

**De Vereniging voor de Sociaalwetenschappelijke bestudering van het Recht & de Nederlandse Vereniging voor Criminologie presenteren**

## **Seminar: Academic Activism**

**Thursday September 7**

### **Trumpery, Authoritarianism, and the Carceral State: On the Responsibility of Intellectuals A lecture by Prof. Tony Platt**

In the so-called post-fact society as Fukuyama described, authoritative information and expert knowledge are questioned and challenged by facts of dubious quality and origin. International movements of political and economic migrants towards Europe as well as the threat of imported Islamic terrorist attacks and the fear for radicalized Muslim youngsters in Europe increased anti-immigrant sentiments and were all responded by introducing several control mechanisms. Difficult questions seem to meet easy answers ignoring a huge body of knowledge academic – evidence based – knowledge seems to be losing its value. We increasingly live in a world in which regarding these matters. In many cases criminalization of behavior goes alongside restrictive measures and the distancing of this same behavior.

These developments are certainly not unique for Europe. With the election of Donald Trump as president, the United States have moved from a post-fact to an alternative fact society in which authoritative information is not just challenged, but replaced by unjust information – especially on issues of migration and crime control. The election of Trump and the policies implemented by his administration so far have sparked academic activism and wide-spread protests in which academics seem to play an active role.

Our guest Tony Platt describes himself as an activist intellectual, amongst others giving expression to the urgent need of doing research or attributing scientific knowledge to improving the position of those who are subject of the research. According to Platt, “the field of criminology emerged in the early 20th century with close ties to state agencies and an intellectual agenda framed by the preoccupations of government. In its selection of research topics, data, and methodologies, Criminology has always been activist, practice-oriented, and committed to social engineering, albeit from a conservative perspective. Following World War II, a progressive strand of activist criminology emerged in Europe, the United States, and Latin America, a response to the failures of social democracy, and to neo-imperialism and the war in Vietnam, and to the rise of social movements. This tendency, known as “radical criminology” in the United States, had some short-run successes, but was defeated by the 1980s. The rise of Trumpism in the United States and new forms of authoritarian populism in Europe give carceral issues a central role in governance. As we face this new, dangerous punitive turn, what is the responsibility of progressive intellectuals?”

#### **Central focus:**

During this seminar, questions will focus on the responsibilities and pit falls of being an activist scholar. How important is it to be engaged in activist research, what does it mean and where does activist research start? Should we engage much more explicitly in public debates surrounding our research themes contributing and counter-arguing the easy answers? And if so, what does it imply for our research integrity and or research methods?

Two intellectuals – Prof. Rene van Swaaningen (Criminology, Erasmus University) and Prof. of Leny de Groot van Leeuwen (Sociology of Law, Radboud University Nijmegen) - will act as a discussant reflecting

on the current state of affairs within their discipline. There will be plenty of time for questions from and discussions with the audience.

**Tony Platt** (amplatt27@gmail.com), a criminologist and sociologist, is the author of eleven books and 150 essays and articles dealing with issues of criminal justice, race, inequality, and social justice in American history. He taught at the University of Chicago, University of California (Berkeley), Sacramento State University, and San Jose State University. He is currently a Distinguished Affiliated Scholar at the Center for the Study of Law & Society, University of California, Berkeley. He is working on a book for St. Martin's Press, tentatively titled: *Beyond These Walls: A Genealogy of American Injustice*. His last book, *Grave Matters*, deals with the history of the looting of Native American graves. He taught "radical criminology," including a class with David Du Bois, editor of the Black Panther Party's newspaper, in Berkeley's School of Criminology, from 1968 until the university closed the School down in 1976. In 1972, he helped to organize California's first major conference on prison activism, "The Struggle Inside." A founding member of the editorial board of *Social Justice*, Platt blogs on history and memory at <http://GoodToGo.typepad.com> .

Organization: the Dutch Society for Criminology and the Dutch Socio-Legal Association in collaboration with ESL Research program Monitoring Safety and Security / Leiden Law School's Van Vollenhoven Institute for Law, Governance & Society

Date: 7 September 2017

Time: 14.30-17.30

Location: Erasmus University Rotterdam, H17-02 Tinbergen building

Please register by sending an email before September 1<sup>st</sup> 2017 to: Chantal Koot , [koot@law.eur.nl](mailto:koot@law.eur.nl)