

Abolitionism: a paradox of non-criminological criminology?

Zoran Kanduč, L.L.D., Research Associate, Institute of Criminology at the Faculty of Law, Kongresni trg 12, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia

Various conceptual and practical orientations covered by the umbrella notion of "(neo)abolitionism" can be defined as the most consistent form of deconstructivism in criminology. Abolitionism, however, does not comprise only a kaleidoscopic multitude of radically critical views on contemporary criminal law systems, but also offers a range of interesting (and often tested in social reality) alternative - essentially non criminal law - methods of solving interpersonal conflicts and responses to problematic and harmful events. In spite of many scruples related to abolitionist ideas, it is nevertheless worth pointing out that many of them have proved fruitful, particularly in the field of critical (for example, feminist) criminology. Furthermore, the ideal of restorative justice has already found (although to a lesser extent) its place in substantive and procedural criminal law. This example demonstrates one of the "functions" of abolitionist "(non)criminology", operating as a sort of "bad conscience" (or a relentless worm of doubt) of crime policy, still mostly based on a criminal law response to social conflicts. Regardless of the uncontested qualities of abolitionist perspectives, it must not be forgotten that they are often derived from sociological (and socio-psychological) relatively simplified explanations of the social role of the criminal law system (which seems to be a source of typically "antithesis" abolitionist critiques). Abolitionism nevertheless enables - probably due to its "non-criminological" nature - valuable insights into different forms of violence, which cannot (either for theoretical or political reasons) be conceptualised by the "classical" criminal law vocabulary. It is in fact in this very area that not yet exploited potentials of the abolitionist mental "experiment" are hidden.

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