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Healthy Signs of Life

This special issue documents papers that were presented at the fourth annual meeting of the Criminology in North Rhine-Westphalia network in March of this year.¹ It was founded in 2017 with the aim of improving communication within North Rhine-Westphalia's diverse criminological community, encouraging young researchers in the field and making criminological research more accessible to the public and political actors.² The network was also created in response to the 2012 *Freiburger Memorandum* (Freiburg Memorandum), which concluded that criminology in Germany was in a state of crisis.³ At the time, there were major concerns about structural deficiencies. It was feared that German criminology would lose even more skilled researchers and continue to see its influence wane, potentially causing the field to fall behind internationally. This bleak picture was partly based on the legitimate criticism that criminologists focused too heavily on traditional areas of research (e.g. violent, sex- and drug-related crime). In order to keep pace with international colleagues, the authors argued that researchers needed to consider a much broader range of issues and devote more time and energy to phenomena such as state crime, organised crime and economic crime. This list is not exhaustive and could also include subfields such as green criminology, climate change criminology and conservation criminology. The fact that we have yet to find German equivalents for these terms and that these areas (e.g. environmental crime) have yet to be (adequately) explored by German criminologists is no coincidence and speaks volumes. It is therefore all the more encouraging to see some of the articles in this issue address this very knowledge gap.

Daniela Boosen offers German criminologists plenty of food for thought in an article that considers criminology teaching within law degrees from the perspective of higher education didactics. She begins by criticising the lack of structured engagement with pedagogical issues by criminologists and goes on to consider the particularities of teaching that arise specifically from criminology as well as from the subject's inclusion in law study programmes. Here she examines the relevance, learning outcomes and practice relevance of criminology teaching. *Daniela Boosen* also analyses data from a teaching staff survey she carried out in the summer of 2021. Her paper raises important questions and presents pedagogical options that inspire action. Finally, she highlights the need for further research: how can affective learning outcomes be best delivered? Are the objectives pursued through the inclusion of social science components in law faculty degrees being achieved? And what is the state of criminological teaching outside of law degrees?

¹ Cf. conference report in *KrimOJ* (Kieven et al., 2023, pp. 160-166).

² See the network's website [in German] at <https://www.kriminologie-nrw.de/>.

³ For more on this discussion, see the special issues of *Neue Kriminalpolitik* (Albrecht et al., 2013a) and *Monatsschrift für Kriminologie und Strafrechtsreform* (Albrecht et al., 2013b). The *Freiburger Memorandum* is available [in German] at: https://static.mpicc.de/shared/data/pdf/freiburger_memorandum_kriminologie_de_12.pdf.

This is followed by a paper by *Kai Seidensticker* on the spatial distribution of residential burglaries in Düsseldorf between 2016 and 2022. Their paper considers the law of crime concentration, a subject that has received a great deal of attention in North American criminology in recent years. Criminology of place now plays a vital role in addressing issues regarding offending. In discussions on prevention, we should rightly be speaking about a shift in perspective – away from the offender and towards the situation or site of crime. Indeed, *Seidensticker* is able to show that in 2016 half of all burglaries reported to police occurred over just 5% of micro-places, and that, like in the United States, crime hot spots exist in Germany. The authors argue that the Covid-19 pandemic led to a broader spatial distribution of burglaries in 2021 and 2022, which can be explained by changes in routine caused by pandemic restrictions, creating opportunities to offend.

Daniela Pollich focuses her article on shame and ‘guilt’ associated with sexual offences, analysing police communication with victims from a victimological perspective. She bases her findings on qualitative interviews with police officers, who report on their perceptions of sexual offence victims in cases where the perpetrator and victim were strangers or did not know each other well. In addition to conducting a theoretical analysis of feelings of shame, this paper considers the extent to which social norms and stereotypes (e.g. ‘ideal’ victims or rape myths) contribute to social shame arising from anticipated or supposed ‘guilt’. The author also discusses a range of ways in which police communication and interrogation strategies could be adapted to prevent victims feeling embarrassed as well as consider the social causes behind feelings of shame.

Closing the gap between German-speaking criminology and its Anglo-American counterpart is *Job Lohmann’s* aim in his paper on the illegal wildlife trade. He examines current discussions in international literature and provides a historical summary that traces the origins of criminalisation back to colonial-era laws enacted by the European powers. *Lohmann* then goes on to outline the various forms, motives and causes as well as factors that facilitate this type of crime, particularly noting high levels of international demand and corruption. He explains that in theoretical terms, this phenomenon has largely been the focus of green criminology and conservation criminology, although references to routine activity theory are made comparatively often. *Lohmann* uses the example of bushmeat poaching in Central Africa to illustrate how multifaceted the phenomenon and its origins are.

In Germany, criminology is a small field and thus remains at risk of being overlooked or pushed to the margins. In this respect, it is certainly an ‘endangered species’. But as the papers featured in this issue show, German criminology is full of life, outward looking and engaged in a broad range of issues and methodologies. This vitality is the best way of ensuring the field keeps up with international developments. It is wonderful to see this energy being brought to bear in a young, innovative journal that is itself doing a great deal to reinvigorate the criminology ‘scene’.

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