Scandinavia has caught international attention since the terrorist attacks of Anders Behring Breivik in July 2011, and not just because of the attacks themselves. Norwegian prison conditions have caused surprise as has the 16-week trial in a case where the accused acknowledges having committed the acts in question. In addition, it may seem strange to Americans that insanity is considered by the court without being put forward as a defense. The Breivik case alone could be a good reason for interest in what this volume of *Crime and Justice. A Review of Research* promises: “the first comprehensive account in English of the Scandinavian criminal justice systems, showing why they are as they are, how they are different from other countries’ systems and how they are changing” (p. viii).

The volume is edited by Michael Tonry in tandem with director of the Finnish National Research Institute of Legal Policy Tapio Lappi-Seppälä. The volume concerns all five Nordic countries (i.e. Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland) and the words ‘Nordic’ and ‘Scandinavian’ are used as synonyms throughout.

Contained in the volume are 11 articles on a number of issues; an introduction to Scandinavian welfare states, criminal justice systems, crime levels and crime policy (32 pages); trends in punishment and crime, 1750-2008 (75 pages); differences between Finland and Sweden as to homicide 1700 – 2000 (90 pages); youth justice in these countries where
youth go to adult court or not to court at all (66 pages); Scandinavian police and research in policing (84 pages); sentencing theory, policy and research (56 pages); the development and content of Scandinavian delinquency research (73 pages); Scandinavian prostitution policies and the ideologies behind them (39 pages); organized crime and how it is shaped by the Scandinavian societies, resulting in no mafia and considerable awareness of criminal biker gangs (36 pages); the role of the crime victim in Sweden compared to neighboring countries (58 pages); and, finally, the rather remarkable opportunities for further criminological research in Nordic register data (34 pages).

As is natural for a journal – rather than a book - there is a large degree of variety in the amount of attention given as well as the approach chosen to the individual issues.

Accordingly, the articles are useful for varying purposes and audiences. Some are suitable as introductions to Scandinavian matters for researchers or (perhaps in excerpts) when teaching students; this goes especially for the introduction by Tonry and Lappi-Seppälä and the articles on prostitution and organized crime. Most other articles are rather too long for teaching situations, at least in college, but will be useful for researchers or for the student who is writing a research paper.

Finally, the end article on Nordic register data caters to those who would like more background to research based on register data or who consider using it themselves. Those who are not familiar with the way residents in Scandinavia have been documented in state databases since the 1960s are in for a surprise. In contrast to data based on the census method, Nordic register data make it possible to track individuals over decades as well as to include the situation of relatives. Lyngstad and Skardhamar do a good job of describing the registers and explaining pitfalls and potentials.
The articles in *Crime and Justice in Scandinavia* are well-written, comprehensive accounts of each their subjects. The volume is not, however, the over-all comprehensive account of the Scandinavian criminal justice systems mentioned in the preface. This is due to the omission or the low priority of issues where Scandinavia differs significantly from other countries and which are therefore important in a comparative, cross-national depiction.

First, the famously (to some, infamously) humane prison conditions in Scandinavia are only mentioned cursorily, even if they have attracted quite a bit of international attention. For instance, the closed prison at Halden in Norway has been featured in international media since 2008 due to its humaneness and perceived luxury. The volume of Crime and Justice does not include a discussion of 'Scandinavian expectionalism' in this respect which is surprising as Pratt (2008a, 2008b) raised the issue in an academic setting in 2008. In Crime and Justice vol. 40, only von Hofer refers (once, in parenthesis) to the Pratt articles. Even if Pratt’s arguments have been criticized quite a bit among Scandinavian criminologists, it would be natural to discuss the articles, as they are some of the more recent and more general accounts of crime and punishment in Scandinavia accessible to non-Scandinavian readers. Luckily, interested readers may go for articles in the book edited by Ugelvik and Dullum in early 2012 on *Penal Exceptionalism*.

Second, the question of insanity is treated in a very different way in Scandinavia than in e.g. the US and a clear description of these differences somewhere in the volume would be merited. Of course, the Breivik case may provoke more interest in this issue, even if the publication deadline must have made it difficult or impossible to make changes.

Third, sense of justice or public attitudes to punishment is not included in spite of the ground-breaking research conducted in all five Nordic countries in recent years. This research has shown that citizens in general advocate for longer sentences, but that they have very little
idea of the sentences actually given. In reality, courts give harder sentences than citizens would themselves. No articles in English have been published on this research until the very recent one by Jerre (2012).

Readers with a keen interest in the role of biker gangs in Scandinavia may be disappointed with the Korsell & Larsson angle. These readers could consider the recent publication by Leinfelt & Rostami (2012), while keeping Korsell & Larsson’s perspective in mind.

Describing and analyzing crime and justice in five different countries is a difficult task. A native to one of the mentioned countries will find details that are not precise for his or her own country, but the authors have done an excellent job trying to lay out both similarities and differences. One should not buy this volume for an account of the special Greenlandic system, though, nor for an actual description of Icelandic matters.

In conclusion, volume 40 of Crime and Justice offers well-written and interesting articles on a number of features of criminal justice in the Nordic countries. The why's of these areas are explained as are in some cases the where-to's. The volume is not a comprehensive account of the Scandinavian criminal justice systems, and the journal format means that one should not expect the cohesion of a book. This also means that most readers will be able to use individual articles rather than the book as such.

Compared to other journals, this one does not seduce the reader through its layout and formatting. Especially, tables and graphs are formatted in a way that brings back memories of the matrix printer. A volume of Crime and Justice is not supposed to be a student text-book; still, when such good researchers get together on important subjects, there can be nothing wrong with catering to more kinds of readers, for instance by choosing to shorten or divide some of the very long articles.

References:


