that tell you your speed in real time. – ed.] But the simplicity of feedback loops is deceptive. They are in fact powerful tools that can help people change bad behavior patterns, even those that seem intractable. Just as important, they can be used to encourage good habits, turning progress itself into a reward. In other words, feedback loops change human behavior. *And thanks to an explosion of new technology, the opportunity to put them into action in nearly every part of our lives is quickly becoming a reality.* (emphasis mine.) [See: Thomas Goetz, *Harnessing the Power of Feedback Loops*, Wired Magazine, June 2011.]

Why not try cameras, interactive signposts and other high-tech options at important archaeology sites. Certainly, in the western countries, there is money to do this when one looks, in the U.S. for instance, at the huge financial and personal costs associated with enforcement endeavors like 2009's so-called Four Corners Cases (no jail time for any convicted defendants, 3 related suicides, etc.) Ought not archaeologists take year-round site security into consideration when writing their grant applications? Should they bear any less responsibility than looters when they unearth a site and leave it, poorly guarded, to the vagaries of chance and profiteers after the 'season' is over?

It seems to me that education and feedback loops are working possibilities while serious efforts to de-incentivize the making of fortunes

from antiquities smuggling, by eliminating the possibility of buyers, is a task worth undertaking. Pie-in-the-sky? Perhaps, but shouldn't we give it a shot?

-- Wilbur Norman

Reprinted From:

The ATADA NEWS

Summer 2011