
RESEARCH

An Agenda in-the-making: The Linking of Drugs and Development Discourses

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The UNGASS process and the SDGs discussions renewed thinking on illicit drug economy and sustainable development linkages, and opened windows for enhanced policy coherence in that sense. Yet, the fragmentation of the drug policy arena and the complex SDGs task still question whether this will be the way negotiated forward. Drawing on concepts of policy entrepreneurship and idea diffusion, this paper takes stock of the recent dynamics through which the idea of drug and development policy coherence has developed and gained traction. Recognizing the role of knowledge in the construction of alternative policy ideas' acceptability, this paper focuses on knowledge activities and existing platforms where a development-oriented framework for illicit drug-related challenges is promoted and defined. It asks whether the conditions are gathered for that idea to be translated into concrete categories of policy interventions beyond the UNGASS and SDGs moments of opportunity.

Keywords: UNGASS; SDGs; drugs and development; policy entrepreneurship; idea diffusion

The development implications of illicit economies have long raised the international community's attention (Keefer et al. 2008; OECD 2015a; WB 2011). However, concerns over the linkages that the illicit drug economy has to sustainable development are more recent. The complex dynamics the illicit drug trade has with a given socio-economic and governance environment has rarely constituted a baseline for strategic global interventions. Growing evidence documents these interconnections as well as the unexpected spillovers years of unbalanced drug control – mainly deployed in the frame of the 'War on Drugs' – had on drug-affected societies (Youngers & Pierris 2016; Gutierrez et al. 2015; Martin 2015; OSF 2015; UNDP 2015; WACD 2014). Exacerbated violence in Central America, marginalized urban enclaves for trafficking across Europe, or emerging hubs of trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa question the capacity of policy actors to reappraise the role drugs may play for communities involved in or suffering from illicit activities, within contexts of fragile institutional presence, conflict, and/or low levels levels of socio- economic opportunities. Cause and/or symptom of development and governance breaches, the multiple dimensions of the illicit drug economy (cultivation, production, trafficking and uses) encourage a review of the drug policy equation across sectors: from security and health, to socio-economic integration, environmental protection and rule of law.

Recent evolutions in UN-level political debates give signs that a window has been opened to rethink the linkages between drug and development policies. In the midst of a global debate on more effective drug policies that led to a special session of the General Assembly on drugs (UNGASS) in April 2016, the idea to develop greater synergies between drugs and development has gained traction. Despite existing shortfalls, the seven chapter UNGASS "Joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem" (UNGA a/res/s-30/1) proposes more integrated options and translates a more multi-faceted understanding of the world drug problem than in past UN roadmaps. Signatories explicitly propose operational recommendations towards development-oriented and human-right-based approaches (chap.5.v, 6, 7) and welcome the recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UNGA 2015). In September 2015, the international community recognizes the burden illicit drugs impose on sustainable development prospects, and sets specific targets to curb organized crime and strengthen public care of substance abuse (SDGs 16, 3). Within this dynamic, opportunities for cross-sectoral policies are being explored (Bewley-Taylor

& Schneider 2016; Mansfield & Fishstein 2016; GITOC 2016; OAS 2013), while possible entry points for a better agenda alignment are being advanced (IEGDPM 2018; GCDP 2018; OAS 2017; UNDP 2016; LSE 2016).

Nevertheless, it is far from obvious this idea of greater policy linkages is likely to take hold; ideas come and go. However, what it takes for an idea to be prominent on a policy agenda and translated into concrete policy tools and practices can neither be taken for granted nor be considered the result of a smooth, linear and total adherence process. Drug policy experts have expressed doubts over the relative fragmentation of the drug policy arena the UNGASS exacerbated (Jelsma et al. 2018; Boister 2016; Cockayne and Walker 2015; Bewley-Taylor 2012). Besides, if some policy actors across boards are thinking about greater coherence on drugs and development, cross-sectoral cooperation is rather limited. Despite increased momentum, it is questionable whether greater coherence on drugs and development policies will be the way negotiated forward. Beyond the opening of a window of opportunity such as the one observed here, the diffusion of policy ideas as solutions to a given problem still needs some level of policy entrepreneurship and organizational mechanisms to induce policy choices (Kingdon 1984; Finnemore & Sikkink 1998; Mintrom & Norman 2009; Zahariadis 2007).

This paper¹ takes stock of the recent dynamics through which the idea of drug and development policy coherence has developed and gained traction. It draws upon approaches that apprehend the diffusion of policy ideas through the voluntary mobilization of resources and interests in multi-leveled policy arenas (Dezalay & Garth 2002; Ladi 2000; Nay 2012; Stone 2000). Specific attention will thus be brought to the role of (individual) actors engaged in public organizations and policy networks - including those positioned across fields (Mintrom & Luetjens 2017; Stone 2017) – and to relevant mechanisms in place to foster adhesion and galvanize interests. Recognizing the role of knowledge in the construction of alternative policy ideas' acceptability, this paper focuses on the policy instruments, knowledge activities and platforms that contribute to generate and circulate information and evidence (definition, instruments, metrics etc.) that ultimately may guide the translation of that idea into a credible policy option. Issues of implementation and political obstacles, although briefly considered, are beyond the scope of this contribution.

Considering three dimensions of policy idea development (framing, dissemination and space), this paper looks first at the way the drugs and development nexus is formally framed through relevant international policy documents. Then, it elaborates on the policy and knowledge activities invested by policy entrepreneurs to give more flesh and bones to that emerging idea, and test the possibility of operational bridges across sectors. Finally, it explores the organizational and governance venues ventured to define the technical implications and orchestrate support towards implementation. The paper argues that although problems compatibility has been acknowledged, the current opportunity for greater policy coherence on drugs and development may turn out sterile without the unlocking of a formal space or "organizational platform" for cross-sectoral policy making. The absence of such space puts at stake the chances to reconcile diverging views around converging priorities, galvanise decision makers' interests, and eventually favor a healthy emulation of common policy ideas beyond sectoral borders.

1. Framing – A formal recognition of problems compatibility related to drug control and development cooperation

Underlying the emergence of the drug problem as an international policy issue in the 1960s has been the recognition of the harmful potentials of drug abuse on individuals and societies. Soon characterised as 'deviant' behaviours, illicit drug trade and use rapidly fuelled 'drug scares' (Reinarman 1994) that entrenched for more than fifty years the policy treatment of drug-related issues into the strict domain of 'discipline and punish' (Foucault 1975) and encouraged policy actors to prioritise repressive, security-focused drug control strategies (Andreas & Nadelmann 2008). Historically, there has been very limited recognition of development-oriented considerations in the international drug control framework (Bridge et al. 2017). The challenges and implications such approach would mean for the drug control system's objectives and instruments have also rarely been assessed (Barrett 2010). Now, more than a coincidence in time, the 2016 UNGASS and the adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) mark turning points in the way problems related to drug control and development cooperation policies can be read.

¹ This paper is based on observations of UN-level policy debates on drugs, and series of interviews with actors in the fields of drug policy and development issues.

A long-ignored policy dimension

Although foreign assistance has traditionally been used to stem drug supply, the development aspects of drug-related problems – let alone of its policies – have been almost totally ignored (Buxton 2015), at best reduced to the unbalanced and long unconvincing concept of “alternative development” (AD) (Mansfield 2006). Certainly, the drug and development nexus has been first internationally recognized in the 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and formalized in the AD definition agreed in the 1998 Political Declaration and Action Plan on the Eradication of Illicit Drug Crops and Alternative Development. But the ‘development’ dimension of drug policy, often ill-defined, has been mainly subdued to security strategies. Mostly translated into short-term projects to support the economic transition of communities cultivating illicit crops towards viable and legal sources of income, the ‘development’ components of drugs policies have been mainly apprehended as a form of conditional, ad hoc, economic assistance (and often externally donor-driven) to rural areas of producing countries of illicit crops. It usually complemented eradication efforts towards the reduction of illicit crop cultivated areas. On the fringes, and often given secondary importance, the idea of development was used as a deceptive label, at best a tool with mixed results, to advance short-term illicit drug supply reduction objectives.

More recently, however, in an international context challenging the repressive policies in force, a series of policy debates have contributed to a reframing of the narrative. On alternative development specifically, a series of multi-level discussions since 2012 led to the definition of the UN Guiding Principles on Alternative Development (2013). These include references to human development indicators and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Principles state the need to address the ‘root causes of illicit crop cultivation’ and the socio-economic inclusion challenges attached (*inter alia* access to market and public services, land rights, political participation and, environmental protection). Although oppositions persist on the articulation of law enforcement interventions such as eradication operations and development support, the focus has shifted towards a more comprehensive, integrated and sustainable acceptance of development, where AD interventions are foreseen not only as drug control tools but also entry points to more sustainable objectives (UNODC 2017). Tackling the socio-economic, governance and environmental challenges surrounding participation to the illicit drug economy, both in rural and urban contexts, are now parts of the policy equation.

In the run up to 2016,² observations of the 2013–2015 plenary debates at the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)³ revealed increased political sensitivity to the issue. Beyond the discussions on alternative development, the costs and harms illicit drug trade has on human development efforts are raising concerns. Although still evasive, several state representatives draw attention in their formal statements to the CND, to the socio-economic and governance issues the drug market exacerbates (access to public services, marginalization, rule of law, institutional accountability, etc.). From a vast array of ideological positions related to drug policy referential, countries from the EU to Mexico and Colombia calling for reform, to states conducting strict repressive policies like Russia or Pakistan, or else African countries struggling with an exacerbating drug problem, references are made to situations where illicit drugs may undermine development efforts.⁴

² As soon as 2010, whereas the international community engaged into a global reflection on the future of the MDGs, the issue sparked interest. UNODC starts to reflect on the importance of the ‘right to development’ (UNODC 2010) while UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon recognized the interlinks between the fight against drugs and the achievement of the MDGs – an issue debated two years later on the occasion of a Thematic Debate of the UN General Assembly dedicated to that theme (See SG/SM/12969; OBV/892 SOC/NAR/940).

³ The UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs is the main UN policymaking body in charge of following up on the application of international drug conventions and plans of action. Functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and Governing entity of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the 53-member entity organize and guide international action against drugs.

⁴ Besides expressed support to alternative development (Germany, Peru, Thailand, Afghanistan, Colombia, Ecuador) along the period, more states, yet from different sensitivity, are drawing attention to the interconnections of illicit narcotic trade and development. For instance, at the 2013 opening debate, Egypt representing the Group of African states expressed concerns over the security and health problems related to drugs that are undermining Africa’s ability to achieve the MDGs. Ghana echoed that position while Russia recognized the need for a post conflict development plan for countries affected by drugs like Afghanistan. In 2014, year of a high level ministerial segment reviewing mid-term progress against the 2008 UN Plan of action against drugs, UNODC representative stressed the importance of coherence in the UN as part of the post-MDG landscape and recalled the Office’s actions to develop integrated interventions to place drugs and crime in the development agenda. In 2015, at the interactive Discussion on Supply Reduction, while the European drug observatory (EMCDDA) underlined how the problems of the drug market exacerbate other societal issues such as unemployment and marginalization, development and security, Pakistan explained opium exportations from third world countries based on socio-economic development causes (Author’s archives).

Pro-reform civil society organizations have been also particularly vocal on the need to give development perspectives greater prominence in drug strategies notably on health,⁵ and to involve others UN specialized agencies accordingly (WHO, UNAIDS, UNDP).

Open windows for a broader vision of the problems at stake

The UNGASS and the SDGs discussions opened breaches into dominant policy thinking schemes. Somehow, the drug issue seemed a bit released from its traditional ideological security-oriented straitjacket, and the development dimension attached to drug policy from its narrow understanding of socio-economic viability. Unlike the Millennium Development Goals, the SDGs agenda formally recognises the burden illicit drugs represent for sustainable development. References to illicit drug use and trafficking are made explicitly under SDG 3 target 5 (Strengthen prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol), and indirectly under SDG16 target 4 (By 2030 significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen recovery and return of stolen assets, and combat all forms of organized crime). Admittedly, the SDGs may be inherently imperfect because heavily negotiated and not legally binding. Nevertheless, the introduction of the drug issue under such an agenda, yet not new in its terms, represents a decisive potential to change the narrative.

The SDG agenda introduces the drug issue under a set of universal, interdependent targets that applies to all countries, whether they are producing, consuming or transit countries, rich, middle or low-income ones. Contrary to the preceding MDGs that applied mainly to low income developing countries, the SDGs shift the focus from the symptoms to the underlying causes of development challenges in all countries and thus encourages comprehensive consideration of the root causes of illicit economy realities to be tackled (UNGA 2015, OECD 2015b; Sachs 2012). The SDG goals embrace human well-being from a combination of economic development, social inclusion, accountable governance and environmental sustainability. The ambition to advance an integrative, indivisible agenda, cements the international community's commitment to greater policy coherence and cross-sectoral interventions grounded in gender and human rights perspectives. Under this overarching vision, progress in one goal is made possible only with simultaneous progress in all other goals. Therefore, it introduces drug-related issues into a multidimensional and interrelated agenda that requires policy-actors to break out of policy silos and greater involvement of key stakeholders across sectors, both within and between engaged states and organizations. Any states' ability to read drug-related challenges through the lenses of 'peace, people, prosperity, the planet, and partnership' – the five critical areas for humanity defined by the 2030 Agenda, is implicitly questioned.

The UNGASS Outcome document unveils in an unprecedented way a more multidimensional reading of the world drug problem. It establishes a strong link to sustainable development, including explicit references to the SDG agenda, and an entire thematic chapter specifically incorporating development-oriented considerations. Not only does it break with the then-dominant vision of a two-fold priority (illicit drug supply and demand reduction), but formulates operational recommendations beyond the tri-pillar foundation of drug policy (i.e. supply eradication, demand reduction and cooperation to fight money laundering). The seven chapter document recognizes the plurality of contexts and problematic dimensions attached to the illicit drug economy, from urban trade to cultivation of illicit plants, from internet trafficking of new psychoactive substances to unequal access to controlled medicines, among others. It rebalances drug control targets and policy treatment towards a greater focus on key dimensions of human development: public health, human rights, socio-economic integration and justice (6.a). Specifically, it translates a political momentum built in the past decade among drug policy actors to address the root causes of, and the enabling conditions for the development of illicit drug economies (often linked to poverty and lack of socio-economic opportunities, institutional fragility and rule of law issues).

These considerations apply to the policy treatment of drug-related crime (chapter 3), misuse of pharmaceuticals that contain narcotic drugs (chapter 5) or of the illicit cultivation of narcotics plants (chapter 7). Signatories acknowledge 'the need to address the key causes and consequences of the world drug problem, including those in the health, social, human rights, economic, justice, public security and law enforcement fields ... and recognize the value of comprehensive and balanced policy interventions' (preamble). For the first

⁵ In particular on scaling up of comprehensive policy packages to reach the MDG of reducing HIV transmission among people injecting drugs by 50% by 2015. (See resolution 56/6 (2013) 'Intensifying the efforts to achieve the targets of the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS among people who use drugs, in particular the target to reduce HIV transmission among people who inject drugs by 50 per cent by 2015' (E/CN.7/2013/14)).

time, 'long-term, comprehensive and sustainable development-oriented and balanced drug control policies' are foreseen as policy options, while the importance of appropriately mainstreaming human rights and gender in drug-related policies is endorsed. Although it echoes the SDGs rationale for integrated approaches, it also implies the need to broaden the sectorial perspective on drugs. It supposedly creates opportunities for a wider range of professionals and policy participants within and outside the drug control sector to break with a strict law enforcement categorization of public action against drugs.

Changing narratives, looming difficulties

If changing dynamics in UN narratives on drugs and development are noted, some underlying difficulties related to operational implications may already be observed. First, a central issue is one of categorization and definition. The qualification operations at stake in the framing of a "public problem" not only depend on context- and actor-specific understandings of particular social realities, but also serve as instruments to define and orient policy priorities and treatment (Gusfield 1981; Lagroye 2003). Now, the SDG agenda seems to still reflect a dualistic interpretation of the world drug problem that resonates very much with the drug control imperatives to cut the illicit supply and demand, that resonate more with the goals of a "society free of drugs" pursued by the international community since the late 1990s than with the 2016 UNGASS debate.

Therefore, the clarification of policy targets' concepts and metrics are determinant to the nature of future policy choices, and to the SDGs achievement. For example, SDG 3 introduces the prevention and treatment of narcotic drug abuse as part of a 13-target goal that expands effective, accessible and affordable health coverage beyond a core set of targeted diseases as per the former MDGs. Nevertheless, the reductive general language of 'prevention' and 'treatment' may constrain the understanding of the health risks and social harms attached to drug use, and evade from the policy spectrum, issues such as stigma, unequal/forced access to treatment, or HIV transmission among people who inject drugs (UNAIDS 2016). In addition to the "capability traps" (Pritchett and Andrews 2010) across states, the cultural and political aspects attached to the SDGs interpretation will also be decisive when enforcing the Agenda. Concerning SDG 16, political appraisals of peace, governance and justice, as well as the specificities of territories affected by violence, conflict and/or illicit economy are determinant in the way national targets are framed. With the return of ultra-conservative leaders in power around the world, the risks of a securitisation of so-called 'development' policies or imposed conditionality on assistance may not be totally evaded.

Second, with none of these instruments being legally binding, the future of the commitments made rely very much on states' ownership of the set objectives and their responsibility to establish coherent national strategies. Now, prevailing framework for policy coherence remains unclear, blurring the lines over the direction states may choose. The UNGASS Outcome document appears to limit the extent to which the SDGs can be entrenched into drug control policy. Signatories in fact only "welcome" the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and note the 'complementarities' and 'mutual reinforcement' of efforts to achieve the SDGs and effectively address the world drug problem. The very overarching and universal nature of the SDGs is somehow overlooked, as if both agendas had to remain on their own stand. Although this might be explained by the limited political channels across the UNGASS and the SDGs discussions,⁶ it also casts doubts upon the leeway available to policy-makers to embark on more cross-sectoral schemes.

2. Dissemination – Policy entrepreneurship for coherent drugs and development responses

Although the seeds for greater policy coherence on drugs and development are planted, finding common grounds on its operationalisation does not necessarily imply direct venues of exchange between self-interest driven policy actors. Depending on contexts, 'entrepreneurs' (Kingdon 1984), 'policy brokers' (Nay & Smith 2002) or 'transfer agents' (Stone 2004) convey and shape shared understandings of policy issues through rather fragmented, multi-levelled patterns of idea circulation. The ability to create, mobilize and disseminate

⁶ As mentioned earlier, besides some level of recognition of the undermining effects of the illicit drug trade on development efforts, the pre-2015 discussions at the CND drew a pretty vague picture of the links between drugs and development cooperation policies, and quasi no references to the post-2015 agenda then in-the-making. In 2013, UNODC developed a position paper arguing for a better integration of security and rule of law into the future global development agenda – two dimensions that though present in the Millennium Declaration, were not operationalized in the MDGs (Denney 2012). A subsequent paper was also developed, which considers a measurement framework in that perspective (See UNODC (2013) 'Accounting for Security and Justice in the Post-2015 Development Agenda' and "Security, the Rule of Law and the post 2015 development agenda").

knowledge and the capacity to constitute and cultivate advocacy networks (Keck & Sikkink 1998; Haas 1992) represent key resources to nurture an idea's credibility and political acceptability. This section highlights three ongoing knowledge-building dynamics in different settings that fuel policy developments and facilitate idea circulation across sectors.

International knowledge brokering

In the last five years, many actors have strategically ventured to position themselves on the edge of their 'native' sector, so to speak. Individual agents from drug policy reform and poverty reduction CSOs, foundations, academia, UN-entities, development cooperation agencies, and national ministries have joined efforts across arenas to broker international knowledge and policy-oriented information on drugs and development linkages. Analysts and researchers from civil society organizations across the drug and development sectors have played critical roles in strengthening evidence on the impact of illicit drugs on development efforts.⁷ At the political level, agents in the governments of Germany, Thailand, Colombia, Peru and Afghanistan (development agency, ministries, drug agencies) - countries which have pioneered in implementing or supporting alternative development, have been particularly active in exchanging lessons and exploring how to best mainstream alternative development interventions into sustainable development strategies (UNODC 2017). The UNODC Sustainable livelihoods unit and more recently the Research and trend analysis branch (RAB) were also instrumental in documenting progress on development-based drug interventions.⁸

More or less colluded, these actors have developed sustained channels of discussion by organizing international conferences, formal meetings or workshops. They partner to build communication bridges across policy-making arenas so the produced knowledge is conveyed to multiple fora. For instance, between 2016 and 2018, the number of co-sponsored side events at the margins of the regular sessions of the CND that focused on the challenges and opportunities attached to drug policy and sustainable development has steadily increased.⁹ Such mobilizations contribute to create a corpus of cross-sectoral references and advocacy analysis that may be used as credible cognitive instruments in the debate. These interactions further participate to build common patterns of understanding on drug - and development-related problems, and joint perspectives on policy options.

More specifically, indicators and measurement instruments constitute critical tools to modify the existing ideological structures of a problem and give account of the evolving realities of priorities. Significant effort have been deployed by civil society experts, national and UN researchers and statisticians to fill the definition gaps around common priorities and targets. The need for improved drug statistics has been thus recognized by the CND (resolution 60/1). Proposals to develop more adequate monitoring and measurement systems are also emerging. A reflection has been initiated to shift the policy evaluation focus from "process-oriented metrics" concentrated on supply and demand indicators, to the creation of an "outcome-oriented" and impact-based evaluation matrix, to better gauge drug-related issues and policies' effects on development and human rights (IEGDPM 2018; Werb et al. 2016). For example, to best capture the prevalence and incidence of HIV among people who inject drugs and its links to SDG 3.3, one of the proposal being advanced is to include process indicators assessing the scale and coverage of evidence-based harm reduction services (opioid substitution treatment, and supervised injection facilities).

⁷ Notably on the development side, the Open Society Foundations, Christian Aid, Health Poverty Action and the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, and their counterparts in the drug policy reform advocacy sector - Transform, Transnational Institute (TNI) Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) and International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC). Local CSOs are also mobilized at the international level such as Thailand Institute of Justice.

⁸ As the support to alternative development fluctuated, UNODC knowledge production on alternative development and development-based drug interventions has been quite irregular. Between 2005 and 2018, a dozen of reports on success stories and regional experience sharing has been produced by both headquarter and country offices, mostly in 2005–2006, 2008 and 2010. Only one thematic evaluation of UNODC alternative development interventions has been conducted by the Independent Evaluation Unit in 2005. Most recently, however, RAB has dedicated the thematic chapters of UNODC 2015 and 2016 global World Drug reports and its *Bulletin in Narcotics* (for long not published) to development-oriented drug policies, whereas alternative development impact assessment projects are underway in cooperation with UNDP. The 2018 World drug report further unveils a more gender-conscious reading of the phenomenon.

⁹ From four events in 2016 where the governments of Thailand, Peru, Germany and Colombia as well as UNODC dedicated units have been lead sponsors, the number jumps to six in 2017 and to nine in 2018. Interestingly, cross-sector CSOs have partnered in 2016 and 2017 to co-sponsored one dedicated event each year, while the topic raised interest among other co-sponsoring stakeholders (Ecuador, Canada, Norway and Organization of American States). Academic institutions such as the London School of Economics or the Social Science Research Council are also becoming part of the discussion and co-partner to diffuse studies and workshops conclusions in the Vienna forum.

At the policy level, a large process is underway, using the SDG indicator framework to guide the broadening of drug statistics. UNODC in collaboration with the UN Statistical Commission and other relevant UN entities such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is discussing how to monitor the ever-changing patterns of the drug problem and develop a measurement system that gauges the effectiveness of programs in addressing all relevant aspects of the world drug problem, including as related to the 2030 Agenda. A roadmap on drug statistics has been discussed in that sense in March 2017. An expert consultation on improving drug statistics and strengthening the Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) opened in January 2018 (E/CN.7/2018/CRP.2) is now exploring concrete options. To palliate to the different levels of data availability, experts proposed a modular approach with fixed components to be fulfilled on an annual basis and other modules of questions, which would be requested less frequently. In addition to systemic sex disaggregation of all relevant questions, experts also considered to incorporate new dimensions (such as gender and socio-economic criteria) and to revisit the structure.

Although the emerging evidence basis translates a search for shared priorities, some brakes to greater synergies may already be identified, mainly of a cognitive and political nature. The existing corpus demonstrates some gaps that future research will need to fulfill. Existing literature and policy documents identify both the development-related aspects of the drug *issue*, and the impact of drug *policies* on development as triggers for greater synergies. Now a critical issue for agents across boards seems here again one of definitions. Available research appears rather unsettled on where to place the cursor. Is coherence needed to better tackle the development implications of illicit drug economy; to address the socio-economic structural causes driving to the illicit drug economy; to reform drug control policies not to hamper development efforts, or else all of the above?

As the policy discussions stand, engaging into a rigorous definition exercise where 'problems' and metrics are clarified constitutes complex, sensitive tasks. Now, the future of policy development may very much lie in the outcomes of that exercise. As recent research underlines, the nature of the statistics used to depict the world drug problem can be misleading (Mansfield 2018: 158). UNODC statistics as collected from Member states' agencies tend to present a rather "simplified and 'profit maximizing' model" (*ibid* 159) of the reality notably of the factors influencing illicit cultivation farmers' livelihoods choices. In addition to methodological challenges, several dimensions such as the potential development benefits of the drug economy, the factors explaining its persistence, the perceptions of policy effectiveness or else the role played by actors involved in the drug trade on local governance and service delivery are relatively absent from existing official data. Without a clear knowledge shift or at least some openness from policy makers to complement official knowledge with other sources of information, it is risky to assume policies can respond constructively to the challenges of illicit drug trade in the field. This shift is all the more unsure that reservations persist among Member States on the need to include socioeconomic indicators and aspects related to cultural context into drug statistics. The advanced argument is still one of concerns over relevance and countries capacity to report such data (E/CN.7/2018/CRP.2).

Cross-sectoral dialogue

In addition, spaces and mechanisms for fostering cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder dialogue are being unlocked. Innovative initiatives seek to bring together like-minded policy practitioners and experts across board to both, encourage information sharing and capitalize support. The launch of a Global Partnership on Drug Policies and Development (GPPDP) is a significant example in that sense. Placed under the patronage of the German Federal Government's Drug Commissioner and implemented by the German cooperation agency GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit), this development cooperation project aims at developing cross-sectoral strategies that combine development promotion, health-oriented interventions and drug policy measures. The setting up of a supervision mechanism that comprises representatives from the ministries of health, foreign affairs, interior, and economic cooperation and development illustrates the possibility of a multi-stakeholder mechanism of policy-making. The Partnership engineers intellectual partnerships and co-sponsors the creation of alternative, more fluid spaces for policy dialogue. Through 'innovation labs', 'forum' or 'colloquium', a community of like-minded actors is emerging, with a view of making practical use of produced evidence. In that line, the Brandenburg Forum on Drugs and Development Policies in 2016¹⁰ allows less constrained discussion than in regular settings and paves the

¹⁰ Organised within the framework of the Global Partnership on Drug Policies and Development (GPPDP), and co-hosted by the

way for more sustained support and possible partnerships. However, as promising as these initiatives can be, their continuity depends very much on available resources and the GPPD's capacity to rally political interests. So far, such mechanism remains one of its kind.

Local innovative policy piloting

At the policy design level, operationalising a coherent agenda on drugs and development is very much endogenous to national choices and decisions. Some states start to explore ways to reconcile policy priorities. Concepts such as 'food security', 'social integration', 'gender' and 'resilience' traditionally used in the development cooperation sector are slowly being applied to drug policy research and pilot interventions (Garcia 2017; OAS 2017; WOLA 2017; Sagredo 2018). More surprisingly, engaged Member States claim 'new visions', 'different treatment' and more 'comprehensive framework' to drug policy. Pilots are flourishing, testing the political acceptability and feasibility of implementing development-oriented strategies in drug-affected areas. Colombia provides an interesting example. The Colombian "solution to the illicit drugs problem" of the Peace agreement adopted in the Havana in 2016 promotes 'a different and differentiated treatment to the (drug) issue', focused on 'population and territorial vulnerabilities'. A National Integrated Program for the Substitution of Illicit Crops (NIPSIC)¹¹ has started to reduce the impacts of illicit crop cultivation and more broadly of the drug trade on the Colombian population. In another area of intervention, Colombia partnered with GIZ and UNODC to build on existing innovative sustainable development tools to combine measures of climate change adaptation with agricultural support to communities cultivating illicit drugs. Since 2013, Colombia, Germany, Norway and the UK have teamed up to develop a Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation initiative (REDD+) that supports the goal of zero-net deforestation in the Colombian Amazon by 2020. In this framework, specific analysis have been conducted with UNODC on the role of coca cultivation in deforestation and on streamlining actions ameliorating market access and alternative livelihoods while preventing deforestation (UNODC 2018).

Although dispersed and timidly ventured, such evolutions give signs that in some ways integrated policy interventions are possible, even politically more or less acceptable. Now, if global norms and agendas may constitute incentives, there is no linear path: all actors (whether individuals or institutional) operate within the context of politics and any hope of progress rests with the political arena. On the paper, NIPSIC in particular intends to respond to the failure of past alternative development initiatives by tackling the social and economic integration of affected territories. A first attempt of a more people-centered approach, the ambitions of the program however overestimated the existing political and logistical challenges¹² attached to such a vision. The reported hostility to a less prohibitive approach to drug policy of the winner of the Colombian presidential elections in June 2018, conjugated to the skepticism of the neighboring United States, traditionally highly influential, puts the future of the program into question.

The mobilization of resources such as expertise, networks and partnerships by a more or less colluded group of individual actors has proved to be particularly conducive to shake a bit the sectoral borders. Nevertheless, the existing dynamics do not seem to be sufficient to sustain influence and diffuse the idea beyond a cognitive level. They further appear highly vulnerable to changes in political support and power distribution. While the size, the composition and the degree of support policy entrepreneurs enjoy for

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), German Federal Government's Drug Commissioner, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, the International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) and the Transnational Institute (TNI), the forum meets annually since 2016 under 'Chatham House Rule'. It brings together government representatives including from countries that have not been traditional supporters of the idea of more development-oriented drug policies, representatives from inter-governmental and UN organizations (such as the European Union, the Executive Office of the UN Secretary General, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNODC) and leading civil society organizations in the field of drug policy reform and development cooperation. In order to promote open dialogue, the discussions were conducted under 'Chatham House Rule'.

¹¹ Built on a 'concerted bottom-up design' between government representatives, the FARC, local authorities, and farming communities, this program is twofold. First, it provides support to cultivating communities for instant, regular financial resources aimed at guaranteeing food security in the short term, and the introduction of a sustainable production project in the medium-term. Second, it aims at boosting sustained integration of territories which have been marginalised, mainly due to the conflict, through the development of essential public services, infrastructures and land reform at the national level.

¹² Several limitations have already hampered the deployment of the program and fueled frustrations in the communities, further undermining the creation of relations of trust with the state. The following difficulties are observed: delays in implementation (notably inspection of crops and payment of financial benefits), slow bureaucratic processes and technical challenges in accessing the targeted territories, limited participation of farmers, and resistance from rebel factions opposed to the Peace Agreement (Indepaz 2017). The resuming of eradication operations yet stopped in 2015, further questions the sustainability and acceptability of the program.

pushing an issue forward is critical, the use and/or establishment of organizational mechanisms (Finnemore & Sicking 1998) able to maintain these issues on the political agenda and translate them into priorities of intervention remain also essential. For now, the available platforms have contributed to produce, publicize and circulate evidence and information that can be used to frame policy priorities and test possible policy options. For the idea to take hold and be operationalised into categories of public intervention, it becomes urgent to rally support and clarify how, by whom and towards what coherence is needed.

3. Space – the role of multilateral organizations in the orchestration of cross-sectoral policy development

Policy idea literature emphasizes the importance of specific organizational platforms for entrepreneurs to galvanize interests, reconcile dissenting views and shape technical and operational contents of proposed policy solutions. Such platforms may further have an instrumental function to exert multi-leveled influence and leverage resources and political support so policies may be exported and imitated. In the contemporary global landscape, even if their capacity and level of influence can be uneven or uncertain, multilateral and UN entities may play a leading role in spearheading and diffusing knowledge, in setting rules and standards of policy-making and management (Barnett and Finnemore 2004), but also in providing the necessary platforms to leverage support and stimulate concerted, coordinated public action along fixed standards (Abbott et al. 2015). Examples in recent development cooperation evolutions highlight this role. The adoption of a collective development response to fragility,¹³ for instance, followed a rather long process that did not go without tensions and controversies, but counted very much on the facilitating function of specific organizational mechanisms.¹⁴ UNAIDS¹⁵ provides another example of a global cluster mechanism created to bolster international cooperation, and inter-agency work.

The universal nature of the 2030 goal-oriented framework drives the international community towards more integrated approaches and thus encourages a broader range of organizational options within the UN-system but also at national, regional and transnational levels (Long 2015). Subsequently, the United Nations Development Group has produced a set of guidelines for the preparation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF 2017) to accompany policy-making processed to go beyond concerted patterns. More specifically, the OECD has updated the concept of policy coherence for development (PCD). The notion of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) now¹⁶ adopts an 'issue-based' focus on common challenges like food security or illicit financial flows. It entails fostering synergies across sectoral policies, through a multi-stakeholders approach; increasing government's capacities to balance divergent policy objectives through specific institutional mechanisms; and addressing the negative side effects and impacts of policies on development (OECD 2015, 2016). Correlatively, the UNGASS signatories recognize the need to broaden the circle of drug policy actors – long pretty much closed to state, diplomatic and law enforcement institutions (chapter 6). They also encourage UNODC to "increase cooperation and collaboration with all relevant United Nations entities and international financial institutions, within their respective mandates" (6.a and 6.e) to assist Member States in their tasks and enhance information exchange among "national practitioners from different fields" (6.c).

However, looking at the governance dimension of drug policy-making and delivery (Schultze-Kraft 2014), the organizational structure for international cross-sectoral policy development remains quite embryonic.

¹³ The idea of fragile state departs from a renewed focus of development practitioners on state in the mid-1990s and gained additional traction after 9/11 and its attached re-conceptualisation dynamics of security threats. On the concept of fragile state and the emerging coordination of actors in such context, see Wimpelmann 2006, De Catheu 2007, and Nay & Lemay-Hébert 2015.

¹⁴ Between 2001 and 2005, multilateral organizations played a leading role in pushing cross-board initiatives. The World Bank and notably its Low Income Countries under Stress (LICUS) initiative, the OECD/DAC initiative on 'difficult partnerships' and the UNDP reflection on 'top' and 'high-priority' countries paved the way to policy dialogue and action. With the support of key stakeholders such as United States and the United Kingdom and through the deployment of different activities (such as expertise production, series of meetings, reflection exercises, and idea campaigns), the World Bank, the OECD and UNDP, although acting in competition at first, contributed to create enabling conditions for policy coherence. The organization of a 'Senior Level Forum on Development Effectiveness in Fragile States' in 2005 tasked with the formulation of the 'Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations' is one of the results of that emulation. Agencies subsequently adapted internal institutional structures and staffing to the operational emerging needs.

¹⁵ UNAIDS coordinates now the action of its 11 'cosponsors' and is a unique problem-solving oriented entity in the UN-system providing space to elaborate and coordinate strategic international policy direction on AIDS, and to catalyze and connect expertise and leadership from governments, private sector, civil societies and communities.

¹⁶ While PCD has traditionally been seen as the main responsibility of donor countries and applied through a sector-to-sector approach (OECD 2012), the post-2015 development agenda demands a broader vision, bringing in many more actors into play, and correlatively many more heterogeneous, if not divergent interests (Knoll 2014).

Despite notable advances, existing platforms are rather inadequate to leverage sufficient influence and resources to operationalize policy coherence proposals. Significant limitations and unresolved tensions jeopardize the possibility of future synergies.

Timid organizational progress towards coherence

Since the adoption of the UNGASS Outcome document, one can observe efforts to advance multi-stakeholder processes in the drug policy arena. The CND forum has opened to new participants, while UNODC has been quite instrumental in spurring the drug policy community on greater mainstreaming of the SDGs into drug-related issues. The contributions of various UN agencies to the drug debate (notably WHO, UNAIDS, OHCHR, UNDP) and the addition of an explicit item on the CND agenda (item 10: the Commission contributions to the follow-up, review and implementation of the 2030 Agenda) display some level of mobilization towards greater development-related work streams. As part of the UNGASS preparations, UN entities could already contribute to the discussion through the United Nations System Task Force on Transnational Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking, and explore the impacts illicit drug economy and attached policies had upon their respective mandates (Hallam 2016). As a contribution, UNDP for instance released two reports on 'the future definition of more fit for purpose and balanced inter-agency coordination structures on drug-related issues'. The continuity of inter-agency dialogue represents a positive step forward.

In addition, UNODC has been exerting clear cognitive influence on the issue. The Office has worked at filling the knowledge gap and reinvigorating orthodox views on drug policy. The last *World Drug Reports* (2015, 2016 and 2018) in particular address the linkages between the world drug problem and sustainable development, notably by exploring the particular needs and challenges faced by cultivating farmers, women and young people. Moreover, its participation to initiatives such as the GPDPP, scientific conferences and expert groups on the topic also demonstrates its capacity to integrate and generate evidence on the need to explore more comprehensive drug policy options. The Office cooperation with UN counterparts on drug indicators as underlined earlier also participates to create new representations of drug-related problems. The signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between UNODC and WHO to support national governments in their efforts to achieve the SDGs and the development of international guidelines on human rights and drug policy (Lines et al. 2017) illustrate it further.

Besides, in line with the General Assembly's requests to mainstream the 2030 Agenda into the work of each entity of the United Nations development system (resolution 71/243) (UNGA 2017), UNODC has delineated the realm of its technical influence on sustainable development. As such, the Office mapped out pertinent areas of work to support Member States to reach multiple SDGs' targets and monitor progress (E/CN.7/2016/CRP.1). Lead or co-lead agency for compiling 17 statistical indicators, including the number of victims of human trafficking by sex, age and form of exploitation, homicide rate, or pre-trial detention statistics, UNODC appears best positioned to diffuse a more SDGs-conscious reading of drug-related policy challenges through global channels.

However, besides these steps, the drug policy community has been timid and vague about how far or in what other concrete ways a coherent agenda on drugs and sustainable development might be pursued. Besides the reaffirmation of the principle of common and shared responsibility, UNGASS signatories remain unclear on how to increase synergies among actors and policy agendas. Certainly, international workshops are being organized at national levels, bringing together stakeholders from different ministries to map respective activities and possible entry points for joint action to implement the UNGASS recommendations. Nevertheless, the level of implication and the role of non-traditional drug policy actors across fields are yet to be defined. Important questions remain thus unanswered, translating to some extent, the current limits of coherence possibility in this arena.

Unresolved dilemmas

The possibility of fully-fledged organizational and coordination mechanisms on drugs and development depends on the existing incentives actors have at stake for greater coherence. Although it would be out of the scope of this article to engage an in-depth discussion on that question, some elements can be highlighted for future consideration.

First, the current configuration of the drug policy arena suggests that divergences prevail. Besides ideological oppositions on the weight law enforcement categories should have on drug policy, different views are emerging on the future of the UNGASS commitments, in the midst of the preparation of the 2019 high-level review on progress made towards the objectives of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action. It is rather unsettled the extent to which the 2009 targets would be reaffirmed, or whether

UNGASS achievements would be a 'blueprint' guiding "efforts to stop organized crime while protecting human rights, enabling development, and ensuring rights-based ... support" as encouraged by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres in his remarks to the 2018 CND. Not totally independent of the ideological fractures inherent to the history of global drug policy, these divisions show through the fragmented picture of national drug policies: from legalization experiments, development-oriented measures, harm reduction strategies to revived wars on drug, one can be skeptical on how an international consensus on drugs will develop ahead. The return to power of conservative forces around the world casts further doubts on the future of drug policy. Recent one-sided initiatives such as the US-led "Global Call to Action on the World Drug Problem", evading most of the dimensions put forward in the UNGASS outcome document, including development-oriented perspectives and the SDGs, increases the chance for more unilateral, repressive policy scenarios.

Second, the organizational incentives for international coordination are currently unclear. The international public sphere developed into a multi-streamed, flexible space of influence and diffused authority, shaped by heterogeneous actor's interactions (Stone 2008). In this framework, multilateral organizations compete for influence and tend to hesitate to advance innovative, controversial ideas that risk to be rejected by Member States. Driven by bureaucratic concerns and confronted with internal compartmentalization and often a strong competition for funds, UN entities tend to stay reflective organizations, threatened by a loss of autonomy (financial, intellectual and regulatory) vis-à-vis the Member States composing their board and of influence over their partners. Additionally, the traditional aid landscape is evolving. Large development agencies and multilateral organizations are expanding their portfolio driven by the rise of new priorities but also the emergence of new actors (donors, notably) and shortening of resources. As a result, and despite examples of joint efforts and complementary strategies on the ground, competition prevails over mandates. Elaborating an agenda on drugs and development implies to make framing choices that may have strong political implications on multilateral agencies' mandates and strategies: how to draw the line between security and development with regards to drug issues? How developed economies would understand the "development" dimension of policies? Who would be the targets of future agendas (extensive powerful drug networks; the 'victims' of the drug trade; users; marginalized communities, etc.)?

The lack of clarity over these questions and the absence of dedicated organizational platforms to deal with such interrogations reduce the chances for further collective efforts and somehow translate the current limits of engagements in that regards. The open opportunity for greater coherence on drugs and development does not seem to be fully embraced. Such timid organizational dynamics question the likeliness of the construction of a specific governance platform where divergent interests could be merged, policy instruments be defined and teams could be stabilized. There is still an opportunity to be seized to rethink the different roles drug and development actors may play and explore organizational options towards clustered, integrated strategies on drug- and development-related issues. This could take the form of an international 'forum', 'expert group', an 'open-ended working group', a cross-UN task force, a formal SDG-Drug lab, or else regular, systematized joint meetings to bring together all relevant stakeholders across sectors to the table. The UN Secretary General' reform process related to the restructuring of the UN and the operational activities for developing the UN system may influence future interactions. Nevertheless, political will and power distribution within the drug policy community might in fine represent the real game changers.

Concluding remarks: the challenge of mainstreaming policy efforts of drugs and sustainable development

This paper modestly attempted to provide an overview of the recent evolutions on policy coherence on drugs and sustainable development. If that idea gained unprecedented political traction, nevertheless the conditions do not seem to be yet pulled together for its operational translation. The UNGASS and SDGs processes certainly created enabling environments for the idea of problems compatibilities to be endorsed. However, there are important definition challenges ahead. The affirmation of a "complementary and mutually reinforcing" rationale between drug control and sustainable development efforts has a paradoxical effect. It recognizes the multidimensionality of the drug issue and the universal nature of the attached challenges. However, it keeps the elaboration of the corresponding policy frameworks and attached implementing tools, behind strict sectoral frontiers. Considering that the frontiers of a sector fluctuate as the actors involved are positioning themselves, the structuring of a policy agenda across sectors would therefore highly depend on engaged actors' capacities to create adequate policy-making spaces to capitalize resources (including knowledge) and exert enough leverage for their solution to be institutionalized further.

Despite attempts of an increasing number of policy entrepreneurs to develop a common language and to position themselves at the edge of both sectors, the organizational mechanisms in place do not seem yet sufficient to fill existing gaps and canalize interests across board. Policy entrepreneurs have successfully managed to build a corpus of evidence demonstrating that a new policy framing is needed. For these efforts not to remain sterile, the challenge seems now one of broadening the scope of the discussion to a more technical level, but also one of strategic channeling and co-opting of operational actors across fields. Unlocking formal spaces for policy-making discussions on defining the development components of priorities, cooperation instruments and available resources seems needed for this proposal to be translated into 'programming' and 'projects'. As examples in development cooperation history highlights, multilateral agencies could have a positive orchestrating role to that end. However, existing political configurations and organizational constraints seem to question the very possibility of a future agenda. The nexus between politics and policy-making remains here a true test to advance an international agenda on drugs and development. Although it would demand involved stakeholders to make firm political choices, to collaborate differently and to measure and frame innovatively, it is not too late to seize the opportunity, and 2019 might be critical on that path.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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