

# PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

March 2014 No 212



*Special Edition*  
**Everyday Prison Governance  
in Africa**

# Reviews

## Book Review

### ***Civilising Criminal Justice: An International Restorative agenda for Penal Reform***

Edited by David J Cornwell, John Blad and Martin Wright  
Publisher: Waterside Press  
ISBN: 978-1-904380-04-7  
Price: £25.00

Civilising Criminal Justice is an ambitious collection from a wide range of international commentators, which looks to provide a compelling argument for a radical restorative reformation of the justice system. The book provides chapters that argue that the justice system is the greatest failure of all the institutions to emerge from the enlightenment, most notably it is argued, because it is the least responsive to changes in the environment and it is not evidence based.

An early and interesting analogy in the book is the comparison to the health service over the last hundred years or so. It is argued that a hundred years ago a visit to the Doctor could have easily left a patient worse off as better; but that has all changed because medicine is now evidence based. The whole theme of the book is that all those that become involved in the justice system (offender, victim or dependant) can still just as easily be left worse off than better in the modern day in western democracies. Naturally, the contributors argue, if law became more evidence based, it would follow that there would be a significant growth in restorative justice.

The global range and prestige of the contributors to this book are quite impressive. They include Dr Per Anderson, the General Director of the National Mediation Service in Norway and former Assistant Director General of the Ministry of

Justice; Sir Louis Blom-Cooper QC, a former chair of the Howard League for Penal Reform; Judge FWM McElrea from New Zealand; and former prison governor Dr David J Cornwell, a consultant criminologist and author.

The book is split into three parts. Essentially each part focuses on 'civilising' justice procedure, theory and practice. The first part includes chapters setting the historical context of criminal justice in England and Wales, in particular highlighting the pitfalls of 'heightened media clamouring' for public protection, which prevents mercy being shown to repentant offenders, and the subsequent damage caused to the offender's dependants. This is supported by interesting chapters including the development of the adversarial trial model and research on the judiciary in Hungary, and an interesting piece on whether judges can have any real impact on crime control.

Part two continues with a chapter arguing that criminal justice has become less civil, due to political and media influence on central state power — with the Netherlands highlighted as an example. This is extended in subsequent chapters with the argument that there is an over reliance on focusing on harm and culpability in mitigation of sentencing, rather than the more civil practice of discretion in considering personal circumstances with individual sentencing. This part concludes with an argument of rethinking justice and the reaction to crime as a whole.

Part three gives practical examples of the theoretical arguments put forward and considers procedures that need to be adopted from the first part of the book. In particular there are accounts included of the very

different problems of introducing restorative justice in Australia and France, juxtaposed with the relatively positive example of Norway, a democracy considered as comparatively progressive or civilised with regards to its justice system.

As the contributors admit, it is still early days in the expansion of restorative justice into the western justice psyche, but this book goes some way to providing a compelling argument and offers sound international theoretical, practical and procedural considerations for the student, academic, practitioner and policy maker.

The editors highlight in their preface that much agonising over the content and editing of this book, amongst other things, caused a delay in its publication date, although considering the depth, range and quality of contributions it has been worth the wait for this essential companion to anyone interested in restorative justice.

**Paul Crossey** is Head of Young Offenders at HMYOI Feltham.

## Book Review

### ***Globalization and Crime: Second edition***

By Katja Franko Aas  
Publisher: Sage (2013)  
ISBN: 978-1446201978 (hardback)  
978-1446201985 (paperback)  
Price: £75.00 (hardback) £24.99 (paperback)

The term 'globalization' is deployed frequently, even indiscriminately, in order to describe a myriad of social practices and phenomena. At its heart, is a sense that the world is a more inter-connected place, enabled by changes in technology,

communications, transport and media. However, such characterisations present this as a politically neutral, social development. These changes have, however, often been characterised as a mixed blessing, bringing many positive developments but also a sense of rapid change and an erosion of traditions which has created fear, risk and insecurity. Indeed, 'globalization' is also an intensely political concept, loaded with issues of power, domination and inequality. In particular, 'globalization' is generally used to describe a set of values and beliefs that are also being disseminated around the world which have sometimes been termed neo-liberal, concerned with the promotion of commercial markets, the reduction in the state and the promotion of individualism. 'Globalization' can therefore be seen as referring to a set of technological, social and political developments that are replicated across a range of states. It is in this context that Katja Franko Aas, Professor of Criminology at the University of Oslo, offers an overview of globalization and crime.

The book is organised into ten chapters, which together attempt to provide an introduction to ways of thinking about globalization and crime. These chapters range across subjects including human trafficking, migration, urbanisation, cyberspace and terrorism. They also consider how states respond and the transfer of public policy, including penal policy, across nations. The last two chapters return to more theoretical issues. In particular considering both how the global and local intersect and inter-relate, and also how an increasingly global world may require a more cosmopolitan approach to justice, transcending the nation state. Each chapter contains a convenient overview, study questions and guide to further reading, which clearly marks it as a student resource.

There is a general concern that books which focus on global aspects of contemporary life have a tendency to reify this, making the influence of global factors appear more intense, the pace of change ever more breathless and also suggest that all people are intimately affected by these developments. However, this underplays the importance of local cultures and practices, which are sometimes deeply entrenched and closely conserved. This often means that global change is more uneven and inchoate than proponents of globalisation would suggest. The idea of globalisation also focuses on those who are touched by this one way or another, but misses out those who are on the margins, without the social and economic resources to participate in this brave new world. Their stories often remain hidden and unheard.

There is no question that this book is a success in terms of the author's own objective to introduce the reader to key concepts in understanding globalization and crime. It will be a useful resource for those studying or researching this area. However, the term 'globalization' is in itself one that needs to be handled with care and looked at with a healthy scepticism.

**Dr Jamie Bennett** is Governor of HMP Grendon and Springhill.

#### Book Review

#### ***The globalization of supermax prisons***

Edited by Jeffrey Ian Ross

Publisher: Rutgers University Press (2013)

ISBN: 978-0-8135-5741-0

(hardback) 978-0-8135-5740-3 (paperback)

Price: £60.95 (hardback) £24.50 (paperback)

'Supermax' is a shorthand term, almost a brand name, for a particular type of high security

prison which has emerged over recent decades. Originating in America, their purpose has been to contain those who present a heightened level of risk to security or safety. Conditions often include lengthy periods of solitary confinement, sometimes 23 hours a day in a cell. They are the practice of state punishment with the greatest depth and weight. This edited collection is primarily concerned with the development of 'supermax' types of imprisonment in America and also eight other countries: Canada, Mexico, UK, Netherlands, Brazil, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand.

The range of countries explored, illustrates how pervasive the 'supermax' approach has become. The ways in which this has developed do, however, vary across time and locality. In some countries, large dedicated facilities have developed. Whilst in the UK, the use of Close Supervision Centres and Special Secure Units has been limited, closely monitored and constrained. Such differences illustrate that whilst globalization is important it cannot suppress diversity. It intersects and exists in a dialectical relationship with often deeply entrenched local cultures.

In his chapter about the development of the 'supermax' in America, Ian Jeffrey Ross makes some important observations about why this approach to custody has gained purchase. He suggests that this is partly a response to a perceived crisis in societies and in prisons, responding to violence and disorder. He also argues that this is situated in a set of competing ideologies, in particular a growing social conservatism and a declining faith in rehabilitation. He also suggests that this particular solution is a product of the penal-industrial complex, reflecting a particular set of economic-orientated ideas and interests. This

analysis positions 'supermax' as the expression of the darker impulses of late modernity.<sup>1</sup>

This book is an important contribution to academic discussion regarding 'supermax' prisons. It is particularly valuable in illuminating the dissemination of this practice around the globe. It also provides a contribution to wider discussions regarding the nature of globalization and policy transfer. Beyond the academic community, the book does raise questions about the development of this approach and its implications for penal and social policy. As HM Inspectorate of Prisons in the UK claimed, such forms of custody are 'extreme'<sup>2</sup> and therefore should the proliferation and normalisation of those conditions be accepted or resisted? The book also poses a challenge to policy makers and practitioners to articulate and demonstrate the effectiveness of more humane, alternatives to 'supermax'. In the UK, it is possible to point towards not only the Close Supervision Centre system but also the Dangerous and Severe Personality Disorder Units, as well as therapeutic communities such as those at Grendon, as examples of where more decent and positive forms of containment have been developed for some of the most difficult, damaged and dangerous people in prisons. Whilst this book suggests that 'supermax' has gained a hold over the penal imagination, the challenge that is presented is for others to show that this is not the only way.

**Dr Jamie Bennett** is Governor of HMP Grendon and Springhill.

Book review

***Carceral spaces: Mobility and agency in imprisonment and migrant detention***

Edited by Dominique Moran, Nick Gill and Deirdre Conlon

Publisher: Ashgate (2013)

ISBN: 978-1-4094-4268-4

(hardback)

Price: £60.00 (hardback)

This book draws together contributions from the new community of 'carceral geography', which is concerned with 'geographical engagement with the practices of imprisonment and migrant detention' (p.1). Geography has already contributed significantly to the understanding of criminal justice and imprisonment including the use of criminal justice mapping to understand where prisoners come from, which has underpinned the emergence of Justice Reinvestment.<sup>1</sup> It has also provided the means to better understand crucial aspects of imprisonment including the use of space<sup>2</sup> and the meanings of architecture.<sup>3</sup>

This book is divided into two sections, entitled 'Mobility' and 'Space and agency'. The first section challenges a number of assumptions about the boundaries and meaning of confinement. The chapters highlight the increasing integration of imprisonment and migration detention, which although not new is certainly worth emphasising and highlighting. Other chapters explore less visible issues, including the liminal space between court and imprisonment, not only as a physical, mobile space but also as a situation imbued with transformative meaning for individuals.

Within the first part of this book, there are chapters concerned with rethinking the understanding of

confinement, which is often assumed to be places of exclusion, characterised by curtailed freedom and therefore immobility. In his chapter, Nick Gill argues that incarceration and freedom cannot be neatly categorised according to immobility and mobility. Instead he describes how transfers and displacement are forms of 'punitive mobility' that are incorporated into the carceral experience. He also describes how superficially less restrictive forms of punishment such as electronic monitoring might appear to offer greater freedom and less control, in fact they offer curtailed mobility both through the imposition of restrictions and through the development of self-regulation. In terms of exclusion, two chapters discuss the ways in which prisoners are both politically and economically included whilst simultaneously excluded. In political terms, Matthew Mitchelson discusses American census practices, which include prisoners in the data, and is subsequently used for mapping electoral districts, but those prisoners do not have the right to participate in elections. Where and how these prisoners are included in the process, it is argued, distorts the democratic process. In an article that will be of particular interest to prison practitioners, Kelsey Nowakowski explores prison labour, which he argues embodies the means through which prisoners are excluded from political and social life but included within the local and global economy. He uses a case study of the recycling of electronic waste in American prisons as an example of prisoners being offered low wages and being subjected to unsafe practices including exposure to toxic materials. Nowakowski characterises the prison

1. See Bauman, Z. (1991) *Modernity and the Holocaust* London: Polity Press.

2. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2006) *Extreme custody: A thematic inspection of close supervision centres and high security segregation* London: HMIP.

1. See Allen, R. and Stern, V. (2007) *Justice reinvestment – A new approach to crime and justice* London: International Centre for Prison Studies.

2. For example Fiddler, M. (2010) *Four walls and what lies within: the meaning of space and place in prisons* in *Prison Service Journal* No. 187, p.3-8.

3. For example Jewkes, Y. (2012) *Aesthetics and an-aesthetics: The architecture of incarceration* in Cheliotis, L. (ed) *The arts of imprisonment: Control, resistance and empowerment* Farnham: Ashgate.

as a 'landscape of defence' which offers protection to wider society from the risk presented by prisoners, that of exposure to toxic materials, and the economic risk of competition from the developing world. It is through such meanings, it is suggested, that prisons can become sites of such exploitative practices.

The second section of the book, 'space and agency' is concerned with space as the medium and outcome of political or macro-economic practices and everyday social relations. This second part will be of more immediate interest to prison practitioners. The chapters explore the ways in which prisoners make sense of and maintain identity and power within places of confinement. The specific issues addressed include the use of hunger strikes as forms of resistance, the ways in which prisoners use space in order to maintain privacy and personal identity, how they negotiate through acts of resistance

and how aspects of personality and identity are maintained through sub-cultural practices. These chapters reveal the overlapping contribution offered by sociology, criminology and carceral geography to understanding the prisoner society.

A final chapter explores the representation of prisons on television, contributed by Jennifer Turner. This chapter focuses on the 'spectacle' of imprisonment, in other words the creation of memorable visual experiences. Turner argues that as punishment has retreated from the direct experience of the public, behind walls and fences, the 'spectacle' has instead been recreated through the media. She uses two examples of television programmes to illustrate the different functions that such representations can play. On the one hand, she argues that the gentle sitcom *The Visit*, set in a prison visits hall, anaesthetises the viewer to the harsh realities of prison life by

physically and socially distancing them from the main prison. In contrast, she argues that the documentary *Sweethearts of the prison rodeo*, about female prisoners participating in a rodeo competition, reproduces a brutal form of gladiatorial punishment. Turner is particularly concerned with how television has an affective impact which can play a role in shaping wider political views.

This book is a fascinating read. Carceral geography intersects with sociology and criminology in various ways. In some areas it reinforces and deepens understanding, but in others it offers fresh perspectives and insights. The emergence of a new intellectual contribution is an exciting moment and this book leaves one with a sense of the thrill of discovery.

**Dr Jamie Bennett** is Governor of HMP Grendon and Springhill.

# PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS



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