



Research Paper

Governing drug use through partnerships: Towards a genealogy of government/non-government relations in drug policy



Natalie Thomas*, Melissa Bull, Rachel Dioso-Villa, Catrin Smith

Griffith Criminology Institute, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 29 April 2015

Received in revised form 19 October 2015

Accepted 4 November 2015

Keywords:

Drug policy

Non-government organisations

Australia

Genealogy

Governmentality

Partnerships

ABSTRACT

Drug policy in Australia is underpinned by the idea of partnerships wherein the non-government sector is one important partner in both delivering services and contributing to policy and decision-making processes. This article presents a genealogy of the concept of government/non-government 'partnerships', tracing its emergence and development within drug policy discourse in Australia. We find that the rise of neo-liberal policies since the 1980s has been a key factor facilitating the emergence of government/non-government 'partnerships' rhetoric in drug policy. Since the 1980s, the role of non-government organisations (NGOs) in drug policy has been articulated in relation to 'community' responsabilisation in contrast to the welfarist reliance on expert intervention. We link the rise of this rhetoric with the neo-liberal turn to governing through community and the individualisation of social problems. Furthermore, although we find that governments on the whole have encouraged the service delivery and policy work of NGOs at least in policy rhetoric, the actions of the state have at times limited the ability of NGOs to perform advocacy work and contribute to policy. Constraints on NGO drug policy work could potentially compromise the responsiveness of drug policy systems by limiting opportunities for innovative policy-making and service delivery.

© 2015 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

Introduction

The concepts of partnership working, collaboration and participation have become increasingly central to contemporary policy discourse in modern liberal democracies. This trend is evident in drugs and crime policy, where government agencies have actively sought to partner with non-government organisations (NGOs) in addressing drug problems and formulating 'evidence-based' drug policies (Duke & Thom, 2014; MacGregor & Thickett, 2011; Mold & Berridge, 2010; Ritter, Lancaster, Grech, & Reuter, 2011). Inter-sectoral partnerships are now a commonplace strategy pursued by governments to both formulate drug policies and deliver essential programs and services (Thom, Herring, Bayley, Waller, & Berridge, 2013).

In line with this trend, the ideas of partnership working and networked governance have become of increasing interest to drug policy researchers (Duke and Thom, 2014; Lancaster and Ritter, 2014; Thom et al., 2013). There is a growing literature documenting, describing and theorising the role of non-state actors and

government-community partnerships in the drug and alcohol field. Scholars have focused on documenting the history of the work of voluntary and drug user organisations in drug services and policy (AIVL, 2012; Crofts, and Herkt, 1993; Ettore, 1987; Lucas, 2011; Madden & Wodak, 2014; Mold, 2012; Mold & Berridge, 2008; Mold and Berridge, 2010), examining the role of non-government actors and experts in drug policy change (Duke and Thom, 2014; Lancaster and Ritter, 2014), and describing the forms of partnerships as well as the shortcomings associated with partnership working (MacGregor and Thickett, 2011; Thom et al., 2013). Thom et al. (2013) point out that although partnerships are now a well-established strategy in drug and alcohol policy, whether or not they 'work' in practice is less well-established. Nonetheless, the rhetoric of partnership working shows no sign of diminishing in popularity.

Although the existing literature provides a level of empirical detail about partnership working in the drug field, there has been less attention paid to how the idea of government/non-government partnerships has been constituted in drug policy, and how governments have articulated or shaped a space for the non-government sector within policy documents. The purpose of this article is to begin addressing this gap in the literature, through unpacking some of the social, historical and political factors influencing government/non-government relations in the Australian

* Corresponding author at: Griffith Criminology Institute, Griffith University, Brisbane, QLD 4121, Australia. Tel.: +61 07 3735 6858.

E-mail address: natalie.thomas@griffithuni.edu.au (N. Thomas).

drug policy field. We use the Australian context as a case study for considering inter-sectoral partnerships and the changing role of NGOs in drug policy. Like the drug policy systems in many other countries, the promotion of partnerships has been a strong theme in Australian drug policy (Ritter et al., 2011), and the non-government, not-for-profit sector plays a role in both delivering services and contributing to policy and decision-making processes. Recent surveys of alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment services in Australia suggest that over half of all AOD services are provided by the non-government sector (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2011).

In what follows, we provide a genealogical account of the rise of the idea of ‘partnerships’, tracing its emergence and development within contemporary drug policy discourse in Australia. Through an analysis of the various iterations of national drug policy strategy documents, we trace both the policy development of government/non-government ‘partnerships’ and how the role of the non-government sector has been articulated in policy. Our findings suggest that, while there has long been a history of association between government and non-government organisations, the development of neo-liberal policies since the 1980s laid the political foundations for the emergence of the rhetoric of government/non-government ‘partnerships’ in drug policy. We demonstrate that since the 1970s, the government has increasingly articulated the role of NGOs in Australian drug policy in relation to their position in the community, a finding we see as broadly aligned with what Rose (1999, p. 176) describes as the neo-liberal turn to ‘governing through community’. Our discussion highlights the complex role of NGOs in contemporary national and international drug policy systems.

Methodology

Genealogy and governmentality

Genealogy proceeds by identifying and problematising some existing practice, idea or issue—in this case government/non-government partnerships in drug policy—and tracing its historical, social and political emergence and development with a view to critically analysing the chosen phenomena (Howarth, 2000). The aim is not to produce a ‘total history’ of the phenomena under investigation, but a more nuanced perspective that reflects and accounts for political, social and historical influences and events. As Garland (2014) explains, historical materials are used to ‘trace the struggles, displacements and processes of re-purposing out of which contemporary practices emerged, and to show the historical conditions of existence upon which present-day practices depend’ (p. 372). We draw on governmentality as a theoretical and analytical tool to frame our thinking about government/non-government partnerships. Foucault used the term ‘governmentality’ to refer to rationalities of government (Gordon, 1991) and ‘government’ to consider ‘the complexity of the processes through which government is ‘assembled’ from a complex of institutions, practices and ways of thinking.’ (Colebatch, 2002, p. 417). In the current genealogy, then, we trace some of the conditions that have contributed to the emergence of government/non-government partnerships in the drug policy field, focusing particularly on Australian drug policy from the 1970s to the present day.

Methods and data sources

To capture the types of social, political and historical factors around the development of ‘partnerships’, we selected and analysed a broad range of documents. Our analysis spans the period 1972–2015 and focuses on national-level policy. Our document selection process involved searching a range of internet

search engines (including Google and Google scholar) and library databases (including the Australian National Library database [Trove], and state library databases). Our search terms included combinations of the following keywords: non-government organisation, NGO, non-profit, voluntary, community organisation, drugs and drug policy. All National Drug Strategies are available online, so we searched for and collected each of these documents and their accompanying evaluation reports that have been produced since 1985. We searched parliamentary websites, Ministers’ websites and newspaper articles to identify relevant social policies concerning NGOs as well as relevant indications of emerging policy strategies. To identify relevant policy directions and organisations prior to 1985, we looked for relevant organisations and documents identified by other authors (Lewis, 1988; Lewis, 2003). Based on this, we conducted a separate search using library databases, including Trove and state library databases. The documents selected were used in conjunction with other sources of information, to situate the relevant statements in their broader historical, social or cultural context.

This study is not intended to be a systematic review; as a genealogy it is necessarily selective and partial. The selection of documents was guided by our judgement as to what texts were relevant or significant. The documents we selected can be divided into five categories: (1) Government drug policy documents, including all national drug strategy documents released since 1985, and evaluations of these documents; (2) Policy documents and government statements about the non-government sector (e.g. the Rudd–Gillard government’s National Compact, see page 5); (3) Documents produced by NGOs in the AOD sector; (4) Emerging policy at the time of analysis, as documented on government websites; (5) Academic literature, newspaper articles and other sources. The documents selected are quoted from and referred to in support of the analysis we are performing.

Analysis

Our genealogical method involved a type of ‘discourse tracing’ (LeGreco and Tracy 2009). We identified and collected documents using the process outlined above, and assembled and managed our data set using NVivo. Our textual analysis involved reading the documents, noting the particular language or terms used, and any continuities or changes over time. We searched each document for references to the voluntary, community, non-government or not-for-profit sector, and for use of the term partnerships, inter-sectoral or collaboration. We then analysed the context in which these terms were used. The following two questions acted as a guide for our textual analysis: (1) how are NGOs and the non-government sector represented (i.e. how is their role or purpose discussed)? (2) How do documents discuss the respective roles of government and non-government organisations, and how these roles interact? Though our study concentrates on the chronology of Australian policy, focusing at the national level, some of the developments we discuss here are not unique to Australia. Where relevant we consider international influences.

Findings

Drug policy during the 1970s–1980s: the beginnings of a national approach

While it is tempting to begin our genealogy with the first introduction of an official drug policy strategy document in 1985, the genealogy of government/non-government relations begins earlier than this. We take the social and drug policies of the Whitlam Labor government (1972–1975) as our starting point. The Whitlam government championed a public health agenda that

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1074989>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1074989>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)