



The Politics of Abolition Revisited

By Thomas Mathiesen



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Originally published in 1974 and the recipient of the Denis Carroll Book Prize at the World Congress of the International Criminology Society in 1978, Thomas Mathiesen's *The Politics of Abolition* is a landmark text in critical criminology. In its examination of Scandinavian penal policy and call for the abolition of prisons, this book was enormously influential across Europe and beyond among criminologists, sociologists and legal scholars, as well as advocates of prisoners' rights.

Forty years on and in the context of mass incarceration in many parts of the world, this book remains relevant to a new generation of penal scholars. This new edition includes a new introduction from the author, as well as an afterword that collects contributions from leading criminologists and inmates from Germany, England, Norway and the United States to reflect on the development and current state of the academic literature on penal abolition.

This book will be suitable for academics and students of criminology and sociology, as well as those studying political science. It will also be of great interest to those who read the original book and are looking for new insights into an issue that is still as important and topical today as it was forty years ago.

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Editorial Review

Review

‘Forty years after its original publication in English, Thomas Mathiesen’s *The Politics of Abolition Revisited* boldly re-enters the debate on the future of imprisonment. With the rise of a global prison industrial complex, contemporary engagements with the prison – from the U.S. to Australia and from Europe to Africa – have been compelled to address not only issues of class, but of race and gender as well. This classic text reminds us once more of the importance of deep critique and of the "visionary nature of the unfinished".’ - Angela Davis, Distinguished Professor Emerita, Department of History of Consciousness and Feminist Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz, USA

‘In an age of mass incarceration and dismally low expectations for penal reform, Thomas Mathiesen’s book shines like a beacon of hope and inspiration. Mathiesen’s commitment to abolition, his concept of the unfinished, and his insider’s account of Nordic penal politics make for thrilling reading and serve to renew our sense of what should be possible. Forty years on from its first publication, there has never been a better time to revisit *The Politics of Abolition*.’ - David Garland, Professor, School of Law and the Department of Sociology, New York University, USA

‘This book is as indispensable as ever in demonstrating how to defend against repression by the state. In this new edition Thomas Mathiesen elaborates on the inspiring concept of "negative reform". Those who fight for the essentials of civil society might seriously consider using Mathiesen’s theory of the "unfinished".’ - Karl F. Schumann, Professor emeritus of Criminology, University of Bremen, Germany

About the Author

Thomas Mathiesen earned his Ph.D. in Oslo in 1965 and was a full professor at the University of Oslo from 1972 until 2003. Thomas has been Professor Emeritus since 2003 and has given numerous guest lectures at universities and colleges in Europe, the US and Latin America. Professor Mathiesen was awarded the Denis Carroll Prize in 1978, was given an honorary doctors degree at Lund University in 2003 and was Co-founder of the Norwegian Association of Penal Reform (KROM) in 1968. Thomas is still active in the organization today. Professor Mathiesen has also published a number of books in various languages, including seven books in English, among which are *Silently Silenced* (2004), *Prison on Trial* (3rd ed. 2006) and *Towards a Surveillant Society* (2013).

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