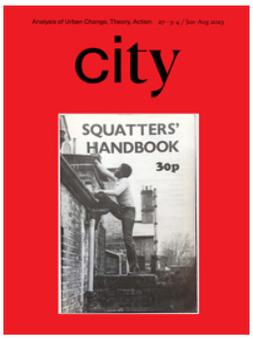

Article:
Pill, M. orcid.org/0000-0002-9434-1425 (2023) 'Moving from protest to policy': civil society responses to carceral governance. City, 27 (5-6). pp. 905-924. ISSN 1360-4813

https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2023.2210965



City

Analysis of Urban Change, Theory, Action

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ccit20

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To cite this article: Madeleine Pill (19 May 2023): ‘Moving from protest to policy’: civil society responses to carceral governance, City, DOI: 10.1080/13604813.2023.2210965

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2023.2210965

Published online: 19 May 2023.

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

'Moving from protest to policy': civil society responses to carceral governance

Madeleine Pill

Baltimore's exclusionary divisions are palpable in the city's long-standing concentration and segregation of its African American population and in its institutions of governance. The city is synonymous with carceral governance, or governance via the criminal justice system and other practices of control, which constrains the political expression of urban citizenship. A focus on the period since the city uprising in 2015, triggered by racist police violence, underlines that the fundamental struggle concerns the democratisation of the city's governance and how this is envisaged. The research affirms a key schism between incremental change, associated with co-option into the status quo, and visions of radical, transformative change. But considering the choices and activities of three civil society organisations refines this bifurcated understanding of civil society responses to carceral governance. The organisations move from protest to policy by combining outsider strategies, focused on youth leadership development, with insider strategies of collaboration with, and policy advocacy targeted at, different tiers of government. In making choices about when they

Keywords **carceral governance, civil society, democratisation, insider and outsider strategies, incrementalism**

URL https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2023.2210965

work with and when they work against the state and city elites, the organisations navigate the co-optive risks of incrementalism when it is perceived as contributing towards their vision of transformative change.

Introduction

On 12 April 2015, Freddie Gray, a 25-year-old African American resident of West Baltimore, was arrested by police. A phone video showed him being dragged into a police van. On April 19 he died in hospital due to the spinal cord injuries sustained in police custody. In the week following, protests were held outside the Western District police station. On 25 April a larger protest outside City Hall preceded skirmishes and violence downtown. After Gray's funeral two days later, rioting spread through pockets of the city with looting, buildings and cars set on fire and 235 arrests. The Maryland State Governor declared a state of emergency, National Guard troops were deployed, and a week-long curfew was imposed. On 28 April, President Obama commented:

> This has been a slow-rolling crisis … We can't just leave this to the police … we as a country have to do some soul-searching. This is not new. It's been going on for decades … If we think that we're just going to send the police to do the dirty work of containing the problems that arise [in impoverished communities], without as a nation saying, 'What are we going to do?'—then we're not going to solve this problem. And we're going to go through the same cycles of periodic violence, and the occasional riots in the streets, and everybody will feign concern until it goes away, and then we go about our business as usual … If our society really wanted to solve the problem, we could. (Obama White House Archives 2015)

The situation in Baltimore typifies a major challenge to the democracy of urban governance in the US—structural racism and its expression in carceral governance. The events of April 2015 were a flashpoint of contestation sparked by racist police violence but running much deeper. Structural racism is starkly expressed in the city's socio-spatial inequalities, represented by the segregation of its African American citizens (62% of the city's population of 593,000, US Census 2019) as well as in its institutions. The spatial pattern of redlining (the racist practice of refusing mortgage finance) remains palpable in Lawrence Brown's (2021) 'Black butterfly' of poor African American neighbourhoods in the city's west and east. The butterfly pattern is replicated in multiple domains, ranging from (high) poverty rates and the proportion of adults on parole or probation, to (low) small business lending and tax increment financing for development. Black butterfly communities are contained spatially, socially and economically, and these processes are reinforced by policing practices. Indeed, the city is synonymous with carceral governance—governing via the criminal justice system along with other practices of containment, coercion and control—which shapes the political identity of urban citizenship and how this is expressed.

The paper proceeds as follows. An examination of carceral governance and its effects on urban citizenship in Baltimore sets the scene for our analysis of civil

society efforts to democratise the city's urban governance in the period since the 2015 uprising. First we establish our analytical approach to democratisation and civil society efforts in this regard. Consideration of democratisation is founded in two contrasting understandings: democratisation as incremental improvements in liberal democracy, associated in critical scholarship with the co-optive use of democratic rhetoric and practice to legitimate the status quo; or as radical transformation of power relations (Purcell 2009; 2013). The realisation of transformation rather than co-optive incrementalism is identified as the 'central challenge' facing the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement:

> to prevent the work from facilitating another transition in regimes of racist policing and incarceration, displacement and disinvestment through formal *but not transformative* reforms. [Emphasis added] (Gilmore and Gilmore 2016, 132)

This key schism between seeking transformative or incremental change creates fissures within the city's civil society about 'protest or policy', given the choices actors make about when to contest and when to collaborate, informed by the perceived risks of co-option by the status quo. Thus in considering civil society efforts to democratise Baltimore, the focus is on the choices made by civil society organisations (CSOs) about working against or with the state (and other non-state, city elites). CSO choices are assessed in terms of the strategies they pursue in seeking to realise their vision of democratisation, informed by an outsider/ insider framing of the repertoire of strategies available to them (Grant 2000). At its extremes the framework contrasts the quintessential outsider strategy of protest, contesting city elites, and the quintessential insider, collaborative strategy of lobbying, only an option to those CSOs who have gained access by being accorded insider status by elites (Maloney, Jordan, and McLaughlin 1994). The repertoire between these extremes incorporates other outsider strategies that can contest the status quo, notably community organising and its focus on leadership training (Chambers 2003), and insider, more collaborative strategies that entail co-optive risks, such as being contracted to undertake service delivery or conducting policy advocacy targeted at City and State tiers of government. In considering CSO choices—in the strategies they pursue and in how they navigate the co-optive risks of collaboration—our specific contribution is in refining understanding of the role of CSOs in seeking to democratise the state-society relationships of urban governance.

Our focus CSOs—all embedded within the city's Black butterfly communities subject to carceral governance—seek to democratise the city's governance via engendering youth leadership as well as in seeking police accountability. The uprising changed the political opportunities afforded, enabling a shift 'from protest to policy' to effect the incremental change of police democratisation, but this combined with outsider strategies towards radical, transformative democratisation centred on realising youth urban citizenship. Thus the choices CSOs make about strategies and collaboration reflect a mix of incremental pragmatism and transformative aspiration. Therefore, whilst our research affirms the key schism between those accepting incremental or seeking radical, transformative change, our analysis refines understanding by revealing that those towards the radical end of the spectrum are willing to take incremental

steps—as long are these are in the 'right direction', namely towards their vision of a transformed, democratised city.

Research approach

The analysis draws from primary and documentary data gathered by the author, an academic researcher. Primary data were gathered following but not prompted by the uprising as part of an international comparative study into urban governance. These comprise thirty-nine in-depth, semi-structured interviews and three group interviews, conducted in an exploratory (November 2015) and main phase (May–October 2016). Findings were refined at a workshop (July 2017) with 20 research interviewees or their representatives and other interested parties. For the purposes of this analysis of state-civil society relationships under carceral governance, the data have been recut to create two broad groupings aligned with 'civil society' and 'the state' (referring to city governance elites) and recoded in terms of their collaborative, co-optive or contested nature.

The first 'citizen activist' group comprises: members of community groups (including neighbourhood associations); members of social movements or organisations with an explicit transformative mission; and small, often neighbourhood-based non-profit organisations. Three CSOs were selected for focus for the current analysis due to their basis in, and mission to address the situation of the city's Black butterfly communities subject to various forms of containment and control. The second 'elite' group is made up of state and non-state actors who wield significant power in the city's governance: elected politicians; public officials of City or State government or agencies; and staff of local philanthropic foundations, 'ed and med' (university and hospital) anchor institutions, and major non-profit organisations. Elite actors make choices about which citizen activist groups they support with resources, financial or otherwise. In turn, citizen activist groups make choices about which elite actors they accept support from, collaborate with or contest; and indeed which other citizen activist groups they engage with on what terms.

The recoded primary data is combined with ongoing (through 2022) documentary review of City government and agency and key city institution (e.g. university, philanthropic foundation, major non-profit organisation) policy documents, research reports, evaluations, and press releases; along with ongoing review of the activities of the selected CSOs as documented in annual reports, newsletters and websites; along with local and national media reports. Ongoing analysis is vital in enabling assessment of the extent and nature of changes in the city's governance over the seven-year period since the uprising, necessary to capture the often slow pace of change.

Carceral governance

Critical scholarship pronounces the US a carceral state (Gottschalk 2014; Camp and Heatherton 2016) that embodies neoliberal racial capitalism—wherein

the state defines challenges to it, such as demands for democracy, equity and redistribution, as disorder (Camp 2016) whilst enabling 'the continuation of accumulation [that] treats certain places and populations as obsolete, in need of appropriation, removal, and erasure' (Bledsoe and Wright 2019, 16). Baltimore's history of urban development encapsulates 'the same age-old, racist process of subsidising and privileging the lives and preferred locales of the wealthy and white over those of poor people of colour' (Moskowitz 2017, 117), affirmed by research workshop participants who described city elite strategies as seeking to attract 'white people with full wallets' whilst displacing poor, Black residents (Pill 2020). Interviewees affirmed the exclusionary nature of the city's governance, one citizen activist describing 'the freezing out of grassroots community voices by … the neoliberal common sense vision', another stressing the necessity of contestation in efforts to be heard:

> There has to be a healthy amount of civil disobedience … I actually got arrested at City Hall once … there needs to be in this public discourse an opportunity for conversation that includes both sides, the citizens and the policy makers. In Baltimore, those opportunities are rare. Those opportunities are thwarted intentionally and they're restricted when they are available.

But understanding Baltimore's governance not only as exclusionary but as carceral—conducted through the criminal justice system but also other practices of containment and control—has explanatory power in locating the police violence which triggered the uprising in the city as a symptom rather than cause. The cause is structural racism—described by a citizen activist as 'the political, justice and economic systems designed to benefit the white system'—that is fundamental to understanding the city.

Racism embedded in the institutions and structures of social life has long been recognised in the US. The National Advisory (Kerner) Commission on Civil Disorder, convened in 1967 following widespread urban unrest, famously concluded that the nation was moving towards two separate societies, as manifested in manifold socio-spatial inequalities, accompanied by 'a double standard of justice and protection' (Kerner et al. 1968, 5). Nearly fifty years later, the US Department of Justice's (US DOJ) post-uprising investigation into the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) reiterated this division:

> many of the city's residents, especially those in low-income, predominantly African-American neighbourhoods, hate the police … Central to this divide is the perception that there are 'two Baltimores' receiving dissimilar policing services. One is affluent and predominately white, while the other is impoverished and largely black. (US DOJ 2016, 156)

Citizen activists agreed, one describing the divide as:

> How [the police] function in these low income Black and brown communities and how they perceive the residents in these communities and the disparities in how they police our community.

Scholarship probing the persistence of these disparities over time asserts the status quo-affirming power of how the problem of racist police violence is framed and the non-transformative prescriptions for change which result (Smith and Holmes 2003). One dominant framing justifies incrementalism as it regards police violence as an avoidable addendum to policing, prescribing that the police should be more accountable to the community. This framing proves attractive as it points to ostensibly realisable solutions, such as better training, regulation and oversight—even though these now standard prescriptions have long proved ineffectual. In Baltimore use of the community accountability frame is clear in the prescriptions outlined in the DOJ report:

> These challenges [of 'two Baltimores'] amplify the importance of using policing methods that build community partnerships and ensure fair and effective enforcement without regard for affluence or race through robust training, close supervision, data collection and analysis, and accountability for misconduct. (US DOJ 2016, 5)

Another common framing, the minority threat approach, does recognise structural causes of racist police violence but sees these as intractable, wherein poor, Black communities are constructed as 'a dysfunctional and criminal underclass that threaten safety and security' (Camp 2016, 18). Here lack of change is inevitable whilst further coercive containment of challenges to the state is rationalised 'as necessary social control' (Logan and Oakley 2017), captured in the 'zero tolerance' policing strategies prevalent since the 1990s (Camp and Heatherton 2016), described by a citizen activist as 'a whole different paradigm in policing [which] ... helped create the situation that we are in now'. These strategies have their roots in the punitive turn of the 1970s 'war on crime', which was supported by many African American city elites despite the devastating (albeit unforeseen) consequences for poor, Black neighbourhoods (Forman 2018; Fortner 2015). That these strategies tend to 'routinely degenerate into racial profiling and harassment and sometimes result in violent misdeeds' (Logan and Oakley 2017) was affirmed by the DOJ investigation which described police officers 'making large numbers of stops, searches, and arrests—and often resorting to force' (US DOJ 2016, 5), as Freddie Gray's treatment evidences.

These framings ease the path of generating the 'same old' political responses which result in incremental rather than structural, transformative change (Heatherton 2016; Gilmore and Gilmore 2016). Indeed, the deficiencies identified in the BPD regarding policing practices and accountability would have been familiar to the Kerner Commission, which described:

> aggressive patrol practices ... [which] create tension and hostility. The resulting grievances have been further aggravated by the lack of effective mechanisms for handling complaints against the police. (Kerner et al. 1968, 8)

The reforms deemed necessary, set out in the court-enforceable consent decree agreed between the DOJ and the City of Baltimore in April 2017 (City of Baltimore 2017) reprise the Kerner Commission's incremental, pragmatic

prescriptions (augmented with police body cameras) derived from a community accountability framing. Whilst acknowledging that it certainly would be better if police were better trained, supervised and equipped to serve their communities, Logan and Oakley (2017) describe the focus on police behaviour as 'scapegoating' as it insulates mainstream institutions and practices of governance from the transformative change necessary to disrupt the structurally racist status quo. Thus these incremental changes contrast with the transformative 'remedies [that] match the diagnosis' (Logan and Oakley 2017) sought by the BLM movement (Yamiche 2016; Gilmore and Gilmore 2016) in which carceral governance is located as an expression of structural racism.

Carceral citizenship

Baltimore's carceral governance shapes and constrains its urban citizenship, or the extent to which its residents have a political identity which 'allows them to act as members of a community who either have rights or who should have rights' (Staeheli 2003, 100). The constraints are made stark when considering the lived experience of carceral governance (Lerman and Weaver 2014) and its apparatus of 'anti-Black violence' (Bledsoe and Wright 2019)—namely the disproportionate incarceration of Black people (Gilmore 1999; Pettit and Western 2004), discriminatory policing (Epp, Maynard-Moody, and Haider-Markel 2014) and the criminalisation of Black poverty (JOTF 2018).

To assert the coercive role of the state in the lives of the 'raced and criminalised poor' in the US, Miller and Stuart (2017) describe the political identity of those convicted of a crime as 'carceral citizenship', alluding to the 'civic death' of those incarcerated through disenfranchisement from political participation and systematic exclusion from social redistribution (Wacquant 2005). Though the State of Maryland passed legislation in 2016 restoring voting rights to felons who have completed their sentence, carceral citizens remain subject to other forms of 'civic death'. For example, Western (2006) explains how mass incarceration erodes social rights by excluding those with convictions from the labour market. States and cities, including Maryland and Baltimore, have sought to redress this through 'ban the box' legislation, requiring employers to postpone asking about criminal history until job candidates are selected. But these measures are insufficient given the scale of economic exclusion, which reinforces the cycle of poverty and criminalisation, a process described by an investigation into Maryland's laws, policies and practices that penalise the Black poor or lead to their being arrested, charged with a crime or imprisoned (JOTF 2018).

Thus carceral governance operates not only though the criminal justice system, but through broader practices of containment and control that create 'troubling gradations of citizenship and belonging' (Gottschalk 2014, 13). The 'intense regulation of low-income communities of colour as prisonlike spaces' (Vitale and Jefferson 2016, 109) extends the reach of the carceral state into the lives of the vast majority of young men and increasingly women of colour (Gottschalk 2014). Here we therefore broaden application of the conception of carceral citizenship beyond those who have been convicted of a crime to

the residents of poor, Black communities given their 'lived experiences of structural disadvantage and racialized poverty' (Lerman and Weaver 2014, 169). As a Baltimore community activist explained, '[it's not] just a war on drugs and profiling young Black men issue, it's a whole community-wide issue'. Several interviewed stressed the traumatic nature of citizens' lived experience, a philanthropic foundation officer explaining:

> We are a traumatised city on many levels. Most of the population, which happens to be African American, 60-some percent of the population is traumatised and a lot of it is at the hands of government.

These everyday (coercive, traumatic) experiences shape citizens' perceptions of and relations with the state—the political identity of their citizenship. Citizens' 'strong feelings of recrimination, resentment, fear, and mistrust' (US DOJ 2016, 18) have implications for their willingness to collaborate with the state, especially as expressed in its most basic function of policing as social control. In compiling residents' experiences of police misconduct, one of the CSOs examined below identified individual victims' trauma but also its wider consequences (WBC and NBC 2016), as a community organiser explained:

> We asked on the street … 'Are you more afraid of the shooters than the police?' 38 out of 44 people said the police … Can you imagine that? … if I could not call the police … . That's scary. So that's what people here have been living with for at least a generation.

In Baltimore, Black butterfly residents are 'perceived and treated as enemies rather than partners' (WBC and NBC 2016, 20) which shapes their ability and willingness to engage in collective contestation and efforts to democratise the city's carceral governance. But despite how politically debilitating carceral governance is, social action does arise—as seen in the flashpoint of the uprising, but also in longer-term, more structured forms, as we will shortly examine.

Contesting carceral governance: civil society responses

The community accountability frame (Smith and Holmes 2003) dominates the incremental prescriptions sought by both 'elite' and 'civil society' groupings following the uprising. All agreed that Freddie Gray's death was the trigger, and thus locate police violence as its proximate cause—which becomes the most pressing problem that needs to be rectified. The DOJ (2016) report emphasised the need for BPD accountability, a concern shared by citizen activists who stressed the need for direct citizen participation:

> Submit a complaint to them … and they write a recommendation to the police commander. And he promptly throws it in the garbage because there is no binding requirement … The City needs to take a hard stance … and demand State action … [the police] do not want us anywhere near … However, the City needs to understand that that's what the citizens want.

Calls for accountability did combine with indirect acknowledgment of structural racism through recognition of the exclusionary effects of carceral governance, as exemplified in this excerpt from a non-profit report three years after the uprising:

> City residents took to the streets to call for an end to police brutality and demand reforms in police accountability. In response to the death of Freddie Gray, what surfaced was communal anger and frustration at the effects of longstanding mass incarceration and a divestment in economic opportunities. (JOTF 2018)

Initial and longer-term responses have included economic inclusion measures, such as expansion of the city government's summer jobs programme with city elite funding (Mayor's Press Release 2015)—though this response can be readily critiqued as a tokenistic tool to contain protest and reassert control. However, police-community relations remained the 'immediate priority', as a citizen activist explained:

> Sadly in Baltimore City it has to be the Police Department … There was a big push, huge push this past year, jobs … jobs … jobs … jobs … jobs. And it's kind of quiet now … it gets diminished as soon as something happens with the Police Department.

A framing of the uprising less generally shared amongst those interviewed points to a more transformative vision of governance change. This is youth's exclusion from city governance and the prescription of youth leadership training to address the politically debilitating effects of carceral governance on urban citizenship. Youth leadership is a realm which has long lacked funding from city elites as indicated by declining funds for community organising of which leadership development is a core element, a City official commenting that 'community organising as a field is dead … as everyone is so focused on results'. In turn, less than 1% of grants awarded in the city is to youth-led organisations (OSI 2018) albeit with some small increases given the 'moral responsibility to reconsider resource allocation' following the uprising as a foundation officer explained. Some change did result three years later as a $12 million Youth Fund commenced support of not only diversionary after-school activities but also democratising leadership training. This was financed from property tax revenues (Duncan 2018) in the absence of city elite resource.

The realm of youth leadership training, and issues relating to elite funding, prove pertinent to our research focus on the strategies pursued by three CSOs in the city. These were selected as at the time of fieldwork they had a high profile within the city, mentioned by interviewees across the 'elite' and 'civil society' groupings. Importantly, they encapsulate the efforts to democratise the city's governance in relation to police accountability and youth leadership, a commitment reflected in their shared member-led ethos, with membership predominantly drawn from the city's Black butterfly communities subject to carceral governance. The CSOs contrast in terms of the type of strategies they pursue and the collaborations in which they choose to engage, related to how

they decide to navigate its co-optive risks. We assess their strategy choices in terms of the insider/ outsider strategic repertoire: insider strategies of lobbying, service provision and advocacy; and outsider strategies of protest and community organising. All three are notable in combining outsider strategies of protest and community organising/ leadership development with insider strategies of service delivery and policy advocacy and lobbying targeted at different (City and State) tiers of government, salient as much relevant police legislation is vested in Maryland State.

The first CSO is a resident-led neighbourhood-based advocacy coalition; the second a youth-led service provider and advocacy non-profit; and the third a radical self-described 'grassroots think tank' constituted as a private company.

Neighbourhood-based, resident-led advocacy

The aim of the coalition, formed in 2010, is 'building a unified and empowered Central West Baltimore across boundaries of race, class and neighbourhood to overcome the issues that have maintained racial and economic segregation for decades' (CSO website). Its organisational membership includes neighbourhood associations, churches and a neighbourhood-based non-profit. The coalition (along with the think tank, below) is a member of a State-wide coalition, the Campaign for Justice, Safety and Jobs, '32 organisations are part of the campaign … pushing for these policy and structural changes', as an activist explained.

Based in the West Baltimore locus of the uprising (and home of Freddie Gray), the coalition was awarded some elite (philanthropic foundation) grant funding to try and 'ensure that stressed communities have a voice', in the words of a foundation officer. But in collaborating with elite actors, the coalition is very aware of the need to maintain community trust and not be perceived as engaging in co-optive relationships with those regarded as 'part of the problem' of structural racism and its expression in carceral governance. Following the uprising it created the West Baltimore Community Commission on Police Misconduct, the findings of which fed into the DOJ investigation, as a coalition organiser explained:

> I kind of walk a real tight line here … I do have community trust but when you're doing things like the Commission and working hand in hand with the DOJ, there's still that perception that you're talking to the Feds … so it's rough but somebody has to do it … there has to be some kind of community mediation in the whole process or it'll just be the DOJ dealing with the police and the bureaucracy and once again no citizen input and no one hears the real story.

The coalition's success in both expressing the community's voice and getting it heard is demonstrated by the commission findings being cited three times in the DOJ report, which recognised it as a response from residents in 'impoverished, primarily minority, neighbourhoods [spurred by] being belittled, disbelieved, and disrespected by officers' (US DOJ 2016, 157). Activists described the welcome 'feeling … of being able to be heard or having an avenue where your voice is documented'. Importantly, while recognising the need for greater community accountability, the commission's report made clear that police violence is a symptom of the cause, structural racism. In explaining this, the

report echoes diversionary interpretations of the focus on police behaviour as 'scapegoating' (Logan and Oakley 2017):

> the legacy of racism in Baltimore is a defining feature of community life and is experienced through concentrated poverty, disinvestment, discrimination, and police profiling and abuse ... while informants expressed the need for individual officers to be held accountable, they did not view officers accused of misconduct as being the central problem, but rather a symptom of more extensive issues. (WBC and NBC 2016, 20)

Beyond gaining community voice in the DOJ investigation, the coalition's activities include seeking formal political voice, running Get Out the Vote campaigns to 'harness that energy to something positive ... and build a legislative voice' for an area where voter turnout was dwarfed by the 5000 people strong protests in the week following Freddie Gray's death. It also established the Baltimore Youth Organising Project, assisting in the palpable growth of youth leadership in the city as recognised by others interviewed. A coalition organiser, in addressing why youth organising is a priority, contrasted outsider and insider strategies of seeking change:

> training young people on how to organise their peers ... moving from protest to policy ... to make sure that the young folks are demonstrating constructively and not just tearing shit up, which they wanna do.

This positive framing of the move from protest to policy was also reflected in the coalition's decision to engage in strategies of collaboration (with other CSOs and with elites), contrasted with the outsider strategies of protest by groups not based in the community:

> We've had a steady stream of demonstration for maybe a year ... [but] the bulk of the protests and demonstration aren't from people in this neighbourhood ... we decided ... now it's time to move from protest to policy.

Youth-led service provider and advocacy non-profit

This black youth-led non-profit (and the think tank, below, with which it has close links) were both described by others interviewed as 'protesting injustice effectively' and trying to 'change the narrative'. The CSO exemplifies the growing voice of young, Black, male and female activists, a foundation officer referring to the city's 'change agents' as 'young millennials, under 40, mainly African American', who are not seeking elected office and are playing an 'inside-outside game'. A major advocacy organisation commented:

> there's a lot of young activist leadership in Baltimore ... I feel like we skipped a generation, and now we've got a lot of really smart, young people.

The CSO combines 'peer-to-peer education' (and is contracted by the Baltimore Schools System to provide mentoring and tutoring to high schoolers) with outsider strategies, including youth leadership training to engender urban

citizenship and engaging with others in actions (such as to protest the proposed construction of a youth jail in the city) which directly contest the city's carceral governance. As with the coalition and think tank, the organisation's strategies and actions seek change at the relevant government tier, going to 'Annapolis [State legislature] to lobby. They were going to City Hall but [concluded] 'that's a waste of time' as a foundation officer explained. In reflecting on the scope for co-option, a common threat for organisations contracted for service delivery, another citizen activist observed that:

> [the organisation] organise themselves. The fact that they have funding, they are getting paid to mentor and tutor but they also use some of the proceeds to do this advocacy work on issues that they think are important and they vote on what they think they need to stand up against or for.

Chiming with the inherent critique of 'outsiders' coming to protest in West Baltimore, a member of this CSO described another group's lack of strategy as 'plan[ning] actions kind of like half-assed, just get people arrested for no reason'. Another member went on to explain the importance of collaboration amongst those engaged in activism:

> there are organisations that are not as genuine in the work … and rather than trying to be collaborators … they seek to try and be 'the' organisation' … the community of individuals who are … actively working on these issues [in Baltimore] is such a small community … the problem for me is that when folks don't work in collaboration, it becomes a situation where [you are identified with others as] doing a thing … whether or not you're a part of it.

The organisation is certainly concerned with police violence and broader criminal justice system reform. But the organisation puts politicisation or raising consciousness of structural racism amongst young people front and centre of its approach:

> What's your understanding about racism and the white supremacy? … the best analogy I could give is like does the fish have a concept of water? So it's baked into everything. And being able to teach folks how that works and how do different elements unearth themselves in different institutions, and being able to develop young people in such a way that they're not afraid to call those things out by name.

Its activists see themselves as 'practitioners in a [just and equitable] system that is not in existence'—a radical vision of a transformed governance (Purcell 2013; Gilmore and Gilmore 2016)—which they contrast with the current status quo, despite City government's Black leadership (since the election of its first African American mayor in 1987 all mayors except one have been Black), as an activist explained:

> We live in a predominantly Black city and we want for folks to have some type of ownership of the agenda … folks are being conditioned to believe that systems change is what should happen rather than some kind of overhaul of everything.

Grassroots think tank

The think tank was regarded by another activist as 'taking a more protest, outsider stance on criminal justice issues'. The importance its founders place on self-determination entails it being constituted as a private company, seeking funding through its 'community sustainers' (members), rather than as a non-profit organisation which risks co-option (or the perception of such) due to reliance on funding from elites, in the form of grants or contracts. But though it is perceived by some as deploying outsider strategies, in seeking change it has engendered alliances, such as its membership of the State-wide coalition (above) and in actuality deploys a savvy combination of insider and outsider strategies. An activist explained:

> It's a combination, relationships with legislators … op-eds, demonstrations … We're pretty well connected to community … those relationships help us so that when we say we need people to come to Annapolis with us that we get a good response … A combination of community organisations, non-profits, ministers, teachers.

Another of its activists recognised 'we've been fortunate enough to be able to raise our profile enough to intervene on [the policy agenda] and to make a difference', an example being:

> This year we also helped … pass reforms … even though we got 80% of what we wanted but 20% we still need to make sure that there's more civilians involved in the review of police and their misconduct.

Thus, the think tank has focused on seeking police and broader criminal justice reform, and as such displays pragmatism in concentrating on the constituent steps towards what it describes as more 'structural police reform', like seeking to ensure empowered community accountability results from implementation of the consent decree (Rector 2017). It has thus targeted its efforts at the State legislature in seeking the return of the BPD to city rather than State control, and has created at State level an annual 'Black legislative agenda' in collaboration with 'others working at the grassroots', publicised via a sophisticated (social) media and events strategy.

But these activities are firmly located as one element of transformational change, according with what activists describe as the 'Black radical tradition' based on the power of 'groups like us and well-meaning people' to produce a 'parallel structure, a parallel narrative'. The paradigm, as described by an activist, alludes to realising urban citizenship (Staeheli 2003) by providing an 'insurgent counternarrative' to neoliberal racial capitalism (Camp 2016) that is transformative (Purcell 2013):

> Where through political pressure, entrepreneurship, and strategic investment to philanthropy and policy change, we can create … striving Black communities … , so that as Baltimore moves forward, there could be a counterweight to the political, social, and economic hegemony of that neoliberal common sense stuff … [with] folks who have a more community-centred … vision of community empowerment from the grassroots up, as opposed to seeing Black folks as appendages of a neoliberal wave.

Making choices

All three CSOs make choices—in their use of strategies and in how they navigate the co-optive risks of collaboration. Their activities affirm the utility of refining the insider and outsider distinction beyond the strategies chosen and goals pursued to include the status accorded to the CSOs by city elites (Maloney, Jordan, and McLaughlin 1994). The uprising, a spontaneous, unstructured protest against the city's carceral governance, triggered shifts in CSO strategy selection by changing the political opportunities afforded to CSOs. For example, the neighbourhood coalition decided to make use of the insider status thus accorded to it by the DOJ (as a credible link to key Black butterfly communities) to seek democratisation via community oversight of policing. The CSO combined this with the outsider strategy of seeking to transform the city's exclusionary, carceral governance by developing youth leadership—its version of 'moving from protest to policy'.

The other CSOs—both of which continue to use protest, the quintessential outsider strategy, as one element of their strategic repertoire when deemed necessary—drew from the political opportunities the uprising generated, such as the consent decree, to consolidate their insider status in collaborating to effect the incremental change of police democratisation. But they combined this with activities aligned with their outsider stance of politicising structural racism as part of their efforts towards radical, transformative democratisation (Purcell 2013). These two CSOs thus combine their inherently outsider status given their vision of radical, transformative change with insider strategies—a choice available given the access accorded to them. For example, the youth-led CSO continues as a city government-funded service provider, an insider strategy, and the grassroots think tank is a well-known lobbyist at the State legislature, a quintessential insider strategy available as a choice given the credibility the CSO has earned through its detailed policy work and alliance-building. As Purcell (2009, 160) explains, it is not that the CSOs 'never cooperate, never communicate, and always protest. They use a range of political practices'—but 'they want something fundamentally different from the status quo'. Thus the three CSOs combine insider and outsider, policy and protest stances and strategies which reflect mixes of incremental pragmatism and transformative aspiration—towards their vision of a radically democratised city.

The focus CSOs illuminate the tensions within the city's civil society in how they differentiate other organisations—in terms of their embeddedness within Baltimore's Black butterfly communities, in terms of their strategy choices, some described as 'half-assed', and in terms of their willingness to collaborate with other CSOs and be 'genuine in the work'. Some activists perceived the scramble for elite resource on the part of the city's CSOs as detrimental, with competition reducing the scope to nurture city-wide alliances to contest its carceral governance. An activist deployed a powerful metaphor in this regard:

> We're very careful with the non-profit industrial complex, where it creates a space or crabs in a barrel … the crabs are all trying to get out … rather than being able to work together to get out, they pull one another down.

The focus CSOs and others interviewed identified fissures within civil society regarding collaboration with the 'non-profit industrial complex', especially given the co-optive capacity of funding relationships interpreted as promulgating dependency on city elites and thus affirming the status quo (Purcell 2009; Ostrander 2013). In Baltimore, the 'complex' comprises city-based philanthropic foundations and anchor institutions, both designated as non-profit for tax purposes, along with major non-profit organisations. All form part of the city governance elite, and support (in ways such as contracting or grant-aiding) citizen activist groups. Both the coalition and youth-led non-profit did accept elite resource in the form of philanthropic grants and City contracts. However, in these cases 'mission drift' was not discernible—disruption of structural racism via transformative governance change remains their shared goal and they continue their politicising and democratising activities such as youth leadership training in this regard. Indeed, the youth-led organisation stressed that its training is 'outside of the local non-profit formula', signalling its conscious distancing from the co-optive risks of the non-profit industrial complex. Thus the CSOs were able to retain an outsider stance whilst securing or maintaining insider status given elite funding of other activities. It can be posited that their outsider status helped them maintain credibility amongst their constituent communities whilst this credibility aided in securing insider status with funders. This points to the need for close attention to the factors which determine whether or not CSOs are co-opted due to the inherent power imbalance of funding relationships (Pill 2019) which are vital for the CSO to engage in certain strategies.

In contrast, the more radical think tank had outright rejected any funding relationships with city elites by adopting a private company structure to avoid scope for co-option of their mission for transformative change, or the perception of such. Here the racial division between the white-led 'non-profit industrial complex' stands in vivid contrast with a vision of civil society activism that is embedded in the city's Black butterfly communities:

> Our critique of … what's called the non-profit industrial complex … the way in which white folks in particular are able to come into predominantly Black communities, steer lots of money and resources to carry out programs that aren't accountable to the community, that the overhead is more about people paying their own salaries as opposed to that actually impacting the community, having a kind of saviour mentality, so that makes the work unsustainable … they undermine the development of independent Black institution building that's so necessary for communities to actually have the power needed to address a lot of these problems. Non-profits proliferate the configuration of us being dependent on their existence and services, which again is not sustainable and undermines our power.

The quote above underlines the schism between the (white) non-profit industrial complex and those embedded in (Black) community-based activism, but also the key schism between those accepting incremental or seeking radical, transformative change (Purcell 2013; Gilmore and Gilmore 2016). In simple terms, the city's civil society is thus bifurcated, between those who collaborate with, and are thus at risk of co-option by city elites and the

non-profit industrial complex into the structurally racist status quo, and a radical grassroots which avoids the non-profit industrial complex and positions itself outside the prevailing neoliberal 'common sense' to seek transformative change (Chorianopoulos and Tselepi 2020). But our analysis reveals that the actuality is more complex, as those towards the radical end of the spectrum will pursue activities which involve developing relationships with elites to effect change—such as the neighbourhood-based coalition 'talking to the Feds'; and the radical think tank's 'relationships with legislators'. In so doing, they show a willingness to take incremental steps 'from protest to policy'—as long are these are in the 'right direction', namely towards their vision of a transformed, democratised city.

Change?

Have these strategies led to change? Considering what has happened in the city since primary data gathering concluded in 2017, drawn from ongoing documentary review, affirms that change has been rapid and generally superficial—but that there are some signs of positive incrementalism which may be steps towards transformation of the city's carceral governance.

The elite institutions remain the same, though personnel have been replaced due to scandal and corruption. As of December 2022, the city has had its third mayor and fourth police commissioner since the uprising. The mayor elected post-uprising resigned when a campaign finance scandal brought Baltimore's political corruption to worldwide attention (Broadwater, Duncan, and Marbella 2019). Implementation of the federal consent decree to reform the BPD was undermined by officers in a gun trace task force being charged in a federal corruption case, further eroding community trust (Williams 2018), followed by a further restructuring by the latest police commissioner to include new bureaus of Compliance and Public Integrity (Anderson 2019).

In summer 2020, racist police violence was again highlighted nationally and globally with the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, accompanied by demands to defund the police (Bowman Williams, Mezey, and Singh 2021). Baltimore's current mayor Brandon Scott took office in 2020 on a defund the police platform and the city budget's BPD allocation was reduced by $22 million. But by summer 2021 the City Council had approved a $28 million increase, with Scott's language softening from defunding the police to 'reimagining public safety', through a 'holistic lens of trauma, equity and healing', along with creation of a Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (City of Baltimore 2021). Scott has since argued that Baltimore is 'ahead of the game' in police reform due to the consent decree's ongoing implementation (Tucker 2021).

How far this 'reimagining' heralds incremental steps in the 'right direction' or serves to insulate institutions and practices of carceral governance from the transformative change necessary to disrupt the structurally racist status quo remains to be seen (Gilmore and Gilmore 2016). However, 2022 was hailed by the neighbourhood coalition as a 'great year for advocacy work'. Five years after its agreement, an important element of the consent decree's community

accountability prescription finally came to fruition with the establishment of Police Accountability Boards, which provide 'the community [with] its own independent means of investigating police misconduct', as the radical think tank explained. More fundamentally, after 160 years as a State agency and following much work by the focus CSOs and many other actors, a successful city-wide ballot in November 2022 returned control of the BPD to the City, after stalling in part due to fears the City would have to take responsibility for police brutality settlement payouts (Soderberg 2019). Thus basic local accountabilities—an initial, incremental step in democratising the city's carceral governance regarded as an immediate priority across the range of civil society—were restored, allowing in the words of the radical think tank, 'local council people to shape policy around discipline and oversight' (Gessler 2022). This step is therefore small but potentially hugely significant.

Conclusion

During fieldwork the 2015 uprising was cast as a pivotal moment. But what can be characterised as a struggle arising from a particular event actually constitutes a fundamental struggle over democracy—in Baltimore, citizens are seeking a role in their governance in the face of 'the centrality of coercion in governing and contesting American cities' (Davies 2014, 590).

Certainly the challenge of disrupting the structural racism which underpins Baltimore's carceral governance can seem unsurmountable. But change did result (albeit incremental rather than transformational), such as initial police reforms, establishment of the Youth Fund, and most recently the BPD's reinstatement to city control—the successful enactment of incremental change in the 'right direction'. And the growing voice of young, Black activists seeking to democratise the city's governance also engenders hope in realising an urban rather than carceral citizenship.

Governance conjunctures are always 'fixes', and as such are partial and open to challenge. Understandings of (carceral) urban governance and (carceral) urban citizenship, and of the power inherent in being able to narrowly frame 'the problem', are useful to refine understanding of the challenge of transformative change, including differentiating between incremental steps which are progressive, such as basic local accountabilities for policing, and those which are tokenistic, such as the small increase in elite funding for youth-led organisations following the uprising. More obviously transformative approaches—such as community wealth building focused on asset ownership and co-operative models that align with the 'independent Black institution building' envisaged by the radical think tank as a means to ultimately redress structural racism—are easier to posit as a transformative vision, and harder to enact. Thus 'moving beyond protest to policy' is only one step that seeks incremental improvements in the democracy of state-society relationships—in contrast to the transformative, radical democratisation of city governance envisaged as 'not just protest … [but] efforts to forge positive alternatives, to invent democratic collectives that can think and act outside the state and outside the capitalist market' (Purcell 2013, 323). But as BLM co-founder Patrisse Cullors explains, whilst creation of a

transformative 'vision that's much bigger than the one we have now' is certainly necessary, in addition 'we do have to deal with the current crisis in the short term … we have to have solutions for people's real-life problems' (Cullors cited in Heatherton 2016, 29)—their lived experiences of carceral citizenship.

Civil society strategies and actions may seem overwhelmed by the scale of 'the problem', however defined. If defined narrowly in terms of bringing the police to account, progress made is accompanied by continued efforts. For example, the think tank's Black State legislative agenda for 2019 (and each subsequent year) seeks to redress the power of the police union to block reform, which points to how hard it is to effect democratisation without a commitment to the rights of citizens to have a role in their governance. All three CSOs focused upon were engaged in seeking police and broader criminal justice reform, and as such can be cast as pragmatic in pushing for the incremental steps they perceive as 'on the way towards' more transformative, structural change. They combine insider and outsider, policy and protest stances and strategies which combine incremental pragmatism and transformative aspiration towards a radically democratised city.

The CSOs' emphasis on Black butterfly community-embeddedness, combined with openness to collaboration (tempered by understanding of the risks of co-option), emphasise the importance of greater unity amongst civil society actors and ultimately elites to effect transformative governance change in which urban citizenship is no longer carceral. The context shapes the mix of strategies deployed and the switch from protest to policy—and indeed back to protest when needed. The context also shapes the collaborative opportunities afforded by the status accorded to CSOs by elites, which CSOs in turn deem 'genuine' or co-optive. Such switching of strategy combinations, combined with the snail's pace of change, points to the validity of further, longitudinal research about CSOs and their choices about and changing interactions with elites and other civil society actors in seeking to effect radical democratisation.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all those who participated in the research, generously sharing their time, experiences and insights. Also thanks to Jonathan Davies, Kristin Smith, Kurt Iveson and Amanda Tattersall, and to the anonymous reviewers for their help in shaping the paper.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

The primary research drawn from for this paper was conducted as part of the Collaborative Governance Under Austerity study funded by the British Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) [award number ES/L012898/1].

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