

In memoriam: Dr Christian Mouhanna

It is with much sadness that we pay tribute to a committed rural criminology colleague and great friend Christian Mouhanna – and much valued member of the editorial advisory board of this Journal – who passed away on 8 December 2024 after a long illness.

Christian trained in the sociology of organisations. His doctoral thesis, defended in December 2005 and entitled *Police and Justice in the Face of the Citizen: Bureaucratic Withdrawal*, marked a turning point in his reflection on penal institutions.

He joined CESDIP – the French Centre for Sociological Research on Law and Penal Institutions – in 2007 and became its deputy director in 2010, then director from 2015. During his time in this role, he promoted research grounded in field realities, connecting scholars, practitioners and policymakers. He successfully maintained CESDIP's unique position at the intersection of the CNRS (National Centre for Scientific Research), the Ministry of Justice and other academic institutions.

Christian conducted pioneering research on the police, criminal justice, security policies and prison systems – offering a critical look at the use of statistics in security discourse; examining the growing sense of urban insecurity; and providing a sociological analysis of the 'real-time' processing of criminal cases. He also explored topics such as the professional dynamics of public prosecutors, summary trials, juvenile justice, penal constraints, and community service, among many others. More recently, Christian has been regularly cited in the rural criminological literature, particularly for his work on rural policing, police centralisation in France and what he feared might be the end of genuine community policing in rural parts of France.

Christian regularly attended academic conferences, particularly the European Society of Criminology, where he would in recent years present on various aspects of rural criminology. He was always a willing participant in themed panels, and on at least a couple of occasions he presented on behalf of the three of us – Alistair, Karen and Kyle – as part of our intrepid team of four investigating various aspects of rural policing.

We each enjoyed, very much, our regular Zoom catch ups, from the COVID-19 era onwards, as we took advantage of this technology to discuss police relationships with rural citizenry; comparisons between rural policing in France, the UK and Australia; the impacts of police station closures; the emerging issue of 'green policing'; and so many other topics. Indeed, having published an article together in *Policing: An International Journal* in 2024, we had great plans for a suite of further work. Despite a few Anglo-Gallic misinterpretations now and again, we somehow managed to get things done! Without doubt, we will continue on this scholarly journey and, whilst it won't be *with* Christian, the trajectory most certainly will be *because* of him.

Following his passing, colleagues and peers have remembered Christian as warm, enthusiastic and generous with his collaborative work. Catherine Grémion, who worked



closely with him during his early days at the Centre for the Sociology of Organizations, described him as “one of the most endearing researchers”, highlighting his humour, commitment and humanity in the face of difficult fieldwork. Other tributes, including from the Institute for Justice Research and Studies and the *Cahiers de la Justice*, emphasised his integrity, clarity of thought and ability to engage with serious topics with depth and balance.

Christian leaves behind a rich legacy of publications and reports that continue to influence penal sociology. His research on alternatives to imprisonment, the acceleration of judicial procedures, and the relationship between police and justice remain essential for understanding changes in the French criminal justice system. He also played a major role in the training of judges, police officers and university students.

Christian’s passing is without doubt a profound loss for both the academic and institutional communities. He was a respected voice in the media, among policymakers, and within civil society groups concerned with justice and public safety. His critical thinking – always grounded in observation, his ability to question data, challenge oversimplified narratives, and his commitment to a more just and humane penal system – make his work a true intellectual legacy.

To his family, friends and colleagues the world over, we extend our deepest condolences.

Vale Christian Mouhanna.

Alistair Harkness, Karen Bullock and Kyle Mulrooney