

Newsletter of the *European Society of Criminology*

# CRIMINOLOGY IN EUROPE



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**Sonja Schulz on Crime and Self-Control**

Gorazd Meško

## BEFORE GOING TO SARAJEVO IN 2018

### A REVIVAL OF COMPARATIVE CRIMINOLOGY IN THE BALKANS

*Of everything that man erects and builds in his urge for living nothing is in my eyes better and more valuable than bridges. They are more important than houses, more sacred than shrines. Belonging to everyone and being equal to everyone, useful, always built with a sense, on the spot where most human needs are crossing, they are more durable than other buildings and they do not serve for anything secret or bad.*  
Ivo Andrić (Nobel prize laureate for literature, 1961)



A few years ago, an innovative criminological initiative, the “Balkan Criminology”, was launched at the ESC conference in Bilbao. This research concept on regional comparative criminology soon became “The Max Planck Partner Group for Balkan Criminology” and has since organised regional conferences and summer schools on a variety of criminological topics. To relearn about the development of criminology in the region, I recently revisited a book on the development of criminology in the Balkan countries entitled *Mapping the Criminological Landscape of the Balkans: A Survey on Criminology and Crime with an Expedition into the Criminal Landscape of the Balkans*. This book, edited by my colleagues from the Balkan criminology network, triggered a reminiscence about my first steps in learning about the Balkans and criminology in the region.

I have had the privilege to learn about criminology and criminological research from my colleagues from the West and the East, from the North and the South, since the beginning of the 1990s. A large majority of my research in the last two decades has focused on comparative criminology in South-eastern Europe.

About twenty years ago, being eager to learn about criminology and criminological research, I visited universities and research institutes in the region. It was not yet an “expedition” as implied in the title of the aforementioned book, but an attempt to learn about the region, especially about post-conflict societies in which crime, social disorganisation, anomie and other social problems were constants in the everyday life of the people. Step by step, comparative criminological research on some topical criminological and criminal justice issues has been growing due to joint efforts—understanding the development of formal social control; studying policing, criminal justice institutions, prisons,

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Cover picture: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, The Massacre of the Innocents

and crime prevention, war crimes, juvenile delinquency, organised crime, corruption, and attempts to develop democracy; emphasising the importance of professional policing and the legitimacy of policing and criminal justice; and reflecting on the importance of values of people and rulers, as well as the development of criminology in Southeastern Europe. (For more, see: *Policing in Central and Eastern Europe 1996-2010*, and *Criminal Justice and Security in Central and Eastern Europe 2012-2016*, COE – *Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society 2004*, and *Trust and Legitimacy in Criminal Justice: European Perspectives*, 2015).

Another observation is that international institutions, including foreign embassies in countries in the region, support criminological research. Supported research topics are mostly related to corruption, trafficking in human beings, illegal trafficking of goods and services, refugees, protection of the youth, gender issues, and policing in post-conflict societies. Since the late 1990s, much has changed, but there are still many problems which attract criminological reflection and research, and must be studied carefully. These issues have been a primary focus of the Balkan Criminology Group.

In addition, after the establishment of the Balkan Criminology Group, a revival of (empirical and comparative) criminology, criminal justice and other studies were published, mainly applying Western concepts in regional and national contexts. Recently, monographs have been edited to present the development of criminological research in the Balkans (and other countries of Southeastern Europe), demonstrating that criminology is again flourishing in the region. Despite the fact that criminology had almost disappeared from the curricula in faculties of law in Central and Eastern Europe, research achievements are proving that criminological reflection and imagination have not vanished. On the contrary, criminology, victimology, penology and crime prevention have become important subjects at many schools of social sciences, especially in new schools of criminal justice, security and police academies.

In quite a short time, a significant amount of work has been done by editing collections of essays on the development of criminology, penology, violence and victimology in English. If everything goes well, a quadrilogy of Balkan criminology publications will be presented at the 2018 ESC conference in Sarajevo. For this reason, I believe that a generation of (mainly) young criminologists from the Balkans and Southeastern Europe will contribute to global criminology and policy-making in their countries.

Some countries in the region have joined the European Union in the last 15 years, which facilitated collaboration by researchers from the region with European and international research teams. While the Balkan region was formerly considered “terra incognita”, it has become more visible in the field of international criminology. Not only have scholars from the region contributed to the development of criminological thought, but researchers from other areas of Europe have also come to explore the region. Good examples of such international connections and cooperation are international and regional conferences and summer schools, which are attended by the most prominent international criminology scholars.

It was not easy to understand the social context at the beginning of my research in some Balkan countries, because the region is not a monolithic entity. On the one hand, the signs of war were visible in some countries, while on the other, life went on and there were no significant differences between these countries and the rest of Europe, at least at first sight. These countries are on the so-called Balkan route known for drug and human trafficking. A recent refugee influx from the Middle East has proven that ideas and practices on social control can be quite controversial. The refugee crisis especially can be seen as a test of humanity, because securitisation has become an everyday reality in the region, while social prevention is losing its role—a situation very similar to that in some Western countries.

## FROM THE NEXT ISSUE

> Discussion on criminology and the immigration crisis

## POSTGRADUATE STUDY IN THE INSTITUTE OF CRIMINOLOGY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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Graham Ellison – Policing & police reform; community safety; sex trafficking & prostitution

Shadd Maruna – Desistance; psychosocial criminology; prisoner reintegration

Anne-Marie McAlinden – Child sexual abuse; sex offenders; restorative justice

Kieran McEvoy – Restorative justice; truth recovery; transitional justice

Marny Requa – Truth recovery; human rights; transitional justice

Phil Scraton – Deaths in controversial circumstances; criminological theory; prisons

Pete Shirlow – Segregation and violence; ethno-sectarianism; political violence

Yvette Russell – Feminist legal theory; gender & crime; sexuality

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Through my fieldwork since the 1990s, I have learned that in some environments the only rule was that there were no rules; sometimes rules are not implemented in practice; and innovation was a leading response to lofty social goals. Social differentiation, the poverty of the majority of the population, and corruption in politics and the public sector were considered significant factors for criminality. In addition to these factors, neoliberal ideas have taken over the entire region, and predatory capitalism took place in economies all over the region.

I remember reading about the Balkans and Balkanisation, meaning mainly fragmentation, destruction, depression, chaos, hatred, cheating, and social disorganisation. However, Balkanisation can also have a positive connotation regarding some dimensions of the quality of life, such as friendship, persistence, diligence of the peo-

ple and their hospitality. The latter is something I wish participants at the 2018 ESC conference will experience while visiting Sarajevo.

ESC conferences, despite a small number of participants from the region, have always been a place of fruitful debates on a variety of criminological topics specific to Southeastern Europe. I believe that the 2018 conference is a unique opportunity to convey a strong message about the importance of criminology as a teaching discipline in higher education and criminological research in the region.

**Gorazd Meško** is Professor of Criminology and Head of the Institute of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Ljubjana, Slovenia, and the President of the ESC

## RECIPIENT OF THE ESC EUROPEAN CRIMINOLOGY AWARD

Manuel Eisner

# FROM THE PAST TO THE FUTURE OF VIOLENCE

It is a great honour for me to be the recipient of the 2017 ECS European Criminology Award for Lifetime Contribution to European Criminology. I would like to thank the Award Committee for their work, and Michael Tonry for his Laudatio, in which he highlighted my contributions to various areas of criminological research. This includes work on the long-term history of violence, research on human development and problem behavior from childhood to adulthood, and studies on the prevention of violence in different settings. These research strands are bound together by my goal to make a useful contribution to our understanding of the causes and consequences of human violent behavior. In particular, I am trying to find better answers to: Why do societies differ in levels of violence? What are the evolutionary roots of violence and cooperation? What developmental and situational processes are involved in generating aggressive behavior? And what can we do to reduce violence? To find tenable answers to these questions I believe that we need to think across subdomains of criminology, linking prevention science, neuro-criminology, life-course criminology, sociological criminology and evolutionary thinking – to name just a few.

## THE REVENGE MECHANISM

I want to illustrate the benefits of thinking across disciplinary boundaries by highlighting some of my work related to one motivating mechanism for human violence, namely revenge – the desire to pay back for harm inflicted on oneself or a member of one's family or group. Revenge has been shown to be a powerful motive for wars in pre-modern societies; it is the most frequent motive for murder in non-state societies; and it is an influential driver for the painful public punishment that the Early Modern state inflicted on its subjects. Revenge and retaliation for real or alleged wrongs justify gang wars in the South of Chicago as much as murder in the townships of Cape Town, police killings in Rio de Janeiro and genocide in Myanmar (Eisner, 2009).

Using insight from evolutionary psychology, I think of revenge as a set of hard-wired psychological mechanisms that mobilise emotions of anger and moralistic aggression, and that are associated with a sense of satisfaction when retaliation has been delivered and justice has been done (Eisner, 2009; Eisner et al., 2017). Anthropological and historical evidence suggests that revenge is a cross-cultural universal, rooted in human psychology and an important cause of violent death

in non-state societies. Humans' desire to retaliate likely evolved because it solves a series of adaptive problems: the anticipation of revenge deters potential aggressors from considering an attack in the first place; actual revenge increases the costs of aggression and hence prevents attackers from attacking again; and in a group-living species revenge and retaliation prevent self-interested actors from free-riding at the cost of others who contribute to a collective good.

## THE DECLINE OF HOMICIDE SINCE THE MIDDLE AGES

A long-held desire for revenge may have played a role when, on 23 March 1369, Henry of Trastámara stabbed his half-brother and King of Castile, Peter the Cruel, to death in a tent outside the fortress of Montiel. According to the French chronicler Froissart, Henry entered the tent and demanded to know 'Where is that Jewish son of a whore who calls himself King of Castile?' to which Peter replied 'You are the son of a whore. I'm the son of good King Alfonso'. This triggered a fight, during which Henry stabbed Peter with his sword. The murder may have made strategic sense, but Henry also had good reasons to hate his half-brother, who not only had Henry's mother killed soon after the death of their father Alfonso XI but also had Henry's twin brother Fadrique slain, reportedly enjoying breakfast next to the cooling body.

The episode belongs to a society in which revenge and feuding among the nobility occurred frequently, occasionally leading to cycles of revenge and counter-revenge that escalated into civil wars (Eisner, 2009). It corresponded to a culture that considered the ability to retaliate against threats to public reputation as a defining element of true masculinity. One area of my research therefore attempts to better understand what happened to this type of violence in Europe, starting in the Middle Ages (Eisner, 2001: 2003: 2015). Much of this work is inspired by the sociologist Norbert Elias. In his seminal *Theory of the Civilizing Process*, he argued that interpersonal violence declined in the history of Europe because of the effects of increasing interdependence in market economies and the growing monopoly over the use of force by the state. In an attempt to test this and other hypotheses, I have developed the history of Violence Database, a collection of quantitative data retrieved from primary historical work on levels and contextual characteristics of homicide in all regions of Europe.

This work, some of which has become widely known through Steven Pinker's *Better Angels of our Nature*,

revealed a surprisingly consistent long-term declining trend over several centuries across all of Western Europe. It was not uniform, but interrupted by recurring periods of increase, some of which—such as the increase in interpersonal violence between the 1960s and the 1990s—appear to have been synchronised across the entire continent. Moreover, we can increasingly recognise a large-scale spatial pattern in the decline. It resembles the gradual expansion of low homicide regimes along a centre to periphery axis: The decline of homicide probably started earliest in the North-West of Europe, spread to Scandinavia somewhat later, and expanded to southern Europe even later.

The causes of the decline were complex. But the work by historians and social scientists leaves little doubt that gaining control over feuding, blood-revenge, and tit-for-tat manslaughters that responded to sleighs in taverns or outside university colleges played a major role. The process played out at different levels. It included the gradual introduction of the rule of law as an effective source of protection against the threat by others; it comprised a transition from a man of honour, rooted in a collectivist culture of self-defense, to a man of respect representing a more individualist culture of self-restraint; and it entailed the shift to more spatially mobile societies, where walking away from a conflict became an option that had few costs for public standing (van Gelder et al., 2017).

## LINKS BETWEEN VICTIMISATION AND PERPETRATION: RUMINATING ABOUT MURDER AND REVENGE

The claim that the historical decline in violence resulted partly from increasing social control over revenge rests on assumptions about human nature. It entails the idea that humans are highly sensitive to provocations, threats to their reputation, and harm against themselves and their kin—and that such acts activate psychological mechanisms associated with anger, hatred and a thirst for revenge. However, we cannot directly observe psychological mechanisms in historical material. The argument therefore risks remaining mere speculation.

We can overcome this limitation by searching for evidence of the revenge mechanism in modern societies. For example, longitudinal data with information on victimisation, angry ruminations about striking back, and actual violent behavior would allow us to examine whether threats to well-being and reputation activate a desire to take revenge even if ultimately we don't do it. One data set that fulfills these requirements is the Zurich Project on Social Development from Childhood

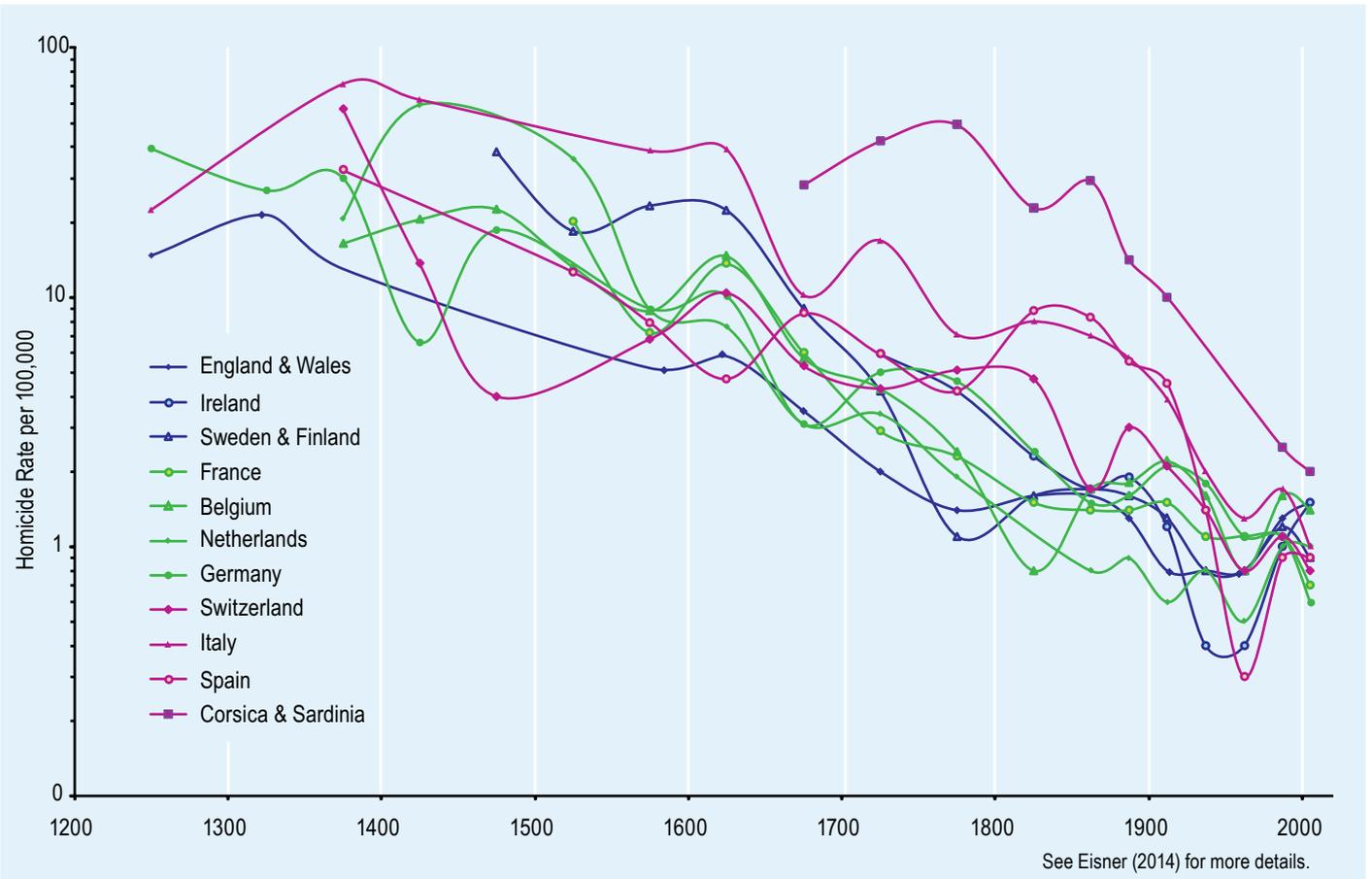


Figure 1. Homicide Rates in Europe, 1200-2020

to Adulthood, or z-proso (Eisner and Ribeaud, 2007). I initiated this study in 2002. It follows a cohort of 1675 children who entered one of 54 primary schools in the city of Zurich in 2004. Since then we have collected multi-informant data on the study participants at ages 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, and 17, and we are currently preparing the upcoming data collection wave at age 20. The initial participation rate was 83% (N = 1361). At age 17 the participation rate was 81% of the original target sample (N = 1306). The study has a particular focus on aggressive and violent behavior, with extensive data on victimisation and a range of age-adequate measures on related psychological mechanisms. One of the research programmes that my colleagues and I pursue on the basis of this unique data source related to improving our understanding of the mechanisms that link victimisation and perpetration (e.g., Averdijk et al. 2016; van Gelder et al., 2017).

When the study participants were aged 17 we administered a newly developed measure of violent ideations. The instrument consisted of 11 items that ask participants to indicate how often they had thought of killing, assault-

ing or otherwise attacking others during the past 30 days (Murray, Eisner and Ribeaud, 2016). Three items relate to fantasies of killing a person who is personally known to the respondent.

This information allows us to estimate how frequent ruminations about murder and revenge are in one of the most peaceful societies in the world. Results show that young Swiss produce enough murderous fantasies to eliminate much of Swiss society if they acted on their thoughts (Murray, Eisner and Ribeaud, 2016). More specifically, 18.6% of the study participants had thought at least once about killing a person they know during the past 30 days. Men were about twice as likely as women to have homicidal ideations (24.1% versus 13.0%), and the male respondents who did have homicidal ideations were more likely to experience them repeatedly than female respondents.

Where do these ruminations come from, and why do individuals differ in how much they experience thoughts of killing a person they know? To a large extent the likelihood of homicidal ruminations reflects broader personality characteristics such as impulsivity and aggressiveness

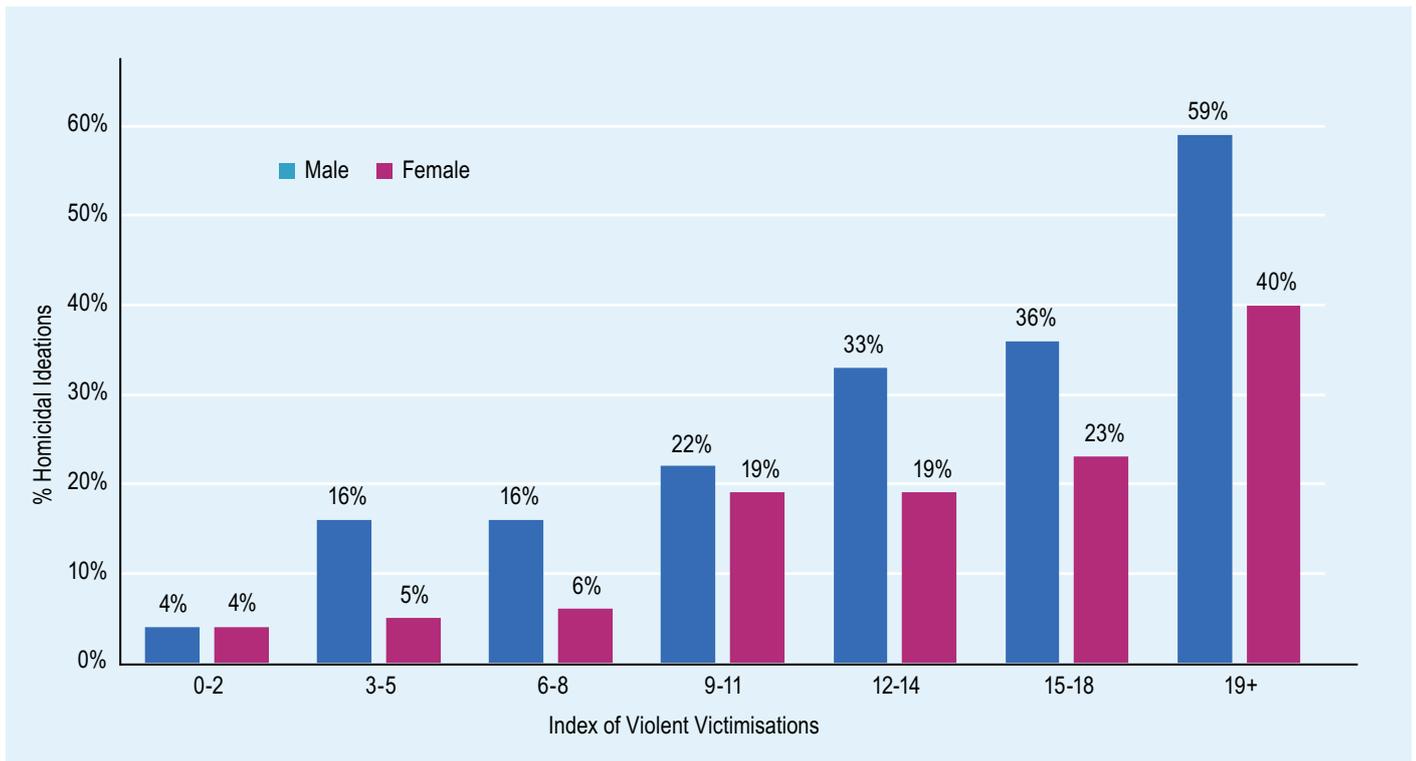


Figure 2. % Adolescents Aged 17 with Homicidal Ideations by Number of Experiences of Violent Victimization, ages 13-17

(Murray et al., 2017). However, if the revenge mechanism exists, we would expect that victimisation experiences cumulatively lead to more, and more intensive, thoughts of brutal revenge, especially among men.

In ongoing research we have started to explore this hypothesis by examining the prevalence of homicidal thoughts as a function of victimisation experiences over the five preceding years. Using the data collected at ages 13, 15 and 17 we calculated an overall variety index of violent victimisation. The index comprises 36 (12 items in each of three waves) items on victimisation at home by the parents (e.g. slapping), serious violent victimisation (assault, robbery), and bullying victimisation. We first calculated total sum scores and then categorised them into groups (0–2, 3–5, 6–8, etc. victimisations).

Provisional results are shown in Figure 2. They demonstrate a strong bivariate association between the overall load of multiple victimisations on the one hand, and the proportion of young people who experience homicidal ideations on the other. For example, young men who experienced 0–2 victimisations over the past five years were 15 times less likely to think about killing a person they know than young men who had experienced 19 or more victimisations.

More analyses will be needed. But it seems that our findings may shed some new light on one of the best-

established empirical regularities in criminology, namely the overlap between victimisation and perpetration of violence.

### FUTURE RESEARCH—EVIDENCE FOR BETTER LIVES

In the future, I intend to further expand this research line in a project that I hope to develop in collaboration with an international network of partners over the coming decade. The project is called Evidence for Better Lives. It aims to combine innovative research, policy impact, and capacity building. Its scientific core would be a birth cohort study launched simultaneously in eight medium-sized (pop. 130–700,000) cities in Low and Middle Income Countries, namely *Kingston* (Jamaica), *Koforidua* (Ghana), *Stellenbosch* (South Africa), *Cluj-Napoca* (Romania), *Ragama* (Sri Lanka), *Tarlai Kalan* (Pakistan), *Hue* (Vietnam), and *Valenzuela* (Philippines). The main focus of the study will be on the link between violence against children and child psychosocial development in the first years of life. In each site, cohorts of 1500 families with an expectant mother in the third trimester of pregnancy will be recruited (12,000 index children in total) and assessed on an annual basis.

A set of questions to which we aim to contribute with this research relates to the processes through which prenatal exposure to violence affects child psychosocial

health in the first years of life, and also possibly well into later childhood and adolescence. In particular, we expect substantial proportions of mothers in the study sites to experience intimate partner violence during their pregnancy. According to the Demographic and Health Survey, for example, an estimated 11% of women in Pakistan experience physical domestic violence during pregnancy, and rates may be even higher in South Africa and Jamaica (e.g. Taillieu and Brownridge, 2010). Existing research shows that exposure to intimate partner violence during pregnancy affects a range of manifestations of child problem behavior, including children's higher negative emotionality, more internalizing and externalising symptoms, as well as developmental delays. Various causal mechanisms have been suggested. One hypothesis holds that the maternal experience of stress affects the neurodevelopment of the unborn child, especially a range of processes involved in the development of the child's stress-response system. This, in turn may lead to an increased tendency to angry responding, which may then lay the basis for long-term tendencies towards reactive aggression later in life.

## CONCLUSIONS

Probably the most intellectually rewarding aspect of being a criminologist for me lies in the endless opportunities to navigate between disciplines. Understanding something like revenge and retaliation requires macro-level comparative thinking across human societies; it necessitates an understanding of the evolutionary forces that have shaped the mechanisms at the basis of human emotions such as empathy, hatred and a desire for justice; and it demands an understanding of how the development of individuals is shaped by the interaction of genetic, neurocognitive, and environmental mechanisms. At the same time, such knowledge can shape the prevention and intervention policies that can help us as criminologists to advance productive co-operation and to reduce violence, neglect and exploitation in all their manifestations.

**Manuel Eisner** is Wolfson Professor of Criminology, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

## MANUEL EISNER

Manuel Eisner is Wolfson Professor of Criminology, Professor of Comparative and Developmental Criminology, and the Director of the Violence Research Centre at the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge. Professor Eisner studied history and subsequently obtained a PhD in sociology at the University of Zürich. He is a scholar of world renown in three substantially different subjects: the history of violence, comparative studies of violence, and longitudinal studies of early childhood interventions with high-risk children. His work on the history of violence since the fourteenth century is considered groundbreaking. His History of Homicide Database, first developed two decades ago and regularly updated since, is referenced extensively by every major historian of crime and violence. The Violence Research Centre at Cambridge, which he founded and heads, is the driving force—along with the World Health Organisation and the United Nations—in a



program to reduce violence globally by 50 percent in 30 years. He also founded and heads the project “z-proso — The life-course development of violence and crime” at the ETH Zürich in his native Switzerland. The project aims to understand how individual, family, school, and situational factors work together in the development of violence and other problem behaviour with a view to developing more effective methods of intervention and prevention.



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## WINNER OF THE YOUNG CRIMINOLOGIST AWARD

Sonja Schulz

# A MODERN APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF SELF-CONTROL AND CRIME

For a contribution about self-control and crime, it is almost a must to start with Gottfredson and Hirschi. It was the publication of their book, *A General Theory of Crime (GToC)*, in 1990 that established the notion of 'self-control' as a central issue in criminological theory for the decades to come. What made GToC's argument so compelling at the time was the way it was able to reconcile the 'classic' approach, stating that offenders decide to refrain from crime if the threat of punishment is high enough, with the persistent empirical evidence of inter-individual differences in criminal propensity or, in Gottfredson and Hirschi's terms, 'criminality'. In line with the classic approach, Gottfredson and Hirschi assume in GToC that people decide rationally whether to offend or not. Put simply, their premise in GToC is: if people expect more harm (e.g. punish-

ment) than good, then they will refrain from offending. Differences in individual criminal propensity, they argue, must consequently be traceable to differences in the individual decision-making about criminal activity. Finding a clear definition of Gottfredson and Hirschi's key explanatory construct of 'self-control' in their seminal publication from 1990 is difficult and was a frequent subject of the countless critiques of their work. However, even before later clarifications and refinements of their construct and theory, it was already evident from their introduction to GToC that low self-control had something to do with a tendency to neglect long-term costs in favor of momentary advantages when making decisions about crime.

Modesty was not a feature of Gottfredson and Hirschi's approach and they received much criticism

for the boldness of their claims, their polemical style of argumentation, their tautological reasoning, and their confrontational approach.<sup>1</sup> The empirical research that followed in the wake of GToC has often tried to falsify their boldest claims. Researchers have tested the generality of self-control theory on different samples, in different cultures, and on different outcomes. Very coarsely summarised (and leaving aside measurement issues), one can say that self-control matters indeed, but that Gottfredson and Hirschi overstated the reach of their theory. The applied measures of low self-control have proven to be consistent and reliable predictors of various types of deviant behavior. Moreover, self-control has been shown to predict crime in different types of samples and in different cultures. Apart from the generality of the theory, however, most of Gottfredson and Hirschi's claims about the scope of the theory have not found empirical support. It is now safe to say that Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) overstated the importance of their theory, e.g. regarding the sufficiency of self-control theory in explaining crime and deviant behaviors, the stability of self-control, and about its roots in childrearing (only).

Much has been written about Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory in the past 25 years, and it is easy to find empirical tests that rely on very different interpretations (e.g. whether it is intended to fully explain all crime or to find one cause common to all types of crime, whether Gottfredson and Hirschi assume absolute or relative stability of self-control, just to name two common examples). However, one development certainly not intended by the authors is the emergence of a reception which could be summarised as a "kinds-of-people" interpretation of self-control theory, in which it loses most of its action-theoretic foundation in the criminological classics. Against the background of self-control's non-redundant effect on criminal behavior and Gottfredson and Hirschi's statements about its sufficiency in explaining criminal behavior, for many scholars 'self-control' developed into a synonym for 'criminal propensity'. Self-control became a variable one had to 'control for' in order to take care of the problem of unobserved heterogeneity and to refute the reviewer's argument "maybe it is not the effect, you are interested in [enter: delinquent friends, important life event, arrests...], but just self-control".

Developments in psychology and neuroscience could give the study of self-control in the explanation of crime and deviance a fresh start. I would like to highlight some threads which seem to be promising starting points for a more modern approach to the study of self-control.

To do this, I would like to cite my article<sup>2</sup> for which I received the ESC Young Criminologist Award 2017 as one example. I hope that my paper is succeeded by more criminological research which takes such an approach, viewing self-control as a skill that helps one to make good decisions in life.

Good definitions are the foundation of every good theory. It would make no sense to theorise about mechanisms and the functioning of a concept, or its interaction with other concepts, before one is clear about the basic definition of the concept itself. Baumeister and et al. defined self-control as the "capacity for altering one's own responses, especially to bring them into line with standards such as ideals, values, morals, and social expectations, and to support the pursuit of long-term goals."<sup>3</sup> Their strength model of self-control distinguishes between the basic capacity for self-control and the amount of self-control present at any moment. Similar to a muscle, which can get tired after repeated use, repeated application of self-control can lead to self-control depletion and thus a state of low self-control. Also, just like individuals differ in their amount of muscle mass, they differ in their capacity for self-control. What this model offers to criminology in addition to a clear definition of self-control is a dynamic view of self-control: the amount of self-control in a situation depends on individuals' basic level of self-control capability, but also on influences like alcohol or drug use, previous self-control tasks and form of the day. Moreover, the analogy to a self-control muscle implies that self-control can be trained.<sup>4</sup>

Another model taken from advances in neuroscience also seems promising to the study of crime. The dual-system model by Steinberg et al. describes the development of two distinct neurobiological subsystems with underpinnings in different brain regions: the socio-

1 See for example Akers, Ronald L. 1991. "Self-Control as a General Theory of Crime". *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 7(2): 201-211, and Tittle, Charles R. 1991. "Book Review of 'A General Theory of Crime'". *American Journal of Sociology*, 96(6): 1609-1611.

2 Schulz, Sonja. 2016. "'Don't Blow Your Cool': Provocation, Violent Coping, and the Conditioning Effects of Self-Control". *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 32(4): 561-587.

3 Baumeister, Roy F., Kathleen D. Vohs, and Dianne M. Tice. 2007. "The Strength Model of Self-Control". *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 16(6): 351-355, p. 352.

4 With promising results on self-control training: Muraven, Mark. 2010. "Building Self-Control Strength: Practicing Self-Control Leads to Improved Self-Control Performance". *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 46(2): 465-468.

emotional system and the cognitive control system.<sup>5</sup> The socio-emotional system is seen as responsible for reward-seeking behavior, such as seeking out strong emotional experiences and thrills (sensation seeking). The cognitive control system is related to impulse control or the evaluation of the potential costs of decision-making. Steinberg et al. stress the difference between sensation-seeking and impulsivity, which are often conflated in empirical research:

*Impulsivity refers to a lack of self-control or deficiencies in response inhibition; it leads to hasty, unplanned behavior. Sensation-seeking, in contrast, refers to the tendency to seek out novel, varied, and highly stimulating experiences, and the willingness to take risks in order to attain them. Not all impulsivity leads to stimulating or even rewarding experiences (e.g., impulsively deciding to end a friendship), and not all sensation-seeking is done impulsively (e.g., purchasing advance tickets to ride a roller coaster or sky dive).<sup>6</sup>*

While Steinberg's dual-systems model deals with a balance between sensation-seeking and internal controls, other dual-systems models differentiate between two general modes of decision-making. According to these models, individuals can choose to act either reflectively and deliberately or in an automatic, habitual manner without paying attention to action alternatives. These models imply that it is only a subgroup of actors who weigh the costs and benefits of crime. The model by Strack and Deutsch<sup>7</sup> tellingly calls the respective systems "reflective system" and "impulsive system." Dual-process approaches to the study of crime<sup>8</sup> have mainly considered an individual's level of morality as a factor that influences whether an individual reflects on crime or whether he/she habitually conforms. However, psychological dual-system approaches such as the model by Strack and Deutsch would lead us to expect that higher levels of self-control also serve as a precondition for reflective calculating decision-making. Reflective calculation needs a high amount of cognitive capacity, while impulsive, automatic-spontaneous processing is possible with little mental effort and requires little cognitive capacity. Poor self-control capabilities or low situational levels of self-control, resulting e.g. from drowsiness, intoxication or self-control depletion, impede reflective calculation because of a lack of capacity, leading to acting in autopilot mode needing little or no attentional resources. Strack and Deutsch argue that reflective underregulation or the dominant operation of the impulsive system can be linked to deficits in executive capabilities due to structural damage to the prefrontal cortex.<sup>9</sup> In a similar manner, Hofmann et al.<sup>10</sup> summarise experimental evidence that momentary self-regulatory resources, trait self-control, as

well as cognitive capacity and alcohol consumption have an impact on reflectively calculating decision-making instead of unreflectively following hedonistic impulses and strong emotions. The connecting element might lie in the impairment of working memory functions: low self-regulatory resources, cognitive load, and alcohol consumption all dovetail insofar as they have been shown to disrupt working memory functions. Without support from working memory functions, reflective operations break down, whereas impulsive processes are left unaffected. Thomas and McGloin<sup>11</sup> derived their hypotheses on differential susceptibility to deviant peer influences on the situational level and peer socialisation from such dual-system approaches as the model by Strack and Deutsch. Their results show that adolescents with high self-control are more susceptible to deviant peer socialisation than those with low self-control, potentially because only those with high self-control have the capacity to take into account what their peers think.

Once we are clear about our theoretical model, we must address the problem of measuring self-control. There are various behavioral tests available (e.g. Stroop task, Go/No-Go-Task)<sup>12</sup>, but most research in the field

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- 5 Steinberg, Laurence, Dustin Albert, Elizabeth Cauffman, Marie Banich, Sandra Graham, and Jennifer Woolard. 2008. "Age differences in sensation seeking and impulsivity as indexed by behavior and self-report: Evidence for a dual systems model". *Developmental Psychology*, 44(6): 1764–1778.
  - 6 Steinberg, Laurence, Dustin Albert, Elizabeth Cauffman, Marie Banich, Sandra Graham, and Jennifer Woolard. 2008. "Age differences in sensation seeking and impulsivity as indexed by behavior and self-report: Evidence for a dual systems model". *Developmental Psychology*, 44(6): 1764–1778, p. 1765, emphasis and references dropped.
  - 7 Strack, Fritz, and Roland Deutsch. 2004. "Reflective and Impulsive Determinants of Social Behavior". *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 8(3): 220–247.
  - 8 See e.g. Wikström, Per-Olof H., Dietrich Oberwittler, Kyle Treiber, and Beth Hardie. 2012. *Breaking Rules: The Social and Situational Dynamics of Young People's Urban Crime*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
  - 9 Strack, Fritz, and Roland Deutsch. 2004. "Reflective and Impulsive Determinants of Social Behavior". *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 8(3): 220–247.
  - 10 Hofmann, Wilhelm, Malte Friese, and Fritz Strack. 2009. "Impulse and Self-Control From a Dual-Systems Perspective". *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 4(2): 162–176.
  - 11 Thomas, Kyle J., and Jean M. McGloin. 2013. "A Dual-Systems Approach for Understanding Differential Susceptibility to Processes of Peer Influence". *Criminology*, 51(2): 435–474.
  - 12 See Duckworth, Angela L., and Margaret L. Kern. 2011. "A Meta-Analysis of the Convergent Validity of Self-Control Measures". *Journal of Research in Personality*, 45(3): 259–268.

of criminology uses questionnaire measurements. Well-established scales from psychology are, for example, the 13-item self-control scale by Tangney et al. and the Barrat Impulsiveness Scale.<sup>13</sup> Whatever technique one uses, the measure should/ capture self-control in the intended sense and *nothing else*. Necessary features of a good self-control measure are therefore construct validity and unidimensionality. More explicitly, an empirical test of any self-control hypothesis will inevitably lead to wrong conclusions, if the measure of its core construct is biased by dimensions having nothing to do with self-control. This should be a strong argument against composite measures of self-control, such as the scale by Grasmick et al.<sup>14</sup> Also, this should be an argument against picking a subdimension (such as risk-affinity) for one's empirical model and interpreting the result with references to a full measure (of self-control or criminal propensity). To be sure, the Grasmick scale certainly captures a good representation of different dimensions of criminal propensity (just to remember: self-centredness, preference for physical activities over cognitive tasks, preference for easy solutions), and it also features subdimensions of self- or impulse control as understood here (particularly the impulsivity dimension and items from the temper dimension). What is more, the risk-affinity subscale and the impulsivity subscale could probably be used to assess vulnerability according to the dual-systems model by Steinberg.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, every researcher should take a minute (or two) to make sure that his/her measurement of self-control indeed 'fits' his/her theoretical model. If you want a representation of criminal propensity, fine—but please do not use a fruit salad to draw inferences on apples, bananas, or pineapples.

Looking at roughly the last decade, there has been a growing number of empirical studies pursuing a more modern approach to the study of self-control and crime, adapting a dynamic model of self-control and/or treating self-control as a capacity which helps individuals to act in the interest of their higher-order, long-term goals. Also, measuring self-control by combining several subdimension of criminal propensity has increasingly become subject to criticism.<sup>16</sup> Two recent publications bundle the accumulated evidence on the functioning of self-control into a research agenda, laying excellent foundations for a more modern approach to the study of self-control and crime. Pratt organises an integrated self-control/life-course theory of criminal behavior around 10 empirically testable propositions<sup>17</sup>. Its key suggestions are 1) to see self-control skills as a dynamic capability which is

based on executive functioning and accordingly subject to maturational reform as well as depletable through excessive use, and 2) to see self-control as an important cause of selection into negative life events, which are themselves causes of offending. Moreover, Pratt states that self-control serves as a coping resource to handle such negative life events and that it has an indirect effect on other coping resources. Similarly, Pratt argues, self-control can be assumed to influence the sensitivity to formal and informal sanctions.

Adolescent risk-taking is supposed to be stimulated by a strong rise in dopaminergic activity within the socio-emotional system around the time of puberty, which brings about increases in reward-seeking behaviors. Risk-affinity increases until mid-adolescence (up to the age of 15 or 16) and then declines sharply.<sup>18</sup> The increase in reward-seeking takes place before the structural maturation of the cognitive control system, which unfolds gradually over the course of adolescence and allows for more advanced self-regulation and impulse control. The temporal gap between the increase in reward-seeking, which is an early adolescent development, and the maturation of the cognitive control system creates a period of heightened vulnerability to risk-taking during middle adolescence. Applications of the dual-systems model to the study of crime and deviance so far seem to be prom-

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- 13 See Tangney, June P., Roy F. Baumeister, and Angie L. Boone. 2004. "High Self-control Predicts Good Adjustment, Less Pathology, Better Grades, and Interpersonal Success". *Journal of Personality*, 72(2): 271–324., and Patton, Jim H., Matthew S. Stanford, and Ernest S. Barratt. 1995. "Factor structure of the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 51(6), 768–774.
- 14 Grasmick, Harold G., Charles R. Tittle, Robert J. Bursik, and Bruce J. Arneklev. 1993. "Testing the Core Empirical Implications of Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime". *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 30(1): 5–29.
- 15 Steinberg, Laurence, Dustin Albert, Elizabeth Cauffman, Marie Banich, Sandra Graham, and Jennifer Woolard. 2008. "Age differences in sensation seeking and impulsivity as indexed by behavior and self-report: Evidence for a dual systems model". *Developmental Psychology*, 44(6): 1764–1778.
- 16 For example Felson, Richard B., and D. Wayne Osgood. 2008. "Violent Crime". In: Goode, Erich (ed) *Out of Control. Assessing the General Theory of Crime*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008, pp. 160–72.
- 17 Pratt, Travis C. 2016. "A self-control/life-course theory of criminal behavior". *European Journal of Criminology*, 13(1): 129–146.
- 18 Steinberg, Laurence. 2009. "Should the science of adolescent brain development inform public policy?". *American Psychologist*, 64(8): 739–750.



ising<sup>19</sup>. Also, the dual-systems perspective might shed new light on the results of criminological self-control research using measures of risk-affinity or a combination of impulsivity and risk-affinity.

In their 2016 book *Self-control and Crime Over the Life Course*, Hay and Meldrum likewise favour a life-course approach to the study of self-control and crime. Their book comprises the sum of two and a half decades of self-control research and vividly illustrates these insights with examples from the media. They define self-control as “a practice in which individuals deliberately act upon themselves to alter their immediate urges, impulses, inclinations, or temptations (...) in order to bring responses

into line with higher-order standards that respond to a person’s values, morals, social commitments, and long-term well-being”<sup>20</sup> and therefore put the interaction of self-control with other factors center stage. Hay and Meldrum’s definition of self-control allows deriving hypotheses about the interaction between self-control and numerous other factors, such as morality, risk of punishment, delinquent peers, or strain. Undoubtedly material for a lot of empirical studies.

Ideally, I would like to see my paper as one of the first in a line of criminological research, which takes a more modern, cross-disciplinary approach to the study of self-control, referring increasingly less often to the criminological classic by Gottfredson and Hirschi. Such an approach would instead make good use of insights provided by psychology and neuroscience, seeing self-control as a construct of agency and studying its interaction with other constructs important in the decision making process.

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19 See Vazsonyi, Alexander T., and Albert J. Ksinan. 2017. “Understanding deviance through the dual systems model: Converging evidence for criminology and developmental sciences”. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 111: 58–64, and Burt, Callie H., Gary Sweeten, and Ronald L. Simons. 2014. “Self-Control through Emerging Adulthood: Instability, Multidimensionality, and Criminological Significance”. *Criminology*, 52(3): 450–487.

20 Hay, Carter, and Ryan C. Meldrum. 2016. *Self-Control and Crime Over the Life Course*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, p. 5.



## CARDIFF CONFERENCE

Csaba Györy

## DIOLCH I CHI, CAERDYDD

“The only thing I do not understand is that a lot of them look too old or too young” says Tibor. We started chatting as my Hungarian compatriot was making my coffee in the Pret a Manger in the shopping mall next to St Davis’s Hall. He says he always knows if there is a conference next door because a lot of people are coming into his coffee shop with badges. This week he noticed with some excitement that criminologists were in town. Yet their age did not fit his idea of a criminologist.

It turns out that Tibor, a consummate TV crime series enthusiast, came away from his binge-watching sessions with the impression that criminologists are the people who rope in from the roof into some bad guy’s apartment, and then proceed to unravel the whole evil conspiracy using a combination of violence, clever hacking techniques, and sophisticated DNA-evidence. I tell him we are doing none of that. “What then?” he inquires. Mostly sitting in

front of the computer. No hacking, though, just writing articles. I sense that I have just disappointed him.

Funny as it is, this is not a condescending story about another person’s unawareness. Quite the opposite. Given the fact that many people get their ideas and impressions about crime as a social phenomenon from television series, movies, and novels, it is rather we, the criminologists, who lack the understanding about the effect of art and entertainment on social imagination of crime.

This is why the opening lecture by the ESC President, Rossella Selmini, was such a welcome departure from the presidential opening statements at ESC conferences. While it arguably touched upon lighter subjects than most, at its core it tackled a difficult and important issue: how crime fiction shapes our understanding of crime, and, more importantly, how differences in social structure, political system, and culture shape the representation of crime and

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**editor@escnewsletter.org**

criminal justice in art. The same brutal act of violence when set in a gritty Milanese suburb can tell us very different stories about the social embeddedness of crime and violence than one happening in Stockholm.

The host, Mike Levi, struck a different tone. His reflection on crime and criminology in the UK and beyond was insightful and entertaining (as well as heavy on Shakespeare).

Another plenary analysed very lucidly the mind-boggling complexity of disentangling criminal justice cooperation between the UK and the EU, and the very real consequences thereof on the political institutions in Europe and the UK, as well as on the everyday operation of criminal justice, even crime. The discussion successfully combined the larger historical perspective on the development of EU institutions and the reflections of high-ranking police officers well-versed in the everyday operation of a large police force.

In the age of Brexit and President Trump one is inclined to sense a foreboding of great historical calamities to come. But maybe it is just a question of perspective. At least this is what the innovative research of the recipient of the ESC Award, Manuel Eisner teaches us. In his plenary address upon receiving the ESC European Criminology Award (printed here in the Newsletter), using a breath-taking scope of data about violence over the centuries, he provided empirical arguments for Elias's thesis on the inevitable process of civilisation. It might very well be that at the ESC Conference in 2517, data will be presented about how this trend turned in the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, yet his data still gives us hope.

Long-time attendees know that balancing between a gala dinner that is festive enough yet accessible to young professionals or generally less well-endowed participants is never easy. Just renting a venue for an event with so many people usually costs a fortune. However modest the price, some will be inevitably excluded. The Board and the succession of organisers have struggled with this problem for many years. The organisers in Cardiff might

have found the solution. The beer vouchers for the Tiny Rebel were a brilliant idea. Finally, there was a place to go where everyone gravitated every evening, and we learned again that getting to know each other in a pub with a beer in hand is much easier than while queuing up for coffee at some cavernous conference venue. We can only hope that future organisers take up this idea and turn it into a tradition.

Brexit generally loomed large over the conference, providing constant fodder for discussions between session or in the pub afterwards. Any discussion of future projects was overshadowed by the uncertainty about future funding arrangements. Many European visitors, your editor included, were constantly shifting between denial (nothing has changed just yet), sadness (it will), and indignation (at the British public discourse that, to many, borders on delusional).

The prospect of Brexit was probably even more painful because Cardiff treated us especially well. ESC conferences generally manage to avoid (despite the growing number of participants) the somewhat impersonal and mass production feel of ASC meetings. But Cardiff was extraordinary even among ESC meetings in the community it managed to create. The city certainly played a role: though certainly not the grandest or the most aesthetically pleasing of ESC annual meeting host cities, it was warm, welcoming, and unpretentious. The walks between venues felt like a Saturday shopping stroll back at home. But the real force behind the good mood and relaxed feel were the organisers. Everything was smooth and uncomplicated. Only past organisers know how much work needs to be invested into such a well-run conference, and how little their investment is appreciated. We are thankful to all of them.

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# Board Members and President: Nominations and Applications Sought

The nomination and application process for at-large board memberships and the presidency to be elected at the 2018 Annual Meeting in Sarajevo is now open. Members are encouraged to nominate others or apply themselves.

Nominations and application shall be sent to the Executive Secretary by not later than 31st March 2018.

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