Addressing gangs in Ottawa: Imagining a plan of action

Taking action together:
Addressing gangs in our city
Leadership symposium

Ross Hastings
October 18, 2012

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Thinking about gangs: a failure of imagination

Some basic assumptions:

1. Crime is a problem-solving behaviour (a choice), and not just a symptom of a condition

2. Must balance the focus on "deficits" (risk factors) with attention to strengths/resilience

3. We cannot punish our way to a « solution » - our responses need to address the complexity of the problem

4. Gangs are a problem … and a solution

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Gangs: costs vs benefits...to whom?

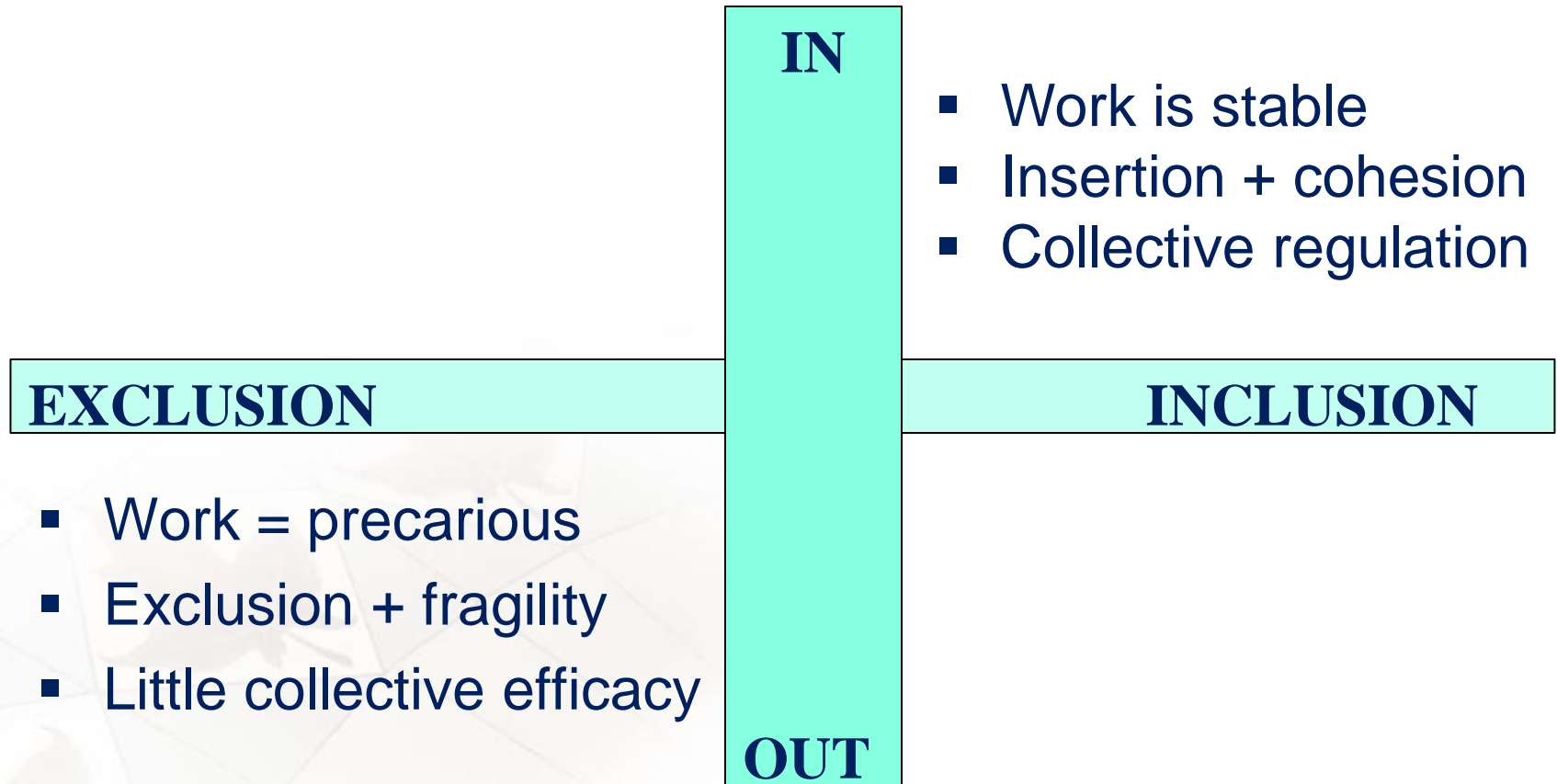| TO:	COSTS	BENEFITS
Individual		
Community		
Justice system		
Politics and media		

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Desistance from Gangs: Key Findings (L. Dunbar, 2012)

1. A process that occurs over time
2. Importance of aging and maturation
3. Desire to escape violence
4. Bonds and attachments to conventional people and activities
5. Absence of structural barriers: opportunity + labelling
6. Fear of law not a major deterrent, especially for persistent offenders

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Social cohesion and crime

IN

- Work is stable
- Insertion + cohesion
- Collective regulation

EXCLUSION

INCLUSION

- Work = precarious
- Exclusion + fragility
- Little collective efficacy

OUT

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Incident-based responses

1. Increase investments in control of persistent offenders

2. Focus on "hot spots" – use situational crime prevention to try to make offending more difficult, more costly or less attractive

3. Focus on victims – reduce their vulnerability + respond to their concerns

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Social inclusion for crime prevention

1. Developmental approaches to building individual capital (individual and relational)
2. Policies that foster social inclusion and create a sense of hope (a "stake" in the future)
3. Foster engagement and attachments to conventional people and activities
4. Remove barriers to opportunity (including labeling) – *allow people in!*

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Youth and Gang Involvement: Risk and Protective Factors

INDIVIDUAL	RELATIONAL	COMMUNITY	STRUCTURAL
COGNITIVE SKILLS	FAMILY CONTEXT	SOCIAL ORGANIZATION (stability)	INEQUALITY & EXCLUSION (objective and subjective)
SELF-CONTROL (impulsivity, aggression, risk-taking)	PARENTING	SCHOOLS	
	EDUCATION	OPPORTUNITY (crime, drugs & weapons)	OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES (a sense of hope!)
SELF-CONCEPT (well-being)	PEERS (pro-social vs. anti-social)	COLLECTIVE EFFICACY	

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Main Findings

This is a complex multi-dimensional problem – it will require an equally complex solution

- Targeted
- Timely
- Integrated service delivery
- Comprehensive
- Culturally sensitive
- Success = insertion + integration

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