

Community Corrections: Rethinking its purpose, scale and shape

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- Purposes: What's the point of community corrections?

Purposes of (Community) Corrections

PURPOSE

Promoting community corrections

Assisting judicial decisions

Rehabilitation/public protection

Punishment/enforcement

Offenders' welfare

Victims' interests

Reparation

MEASURE

Increased “market share”

Judicial satisfaction with reports;
improved decisionmaking

Reduced reconviction/improved community
safety

High compliance, efficient enforcement

Improved inclusion and well-being

Victim satisfaction with process and outcome

Constructive and proportionate redress provided

McNeill, F., Farrall, S., Lightowler, C., and Maruna, S. (2012) Reexamining “Evidence-Based Practice” in Community Corrections: Beyond “a Confined View” of What Works, *Justice Research and Policy* 14(1): 35-60.

What do we want Community Corrections to be?

- Pessimistic (?) visions
 - A service that enforces punishment
 - A service that efficiently manages (social) waste through control and incapacitation
 - [A service that efficiently minimizes the harms and manages the risks of reoffending]

What do we want Community Corrections to be?

- Optimist and constructive visions
 - A service that plays a part in righting wrongs (i.e. an agency of justice)
 - A service that plays a part in building a fairer society by supporting re/integration
 - A service that helps people change for the better and helps others support and recognize the change
 - A capacity-building service for the individual and the community

- Scale: Growing community corrections?

Mass supervision?

- Growth in volume
- Geographical distribution
- Intensification of conditions
- ‘Mass supervision’ has been neglected by scholars preoccupied with ‘mass incarceration’.... At least until:
 - www.offendersupervision.eu

Offender Supervision in Europe

COST Action IS1106

Arguments for expanding community corrections

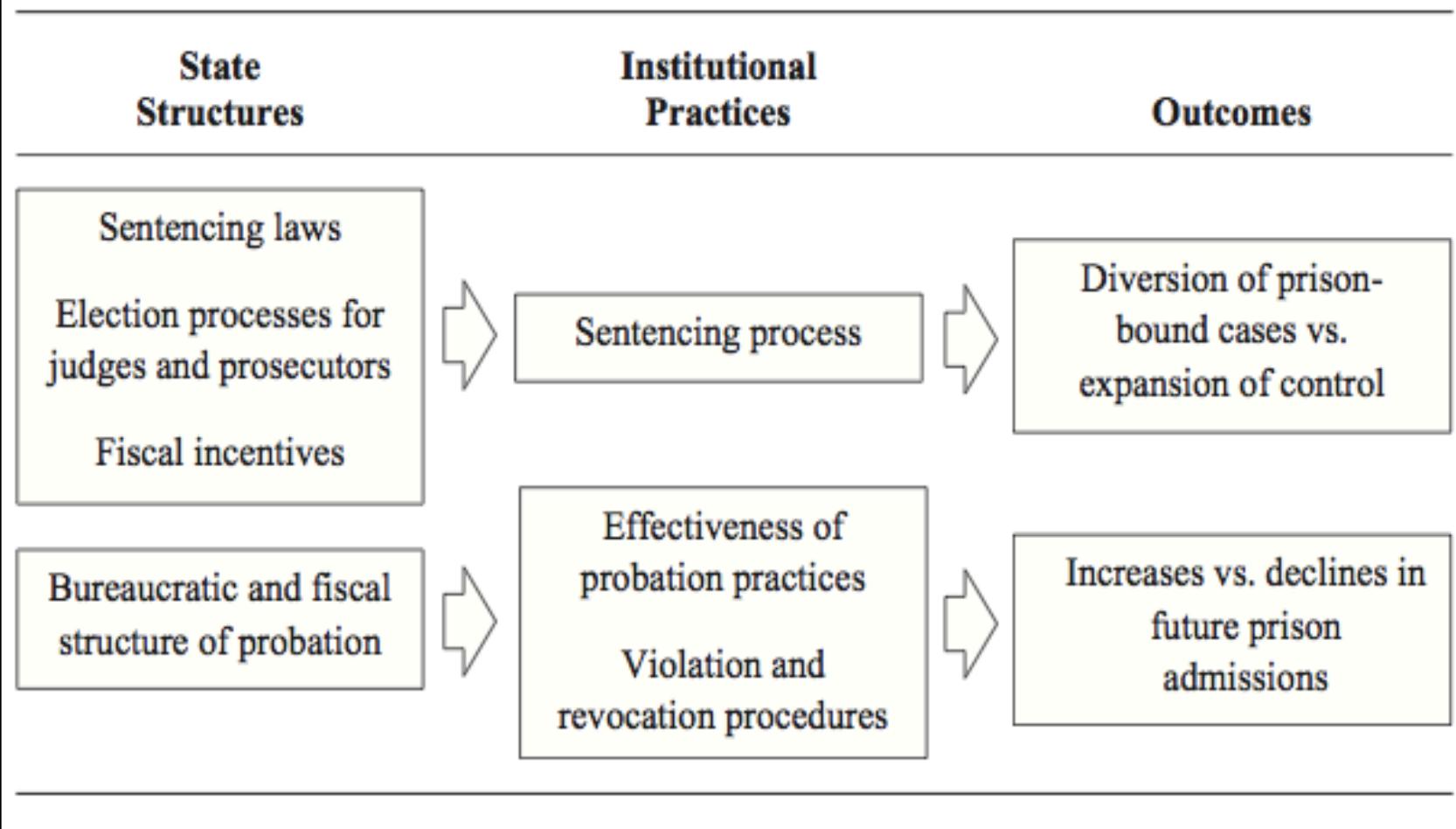
- Less expensive than imprisonment
- Less harmful than imprisonment?
 - To its subjects
 - To their families
 - To their communities
- More effective than imprisonment in reducing reoffending?
- More respectful of human rights?

But... Two and a half myths

1. The growth of probation shrinks the prison population.
2. Making probation ‘tougher’ and/or more ‘credible’ and/or more ‘effective’ and/or more ‘professional’ increases public and judicial support for it.
 - a. Being supervised in the community is easier for offenders than doing prison time.

- Probation growth can accompany prison growth (and contribute to it)
- Probation growth can restrain prison growth (and perhaps contribute to ending mass incarceration?)
- Probation growth can have a null effect on prison growth

Table 1. The Paradox of Probation Model: Understanding the Probation-Prison Link



Probation as decarceration

- In order for probation to reduce prison populations and to avoid a net-widening effect
 - its systemic context needs to facilitate and incentivize penal reductionist goals (through political and sentencing reform);
 - it needs to be effectively targeted; its practices need to be effective; and
 - its management of breach/violations needs to be careful and considered.

The half myth: Penal burdens

- The pains of probation (Durnescu, 2009)
 - Autonomy, privacy, time, money, stigma, ‘forced return’, threat
- Helping, holding and hurting (McNeill, 2009)
- In comparison with short custodial sentences (Armstrong and Weaver, 2011)
 - More productive and preferable
 - But **not** because it is easier
- In some studies (mostly in the USA) the simplicity and clarity of custody is preferred

How do people experience correctional supervision (in a welfarist jurisdiction)?



How do people experience correctional supervision?



How do people experience correctional supervision?



Containing growth?

- For most people, most of the time, the community is the better context for supporting change (and desistance)
- But **we cannot and must not assume that community corrections and its growth is an unqualified good.**
- Like prison, its use must be parsimonious and proportionate, and subject to human rights safeguards
 - Non-supervisory sanctions
 - Upstream diversion

- Shape: How should we reshape community corrections?



Depends on
what you want
it to do...

Reshaping Corrections: Supporting Desistance

1. Desistance is a process of personal, human development
2. That takes place in and is shaped by its social and cultural contexts; hence also a social transition
3. That involves movement away from offending (volume, frequency, severity)
4. *And movement towards successful social integration, citizenship and participation*

Desistance

Primary/
Formal

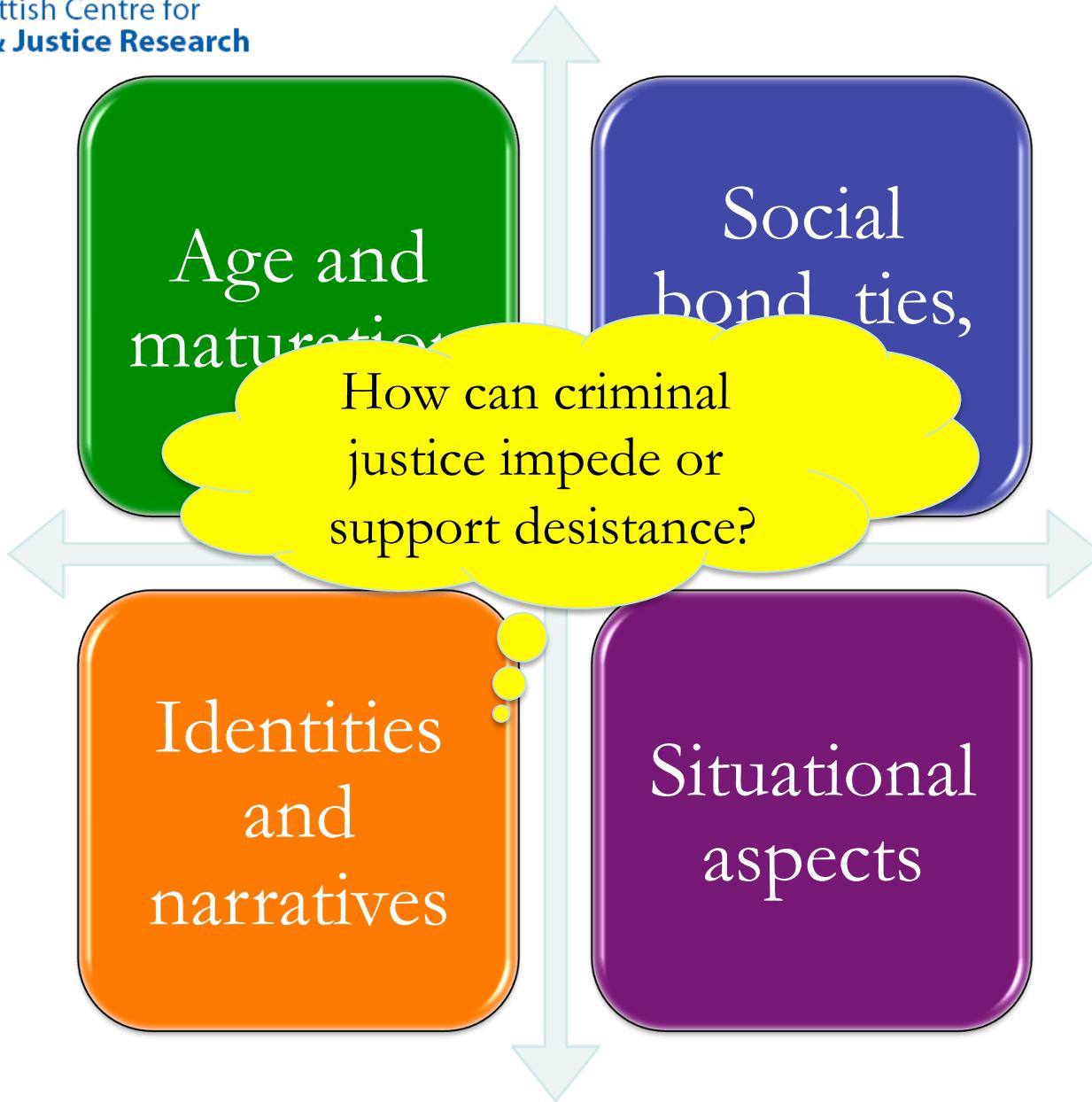
- Behaviour

Secondary/
Substantive

- Identity

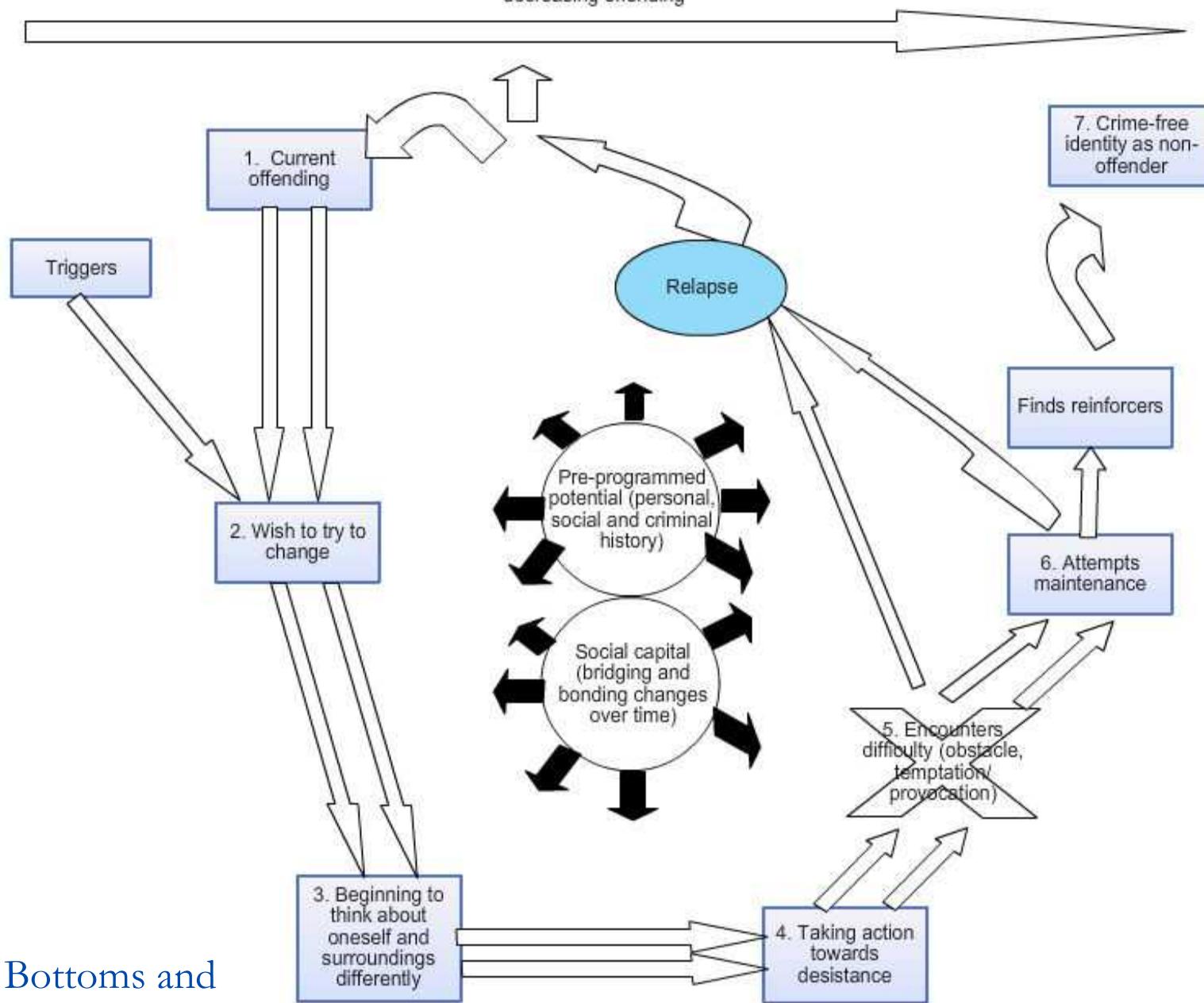
Tertiary/
Secure

- Belonging





decreasing offending



From Bottoms and Shapland (2011: 70)

Realism

- Manage lapses and setbacks

Individualisation

- Respect subjectivity and diversity

Hope and agency

- Build self-determination

Relationships

- Social relations and social capital

Recognition

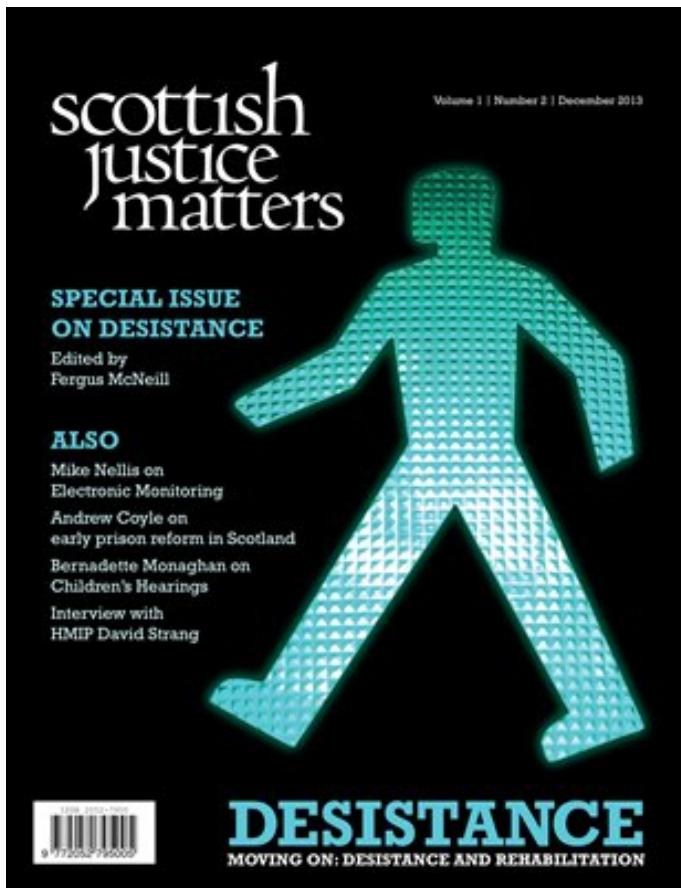
- Language and representation matter

Routines

- Practical supports

The Desistance Knowledge Exchange Project

<http://blogs.iriss.org.uk/discoveringdesistance/>



The poster for the documentary film 'The Road From Crime' features a man in profile, looking towards the right. The background is dark with a textured, light-colored pattern on the right side. The title 'The Road From Crime' is prominently displayed at the top. Below the title, there is a detailed description of the film's purpose and funding.

The Road From Crime

The Road from Crime is a timely and compelling documentary film funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council and by the Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence at George Mason University. It has been co-produced by academics, ex-offenders, justice practitioners and professional film-makers in order to stimulate debate about how and why people stop offending, and about how the justice system can better support them in that process.

The film is available with English, Finnish, French, German and Spanish subtitles and can be downloaded free of charge or ordered on DVD via:

- <http://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/the-road-from-crime>

The conversation about changing justice continues at the 'Discovering Desistance' blog:
<http://blogs.iriss.org.uk/discoveringdesistance/>

Integration as a positive social good

Personal Re/Integration

- The re-development of the self
- Capacity building

Social Re/Integration

- Desistance supporting communities
- Collective efficacy and reciprocity

Desistance

Judicial Re/Integration

- Formal de-labeling
- Certification and ritual

Moral Re/Integration

- Negotiating shared values
- Building solidarity

Integration as a positive social good

A Conceptual Framework Defining Core Domains of Integration



Conclusions

- Clarity of purpose
 - Normative issues; principles and values
- An expansive conception of EBP
 - Explanatory as well as evaluation research
- Co-production of practice models and approaches, in and for your context
 - Also requires local research on desistance and integration, as well as local evaluation research

Conclusions

- Desistance and integration are *social* processes not (just) personal transitions
- Correctional supervision of transitions is not the same thing as support
- Integration of all citizens is a human right and a duty of the state and of civil society – even a responsibility of all citizens
 - Integration work must extend across all of these actors and sectors
 - Corrections needs to reach out, not turn in