

En fängslande vetenskap?

Kriminologi i Sverige 1885–1965

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this dissertation is to write a history of criminology in Sweden 1885–1965. It is an investigation of how criminology was established as a science – as an acknowledged field of scientific knowledge – not as a broader discursive formation. The aim is to put criminological theories and practices in relation to political movements, media, the state and its institutions, such as the prison, the asylum and the university, and through that analyze Swedish criminology from the point of view of history of science. I mobilize the theoretical concepts of “hybrid management” and “boundary movement” to investigate how the borders between science and politics were negotiated and upheld. The study is divided into three parts which relate to each other both chronologically and thematically.

I argue that criminological theories and practices were established by being connected to different actors, different modes of thinking and different types of political aims. By analyzing criminology as a public science as well as tool for political administration and reform and as an academic discipline, I investigate not only the criminological text and ideas but also the infrastructure and political and cultural context of the science of crime. For this purpose I utilize diverse source material, including, but not limited to, popular scientific texts, state committee reports, the daily press and documents from a range of archives. I argue that criminology as a historical phenomenon is best understood as a social science which tries to mobilize a scientific way of thinking, talking and acting with the purpose of changing society in one way or another. Rather than focusing on which different criminological perspectives dominated at different times I focus on continuity and investigate criminology in Sweden as a project in which criminologists and their allies tried to achieve their goals of 1) production of knowledge, 2) securing the conditions for production of knowledge and 3) implementation of that knowledge in social and penal political reform.

The dissertation shows that the political dimension of criminology should be described as shifting and multifaceted. Criminology did not represent repression or emancipation. Rather, as a science of the welfare state it was mobilized for both purposes and it needs to be understood in a complex process of conflicting interests. I conclude that a fundamental aspect of the establishing of criminology as a science in Sweden 1885–1965 was its proponents’ ability to balance between scientific and political interests in their endeavor to produce criminological knowledge and promote a criminological rationality.

Keywords: crime, criminals, criminology, hybrid management, history, history of social science, psychiatry, sociology, the social question, Sweden in the 20th century, welfare state