



“Through Roger Matthews’ eyes”: Glimpses of critical and left realist British criminology

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BRUNO AMARAL MACHADO* 

CAROLINA SOUZA CORDEIRO* 

Abstract

Roger Matthews was a British criminologist renowned as a left realist. He was Professor of Criminology at the University of Kent and was part of the National Deviancy Conference. In this interview, Matthews presented a brief context of the British socio-criminological academia in the 1970’s and on. He showed us the academic network between North American and British academics and the rivalry among them. Afterwards, Matthews talked about his impressions on European and Latin American Criminology. His statements led us to reflect about recent debates in the Brazilian criminological field and alert us of some limits of a marginal criminology.

Key words

Roger Matthews; British socio-criminological academia; academic network; European criminology; Latin American criminology

Resumen

Roger Matthews fue un criminólogo británico reputado como realista de izquierdas. Fue profesor de criminología en la Universidad de Kent y participó en la National Deviancy Conference. En esta entrevista, Matthews presenta un breve contexto de la realidad académica socio-criminológica británica en los 70 y más allá. Nos muestra la red académica entre los investigadores norteamericanos y británicos y la rivalidad entre ellos. A continuación, Matthews habla de sus impresiones sobre la criminología europea y la latinoamericana. Sus afirmaciones nos animaron a reflexionar sobre debates

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* University Center of Brasília – CEUB. Address: SQSW 302, bloco C, apart. 506. Zip Code: 70673-203, Brasília-DF. E-mail: brunoamachado@hotmail.com

* University Center of Brasília – CEUB. Address: QI 27, lote 8, apart. 512. Regional Building. Zip Code: 71.060-278, Brasília-DF. E-mail: carolinascordeiro@yahoo.com.br

recientes en el campo criminológico brasileño y nos alertaron de algunos de los límites de una criminología marginal.

Palabras clave

Roger Matthews; socio-criminología británica; red académica; criminología europea; criminología latinoamericana

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1. Introduction

Roger A. Matthews (1948–2020) was Professor of Criminology and Director of Studies for the MA in Criminology at the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research, at the University of Kent. He received his B.A. with honors in Social Science at Middlesex University. Matthews also earned his M.A. in Sociology/Criminology at the University of Sussex and his Ph.D. at the University of Essex. At Middlesex University, he worked as Lecturer and Senior Lecturer in Criminology (1977–1990) and later as Reader and Professor of Criminology (1993–2004). After that, Matthews worked as Senior Lecturer at the University of Leicester (1990–1993). Prior to joining the University of Kent, he was Professor of Criminology at London South Bank University from 2004 to 2011. Unfortunately, Matthews recently died of the effects of COVID-19.¹

Matthews is described as “... one of the influential group of ‘Left Realists’ and a leading contributor to several areas of study in critical criminology (...)” (South and Brisman 2020, p. 303). His relevance in the academic scenery, as Iñaki Rivera Beiras reports, sends us back to 1985 in the sessions of the Common Study Programme on Criminal Justice and Critical Criminology. Matthews was part of the main debates that took place in the sociological and criminological academic field by that time. He led the debates in those sessions along with well-known actors of the field, such as Louk Hulsman, Alessandro Baratta, Jock Young, Massimo Pavarini, Roberto Bergalli, among others (Rivera Beiras 2020, pp. 177–8). Rivera Beiras also argues that Matthews “... has taken on Young’s legacy as to strengthen a critical Criminology that could be seen as inherent to British left realism” (Rivera Beiras 2020, p. 179, translated by us).²

Following a lifetime dedicated to academic life, Matthews left a great number of publications. Some of his books are: *Armed Robbery* (2002); *Doing Time: An Introduction to the Sociology of Imprisonment* (1999; 2009); *Exiting Prostitution – along with others* (2014); *Prostitution, Politics and Policy* (2008); *Realist Criminology* (2014). He also edited books with colleagues, such as: *Confronting Crime*, with Jock Young (1986); *Crime, Disorder and Community Safety: a new agenda?* with John Pitts (2001); *Informal Justice?* (1988); *Issues in Realist Criminology*, with Jock Young (1992); *Prisons 2000: An International Perspective on the Current State and Future of Imprisonment*, with Peter Francis (1996); *Privatizing Criminal Justice* (1989); *Prostitution*, with Megan O’Neill (2003); *Rethinking Criminology: The Realist Debate*, with Jock Young (1992); *The New Politics of Crime and Punishment*, with Jock Young (2011); *What is to Be Done about Crime and Punishment? Towards a “Public Criminology”* (2016). Last but not least, Matthews wrote articles such as: *Beyond “so what?” criminology: rediscovering realism* (2009); *False Starts, Wrong Turns and Dead Ends: Reflections on Recent Developments in Criminology* (2017), *Policing Prostitution: Ten Years On* (2005), *Realist Criminology, the New Aetiological Crisis and the Crime Drop* (2016), *Reintegrative Shaming and Restorative Justice: Reconciliation or Divorce?* (2006), *The Construction of “So What?” criminology: A Realist Analysis* (2010), just to name a few. In 2020, he published *New times, new crimes: Notes on the depillarization of the criminal justice system in Critical Criminology*. In the same issue of this journal, Nigel South and Avi Brisman paid a tribute to him publishing *Remembering Roger Matthews (1948–2020) and editors’ introduction to “New*

¹ Information available on 13 February 2021, <http://www.rogermatthews.net>

² “En las últimas décadas Roger Matthews asumió fuertemente el legado de Jock Young de fortalecer una Criminología crítica propia del realismo de izquierda británico” (Rivera Beiras 2020, p. 179).

Times” and “*Environmental Crimes*” (South and Brisman 2020). After his death, his fellow academics also wrote texts about his academic legacy (Rivera Beiras 2020, South and Brisman 2020).

As South and Brisman described: “Roger enjoyed meeting friends, students and colleagues around the world, most recently developing research links in Latin America (...)” (2020, 304). In 2018, he came to Brasilia (Brazil’s capital city) to give a seminar to masters and doctoral students at the University Center of Brasília (CEUB). Matthews was invited by Bruno Amaral Machado, who is Professor of Criminology and Criminal Law at the Program of Master and Doctorate in Law at the University Center of Brasília. The seminar *Topics in Contemporary Criminology: Realist Criminology, Penal Policy and Sex Trafficking* was held on 09–11 April 2018. Before the first day of the seminar, Machado and Carolina Cordeiro interviewed Matthews. Cordeiro is Professor of Criminology and Criminal Law at the Undergraduate Program at the University Center of Brasília.

This is an unprinted version of the interview held with Roger Matthews on April 9th, 2018, in Brasilia, Brazil, when he visited the University Center of Brasilia (CEUB) and offered a three-day seminar. Our purpose is to provide a brief view of Matthews’ privileged perspective on how criminology developed. Therefore, we intend to bring back his point of view and academic path. We also call attention to Roger Matthews’ productivity and significant influence in the British socio-criminological field.

Matthews’ statements make us think about recent debates in the Brazilian criminological field and alert us of some limits of a marginal criminology (Zaffaroni 1988, 1993, Dieter 2016a, 2016b, Matthews 2015, 2018). Though historically focused on the British and American criminological field, the scenery Matthews showed us is certainly worthy when thinking about Latin American Criminology and the contemporary changes of the field. In Brazil, part of the criminologists, mainly the ones linked to sociological research, are willing to take a path that is not far from Left Realism (Vasconcelos 2014, pp. 112, 219–220, 329 and 439). Another part, mainly critical criminologists, still reject these changes, keeping their studies, in a way, closer to radical abolitionists’ and strategically making few exceptions to a strategic reformism (Karam 1996, 2021, Genelhú 2015, Malaguti Batista 2015). Not to mention other (Latin American) discussions on whether radical criminologists should assume political protagonism (Aniyar de Castro 1995, 1996, pp. 59–61). Or discussions on whether social movements’ call for penal punishment is a conscious strategy in defense of human rights or a naïve choice in opposition to devious reasoning (Campos and Carvalho 2011, p. 149, Carvalho 2014, pp. 138–139). As it is connected to our main goal, we will also bring these local disputes to debate Brazilian socio-criminological scenery.

Our main goal in this article is to question how the British Left Realism worked in the socio-criminological field and how the disputes related to Left Realism came and unsettled the Brazilian context. It is not our purpose to go through the whole realistic debate but to raise relevant topics taking the point of view of one of the most prominent figures of this movement.

2. The British Socio-criminological Academia: A brief context³

Politics plays a central role in British sociological and criminological field – which we suggest as a socio-criminological field. The rise of the anti-psychiatry movement, the political influence of student movements along with the mobilizations against the Vietnam War were significant parts of that background from the 1950s on. This insurgency of critical academics derived from Marxist social political perspectives turned out to be the basis of British New Criminology (Cohen to McMahon and Kellough 2013, pp. 41–42).

Jock Young, Ian Taylor and Cohen were leading figures among the founders of the group that later became the National Deviancy Conference (McMahon and Kellough 2013, pp. 42–43, Cooper 2015). The members of the NDC interacted in their meetings and with other academics. Young said that “... the size of Britain makes an awful difference (...). You can, in fact, you will, meet all the people in the field within a period of six months if you get around” (Mintz 1974, p. 38). It goes without saying that even though Young referred to Britain, he also meant the small size of British socio-criminological academic field by that time, and that such a journey would last a lot longer nowadays.⁴ Taylor highlighted the importance of the NDC’s political proposal:

The important feature of the NDC is that, right from the start, it was characterized by a reaction against the Social Democracy of European correctionalist criminology, and by a dissatisfaction with social democracy in Europe as such. (...) Later, we became very much more consciously aware of the inadequacy of the orthodox Marxist grouplets’ critique of Social Democracy in these crucial cultural areas, and all three of us [Taylor, Walton and Young], along with Laurie Taylor and Stan Cohen, wrote papers for Left organizations and magazines precisely on this question. The New Criminology would not have been possible without that shared understanding of Social Democracy’s limitations, and thus the limitations of deviancy theory as well. (Mintz 1974, p. 34)

A few years later, Young, Taylor and Walton published *The New Criminology* (Taylor *et al.* 2003), which is known as one of the opening books of a renewed Marxist criminology in Great Britain. They recognized the fundamental role of the discussions held within the framework of NDC for the development of such a work: “This book is fundamentally the product of discussions and developments in and around the National Deviancy Conference, a growing body of sociologists and individuals involved in social action in the United Kingdom” (Taylor *et al.* 2003, p. xv). By that time, the growing interest in criminology led young students such as Matthews into shifting their research to criminology.

Machado: What was the atmosphere like in British academia in the 60’s? As far as we know, in British academia, you had a strong Marxist background. What kind of influence did you have on the National Deviancy Conference in the late 60’s?

Matthews: We were all sociologists. When I started teaching [in] 1974, I had to teach Marx. I had to teach critical theory: Marcuse, Adorno, Horkheimer. I should do a bit of criminology but, really, we grew up as Marxists.

³ The following paragraphs of this section, before the interview itself, were part of Cordeiro’s PhD dissertation (2020).

⁴ It should be noted that not all the founders of the NDC followed the Marxist path.

We were searching in the literature for Marxist-oriented Criminology. So, people started reading Bonger, Pashukanis, Rusche and Kirchheimer. It was really quite a revelation.

There was a whole body of these Marxist-oriented [groups]. There was The National Deviancy Conference,⁵ which actually was this kind of radical very, very left idealists. And there was also this other group of our friends, a society that was called the Conference of Socialist Economists. They were all Marxists or Marxist economists. And we said it would be really good we did a book that actually combined [our ideas]. We did a book [together] called *Capitalism and the Rule of Law*.⁶

So, there was a whole group of people in the UK. This was also the base of left realism: Jock Young, John Lea, myself, and other people.

Machado: Was Middlesex the center of the critical criminology? Can you tell us about the leading figures in the British Academia in the National Deviancy Conference? Do you see Jock Young and Stanley Cohen as leading figures among the British criticism in the early 70s? By that time, they already had some research together, right?⁷

Matthews: I started teaching in 1974 in Middlesex [University]. I was in the middle of my PhD in Essex [University]. We [Jock and Matthews] were really good friends at that time.

Middlesex was quite important. But it was not [a center]... Middlesex was full of leftists. The whole social sciences in Middlesex... [We] were moving to critical criminology.

[Ian] Taylor and I were [in the NDC]... Mary Mc [Mary McIntosh]... She was somebody who doesn't take prisoners. [Do] You know this phrase? When you have an invading army, a really hard invading army, it doesn't take prisoners, it just shoots them. So, she was a hard woman, very tough, very dedicated, very committed.

Stan was in Middlesex as well. Also, a radical... Stan went to Essex. Stan was just a genius. When we were in Middlesex, we used to have an annual conference.⁸ Back in

⁵ According to Matthews in *Realist Criminology*, "[t]he establishment of the National Deviancy Conference in 1968 provided an important vehicle for giving impetus to the development and promotion of this new criminology. Similarly, the formation of the European Society for the Study of Deviance and Social Control, which was established in 1973, provided a similar vehicle for a new generation of young European scholars (Cohen 1998, Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008, ch. 2). A number of books concerned with crime and deviance began to appear that set in motion new ways of thinking about these established themes" (Matthews 2014, p. 2).

⁶ Matthews referred to: Fine, B. *et al. Capitalism and the Rule of Law: From Deviancy theory to Marxism*. London: Hutchinson, 1979.

⁷ Machado referred to works like Cohen, S.; Young, J. *The manufacture of news: Deviance, social problems & the mass media*. Michigan: Constable, 1973. In an interview, Stanley Cohen told McMahon and Kellough that Jock Young, Ian Taylor and himself took the first steps to found the National Deviancy Conference: "I guess though, that I was influenced more by the kind of cultural politics of London at that time. The 1966-67 *Dialectics of Liberation* conferences, Laing, then the Student Movement, the anti-Vietnam activities. I think that all this was culturally an enormous influence on me as well as all the generation of people I was with at the time, Jock Young was a student with me and Ian Taylor was a student of mine. We were all part of that circle. I suppose my influence came very much from the type of communal activity which began building around the National Deviancy Conference. It was something of my idea at the start. I'd moved up from London to Durham, and I was isolated from my buddies in London. I thought, let's find some kinds of opportunities to get together. So I contacted Jock - Ian was already in Durham as a student when I was there - and we rounded up others for a meeting" (McMahon and Kellough 2013, pp. 42-43).

⁸ Matthews explained that they used to call it a conference there, whereas he knew that in Brazil we call it a seminar.

1980, I remember me going there and Stan presenting a paper that was actually the basis of *Visions of Social Control*.⁹ I have said it to you [Cordeiro], it was one of those papers that you go to. The presentation took like 45 minutes. Afterwards, I just sit in my room for a couple of hours, and I was like... wow! I didn't sleep. I actually lost it. There were two papers historically that had blown me away: one was Jock's *Working-class criminology* [Young 1975] and the other one was this paper by Stan that then became the base of *Vision of Social Control*.¹⁰ These papers just absolutely took the breath away, just so strong, so powerful, such a mind-changer, completely. I always come back at such things. There are things you read that are interesting and there are things that you read that mean you cannot any longer see this world the way you saw it before. There were very few things like that, and those two pieces were like that. Young's *Working-class criminology* and Stan's *Visions of Social Control*: once you read them, the world changed.¹¹ People like Jock Young and Stan were... as I said, they lifted Britain. This wasn't a job; this was not like an academic that you would go from Monday to Friday. If you got into Jock Young on a Sunday morning, his brain would be trying to think about something to do with criminology. That was always a real turning point. It was non-stop. It was a passionate commitment and even an affliction. There's no way out there. So, it was a different way of thinking.

Machado: Do you believe that the realist criminology concern was already there in *The New Criminology*?

Matthews: The new criminology was very much about how we were all excited by Merton. We were trying to make sense of positivism and trying to move beyond positivism.¹² There has always been a kind of critical criminology which is anti-positivistic. And there was a big issue about how you made sense of Durkheim, because Durkheim was a socialist, right?

So, the question is how that fits into this path. So that's what the new criminology was all about: a try to rethink through all that. Maybe you could say it was a kind of steppingstone towards Realist Criminology. But in many ways, it was a book of this time.

Of course, a point about all of that is the reason why the New Criminology got Britain. It was, basically, Jock Young. Without Jock Young, we never would have written it. He was the guy behind that book. He could have done it without the people, but they couldn't have done it without him. Do you understand what I mean? He was the driver. And he was just a guy. He was there with Gouldner.

If you want to really understand the development of realist criminology and the transition from what we were the radicals in the early 1970s, the real figure behind it... Who was the person who really influenced Jock Young? The key part of all this was Gouldner. Alvin Gouldner really was the one pulling the strings. He was the man behind many people thinking.

⁹ Matthews referred to Cohen 1985.

¹⁰ In *Visions of Social Control*, Cohen advised that: "Parts of chapters 2 and 4 appeared in somewhat different forms as *The Punitive City: Notes on the Dispersal of Social Control*, Contemporary Crises 3 (October 1979) and *Social Control Talk: Telling Stories about Correctional Change* in Peter Garland and David Young (eds.) *The Power to Punish*, (London: Heinemann, 1983). I am grateful to the editors and publishers for permission to recycle some of this material." (Cohen 1985, p. ix). So we assume he referred to one of these articles.

¹¹ According to Nigel South and Avi Brisman (2020, p. 303), Matthews was born "... into a working-class family in North London and never forgot his roots".

¹² He meant "we" as a group, as part of the NDC. The debates that originated *The New Criminology*, published by Ian Taylor, Paul Walton and Jock Young, were held in the NDC.

Gouldner was a major major influence. The absolute key article in this – I might talk about it a little bit later –, if you want to read the key article, it was Jock Young’s *Working-class criminology* [Young 1975]. And basically, that is an article that was massively influenced by Gouldner and was also the transition from left idealism to left realism. I can remember the conference where Jock delivered that paper. And the left idealists in the audience were getting angered, coming really really upset and he basically told them they were misguided, idealistics, romantics, basically...

Another guy also very influential at this time was Stuart Hall, who you probably don’t hear so much out here, right? Stuart Hall was a Marxist sociologist. Stuart Hall was a much much much powerful thinker and a powerful guy. He was very influential not only in criminology but in broad works, too.

1975 was a real turning point. That was a big, big turning point. That was the split in *Critical Criminology*¹³ between the left idealists and the left realists.

In 1975, we started to produce some pieces. There was a period of formation. It wasn’t really until the early 1980’s that we started to get really productive.

It was a period of transition. In the UK, certainly, there was a breakup of that Marxist tradition. We were all members of different Marxist socialist parties. And then, basically, what happened was people began to lose their faith.

In his book *Realist Criminology*, Matthews identified three main changes in socio-criminological studies during the 1970’s and 1980’s in the British field:¹⁴

... from the early 1970s to the late 1980s three fundamental changes took place in the nature of criminological inquiry. These were first, a requirement to address the motives and meanings of crime and deviant behaviour. Second, a greater focus on social reaction and the process of social control, including the role of the media. Third, a broadening of the focus of inquiry to include occupational crime, domestic issues and the operation of the ‘hidden economy’. In addition, we might add that criminological endeavours became more politically attuned in this period, with an increasing recognition that crime and justice are politically contested issues and an appreciation of the ways that politics and power serve to shape the behaviour not only of those under study but also of those undertaking research. (Matthews 2014, p. 4)

He also added that: “These Young Turks, together with the growing body of apprentice criminologists, were not based in the established centres of learning (...) but were located in the new universities, many of which had been built or modernised during the 1960s” (Matthews 2014, p. 2).

3. Academic Network: North American and British rivalry¹⁵

The United States played a relevant role in the critical shift of British socio-criminological field. The NDC developed during the arrival of the Sociology of Deviance to Great Britain (Van Swaaningen 2013, pp. 70–71). Young also noticed that: “... [I]t flourished greatly in the extraordinary burst of creativity of American deviancy theory of the mid 1950s and 1960s, which was elaborated and developed in the late 1960s and 1970s (...)” (Young 2011, p. 181). He stated that after the fast development of North American

¹³ Matthews referred to Taylor *et al.* 2003.

¹⁴ This paragraph was part of Cordeiro’s PhD dissertation (2020).

¹⁵ The following paragraphs of this section, before the interview itself, were part of Cordeiro’s PhD dissertation (2020).

Sociology of Deviance in the 1950's and 1960's, it grew and expanded further in the late 1960's and early 1970's with "... the transatlantic crossing to Britain and the work of the National Deviancy Conference and the Birmingham School; it matured immensely with the influence of second wave feminism and the intense and creative debates with the abolitionism of Northern Europe and is represented by the cultural criminology of today" (Young 2011, p. 181). However, Young also believed British criminology to be mostly critical, unlike the North American one (Young 2011, p. 184).

British criminologists that were in the field by then did not deny North American theoretical influence but kept pointing out their limitations and restrictions to their own interests and fields (Mintz 1974, p. 38). Cohen acknowledged the importance of interactions among British and North American socio-criminological fields in the development of the New Criminology in Great Britain. They published, even individually, under the same political and deconstructed perspective when talking about crimes of the higher classes, drugs, violence, and others. It was no surprise that Cohen attributed the New Criminology primary texts to Becker's influence: "They were really a political version of Becker" (McMahon and Kellough 2013, pp. 43–45).

In fact, Cohen states that Becker's book was the first criminological book that really impressed him, while he was still studying Economics by the end of the 1960's: "I still remember reading Becker's *Outsiders* and being quite knocked out by it, even though it's so simple. It is absolutely simple; any idiot can understand it. And yet it still has all sorts of very fascinating implications if you take it seriously" (McMahon and Kellough 2013, p. 42).

Besides that, Cohen pointed out disputes between both English-speaking socio-criminological fields. He believed that the sense of collectiveness, the non-competitiveness and the political stand taken by the students' group were the responsible for the very existence of NDC in Great Britain. The political bias was not only theoretical. The members of NDC were active in political parties linked to the radical left, they were involved in social service works and wrote about them (McMahon and Kellough 2013, p. 43).

British and North American socio-criminological fields were in opposite sides when it came to competing academically and to taking a political stand. On the one hand, North American criminologists were more competitive but did not open their fields in order to allow a direct contact with young workers, prison officers, etc. North American criminologists' only concern was their own criminology. On the other hand, British criminologists were open to including workers and prison officers, which would even join NDC's meetings, though being less competitive. Cohen highlighted the political reasoning and the sense of collectiveness that moved them and that led British scholars to the creation of the NDC (McMahon and Kellough 2013, pp. 43–45, Matthews 2014, p. 3). Cohen compared both fields:

Unlike North American academic life, the emerging group had two distinct features: for one, it was intensely political, and this is, I think, a difference which people don't quite appreciate when they see leftist radical English academic writing. Because it was always engaged – not just in an abstract sense – with the world. Most people were members of various political groups, or they saw their academic work in sociology and deviance as connected with their politics. I've written about this in a paper on the

evolution of the NDC, and Geoff Pearson’s book *The Deviant Imagination* describes that atmosphere very well. So, the atmosphere was very political and very engaged, and that influenced me. I was fascinated and caught up in it. Second, unlike a lot of North American academic life, it was collective, it was very non-competitive. I really don’t think people were competing with each other to get publications. (McMahon and Kellough 2013, p. 43)

British and North American socio-criminological fields were seen as opponent but they also shared features. There was intellectual exchange among sociological and criminological fields from both sides. Young observed that the “crossing” over of the Atlantic Ocean by the Sociology of Deviance also resulted in the exchange of cultural elements:

Let me say at this stage the passage across the Atlantic was not so much a translation as a transposition. The British radical criminologists, just like the American sociologists, whose imagination inspired the new deviancy theory, were revolting against the tradition of positivism and correctionalism which had dominated criminology and the sociology of deviance in both countries in the 1950s and early 1960s. This was the reason why American ideas were so attractive to them. Yet, as we shall see, the ideas were significantly transformed in the transition and, ironically, their impact was more influential and sustained. (Young 2011, p. 205)

Machado: What about the relationship of the British group with the Americans? Richard Quinney, William Chambliss, and other leading figures of that time... What kind of relationship did you have?

Matthews: There was no relation at all, and it is still the case now, thirty-four years later. The Americans live in an American world. Anything outside of that they don’t really want to know about. This is one of the big reasons why it was very difficult to establish left realism in America. Because it wasn’t American.

I remember when I talked to [Elliott] Currie about what [James Q.] Wilson and [George] Kelling meant by *Broken Windows*.¹⁶ The Broken Windows thesis was probably the major best known criminological thesis in the 1980’s. I wrote an article [about it] in 1992.¹⁷ Many years later, we did a book on crime community¹⁸ and I invited Kelling to

¹⁶ Matthews referred to the article *Broken Windows*, published by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling. In *Realist Criminology*, he called this movement Right Realism and characterized it as naïve, superficial, inside a criminological pattern that did not go underneath the structural issues: “Right realism, or what might be better characterised as ‘naïve realism’, takes the category of crime and the functioning and purpose of the criminal justice system as given. By focusing on that which is immediately given, this form of neo-conservative criminology adopts a largely commonsensical approach to crime control, which has the considerable advantage of avoiding the difficulties of having to deconstruct categories and concepts. Right realists also tend to avoid explanations that include considerations of ‘root causes’ and ‘deep structures’, such as poverty and inequality, and instead focus on the more visible but arguably more superficial aspects of crime and its control. This, in part, is the basis of its widespread appeal. By avoiding challenging conceptual issues and engaging in ‘straight talking’, the policies presented often resonate not only with academics but also with politicians and the general public. Thus, right or naïve realism is realist inasmuch as it takes crime seriously and aims to reduce crime and victimisation, but is naïve inasmuch as it takes social reality as self-evident” (Matthews, 2014, pp. 15-16).

¹⁷ Matthews referred to Matthews, R. (ed.) *Replacing ‘broken windows’: crime, incivilities and urban chance*. In: Matthews, R.; Young, J. (ed.) *Issues in Realist Criminology*. London: Sage, 1992.

¹⁸ Matthews referred to the book he edited with John Pitts: Matthews, R.; Pitts, J. *Crime, Disorder and Community Safety: a new agenda?* Edited with John Pitts. London/New York: Routledge, 2001.

do a chapter in it on a bit of a rethinking the Broken Windows thesis.¹⁹ In that chapter he got involved and engaged in a debate with me. I said to him: 'Why didn't you engage in a debate with me back then, in the 1990's, when I actually wrote this'. He said, basically: 'Because it came from Britain. We don't debate with you in Britain because it's not here'. He never ever thought or wrote about it because it's not coming from our planet [Matthews explains ironically]. Do you understand? You got to realize just how incredibly into them the Americans are. I always had this thing with that.

I am actually doing a paper on Foucault for publications coming out in America and I was looking at the standard social theory or criminological theory textbook in America.²⁰ There is this book *Criminological Theory* by Lilly, Cullen and Ball,²¹ which is a best-selling book in America on criminological theory. And it's basically, in many ways, a good book. So, I thought I could look what they have made on Foucault. What was their view of Foucault? And you know, in this book, which is like four hundred pages, there was not one reference to Foucault. There's not one reference. There's no mention of Foucault in this book. From my point of view, the most powerful theory in the post-war period – [it's] criminal, if you like criminological theories or sociological theories. It doesn't even register in American criminology. Because they don't have any affinity with European literature. Americans only read American work.

Cordeiro: If you read those criminologists or sociologists in the US, you don't see that strong Marxist background. Young mentions in an interview [to Sozzo and Fonseca]²² that Merton had also a Marxist background, and then he shifted. Was it all about McCarthyism?

Matthews: The thing really took off earlier in America. In the 60's, there was a whole body of literature that came out of America that was massively powerful: Becker,²³ Lemert, Cicourel, Albert Cohen, Merton. There was a wealth of material and that was what sparked us in terms of criminology, because of the whole development of Labelling theory.²⁴ Imagine, we were twenty and there were these people like Ed Lemert, Becker, all of these people, Gusfield,²⁵ lots of them. And they were telling us that the normal wasn't normal. The pathological was no more than the path. The world was upside down. It made you rethink every other question. All of a sudden, everything was seen through different eyes. It was just a really really exciting period.

Before he died, Jock was very preoccupied with how McCarthyism shook American sociology. So, basically, what happened was that when McCarthyism was there a lot of

¹⁹ Matthews referred to the article: Kelling, G. L. 'Broken Windows' and the culture wars: a response to selected critiques. In: Matthews, R.; Pitts, J. *Crime, Disorder and Community Safety: a new agenda?* Edited with John Pitts. London/New York: Routledge, 2001.

²⁰ Matthews referred to: Matthews, R. False Starts, Wrong Turns and Dead Ends: Reflections on Recent Developments in Criminology. *Critical Criminology*, vol 25, p. 577-591, 2017.

²¹ Matthews referred to: Lilly, J.R.; Cullen, F.T.; Ball, R.A. *Criminological Theory: Context and Consequences*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2019.

²² Cordeiro referred to Máximo Sozzo and David Fonseca's interview with Jock Young, which were published both in English and in Portuguese (Sozzo and Fonseca 2016).

²³ Howard S. Becker was a sociologist at the University of Chicago. The School of Chicago has a prestigious sociology department in the United States, and was home for some well-known sociologists since the end of the 19th century. It was, partially, the birthplace of the Deviance Sociology (Cordeiro 2020, p. 61).

²⁴ Becker developed the Labelling Approach, one of the main theoretical foundations of new criminology (and of critical criminology). He did it while working there, preceded by figures such as Edwin Lemert and Edwin Schur, who developed the symbolic interactionist perspective (Cordeiro 2020, p. 61).

²⁵ Joseph R. Gusfield was a sociologist who went to the University of Chicago. Information available: 16 February 2021, <https://sociology.ucsd.edu/people/memoriain/gusfield.html>

left-wing sociologists disappeared or changed their Sociology, so it became acceptable. So, Jock's kind of thesis was that this McCarthyism changed it all. If you look at American movies, it all happened there in the same way. In the McCarthy period, they took out anyone who was left or center, actors, or producers. It shacked the heart of the movie industry in America. Because only certain types of movies were allowed to be made. The same thing happened in Sociology. So, Jock was interested in seeing how Merton as a socialist actually managed to operate in this McCarthy era.

Another thing which, of course, is important when you think about history was that in those days a big book would come out every year or every two years. When Becker produced the *Outsiders*,²⁶ everybody read it. It was standard reading. People would walk around with these books in their hands. Because you could talk to people about these books because you knew everybody else had read them.

Now people are picking stuff up from different countries, which is interesting, but I think that there's another topic. What you propose as theoretical critical realism and what people do all over the world and they consider it as public criminology.²⁷ You have some influence from these ideas, critical ideas but dedicated to intervention, to realism.

There are people for years and years and years who have been engaged in public criminology. The conservatives [the right] have always engaged in public criminology. Actually, one of the links between the right realism and left realism is that right realist has always engaged in it. Kelling and Wilson used to go around the world selling Broken Windows, right?

They were talking to governors, to politicians, to policymakers. They were selling that like stocks and shares. They were selling everywhere. The rights have always had this strong public criminology focus. The right wants to change the world in their own particular way. The people who are left out of this are the left idealists, who don't want to do anything. They don't think there's a problem. They don't think there are problems to think about. It doesn't really exist, therefore why should we do anything, right? And also, of course, because, as we know, there is this whole industry: the ivory tower academics.

There's a lot of academics who now have enormous pressure to publish, if they don't publish, they don't get jobs, they don't get a promotion, they can't move. They got no marketability. So, the relationship now is between the academics and the journals, the publications. Not a lot of them actually think they have to go beyond that and actually do something to change the world. So, they think that if they write two articles a year to be published, that's their job. That's what they need to do. There are a lot of academics who do that and are quite happy to do that and don't think of anything else. Also, there's now a lot of stuff produced, which, to be honest, is of such poor quality that doesn't even have any policy related elements anyway.

Cordeiro: "So what?"²⁸

²⁶ Matthews referred to the book *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, published by Becker for the first time in 1963.

²⁷ Matthews criticized what is sometimes called "public criminology" without really being attached to its purpose such as in British realistic studies.

²⁸ The expression "*So what*" criminology was used in Matthew's articles to refer to criminological studies he believed to be common among academic criminologist nowadays. He explained: "Increasingly within academic criminology there is a growing body of work that can be designated as '*So What?*' criminology. That is, there is an increasing number of publications that are weak theoretically, employ dubious methodologies

Matthews: Yeah... "So what?" criminology... [Matthews 2009, 2010].

Machado: Do you see other figures similar to Merton among the sociologists in that period?

Matthews: There was C. Wright Mills, of course... C. Wright Mills was influential. C. Wright Mills was pretty central. People read his stuff.

Machado: But Wright Mills was an outsider in the American sociology, right? What about that big controversy with Talcott Parsons and the so-called Grand Theory?

Matthews: They all had a love-hate relation with Parsons, right? This was an interesting period there. There's no doubt that American sociologists took a significant difficult turn to the right. If you look through the 1970's and 1980's, American sociology and American criminology were to the right... The conservatives were very strong.

In the book *Realist Criminology*, Matthews also compared both British and North American socio-criminological fields and described their differences and distinguished political backgrounds. He highlighted the relevance of the book *The New Criminology* and pointed out the absence of such a masterpiece in the United States:

... there was not a single landmark text in America along the lines of *The New Criminology*. Instead, there was a growing critical mass of texts alongside the rapid expansion of the American Society of Criminology, whose membership increased from 300 in 1970 to just under 2,000 in 1977 [Scarpitti 1985]. In addition, the publication in 1970 of the first issue of the flagship journal of the American Society of Criminology – *Criminology: An Interdisciplinary Journal* – signalled the growing professionalisation of academic criminology in America.

Thus, on both sides of the Atlantic the new criminology grew as a hybrid subject with four main and competing strands existing in an uneasy tension. The deviancy and sociological approaches were critical of positivistic and administrative approaches, while positivists, in turn, were skeptical about what they saw as the metaphysical and 'unscientific' tendencies of new deviancy theory. As [Matthews 2014, p. 3].

Even though there were all those differences, the North American and British fields grew linked by similar socio-criminological approaches.²⁹

4. A brief look into European and Latin American Criminology³⁰

Another group of researchers that historically allowed interactions in the European critical socio-criminological field was the European Group for the Study of Deviance and Social Control. Cohen said he met and shared an office with Italian researcher Mario Simondi and German researcher Karl Schumann in Berkeley in 1970. Some years later, they met again in Europe and started the European Group (McMahon and Kellough

or have little or no discernable policy relevance. There are a number of developments that have taken place within the sub-discipline of criminology, that have contributed more or less directly to the spread of "So What?" criminology. These include the growing influence of postmodernism, the demise of critical criminology, the lure of empiricism, a widespread pessimism or impossibilism and the adoption of an instrumentalist approach to what works" (Matthews 2010, p. 125).

²⁹ The last paragraph was part of Cordeiro's PhD dissertation (2020).

³⁰ The following paragraphs of this section, before the interview itself, were part of Cordeiro's PhD dissertation (2020).

2013, pp. 43–44). René Van Swaaningen pointed the irony of this meeting of European researchers in Berkeley:

In 1970 Stanley Cohen, then living in England, the Italian Mario Simondi and the German Karl Schumann ‘coincidentally’ shared an office in the renowned critical School of Criminology in the University of California at Berkeley. They did not know each other previously. In their own countries, all three of them had had their experiences with the establishment of an alternative criminology, which should offer a counterweight to the dominant Parsonian functionalism, and by doing so break the hegemony of the administrative criminology based on this paradigm. It can be called a little paradoxical that Europeans had to come to the United States to get their inspiration for the development of an alternative paradigm for functionalism – being itself the example par excellence of the North American imperialism within social sciences. Europe’s specific history, and its large cultural and linguistic diversity, had prevented such a concerted action to grow, however, within the old continent itself. Now the time had come to break this situation of splendid isolation. (Van Swaaningen 2013, pp. 70–71)

In her doctoral dissertation, Cordeiro identified that both English-speaking fields (British and North American) were the intellectual centers of knowledge production. The most significant socio-criminological fields in Great Britain and in the United States from the 70’s were developed through disputes over intellectual leadership by the leading academics. The disputes for power and scientific prestige while in touch with foreign fields revealed the structural bond between each field and their own knowledge (Cordeiro 2020).

The disputes among British and North American academics were decisive models for European and global South fields. They were structurally alike in disputes, dynamics of academics and leadership archetype. Despite all that, the historically established similarities made European and Latin American legal-criminological fields resemblances of their Anglo-Saxon precedents (Cordeiro 2020).

We also noticed that North American and British criminologists recognized just each other’s research and had little concern about other socio-criminological fields. Sociological and criminological journals from the 1960’s and 1970’s, such as *Crime and Social Justice* (US), *Issues in Criminology* (US) and *The British Journal in Criminology* (GB), rarely published articles or translations from non-English-speaking countries. In addition to focusing on their own production, British and North American criminological fields were mainly open only to each other, English-speaking researchers. Even authors from northern countries such as Canada and France, which are French speaking countries (even though Canada also speaks English), had few publications in those journals (Cordeiro 2020).

When it came to recognition in those fields, Latin American scholars were also left out. Cultural and intellectual exchange among global North criminological journals showed that their main concerns were also related to that imperialistic view along with their regard to English-speaking backgrounds. The power of scientific capitals, as used by Pierre Bourdieu (2017), from global North and English-speaking countries were also significant in determining the very existence of a connection among academics from different fields.

Kerry Carrington, Russel Hogg and Máximo Sozzo highlighted the historical intellectual dependency that up to these days defines the prevailing Northern point of view over the Southern socio-criminological fields. Not only economic but intellectual hierarchy was/is a decisive issue when talking about different perspectives between Global North and South (Carrington *et al.* 2016, pp. 5–6).³¹

It has always been a matter of “... power relations embedded in the hierarchal production of socio-criminological knowledge that privileges theories, assumptions and methods based largely on empirical specificities of the global North” (Carrington *et al.* 2016, pp. 2–3). Aside from class, gender and race as key for socio-criminological research, empire is an important element there which cannot be forgotten: “Empire is once again an important connecting thread in the relationship between penal practices in North and South” (Carrington *et al.* 2016, p. 12).

Machado: And what about the Europeans in the 70’s, 80’s? Other European colleagues joined you?

Matthews: The NDC failed partly because the left idealists ran out of steam in many ways... At some point, it got replaced by the European Deviance Group, which became a new partnership of the left idealism. I was a founding member of the European Deviance Group. I was a member of that group for a long time.

Machado: Was the German criminological field very different from the British one? Was it more theoretical? And how do you figure this kind of criminology among the Germans, as Fritz Sack for example, and other leading figures from the seventies?

Matthews: I’m not quite sure. There was a big abolitionist element in all of their stuff. They had that very formal German sociology, didn’t they? They also had that sort of guys who were doing a formalistic classic German sociology.

There was Sebastian [Scheerer]. Sebastian is retired now. But that whole school, they are still abolitionists. Not left idealism, just idealists, really.

³¹ “The missing element here is empire. Of course, empire is acknowledged as a fact but invariably one that plays no part as an organizing principle of analysis. Over the course of several centuries, but rising to its zenith in the 19th century, European imperial states colonized vast swathes of the Americas, Africa, the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific (Gregory 2004; Beckert 2014). At the height of western imperial power, they controlled as much as nine tenths of the global land mass, establishing white settler communities in foreign lands, superimposing colonial borders on local ethnic, tribal and other boundaries, extracting raw materials, exploiting labour and opening up trade routes to the West (Gregory 2004; Beckert 2014). [...] To complicate this picture further, global Northern countries like the United States and Canada also share these characteristics as colonial settler societies. The southern plantation economy of the United States was based on slavery until the civil war and on a brutal form of racial segregation for a further century after that” (Carrington *et al.* 2016, pp. 5-6).

“Metropolitan criminology focused on the urban context of industrializing countries of the North, but the issue in many colonial settler states (Australia being a classic example) was not primarily one of managing the migration of people from the countryside into fledgling cities, but of how to populate the countryside with white settlers and contend with the resistance of its existing inhabitants to their physical and cultural dispossession (Reynolds 1989; Goodall 1996). The resultant conflicts and tensions are far from being of mere historical interest. The impact of past expropriation, frontier violence, segregation and autocratic administrative controls under supposed ‘protection’ and ‘welfare’ laws, concerted efforts at cultural decimation (breaking up families and removing children), reach into the present, adversely impacting Indigenous health and well-being in myriad ways (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW] 2014)” (Carrington *et al.* 2016, pp. 8-9).

Fritz Sack was old school, wasn't he?³² So, he was part of that left idealist tradition. He was still very much committed to left idealism. So, he was in that school in Hamburg. There was a lot of things going on.

I remember I got to a conference in Hamburg, and I had a massive debate with Hulsman. And actually Stan [Cohen] came in to the debate and he refereed it. Because it was such a heated debate and Stan was just too taken.

Look at German's [field now]. When was the last time you saw a debate with the Germans? People don't actually even debate things anymore. The interesting thing about this was on the original 'new punitiveness' article,³³ which has gotten the most downloads of any article in that journal, is that [has gotten] not one response. There is not an article that comes back and argues with me on that topic. So, there's no debate, no argument. It appears there's nothing like a major debate. People don't debate issues in a real way. It has just become something arrogant.

You have much in the way about any kind of really ongoing debate about anything. Certainly not debates about theory. There are debates which are very low key, very low-level debates.

Cordeiro: I remember you mentioned [John] Braithwaite as well in “Realist Criminology”, right? Was he there?

Matthews: Braithwaite was one of the guys. Braithwaite's books came out in the 19... [1970's]. It was this classic book approximately about 1980's. But with Braithwaite, obviously, he came of another part of the world.³⁴ He's not a common realist in essence. There was really something in Braithwaite in the sense that Braithwaite was always interested in public criminology. Braithwaite always wanted to do something meaningful about crime. He always wanted to get in ongoing and engage in some kind of intervention. It was always Braithwaite's project.

[Public criminology] Before the Label... Whereas the left idealistic guys were all like: crime doesn't really exist, we can't look at it anyway. Braithwaite was always interested [in it].

Machado: And what about Italy? What about Marxist texts in Italy in the 1970's and some leading intellectuals that took part in the National Deviancy Conferences? Do you remember [Alessandro] Baratta³⁵ there?

Matthews: There was Pavarini there... They were still active by 1980's. By 1980's they were still into it. They also had it before that, of course.

Negri was there... They had people like Negri³⁶ in Italy. They are still quite influential. Ferrajoli [also] was around then. He was around all the time.

Baratta was in Italy, and he moved to Germany. He was an academic entrepreneur. He wasn't an intellectual. He was a major operator.

³² In Germany, Sack and Baratta were leading representatives of critical criminology, which Matthews identified with the left idealistic tradition.

³³ Matthews referred to the article *The myth of Punitiveness* (Matthews 2005).

³⁴ John Braithwaite is an Australian criminologist who interacted with the British academics.

³⁵ Alessandro Baratta (1933-2002) was an Italian jurist, who also wrote about philosophy and criminology. He was professor of Sociology of Law in the University of Saarlandes and Director of the Institute for Legal and Social Philosophy. He also directed two prestigious Italian criminological journals: *La Questione Criminale* and *Dei Delitti e delle pene* (Cordeiro 2020).

³⁶ Antonio Negri was an Italian social scientist and philosopher.

They weren't Marxists. They were just radical liberals. They weren't concerned about what happened in Russia and all that was going on in the Social Communism as well. That wasn't their backgrounds, so it wasn't a big problem back there. They were just radical liberals or radical idealists.

It is always a big surprise to me just how influential they were particularly in Latin America. You have to give people credit, if you got that kind of impact. You don't get it for nothing. You have to do something that has some significance.

Machado/Cordeiro: In his main book *Critical criminology and the criticism of criminal law*,³⁷ Baratta suggested taking Gramsci's idea of organic intellectual as a starting point. An organic intellectual should be active, should be close to ongoing.

Matthews: Yeah, you have to remember also there are all these prices. So Baratta, he writes his book saying you need to think about organic intellectual. It's because we – in these debates we were having with them – were saying it. One thing they were saying was that crime is a myth that doesn't exist. But we were arguing that crime does exist and also you need to do something about it.

Machado/Cordeiro: What about Latin American Criminology? How do you see it compared to British?

Matthews: We grew up as Marxists. We were all Marxists for many many years and sociologists. So, we grew up with an immersion in theory and there was no better training in theory than reading Marx. Marx is just one of the best thinkers of all time. Just to read Marx and to train in that way of thinking is an apprenticeship. The trouble now is [that] a lot of people [studying criminology] are not coming through sociology and that kind of background. People that are coming through Law don't have that theoretical training, they don't have that background. So, it's very difficult for them to make that transition into critical criminology and to take it on themselves, so then they become dependent on what is important and on what's available, rather than being out searching for: We are in Latin America, we have our own problems, we have our own look in the world. Let's think of this now and from our perspective and an original way.

Basically, how you think about theory and how you think about critical criminology also determines what kind of questions you ask, and it also affects how you research such questions. So, if you adopt a particular approach, then you are going to look at your problems in a certain kind of way or, even more important, you're going to find out what our problems are. So, one of the things [that] happens with a lot of people now, particularly in Anglo-American criminology, is that people don't actually follow a clear theoretical problematic. What happens now is that, if you look at northern criminology, is that people now do topics... what you do is that when you are a young academic is you choose a topic (gangs, prisons, police, whatever) and then you do that maybe for twenty years. And really you never really think widely outside of that, right?

Because, actually, also, there's such a lot of material going published now that is even hard to keep up with the material in your own little area, right? So, there are very few people that have a wider vision. Some write a lot of interesting stuff, but it is not of a broad perspective and a broad vision of a society in such a structure. So, what you get is just a lot of people writing about the same particular issue, a particular topic and that's pretty much how the Anglo-American criminology operates now.

³⁷ Machado referred to the book originally published as *Criminologia critica e critica del diritto penale. Introduzione alla sociologia giuridico-penale* (1982).

Maybe you could say the same about the situation in Latin America, you need to have a book, you need something here where you have a deep reflection on what is available, what do we know, where are we going, how do we make sense of the world. Something that puts the whole thing in an understandable perspective and that requires some people with serious academic ability.

Cordeiro: I feel like Latin American critical criminology has been facing these issues for quite some time...

Matthews: It has become very strange. I think one thing quite important about critical criminology in Latin America is you have to be very careful about importing critical criminology from North America or from Europe. Actually, there are two basic things really: one is that the criminology that comes from the Anglo-American world actually doesn't explain crime and justice very well in its own world, right? So, you don't want to be importing it, because it has not been very good explaining its own problems. Let alone your problems. The other problem is the same: the theory is weak, in general. The theory is thin. So, it's not even of a quality that you would want to use it. So, what I find out here is there are a lot of people who are trying to import particular North American criminology and, as I said, a lot of the stuff you are importing is not good quality work and it doesn't fit even well in North America, let alone down here. So, it's very dangerous to import this stuff.

In 1985, I had a great wake-up call. The problem about the left idealistic is that we had the critic for the prison, but we haven't really thought about what you are actually going to do about it. And I thought: What am I going to do? What is there? We need a debate. Something that will actually answer what we would do about it.

5. Glimpses of the Realistic debate in Brazil

We found few studies dedicated to Realism in Brazil (Coelho 2012, Fayet Júnior and Coelho 2014, Dieter 2016a, 2016b). Dieter reviewed Matthews' book *Realist Criminology* (2016). Fayet Júnior and Coelho wrote an article on Left Realism (2014). And Coelho identified the relation between realistic proposals and Brazilian public policy. In her academic research, she noted that even though there was no direct influence, they shared similar values and purposes (Coelho 2012, p. 14).

Despite that, the Left Realist turn, in which Matthews was a leading figure, certainly brings us to disputes in the critical criminological field in the last decades, in different contexts. In Brazil, some critical criminologists show their disagreement to part of the realistic agenda. Vera Malaguti Batista (2007, 2015, pp. 93 and 104) and Maria Lucia Karam (1996, 2021, pp. 22–23) resist against some researchers they call “collaborationists” or “punitive left”. These labels are attributed to sociologists and criminologists engaged in public policies concerning the penal agenda. On the one hand, these supposedly collaborationist criminologists are the ones who import left realism. For that matter, Malaguti Batista states that “[i]n Tony Blair's England and around the globe, left realism spread theoretically, calling on criminologists and the social sciences to collaborate with the governmentalization of the penal state” (2015, p. 104, our translation). Karam described the left realist criminology's message as “the condescending point of view that the criminalization promoted by leftist governments would take place out of necessity” (2021, p. 22, our translation). On the other hand, the “punitive left” label refers to intellectuals involved in social movements as feminism, antiracism and LGBT, who require the Penal State against gender violence and racial

discrimination (Carvalho 2014, pp. 138–139). Nevertheless, feminist, antiracist and intersectional criminologies has followed different paths and explored different ways to cope with the State to defend human rights. Undoubtedly, those demands are also subject to criticism of part of the critical criminological field.

Matthews wrote about this kind of “stalemate with the abolitionists being accused of idealism and the reformists being accused of pragmatism or worse” (2018, p. 21). He reminded us that Mathieson, in *The Politics of Abolition*, also “pointed out that well-meaning reforms can all too easily become incorporated into an expanding penal system” (Matthews 2018, p. 22). Matthews also criticized the domination of “pessimism and impossibilism” in criminology and argued that “activists may have a personal or ideological commitment to abolition but in practice we are all reformers, while it is extremely questionable whether the abolition of prison could ever be achieved by a process of attrition and the gradual building up of reforms” (Matthews 2018, p. 27). In the end, he summarized “in reality, the distinction between the abolitionists and reformers is ideological and, although self-proclaimed abolitionists and reformers may have different priorities in terms of intervention, there is a pressing need to engage in prison reform” (Matthews 2018, p. 31).

As Matthews showed us, Realism was an answer to Thatcher’s Law and Order in the United Kingdom. That conservative experience, that had roots close to the changes in punishment during the 70’s, must be read from our perspective (Dieter 2016a, 2016b, Pinto Neto and Cipriani 2021). We cannot deny that we face some specific problems of a marginal Criminology such as intellectual dependency and hierarchy; nor our struggle against theoretical bias while importing theories, which tends to focus on Global North influence, leaving our local knowledge and empirical research aside (Cordeiro 2020). Furthermore, our Latin American experience is known historically by its colonial reality, by biopolitics related with subordinated people, which received new impulses with the astonishment with Law and Order, that proposed new ways of thinking about public security.

Indeed, Latin American Criminology has its own specificities: left governments and their mass incarceration penal policies (Azevedo and Cifali 2017, Sozzo 2017); fragmentation of the field between criminological and sociological studies in Law and Sociology departments (Vasconcelos 2014, Alvarez *et al.* 2020); criticism to realistic approaches (Karam 1996, 2021, Malaguti Batista 2015); debates on whether criminologists should work “militantly” side by side with politicians or even run for elections (Novoa Monreal 1985, 1986, Aniyar de Castro 1986, 1995, 1996, Cordeiro 2020), to name a few. In Brazil, antiracist and feminist studies have been taking the stand for forgotten victims, though they lead to results far from realistic ones. The feminist movements are the ones really taking violence against women seriously (Campos and Carvalho 2011, Campos 2013, Gindri 2018, Souza and Pires 2020).

Considering all that, we should go beyond Matthews: Reformism should be thought strategically. Realism in Latin America should consider our marginal idiosyncrasies. A marginal realistic view that has been described by a well-known local figure such as Zaffaroni (1988, 1993) as a socio-criminological path that allies our historical roots with the Southern contemporary capitalistic scenery. Zaffaroni captures the realistic essence

and remodels it according to a marginal point of view. He sets a realistic paradigm that we can look for in our marginal perspective.

6. Conclusion

Roger Matthews presented a brief context of the British socio-criminological academia in the 1970’s and on. He showed us the academic network between North American and British academics and the rivalry among them. His perspective was critical to some limits of European and Latin American Criminology. Matthews helped us pose more questions and think about our own field. Must we all ask ourselves “so what”? What is the next step in Criminological Studies?

We should recognize Southern Criminology’s research and its characteristics in order to avoid perpetuating the same mistake of following Matthews’ footsteps uncritically. We also need to overcome the distance between socio-criminological academia and public criminology. Therefore, we claimed that we must take a stand and re-read Matthews from our own background. Zaffaroni’s proposition is a realistic approach taken from our border’s point of view. A marginal realistic perspective that considers both historical and current demands while producing realism in Latin America. This approach frames Realism for our marginal reality.

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