



**Bournemouth
University**

Vulnerable citizens or democratic partners?

Professor Dr Jonathan Parker, Professor of Society & Social Welfare

parkerj@bournemouth.ac.uk




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People in Contact with Criminal Justice Systems Participating in Service Redesign: Vulnerable Citizens or Democratic Partners?

Authors

[Authors and affiliations](#)

Jonathan Parker , Vanessa Heaslip, Sara Ashencaen Crabtree, Berit Johnsen, Sarah Hean

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Abstract

This chapter presents a conceptual consideration of the centrality of ‘voice’ in the Criminal Justice System (CJS), particularly in respect of service development. The hidden perspectives of those who are ‘subject to’, working with or working in the CJS represent important aspects to consider when seeking to change, develop or evaluate services. After emphasising the turn to including the voices of those often excluded from participation we explore aspects of the contested concept of ‘vulnerability’ as a label often applied to those working with CJS. We widen this to consider the vulnerabilities by association that professional take on as popular discourses permeate perceptions of CJS cultures. Subsequently, we examine some of the ways in which the inclusion of hidden and potentially vulnerable voices of those citizens involved with CJS can assist the transformative development of services by irritating the normative perspectives. We advocate an approach based around critical ethnography as a means of sitting with and walking besides people intimately involved in CJS.

Context

centrality of 'voice' in the Criminal Justice System (CJS)

hidden perspectives of those are 'subject to', working with or within the CJS (and made vulnerable by it) – important considerations when seeking to change, develop or evaluate services

inclusion can assist the **transformative** development of services

Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoner, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering (Hebrews 13.3)

Inclusion – 'other' or 'equal'?

- We use 'citizens' to describe all involved in service development
- Inclusion of voice not common in CJS

The centrality of voice and inclusion

UK focus on populist and punitive measures in the criminal justice system (CJS) fortify populist and popular perspectives among general public so **WHY** include the voice of the unpopular, subject to punishment and exclusion?

Removal from society, taking of liberties, and imprisonment of the prisoner – to:

1. Protect the public
2. Exact retribution and to punish
3. Rehabilitate

Norwegian model of prison is to provide support and rehabilitation to reintegrate into society – imprisonment is the only punitive element





Rationale to include prisoners' voices:

Professional ethics

Pragmatism: economic, social and personal costs of mental ill-health and incarceration

Whatever philosophical base underpins the penal system reducing future offending and integrating citizens into society is a positive individual, social and economic gain

Amplifying the voice of those subject to the CJS is fundamental to future development

Vulnerability: a contested topic

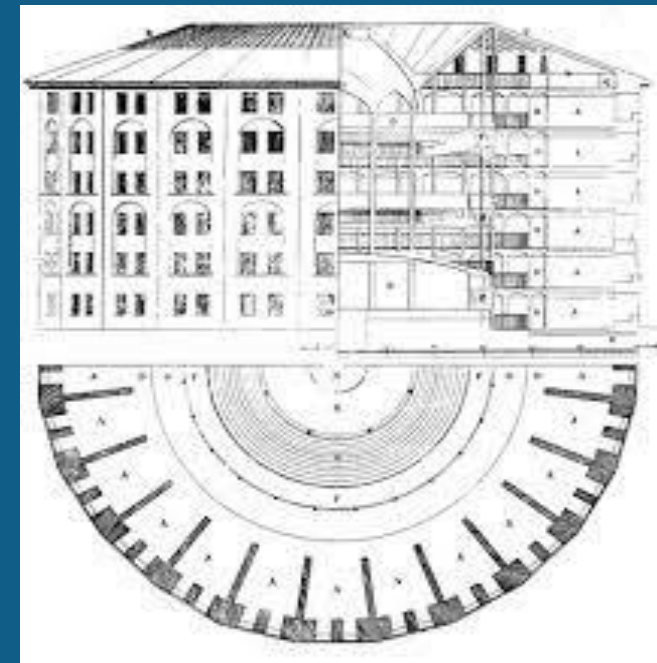
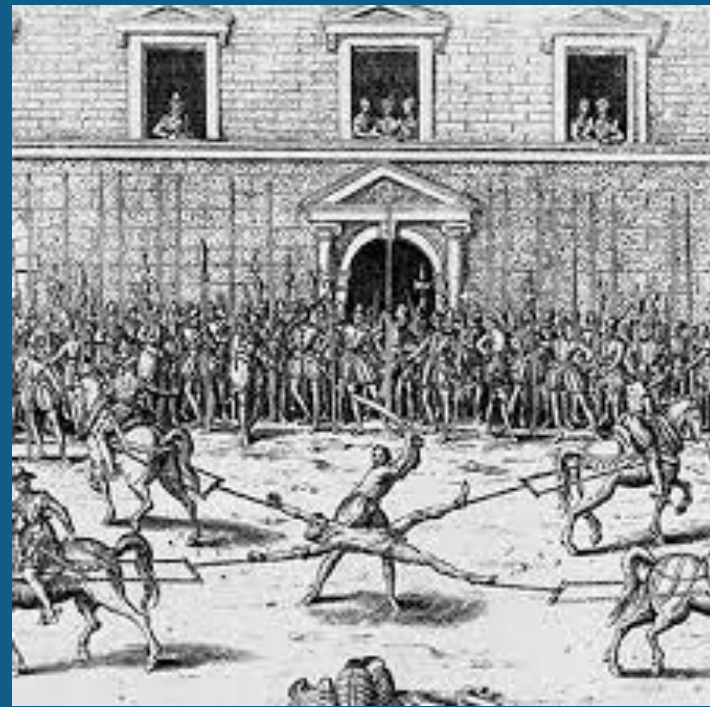
- A characteristic possessed by offenders (normative position)
- A social construction (connotative rather than denotative or precisely defined)
- Agentic and structural factors

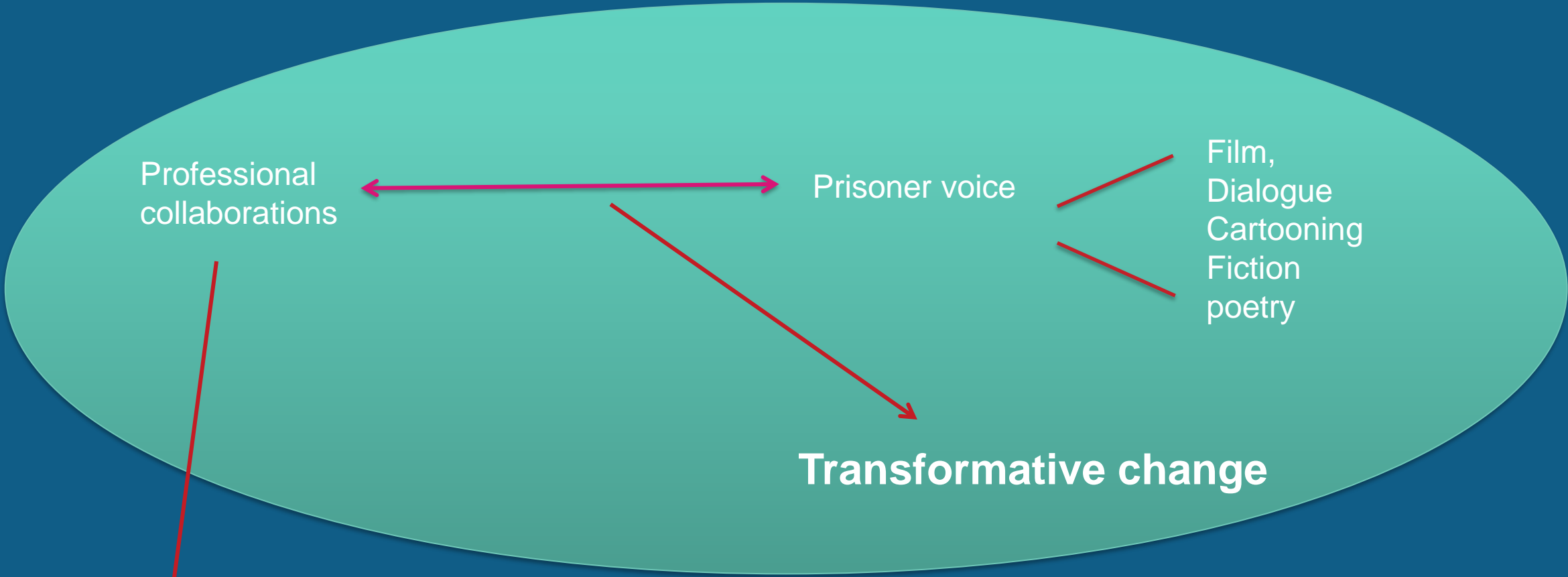


Vulnerability and prison

Multifaceted and affects anyone:

- To be subject to CJS makes those people vulnerable
- Exacerbates vulnerability to dangerous others, to increased crime, to mental and physical ill-health and social exclusion
- The dangerousness, perceived or otherwise, makes others feel vulnerable
- CJS gaze reflects vulnerability to danger of the gazer, and often ignores the vulnerability of the gazed on





Professional and organisational change only

Ways forward...

- Change Lab – bottom up, participatory method of organisation transformation used in our project to effect change
- **The model did not have a user or citizen voice** in its original conception – we argue this is **fundamental to effective transformation**

- Address power imbalances
- Inclusive not exclusive
- Authentic collaborative efforts can reduce costs and enhance wellbeing

