

Sveinung Sandberg: Narrative Criminology

'Crime' is a central part of most societies. It features in human life, not only as actual physical actions, but also as boundary work and stories. Stories of crime make harmful actions both plausible and compelling. Stories about crime provide a lot of what qualitative researchers consider data, but as a discursive form they have received only scant attention in studies of criminality. Stories are interesting in their own right. For, whether true or false, the stories people tell reflect values, identities, cultures and communities. Stories are good at making simple what is complicated. At the same time, some of the complexity is retained because stories by their very nature are ambiguous and open-ended.

Narrative criminology is an emergent framework. Research within this tradition study the role the telling and sharing of stories play in committing, upholding and effecting desistance from crime and other harmful acts. In this talk, Sandberg presents the theoretical and methodological pillars of narrative criminology and illustrates how it can be used in empirical research. Examples are from his own research and include studies of right-wing and jihadist terrorism, drug dealing, violence and street culture. He also shortly discusses the potential of counter-narratives to crime.