

# Paavo Uusitalo

\* 12/7/1939 † 2/4/2016



**PAAVO ARTTURI UUSITALO**, Emeritus Professor of the Sociology of Law, died at the age of 76 in Helsinki on 2nd April 2016. He was born in Oulu on 12th July 1939.

After having completed his upper secondary school studies at Oulu Lyceum, Paavo Uusitalo studied at the University of Turku and graduated as a Master of Arts in 1963. He then took up an assistant's position in the department of sociology at the University of Helsinki, which he held until 1968. He gained a Licentiate in the Social Sciences from the University of Helsinki in 1967 and a year later defended his doctoral thesis on *Prison and penal colony as punishment*. He received his doctorate in the Social Sciences in 1970.

Uusitalo continued his academic career as acting associate professor of sociology at the University of Helsinki in 1969–1971, as a research fellow of the Finnish National Research Council for the Social Sciences in 1972–1973 and as a researcher at the Nordic Institute for Community Planning in Stockholm in 1972–1975. He was then Professor of Sociology at the University of Tampere between 1975 and 1978, after which he was appointed Associate Professor of the Sociology of Law in the Faculty of Law at the University of Hel-

sinki in 1978, becoming a personal professor extraordinary of the same subject in 1984. Having retired from that position in 2004 at the age of 65, he continued to work until 2008 as Professor of Sociology at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland.

Paavo Uusitalo was internationally oriented in his research interests. In addition to his time in Stockholm as a researcher and in Toruń as a professor, he was an Asla Fulbright fellow at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the USA in 1968–1969 and at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1969. He also worked as a visiting professor in Stockholm in 1981 and as a research director and visiting scholar at the Oñati International Institute for the Sociology of Law in Spain in 1991–1993.

Uusitalo was a member of the board of the Helsinki group of the Scandinavian Summer University in 1966–1970, Chairman of the Finnish Society of Urban Planning in 1970–1972, Chairman of the Finnish Association for the Legal and Social Sciences in 1980–1981, Chairman of the Scandinavian Sociological Association in 1987–1988 and Inspector of the Northern Ostrobothnia Student Nation at the University of Helsinki in 1997–2002. He was

elected to membership of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters in 1992.

Paavo Uusitalo's research focused particularly on the sociology of law, criminology, community planning, road safety, university administration and the sociology of economic and societal institutions and structures.

Uusitalo's doctoral thesis in criminology was preparing ground for a major shift in Finnish criminal policy thinking. The part played by researchers and their studies in this ideological revolution that led to a general reform in the Finnish Criminal Code was significant. The findings presented in Uusitalo's thesis suggested that the use of penal colonies as a form of prison sentence was no more effective than ordinary imprisonment in preventing further offences. The introduction of these penal colonies had, however, reduced the adverse effects of imprisonment, namely the sufferings of the convicts and the level of government expenditure. These findings were used in the work of reforming the system of criminal sanctions which started in the 1970s.

Through his book on *Goals and means of community planning*, published in Finnish in 1974 and in Swedish in 1976, Paavo Uusitalo participated in the contemporary debate on community and urban planning. Its central topics were related to formulating goals for community planning, developing appropriate indicators for measuring societal conditions, creating cost-benefit models and investigating the relationship between goals and means. The ideas presented in Uusitalo's book directly affected the re-evaluation of the goals and means of Finnish criminal policy.

Paavo Uusitalo applied his analysis of means and goals, for instance, to the planning of road safety measures, which was an

important issue for him. Based on this research, he later criticised the New Year speeches of Urho Kekkonen and Mauno Koivisto, Presidents of the Republic of Finland, in which they had demanded stricter measures against drunken drivers. According to Uusitalo, it was much more important to reduce speed limits and to use structural measures to ensure better road safety.

The monograph *Unemployment, law and economy* that Paavo Uusitalo wrote together with Jaakko Uotila in 1984 was an investigation into such things as the possibility for partly differentiating between a livelihood and the work needed to earn it – in modern terms, the issue of a basic income for all – and the tax models which would serve best to create jobs. Uusitalo continued his research into the latter topic together with Anneli Levo-Kivirikko in a monograph on *Job-creating taxation: employment, corporate tax and financing social security* (1999).

Professor Paavo Uusitalo was a pioneer in his own discipline, the sociology of law, in Finland. The establishment of legal sociology as a subject at the Faculty of Law in the mid-1970s and the creation of the related post of assistant professor can be explained by the prevalent will to strengthen teaching which could shed some light on the relationship between law and society and thus increase the weight of social science studies in the curriculum for a law degree. However, the faculty could not secure a permanent professorship in the subject after Uusitalo retired. On the other hand, the position of criminology and legal policy strengthened in the Faculty of Social Sciences since a research institute specializing in these subjects was transferred to it from the Ministry of Justice in 2015.

In an article directed at a foreign readership entitled *Sociology of Law in Finland* (1990), Paavo Uusitalo expressed his view that the roots of legal sociology in Finland can be found both in the social sciences and in the humanities. The critical sociological research which gained a foothold from the 1960s onwards was concerned amongst other things about unjust or overly controlling legislation and its implementation. The founding of the Scandinavian Research Council for Criminology in 1962 together with the general academic interest in the subject in the Nordic countries were important factors in the appearance of the sociology of law on the jurisprudential stage. According to Uusitalo, the sociology of law should be closely connected to the general theoretical and methodological foundation for sociological studies.

In his *Societal regulation* (1982), a compilation of teaching material on the sociology of law, Uusitalo perceived that the fruitfulness of sociological research depends on its superior ability – in contrast to uncritical everyday thinking – to identify different social phenomena by means of language and thus to recognize new functional capacities in the social structure of a state.

In the 1990s and 2000s Paavo Uusitalo took on the role of a staunch defender of the autonomy of universities and thus criticized in no uncertain terms legislative proposals which undermined the self-governance and collegiate administration of universities. He edited together with Jukka Lipponen a polemic book on the subject, entitled *University and Government* (1995).

Uusitalo stressed, for instance, that a university is a moral community and an institution which challenges the ruling powers to justify their actions. Universities as such are based on free discussion.

Paavo Uusitalo himself acted in an exemplary manner with respect to that characteristic feature of an academic community. Apart from research, he also took an active part in discussions on topical issues of the day and made progressive statements to the very end of his life.

The present writer came to know Paavo Uusitalo through the activities of the Scandinavian Summer University in the late 1960s. As a young researcher in criminal law, I was his student when I supplemented my studies with criminology and took a Master's Degree in Social Sciences, majoring in sociology. We then became professorial colleagues in the Faculty of Law for 25 years. During that time we acted in good accord except for one little disagreement following my proposal as head of department to incorporate the discipline of the sociology of law into the subjects of the department of criminal and procedural law and general jurisprudential studies. Uusitalo objected to this administrative re-arrangement, basing his argument on organizational theory. Later on, the division into departments was abandoned entirely in the Faculty of Law.

Paavo Uusitalo's interests included sailing and boatbuilding, and he also made various attempts at the visual arts. As a friend and conversationalist he was inspirational and respectful and possessed a good sense of humour. As a talker, Paavo was able to enchant his audience.

*Obituary by  
Raimo Lahti*