



Editorial: Introducing Criminological Encounters

Lucas MELGAÇO, An NUYTIENS and Tom BAUWENS

On behalf of the editorial team

Criminological Encounters: Setting the Stage

It is our great pleasure to introduce the inaugural issue of *Criminological Encounters*, a new international, interdisciplinary, double blind peer-reviewed, digital, and open-access journal in the field of criminology. With this new venue for discussion, we aim to facilitate critical dialogue between scholars of criminology and interlocutors from related domains. For our debates, we invite fellow academics, practitioners, policy-makers, journalists as well as anybody else with an interest in any aspect of criminology. The potential conversations will include, but are not limited to, contemporary issues of crime and conflict, supplemented by interconnected matters such as harm, risk, violence, (in)justice, security, ethics and law.

The fundamental idea behind this journal is that of “encountering”. An “encounter” evokes the idea of solitary gatherings, moments to get together and build common projects as well as moments of confrontation. In academia, these gatherings, get-togethers, projects, and confrontations are at times intellectual in nature and at others are more explicitly political. The reference to these heated encounters is an acknowledgement of the historical roots of criminology as a “rendezvous” field, situated at the intersection where academic disciplines such as law, sociology, psychology – but also other less obvious disciplines like geography, biology, and mathematics – meet to discuss (the causes and consequences of) crime.

Our ambition is to revitalize this interdisciplinary debate by setting the stage for researchers from social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences to encounter each other and discuss contemporary issues of crime and conflict in a broad perspective. Yet “encounter” involves also an element of surprise. To “encounter”, as the Oxford Dictionary of English defines it, is to “unexpectedly be faced with or experience (something hostile or difficult)” or to “meet (someone) unexpectedly”. And it is precisely this unexpected nature of an “encounter” that, we aim, will define this journal. The encounters we intend to foment here are not limited to interdisciplinary dialogues but also include conversations around different methods (e.g. qualitative versus quantitative) and theoretical schools of thought (e.g. Foucauldian versus Marxist). We also want to stimulate debates between academics and practitioners (e.g. criminology scholars and law enforcement agents), two groups that are often assumed to speak “different languages” and to be living in different spheres that very rarely overlap. Instead of being a journal that focuses only on one of these two aspects – science or practice –, this will be a venue in which these spheres intersect, dialogue with and, when necessary, confront each other. Finally, we want this journal to present new ideas, no matter how brave or provocative they might be. We aim for *Criminological Encounters* to become a venue in which those interested in criminology would meet and in which new, serendipitous knowledges would be produced. We are convinced that the format we have chosen – a digital, open-access, and rigorously peer-reviewed journal – will facilitate the realization of these goals.

Criminological Encounters also aims to foster more encounters between academics from the so-called Global North and Global South. This journal is from its beginning engaged with initiatives to decolonize academia. We intend to make it a venue for theoretical and empirical voices typically obscured by Anglo- and Eurocentric

academia to be heard. We are aware, however, of the challenges and limitations posed by choosing English as the *lingua franca*. As a compensation for such limitation, the forthcoming issues will contain a section called “Language Encounters”, in which we will potentially publish one extra article in one of the different languages spoken by the members of our editorial board (Dutch, French, Spanish, and Portuguese). We are also open to hosting full special issues in Dutch and French. With these initiatives, we aspire to make this journal a welcoming venue for comparative criminological research around the globe.

Why a New Journal in Criminology?

Contemporary researchers are spoiled with a wide range of excellent journals in criminology. However, we do believe this new publishing forum will be a great contribution to academia for multiple reasons. First of all, *Criminological Encounters* is an independent and open-access journal. Our content does not hide behind expensive, and at many times inaccessible, pay-walls. Secondly, this journal has a policy of equality that takes into account not only issues of gender, religion, or racial/ethnic background, but also makes an effort to counter as much as possible colonialist approaches in academia. As mentioned, contributions from outside the “Global North” are particularly welcome. Thirdly, this is a journal that openly adheres to the “slow science” movement. Our focus will never be on the quantity of papers published but on their quality. In the same vein, this journal will not obsessively care about metrics, rankings, and indicators. We want the so-called “impact” of our journal to be “measured” in a purpose-driven way, not based so much on how many times our articles are cited in other journals or books, but rather on the “why” they are cited. Having said that, our aim is to become a well-cited, leading interdisciplinary journal that publishes cutting-edge research. Lastly, being a new journal will allow us to experiment freely with new topics, methods and formats less common in mainstream criminology. We aim to keep such an exploratory verve even when the journal reaches its maturity.

The Inaugural Issue

The inaugural issue of *Criminological Encounters* opens with an analysis by Jeffrey Monaghan and Kevin Walby of an undercover police technique called “hobocops”, in which police officers disguise themselves as homeless in an attempt to issue tickets to distracted drivers. Entitled “‘Hobocops’: Undercover Policing’s Deceptive Encounters”, the first article discusses the convergence between the increasingly prevalent activities of covert policing, urban governance, and a sociological account of police engaging in identity co-optation. It is a critical contribution and an engaged invitation to discuss the ethics of covert policing practices.

Corey Shdaimah and Chrysanthi Leon make a similar point, but extend the scope to include the unintended consequences of current policies and scientific practices that address street-based prostitution. Their article “Whose Knowledges? Moving Beyond Damage-Centred Research in Studies of Women in Street-Based Sex Work” explores the implications for scholarship and policy when researchers allow their studies to be guided by the voices of study participants, rather than by their own assumptions and hypotheses.

Taking the lived experience of people as the point of departure is a recurring approach to tackle one of the key challenges for criminology: the definition of its object of study. While the essentially contested notion of crime is what brings scholars together, it is not a self-contained concept. Crime is not a fixed category. It is understood through social norms and values, and is consequently intimately tied to questions of power. In “Understanding Fear and Unease in Open Domains: Toward a Typology for Deviant Behaviour in Public Space”, Sunniva Frislid Meyer promotes an encounter between criminology and urban studies by presenting a comprehensive classification of categories of crime and deviance in public spaces. Her typology is a reminder that the encounter between social reality and scientific practice is not without problems. There is no such thing as an unambiguous uniform classification system, but such categorizations can be crucial to making sense of the complex social reality.

Questioning the established wisdom and dominant approaches is an important quality of a criminological encounter and the contribution of James Oleson is exactly devoted thereto. While crimes of the powerful may be much more harmful from a financial point of view than crimes of vulnerable populations, conventional criminology tends to focus on the latter ones. One of the reasons for such preference is the fact that it is difficult to get access to the activities of the powerful. In his contribution “Access Denied: Studying Up in the Criminological Encounter”, Oleson presents the advantages of working with self-report surveys with perpetrators of white-collar offences.

In “Stabbing to Get to Prison: Biography as an Encounter with the Criminal Mind”, Frank van Gemert focuses on the added value of authorized biographies for criminology. Authorized biographies are, in his words, a quite underused methodology to explore ‘what is going on in the criminal mind’. In this instigating article, he uses the unexpected case of an offender who turned himself in as an example of how writing a biography can be used as a tool for criminologists to deeply immerse in the rationale of perpetrators.

In the book review section, An Nuytiens and An-Sofie Vanhouche propose an encounter between traditional criminology and popular culture. In their review of “Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Women’s Prison” (Kerman, 2010), the book that inspired the TV series, they promote a dialogue between such a biography and criminological research on female imprisonment. While the series “Orange is the New Black” is discussed in several scholarly publications, far fewer publications have focused on the book. However, as the review shows, such books have great merit for criminology, as they succeed in bringing to life abstract theoretical concepts.

Finally, Criminological Encounters intends to close each issue with an interview with a prominent scholar on their encounters with(in) criminology. For our inaugural issue, we are pleased to have interviewed Sonja Snacken, who shares with us an inspiring reflection on the multiplicity of encounters she has experienced in her longstanding career in criminology. Her interview highlights not only the interdisciplinary aspect of criminology but also how it is a field that closely dialogues with policy and politics.

This inaugural issue is a great exercise on the types of encounters we intend to promote with the journal. For the future issues, we intend to bring together even more diversity, with authors from yet other continents and with more contributions from practitioners, or even artists. For the same reason, we will not only be working with standard full scientific articles, book reviews and interviews, as we did this time, but will also accept other formats such as shorter opinion pieces.

Who is Behind Criminological Encounters?

Criminological Encounters is by definition a collective venture. Our editorial team is composed of academics from all corners of the world and includes both criminologists as well as scholars of other social sciences like sociology, law, education, and geography. The idea to create such a journal emerged from the debates that took place in the Crime and Society Research Group (CRiS) of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel as part of a former research project “Crossing Borders: Crime, Culture and Control”. This idea of crossing borders in and within criminology led to a broader reflection on the idea of encounters.

The editorial team of Criminological Encounters would like to express their sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to the materialization of this project and to the launch of this inaugural list. Among a long list of contributors, we would like to expressly thank: LaFem for the care and creativity she invested in the design of the journal logo and cover; Dariusz Kloza for his contribution to the design of the layout and for his legal advice; Irina Baraliuc for her advice on copyright; Iris Steenhout for her crucial support with the setting of the open access platform (Open Journal Systems; OJS) that hosts the journal; Hanneke Vanhellemont for proofreading; all the anonymous peer-reviewers who carefully revised the articles presented in this inaugural issue; and, last but not foremost, the direction and members of CRiS/VUB for believing in this bold project and for providing all the necessary support for its birth.

Call for our Second Issue and Other Invitations

As a collective project, we would like to invite you, the reader of this journal, to join us in this challenging but exciting venture. There are many ways possible. First of all, we would like to invite authors to submit articles to our forthcoming issues. Our second issue is scheduled to appear by December 2018. We accept both theoretical reflections and empirical contributions that are in line with, but not limited to, the following themes:

- Dialogues between criminology and given disciplines: e.g. criminology and geography, criminology and law, criminology and political science, criminology and philosophy;
- Dialogues between criminology scholars and practitioners: e.g. criminology and law enforcement agents, criminology and policy-makers;
- The encounter between competing research methods: e.g. qualitative versus quantitative approaches in criminology;

- The encounter between competing theories or between different schools of thought: e.g. critical versus positivistic criminology; American versus European criminology; criminology from the “Global South” and criminology from the “Global North”;
- The essence of criminology as a standalone discipline amid its different multidisciplinary influences;
- Criminology as the science for the study of conflicts;
- Other “criminological encounters”: authors are invited to present other possibilities of interpretation of such encounters.

The deadline for submitting an article for our second issue is July 15, 2018.

Secondly, we would like to invite editors to submit proposals for special issues that clearly deal with the ideas of “encountering” mentioned above. Our special issues will focus on thematic topics and will feature competing and complementary perspectives. These could be, for example, encounters between: criminology and sports studies on the topic of “sports in detention contexts”; criminologists and nutritionists on the topic of “food in prison;” policing studies scholars and gender and feminist scholars on “institutionalized sexism within the police”; criminologists, geographers and urban studies scholars on topics like “conflict in public spaces”, “border control and crimmigration”, “electronic monitoring”, “youth crime” and so on. Many different encounters are thus possible.

Thirdly, the quality of such a project is directly related to the capacity of having competent peer reviewers to help us with this endeavour. We already have a great network of very skilled reviewers who have gladly accepted our invitation to take part as a reviewer for the articles of this inaugural issue. However, there is no such a thing as too many reviewers. If you would like to become a reviewer in any of the potential topics treated by this journal and if you consider you have the necessary expertise for such, please contact us.

Given our ambition to be a welcoming venue for comparative criminological research around the globe, we are actively reaching out to practitioners and scholars from the “Global South” to join our editorial team. If you think you fit the profile and if you have time and energy to dedicate to this voluntary project, please express your interest and motivation by sending us an email.

Finally, and most importantly, we would like to invite you to become a regular reader of our journal. If you would like to receive a notification of our future issues, please subscribe through our website www.criminologicalencounters.org. You can also follow us on Twitter (@crimencounters). We are looking forward to future encounters, and hope you are able to join us!

Brussels, March 2018

