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# Anticipated citizenship in the shadow of imprisonment

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[journals.sagepub.com/home/prb](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/prb)**Abigail D. Stark** 

University of Central Lancashire, UK

## Abstract

This article explores imprisoned men's anticipation of citizenship, when looking towards release from prison. Based on the subjective meaning citizenship holds for participants themselves, I explore men's expectations of their citizenship status and experience after release, considering how and whether imprisoned men expect subjectively meaningful citizenship to be realised in their post-prison lives. I argue that imagined future citizenship is not only inhibited by formal restrictions faced on release, but also by the potential longevity of prison's impact on the self, and perceptions of imprisonment as failing to prepare individuals for 'normal' life as citizens.

## Keywords

citizenship, imprisonment, reentry, identity, social exclusion

## Introduction

Citizenship has long been intrinsically interwoven with punishment. Punishment is used against those who – convicted of behaviour defined as criminal – are deemed to have fallen below the standards expected of citizens, and a central element of modern punishment has been its emphasis on changing individuals' behaviour. Prisons are often seen as a tool to 'mould' people into citizens as opposed to 'offenders', with those undergoing punishment occupying a 'purgatory' position of 'conditional citizenship' so this 'moulding' might take place (Vaughan, 2000: 26). Official rhetoric around release from prison and rehabilitation is often framed around returning 'law-abiding citizens' to the community (Carlen, 2013),

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## Corresponding Author:

Abi Stark, School of Justice, University of Central Lancashire, Harris Building, Preston, PR1 2HE, United Kingdom.

Email: [astark@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:astark@uclan.ac.uk)

suggesting an implicit distinction between the 'offender' experiencing punishment, and the 'citizen' who is returned. However, scholars have highlighted the many challenges faced in resettlement, with deprivations of punishment not limited to the 'pains of imprisonment' (Sykes, 1958) during incarceration. Both during and on release from prison, individuals face a wide range of 'collateral consequences' or 'invisible punishments' (Travis, 2002: 15) which may impact their formal citizenship status, and ability to partake meaningfully in society. These restrictions on citizenship have emerged while individuals are increasingly expected to take control of their own rehabilitation, through responsabilisation (Garland, 2001).

While scholarship has explored formal and legal barriers to citizenship faced by imprisoned and formerly imprisoned people, and the challenges of reentry, little is known about prisoners' own perspectives on citizenship, and the subjective meaning it holds for them. Similarly, there is limited understanding of prisoners' expectations of what returning to the community as 'citizens' might look like for them. This article will explore expectations of life on release, in relation to imagined future citizenship, from the perspectives of imprisoned men. It will be argued that, if criminal justice agencies are to return 'citizens' to communities, then we must understand what citizenship means for imprisoned people themselves. The article will demonstrate that expectations or aspirations of citizenship upon release do not always align with legal or normative definitions of citizenship dominant in literature, and that formal restrictions may interact with the circumstances of incarceration to create a disconnect between aspirations of future meaningful citizenship, and expectations of reality. While prisoners have been described as 'conditional' (Vaughan, 2000) or 'sleeping' citizens (McNeill and Velasquez, 2017), for some imprisoned people future imagined citizenship is damaged, both by the experience of incarceration, and their awareness of the many restrictions and hurdles faced on release. This article will thus argue that subjectively meaningful citizenship is shaped, tainted, hindered and, sometimes, destroyed by the effects of imprisonment, which interact with formal and material restrictions anticipated on release to shape future narratives of citizenship. Given the significance of the 'imagined self', both in general (Maruna, 2001) and as citizens specifically (Farrall et al., 2014), for desistance, understanding of participants' envisaged future citizenship may contribute to furthering understanding of reentry and desistance narratives. In particular, understanding the barriers to envisaging a pro-social self through imagined future citizenship, may help to inform how desistance can best be supported through enabling anticipated future citizenship narratives amongst those in prison.

## **Citizenship, imprisonment and reentry**

The connections between punishment and citizenship have long been discussed, with a growing body of literature considering the implications of conviction, or indeed imprisonment, for individuals' citizenship. Scholarship exploring citizenship for those imprisoned, has focused predominantly on formal restrictions to citizenship rights, for example through legal disenfranchisement (Easton, 2008). Looking beyond the prison context, research has demonstrated the wealth of formal restrictions

for people with convictions when seeking to access essential services, or engage in community as citizens. Miller and Stuart (2017: 533) argue that a new, alternative citizenship category exists, that of 'carceral citizenship', created as 'the advent of new laws, sanctions and regulatory penalties, numbering in the tens of thousands shaped the social, civic and political participation of people with criminal records'. While much literature on such restrictions originates from the USA, there is a growing body of literature exploring formal citizenship restrictions or civil disabilities, considering the implications of criminal records for access to citizenship rights and participation, and questioning their status as 'collateral consequences' rather than intended penal policy (Behan, 2020). Beyond the formal restrictions faced by those with convictions, research has also explored the experiences of those engaged in activities pre-defined as examples of 'active citizenship', during incarceration, through activities such as volunteering or involvement in prisoner councils (Easton, 2018).

Despite substantial research on the implications of convictions for citizenship status and activity, there has been an absence of scholarship on the meaning 'citizenship' actually holds for those experiencing penal sanctions. The notion of 'lived citizenship' (Hall and Williamson, 1999: 2), seeks to privilege such subjective perceptions and understanding through considering:

'the meaning that citizenship actually has in people's lives and the ways in which people's social and cultural backgrounds and material circumstances affect their lives as citizens.'

Acknowledging the theoretical developments of 'lived citizenship' as enabling consideration of 'more expansive and inclusive citizenship modes', Kallio et al. (2020: 714) identify four key dimensions of 'lived citizenship' based on developing literature in this area. They argue that 'lived citizenship' necessitates consideration of: *spatiality*, due to the role of spatial context in shaping citizenship experiences; *intersubjectivity*, with citizenship dependent on connections to others and membership of groups or communities; the *performed* dimension, individuals establishing themselves as citizens through practices or actions; and the *affective* dimension, based on feelings of being and belonging as a citizen. While such an approach to citizenship does not deny the significance of formal status and restrictions in individuals' lives, it enables a contextually-situated understanding of experiences of being a citizen, which cannot be gleaned by consideration of formal status alone.

This lens of 'lived citizenship' has been used to explore experiences of those facing intersecting marginalities, due to its appreciation of the contextually-situated nature of citizenship, yet empirical understanding of the 'lived citizenship' experience for many groups is sorely lacking. This includes experiences of criminalised people (for a recent exception, see MacIntyre et al., 2021) and prisoners. In line with broader developments in scholarship, prioritising the subjective meaning of sentences (Hall, 2016) or rehabilitation (Bullock and Bunce, 2018), the lens of 'lived citizenship' provides a valuable opportunity for exploring how citizenship is understood by those subject to penal sanctions, and influenced by conviction and

punishment. It is through this lens, centring on subjective understandings of 'citizenship', that this article will explore individuals' aspirations and expectations of citizenship after imprisonment.

## **The research**

The study on which this article is based, explored 'lived citizenship' from the perspectives of men imprisoned in the Republic of Ireland and England. By focusing on 'lived citizenship' (Hall and Williamson, 1999), this study provided the first exploration of the subjective meaning of 'citizenship' for prisoners, and the subjective citizenship of the everyday (Lister, 2007) during incarceration. The comparative nature of the study shed light on the role of national and institutional context in shaping understandings and experiences of citizenship, while the selection of jurisdictions with divergent approaches to prisoner enfranchisement enabled interrogation of whether such legal positions are truly symbolic (Easton, 2018; Stern, 2002) of citizenship for imprisoned people.

The research involved qualitative fieldwork at an Irish committal prison and an English category B prison, following ethical approval from the University of Sheffield, National Offender Management Service, and Irish Prison Service. Interviews were conducted with 32 imprisoned men in each jurisdiction (Total = 64), enabling inclusion of various perspectives reflecting the heterogeneity of each prison population. Self-selection sampling was used, participants volunteering in response to posters, along with snowball sampling as fieldwork progressed. Both samples included participants serving a range of sentences (from three months to life imprisonment), along with a variety of offences reflecting the diversity of the prison population, albeit not all participants disclosed their offence(s). The sample also included those at various stages of their sentences, from individuals nearing release in five days' time, through to those with years left inside, and men serving indeterminate sentences for whom release dates were unknown. Participants were mostly Irish or British nationals, with three foreign national prisoners (FNPs) interviewed in Ireland. Interviews were transcribed and anonymised, before data was analysed using thematic analysis to identify codes and themes. An adaptive theory approach was utilised to enable an iterative relationship between empirical data and existing theory (Layder, 1998). Each national dataset was analysed separately, before the two were combined to identify common themes and differences relevant to the research questions.

With a particular focus of the research being how imprisoned men understood the notion of citizenship, three core features were identified in the 'meaning' of citizenship for participants: a sense of belonging to a self-defined community; opportunities to contribute meaningfully to one's community/ies; and an acknowledged identity beyond the 'prisoner' label. Underpinning each theme was the centrality of autonomy to determining the communities to which one belonged, and the particular contributions they could make to, and identities they could take on within, these communities. The interviews explored citizenship, and its subjective meaning, in relation to participants' time inside, the significance of citizenship during their imprisonment, and men's expectations of citizenship on release from prison. It is

on the latter issue that this article will focus, exploring the following questions: Do imprisoned men envisage citizenship as relevant to their lives on release, and how?; What barriers to imprisoned men's imagined future citizenship are envisaged?; How does incarceration impact on anticipation of meaningful citizenship on release from prison?

## **Returning citizens: aspirations of 'normal' or 'active' citizenship after imprisonment**

The desire to live a 'normal' life is prevalent in prisoners' narratives about their post-release futures. Many aspire to the humble stability of a crime-free existence and conventional work and home life, their imprisonment being perceived as in opposition to such 'normalcy' (Villman, 2021). In this study, narratives of 'normal life' and citizenship were intimately connected, with participants frequently understanding citizenship as synonymous with normality. While some participants had ambitious visions of themselves as active citizens, engaged in community contributions, most had more modest hopes for future citizenship, desiring and planning for a 'normal' life. Asked if he would consider himself a citizen on release, Logan (England) explained that his pursuit of conventional goals, and attached benefits, would enable meaningful citizenship if successful:

Yeah, I will be a citizen then – when I get a job, pay my taxes and just go home. You know have the bath ready and that. Just normal life. My Mrs, she's hammering me because this is just not the place to be. She's got a newborn at home, by herself. She gets maternity leave though – now that to me is citizenship, to be given time off to look after your new child...

When notions of 'citizenship' are grounded in people's lived experience and the subjective meaning it holds for them, the 'banal ordinariness' of its central features becomes apparent despite often being overlooked in literature (MacIntyre et al., 2021: 8). Logan's aspirations for citizenship on release, like most participants, related primarily to a 'normal' life characterised by legitimate employment and a settled home life. Focusing on normality as in opposition to one's current imprisonment, anticipated or aspired-to citizenship was often understood as synonymous with desistance and a non-offending lifestyle. For example, Blake (Ireland), who did not consider himself a citizen inside, described how abstinence from offending would determine his citizenship status on release:

Yeah, I'll be a citizen [then]... Yeah, course I will. I live normal out there most of the time.

*Yeah. Is that what you think being a citizen is about?*

It's keeping out of trouble and stuff like that.

In this respect, narratives of anticipated citizenship were intricately linked with narratives of desistance or recidivism, with perceptions of one's ability to have an *affective* sense of being a citizen on release (Kallio et al., 2020) as contingent on their ability to stay away from offending. Such future aspirational citizenship narratives were often constructed similarly to the 'imagined normality', that Villman (2021: 10) found to be used for creation of a believable story for one's future.

While for many, aspirations of citizenship were limited to notions of normality, some participants' narratives also featured strong intentions and aspirations to civic engagement upon release. These narratives frequently centred around understandings of citizenship as something inherently 'active' and built around communitarian ideals of 'active citizenship' as about participation and community engagement for the common good, as illustrated by Declan (Ireland):

I'd like to be able to help, and my future aim is to contribute to making the community better...it's about bettering the community, not just making myself better.

Such common expressions of aspirations for future active citizenship spoke to participants' desires to 'make good' (Maruna, 2001) through community contributions, with these participants often feeling optimistic about their potential *performed* involvement as citizens (Kallio et al., 2020) in future, seeing this as a way to 'make amends for what I've done' (Shane, Ireland). Many participants articulated desires to 'make good' through re-framing their experience of imprisonment as capital to support others involved in the system. When asked about future citizenship on release, Rory (England) explained he would like to support others through probation mentoring. Reflecting further on whether he would be a citizen on release, he went on to say:

Well I'd like to think so! I'd like to think I've bettered myself with my time in prison, and actually...I'd like to help prisoners...I'd like to speak to people about where my life went wrong down to the cocaine and the partying. I'd like to speak to people about it and say "well this is what happened to me. I ended up doing seven years in prison. Do you want that?"

In Ireland, a number of participants identified the introduction of Community Return – a scheme involving supervised early release on the condition of completing unpaid community work - as an opportunity for such contributions, suggesting a perception of post-prison supervision as potentially facilitating *performed* citizenship. For a few participants, this desire to centre future citizenship around supporting others in similar circumstances was centred on the absence of necessary support in their prior experiences of release. When asked whether he anticipated experiencing citizenship on release, Owen (England) explained:

If there was stuff in place that I could do, yeah. I would do!...Like community work. Help people and stuff, you know! Try and keep people out of prison. 'Cause I was never given...I never got that help when I was out there.

As such, the *performed* acts or practices (Kallio et al., 2020) in participants' future aspirations of citizenship were often akin to the role of 'wounded healer', with similarities to 'the desisting self-narrative [which] frequently involves reworking a delinquent history into a source of wisdom to be drawn from while acting as a drug counselor, youth worker, community volunteer, or mutual-help group member' (Maruna, 2001: 117). While such narratives of future active citizenship were frequent, these may be influenced by the penal context, or the interviewers' focus on citizenship. In this way, participants' expressions of desired active citizenship may reflect an 'enforced narrative' (Steedman, 2000), shaped by institutional demands and expectations of returning citizens. Nevertheless, some participants felt imprisonment had provided time to reflect on their desired community contributions and – in some instances – was experienced as politicising, fostering motivation for and confidence in future civic engagement. However, this was not the case for all. In both jurisdictions, participants demonstrated an acute awareness of the barriers they would face in fulfilling hopes of citizenship through 'normal' life or meaningful community contributions, making citizenship something that was often aspirational rather than anticipated.

## **Inaccessible citizenship? Perceived barriers to meaningful citizenship on release**

Individuals face a multitude of challenges on release from prison, from financial instability and deprivation (Western, 2018), to the many restrictions accompanying a criminal conviction which may directly or indirectly restrict access to housing, employment, or participation in the community (Henley, 2018b; Keene et al., 2018; Miller and Stuart, 2017). Considering these challenges, the 'banal ordinari-ness' of subjectively meaningful citizenship is often inaccessible for the formerly incarcerated, as marginalised members of society (MacIntyre et al., 2021: 8). Both formal and informal barriers to reintegration were identified by participants as infringing on their ability to envisage meaningful citizenship through 'normal' post-release lives, highlighting the prevalence of continued stigma and the 'pains of criminalisation' (Henley, 2018a) in participants' anticipated futures.

Given the emphasis on stable work, and payment of taxes, in many participants' understandings of citizenship as normality, awareness of the barriers to employment with a criminal record was a challenge to envisaging meaningful future citizenship commonly cited by participants. With the frequent use of criminal records checks, and lengthy wait for 'legal rehabilitation' through convictions becoming spent (Henley, 2018b), many people with convictions find securing stable and meaningful employment difficult, while stigma and risk-averse attitudes of employers also further hinder their job prospects (Graffam et al., 2008). Amongst several participants, these barriers were perceived as further heightened with roles involving helping or contributing to the community in ways associated with 'active citizenship', whether paid or voluntary. When asked if he would continue peer-support work, through which he was making contributions to the prison 'community', after release, Kyle



(Ireland) explained how he saw its relevance and accessibility as restricted to time inside:

That's only for prison for certs for court, mainly. It's the only reason I done that...That's why mainly everyone does it really...

*So, you wouldn't consider doing something like that on the outside then?*

There's no point, who's gonna bleedin' hire an ex-criminal with over 100 convictions?! ...Known drug-dealer, known bleedin' thug you know what I mean? Noone's gonna hire that! There's no point even trying to go for a steady job out there because you won't get it. Can't even get onto a course out there!

Such concerns are not unfounded, with individuals facing substantial barriers to securing employment with an unspent conviction (Henley, 2018b). Additionally, aspirations to take on roles seeking to change and respond to the issues facing prisoners, and other marginalised communities, are often hindered by suitability criteria and perceptions of risk (see Bald et al. in this edition), making considered 'acts of citizenship' (Isin, 2008) more difficult to perform. The barrier of criminal records was heightened in Ireland by the absence of spent convictions legislation, before the introduction of the Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016. This provided no opportunity to 'wipe the slate clean' (McIntyre and O'Donnell, 2017: 27), in comparison to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 in England & Wales which allows convictions resulting in sentences of less than four years in custody to become spent. Thus, while this impediment to employment was evident in both jurisdictions, the reality of realising 'normal' citizenship in this way would have been particularly difficult for participants in Ireland at the time of the research.

A common theme in both jurisdictions was that these barriers were compounded by the lack of suitable preparation for 'normal' life outside in the modern world. For example, Kyle (Ireland) viewed his engagement with voluntary activities in terms of compliance with a responsabilised system, rather than as meaningful actions or practices for *performed* citizenship (Kallio et al., 2020). This challenges Lister's (2007) assertion that where an act takes place is not a key determinant of whether it constitutes citizenship, and thus highlights the significance of *spatiality* and *intersubjectivity* to citizenship during, and following, imprisonment. Many participants also lamented the limited opportunities for engagement in meaningful activity relevant to 'normal' citizenship outside. While some activities, including the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) mentoring course, were viewed positively, most participants regarded opportunities to engage with the prison regime as irrelevant to meaningful citizenship, through 'normal' working life, outside. Logan (England) explained how work and education in prison held little relevance to the realities of the modern-day labour market:

The courses you have here are so limited. It's awful to be honest – education is awful! I got my maths and English on the out, and so for me there's really not much to offer. Let me think...there's the barista course which I've done, there's the customer service course – done, there's the IT course, but all you do there is learn how to use Microsoft Word 2002! What the hell is that gonna teach you?! What edition we on now?...Noone will employ you with that – Jesus Christ!... When I've done my IAG, I wanna better myself but what is there for me? Cause I've done all the others they'll get me tea packing or sewing boxers – who even does this on the outside? I guess tea packing is like working in a factory, but who sews clothes in workshops these days?!

Attempts at preparation for future citizenship were thus often viewed as preparation for 'normal' citizenship in an imaginary world, without the barriers that exist to employment in practice, and providing skills only relevant to an outdated version of normality. Preparing individuals for 'normal' life in a world that no longer exists, and is inaccessible, was perceived as setting people up to fail and significantly inhibited conception of a future 'citizen' self. For many, this lack of preparation for meaningful future citizenship was compounded by concerns about the lack of support upon release:

You're in a bubble, in a sense, in here dya know? And you live within that bubble. But... it's true, when you get to the gate that bubble pops...and it's a big shock! You're not used to life out there, shall we say, anymore. You know? Everything's going two thousand miles an hour, you can't seem to get an answer outta somebody, whereas in here you're kinda needed, wanted, and used...Out there you've got nothing! Nobody needs you. Nobody wants you. And you're not used. Well, like the roles I've got now - I'm needed on the wing, I've got my own cell, you know? I've got set routines what I do myself. I've got the gym. As soon as I get out, I don't have none of that! There's no job, there's no housing, there's noone there that needs me to do anything, there's noone there that wants my help. What am I?! And I'm not saying there should be a nice package all wrapped up with a bow on it, ready for you when you get out, but...just a bit of help to, you know...that's all.

(George, England)

This perceived lack of support on release, and a sense of hopelessness at finding a role where their contributions would be appreciated, was evident in many participants' narratives, with restrictions on the accessibility of 'normal' life making aspirations for any active engagement beyond this seem inaccessible. With a myriad of struggles on release, it is perhaps unsurprising that conceptions of citizenship as going beyond the mundane normality of everyday life, and contributing to one's community, were sometimes de-prioritised in participants' future aspirations; with so many barriers to establishing the bare essentials for them and their families, many did not envisage having time to consider the *performed* dimensions of 'lived citizenship' (Kallio et al., 2020) as part of their post-release lives. Asked if he would make contributions to the community on release, identified as key in discussion of citizenship, Harrison (England) explained his uncertainty:

If I can do summit to...yeah... 'Cause I'll be truthful like, when I get out of here they're just gonna kick me out of jail - no benefits, no money. They do it to everyone and they wonder why we come back, you know what I mean? ...That's the main thing they need to sort out really. That's why I'm back again this time! Being out of jail I had noone. They left me with nothing, yeah? And you can't, even if you apply for benefits yeah? It takes a month to get it, so...I don't know what they expect you to do for a month.

For some participants, notions of active citizenship, and the contributions they perceived as necessary for meaningful citizenship, were likely to be inaccessible – or at least deprioritised – when faced with many more immediate concerns upon release, such as seeking basic shelter and sustenance. Social exclusion is often exacerbated by punishment and, consequently, the penal system may further distance individuals from the possibility of participatory, active engagement with society that is identified as meaningful to citizenship for them. As Weaver, Hacker and Wildeman (2014: 2) have noted:

'Criminal justice interventions make people less capable of being engaged citizens, regardless of their desire to do so, by making them more troubled in a host of domains: their ability to maintain jobs, housing, and stable families; their access to the social safety net; and their risk of poverty, joblessness, homelessness, and other disadvantages that make civic engagement more difficult.'

## **Displaced or restricted reentry and the spatiality of citizenship**

While many participants acknowledged both their hopes for future citizenship and awareness of the hurdles that might be faced in achieving this, for some their future imagined citizenship was spatially restricted. Citizenship is an inherently spatialised concept, whether considered in terms of nationality, or more broadly as membership of a community. Kallio et al. (2020: 717) identify *spatiality* as a crucial dimension of 'lived citizenship', noting how citizenship is contingent on the 'mundane spatio-temporalities of everyday life' and 'cannot be divorced from its context' (Lister et al., 2007: 1 cited in Kallio et al., 2020). Spatiality, and *where* one could imagine future involvement as a citizen, was prevalent in many participants' responses, for various reasons, highlighting the significance of spatiality in domestic, local everyday life, as well as the significance of nationality-based citizenship status for subjective anticipated citizenship on release.

There is a growing body of scholarship exploring the implications of conviction for foreign nationals, their citizenship and residency (De Noronha, 2020; Tripkovic, 2021). For a small number of participants who had faced deportation, during or following imprisonment, their imagined future citizenship was restricted to a different space to that which they had hoped to return. Ciaran (Ireland) explained how experience of deportation from England, and the use of language in his notice of deportation, had made him feel 'unwanted': 'that word "undesirable"

– I really didn't feel like a citizen'. Even where such formal denial of citizenship did not apply, several participants – nationals and foreign nationals – described a need to leave their location to realise future hopes of citizenship. When asked if he felt he would be a citizen after release, Jordan, a FNP in Ireland, explained that expecting continued treatment as a potential 'risk' made it impossible to envisage life as a citizen without moving abroad:

A citizen here? ... It's complicated...I tell you the reality - after the crime, completely I am changed. Before I love this country, I tell you reality...Now I can't anymore here[...]. Because before, when you outside in the freedom, you don't feel it...But after the crime, I have developed a life where...I feel like a risk, like a risk you know? So [it's] better I left. Maybe I stay few months here after release, because I have my daughter here in this country, but in true reality, definitely back to [country of birth].

This sense of stigma being such that citizenship could only be realised elsewhere also extended to several Irish/British nationals too, with the prospect of moving – to another area or abroad – being viewed as the only way to imagine a meaningful future as a citizen. This perception was particularly evident amongst participants in Ireland, who cited fear of being known to police as 'criminals' and consequently targeted. As Kyle (Ireland) explained, the only way he could imagine a life outside, beyond prison, was to:

Get the fuck out of bleedin' [city]! That's what I'd say. The only way you rehabilitate is starting a new life for yourself. If you get outta here, it's just gonna be all Gardas and all that. They're going to know who you are straight away when you get out.

Such expectations indicated a sense of vulnerability to criminal justice interference, identified by Nugent and Schinkel (2016) as part of the 'pains of desistance', with a perception that the *intersubjectivity* of citizenship (Kallio et al., 2020) would be shaped by sustained markers of 'criminal' rather than 'citizen' in interactions and relationships with those nearby. As such, the *spatiality* of imagined future citizenship was limited to places where one was unknown, and their *affective* sense of being a citizen was yet to be tarnished by this stigma. This was raised more frequently by participants in Ireland than England, perhaps due to the tight-knit communities also described by Irish participants, providing less of the anonymity perceived to be required for an *affective* sense of citizenship.

Continued restrictions on autonomy after prison were also highlighted by several participants, mostly in England, as impacting on the spatiality of citizenship expected following release. License restrictions, curtailing where individuals could operate as a member of a community, impacted directly and indirectly on the spatiality of anticipated citizenship when imagining release. For Jayden (England), serving a life sentence, his license conditions would prevent him from returning to the place he felt his community was. When asked if he would consider himself a citizen, in his own terms as part of the community on release, he said:

Well I still...cause of my license conditions, at the minute, they're saying I'm not allowed to go back there. I don't know where but...but once I've done all my stuff, eventually I'll be able to be back. My family's there – my nana and grandad...I will be back there eventually, it's just while my conditions are on, I've got to stick to my license conditions haven't I?

While several participants noted how license restrictions explicitly restricted the spatiality of their future imagined citizenship, for a few others the uncertainty of managing compliance led them to self-restrict the spatial dimensions of the communities in which they could envisage belonging as citizens:

I know that I will never be able to belong to a community out there again...Well I don't know what the restrictions will be...but it's the experience I've had in prison that will... make me that way, that I will withdraw.

*So do you think prison itself makes it difficult for people to be active, involved members of the community once they're out?*

Yeah! Especially a sex offenders' wing...And that's family as well, because obviously if I'm that withdrawn from the community that will restrict...When I get out, my community will be my house. Obviously I will get visits from my kids and grandkids...and I'll have the wife there and everything, but I won't be able to...I should be able to, and there shouldn't be any problems, but I know for a fact that I won't want to be part of the community again because of the stigma of being classed as...you know.

(Andrew, England)

Andrew's expectations of restricting community life to his house highlight how an underlying fear of 'tripping up' underpinned expectations of future supervision after release for some, while his *affective* sense of belonging was impacted by the stigma attached to his conviction for a sexual offence. This perception of returning to the community as risky, creating the potential for unwitting breaches of license conditions, speaks to the role of Durnescu's (2011) 'pains of probation' in participants' planned self-restriction of spatiality on release, hindering hopes of future meaningful citizenship in one's wider community. Such concerns, shared more commonly by participants in England, demonstrate the continuation of 'tightness' (Crewe, 2011) beyond release and into individuals' supervised lives, particularly where supervision is driven by a focus on risk and punishment, rather than the stronger penal welfare influence evident in Ireland (Fitzgibbon and Healy, 2019). Andrew's expectations of the stigma accompanying his offence, and burdensome restrictions of license, meant he anticipated his freedom and confidence to engage as a citizen being heavily impacted, continuing to be a supervised subject after release, rather than a citizen of equal standing. In this respect, supervision in England was often perceived not as an opportunity for citizenship, as with Community Return in Ireland, but as a restriction of where citizenship might be possible. Thus, in various ways, participants' imagined citizen futures were spatially contingent and restricted, highlighting how

the spatial dimension of 'lived citizenship' (Kallio et al., 2020) is experienced for people in prison and, more broadly, under the web of penal supervision.

## The prison's 'shadow' over meaningful future citizenship

Imprisonment had either disrupted or damaged citizenship for many participants, with some feeling their potential citizenship had received such irreparable damage it had been entirely lost, making an imagined future citizen self no longer attainable. Just as imprisonment 'disrupted their normal life' (Villman, 2021: 8), for some, imprisonment had also disrupted their prior engagement as 'active citizens' outside which they hoped, albeit with apprehension about the hurdles involved, to return to. Several participants described how they had been involved in what they saw as positive and meaningful citizenship before incarceration, whether through paid employment, running businesses, or voluntary contributions to local communities. However, in these cases imprisonment had disrupted this meaningful citizenship, with limited opportunities to continue contributing to external communities. Less frequently cited, yet central to a few participants' narratives, was a feeling that citizenship through such contributions was not only temporarily disrupted, but potentially damaged irreparably. Isaac (England), who ran a business before imprisonment, described this concern when asked if he could continue the citizenship contributions he identified:

No. You're very, very isolated from the outside.

*So the contributions that you feel like you were making are...stopped at the point...?*

Well they're not just that, they're in danger of being ruined aren't they? The longer they keep you in here...they're breaking twenty years of what's been done and what's good!

For participants who perceived their former selves as fulfilling the *performed* dimension of citizenship (Kallio et al., 2020) through community contributions, the *spatiality* and *intersubjectivity* of their current circumstances led to fears such contributions would be destroyed. Both physical distance, and lack of interaction with those outside to sustain contributions, removed opportunities to perform citizenship, while some had concerns that their *affective* position of being a citizen – supported through these contributions – was erased or forgotten in their current status of being as a 'prisoner'.

Finally, in relation to the prison's role in limiting anticipated citizenship, some participants expressed concern about maintenance of their true self throughout and beyond imprisonment. The assaultive processes of imprisonment on identity are widely discussed, with the 'mortification of the self' (Goffman, 1961), imposition of alternative identities, and often necessitated adoption of 'institutionally desired' versions of one's identity (Warr, 2020: 39). Given the significance of identity beyond the 'prisoner' label to imprisoned men's understandings of citizenship,

this led to an existential concern that the prospect of a future citizen self was irrevocably lost during time inside, particularly for those serving longer sentences. This apprehension of 'loss of the self' during imprisonment (Henley, 2018a) was evident in Neil's (Ireland) response when asked if he would consider himself a citizen on his expected release in five years:

Ermm...I would hope so. When I'm released I'll have spent 11 and a half years in here, you know, and...you would hope you could go back to some sort of normality when you get out you know? It's...it's actually impossible to say, because in here I feel my head is right, I feel everything is right, but you don't know how it's going to be being released after 11 and a half years. You don't know how you're gonna be able to help, how you're gonna be able to get on with life you know. That's a difficult one to answer, because you don't know. You would hope so. You would hope so, and mentally I think yeah, I'm OK yeah. I'm over halfway through now or something, and mentally I don't think I've changed at all...I hope not anyway...

The age and life-stage of some older participants impacted on their sense that prospects of future citizenship had been 'lost' through imprisonment. For these men, this existential apprehension of social death, through loss of the self, was accompanied by an acute awareness of mortality and inability to confidently envisage a future outside prison. When describing the contributions he hoped to make on release, Neil (Ireland) caveated this with 'if I'm alive at that stage', highlighting the 'spirit of death' – not only social and civil, but also corporeal – in imprisonment (Scott, 2018:164). Andrew (England) explained how his perception of his potential citizenship on release would be shaped by the detrimental impact on his health, when asked what citizenship meant to him:

Being part of the local community. The bigger community, like I say, queen and country. I've no rights here, and when I get out of prison, I won't have any rights at all because... the way my health is, prison's done for me.

Crawley and Sparks (2006) have noted how release is often viewed with trepidation by older prisoners, and Andrew's comments illustrate how concerns around the impact of imprisonment on health may also inhibit imagination of a meaningful future as 'citizen' rather than 'prisoner'. As such, the *affective* dimension of 'lived citizenship' (Kallio et al., 2020) was shaped not only by symbolic or social loss of self but, particularly for older prisoners, also imprisonment's effects on the body, threatening prospects of *being* a citizen in future.

## Discussion

Despite substantial discussion of the consequences of convictions for citizenship status and activity, little is known about how people with convictions themselves understand citizenship and envisage this in their lives post-release. The findings discussed demonstrate that, despite rhetorical emphasis on returning 'citizens', the

prison, combined with the multitude of civil disabilities and informal restrictions from the stigma of a conviction, serves to inhibit imagined future citizenship in pre-release narratives of imprisoned men. This is partly due to the impact of imprisonment on individuals' sense of self and prior contributions, along with its role in exacerbating marginality through stigmatisation, and lack of appropriate support in resettlement. While many participants embraced notions of citizenship as 'normal' (non-criminal) or 'active' in their aspirations for release, their expected realities differed markedly from these aspirations, with awareness of the limitations facing them. Given the significance of constructing a coherent pro-social self to desistance, it is crucial that these barriers, inhibitions and concerns are identified and, where possible, minimised. If engaged citizenship is to be expected on release, we must understand what meaningful citizenship looks like for imprisoned individuals, subjectively as well as through legal and normative definitions. This involves acknowledging subjective understandings of citizenship from prisoners' perspectives, and how the dimensions of subjectively meaningful citizenship are re-shaped, hindered or rendered inaccessible by imprisonment itself, and its consequences – formal and informal.

This article has shown that individuals' convictions, sentences, and imprisonment experiences, can impact on the various dimensions of 'lived citizenship', and how citizenship is aspired to, or expected in future. These effects can be understood within the framework of 'lived citizenship' proposed by Kallio et al. (2020), each dimension of which is impacted by one's incarceration, future supervision, and the collateral consequences of conviction. Firstly, this article has demonstrated how future imagined citizenship can be *spatially* displaced or restricted by one's sentence and associated collateral consequences. Whether displaced to another country, or through self-restriction of the physical remit of life in fear of license breaches, the spatiality of citizenship is shaped by the continued impact of one's sentence in a way that also inevitably shapes the *intersubjectivity* of 'lived citizenship', including the relationships individuals are able to foster on release, and the consequent boundaries of their self-identified communities. Within these communities, participants identified anticipated barriers to participation through 'normal' citizenship, focused on finding employment, as well as through more explicit 'acts of citizenship' (Isin, 2008) via community contributions. Consequently, these anticipated barriers, the lack of relevant preparation inside prison, and practical hurdles faced on reentry, shaped the extent to which *performed* citizenship was envisaged as feasible in participants' post-release lives, while also rendering previous 'acts' of citizenship damaged or forgotten. Finally, the various barriers to inclusion were combined with existential concerns around identity and self to impact the *affective* dimension of 'lived citizenship', inhibiting the emotional connections and feelings of being a citizen which accompany meaningful belonging.

Through consideration of participants' own expectations of being a citizen after release, this article has demonstrated that while meaningful citizenship might be hoped for, or aspired to, it is rarely expected with confidence. Consequently, rhetoric around the penal system as returning 'citizens' oversimplifies the lived reality of citizenship for those incarcerated and facing release; for them, the transition from prison to community is not perceived as a transition to citizenship, as such



rhetoric suggests. By utilising this language to describe reentry, and failing to consider the subjective understandings of citizenship for those facing release, we risk setting expectations of imprisoned people that exceed those expected of the 'average citizen' outside, and are perceived as unachievable from the outset. The aim of rehabilitating individuals into law-abiding 'citizens', and the perceived restrictions that inhibit hopes of securing the position of 'citizen' on release, are in tension:

'While promoting 'active' or 'moral' citizenship, successive governments have imposed structural limitations on the exercise of citizenship by constructing a concept of citizenship that is limited and limiting. It is the iron fist of imprisonment wrapped in the moralistic velvet glove of citizenship.'

(Behan, 2020: 10)

An imagined future self can be crucial to the process of desistance (Maruna, 2001) and thus, if we are to foster circumstances conducive to desistance, we must strive for a society where empty moralistic rhetoric is replaced by circumstances in which individuals *can* envisage themselves as full citizens in their future lives, knowing that opportunities for this can be realised, and barriers removed. Just as McNeill (2012) has argued for the need to look beyond the individual when considering rehabilitation, this requires a reorientation from a moralised emphasis on expectations of individuals through citizenship, to exploration of how wider society and criminal justice institutions might better enable citizenship. Such a shift is crucial if we are to be concerned not only with individuals' status as 'moral' citizens through desistance, or productive citizens through economic participation, but with their ability to experience citizenship in a way which is affectively meaningful and cultivates a sense of belonging and inclusion as full citizens. Without this broader view, meaningful citizenship may continue to be perceived as an unachievable aspiration, rather than an anticipated future reality, for those looking forward to release from prison.

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### **ORCID iD**

Abigail D. Stark  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5693-0771>

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