

Preventing what? Preventing how? The development of contemporary preventive policy aimed at prostitution in the UK.

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Abstract

With the potential to both cut public spending in the long term and to enable people to live better, longer, healthier lives, prevention is increasingly becoming a government priority in the UK. In particular, the Scottish Government has decided that a ‘decisive shift towards prevention’ would form one of the four pillars of its public service reform strategy. This move to prevention is presented as a holistic and integrated transformation of the way in which public services are developed and delivered predicated on shifting focus and resources away from short-term, reactive and acute services towards longer-term health, wealth and wellbeing goals. Yet questions remain around the development and implementation of prevention policy on the ground. Vagueness regarding prevention’s meaning, and how it is understood, is further compounded by the difficulties involved in articulating and delivering prevention in different policy fields. Thus, while there is relatively little divergence on the broad strategies for tackling child poverty or cases of smoking-related cancer, the prevention of other negative social outcomes is not necessarily as straightforward. This paper uses the development of contemporary prostitution policy across the UK as a lens through which to explore what happens when policy actors fail to agree on what exactly the problem to be prevented is. The varying manner in which ‘prevention’ is understood, implemented and evaluated across regions and levels of government in the UK is analyzed by means of a comparative case study of preventive policy on the issue of prostitution across Scotland, and the rest of the UK.

Introduction

The term prevention has increasingly broad currency among those who make and deliver public services. Faced with increasing budgetary constraints and a changing and ageing population, preventative policymaking has moved up the political agenda in the UK, and particularly in Scotland. This is because shifting resources from wasteful and short-sighted reactive services to holistic preventative and early intervention policies promises more effective, strategic and rational policymaking. In this way, prevention policy lines up with the tenets of joined-up government that have gained ascendancy over the last 30 years. The development of this broad ‘philosophy’ of prevention has been coupled with the decentralization of power to design and deliver prevention, to address the disparate needs of communities and better make use of their specific assets.

Yet, the enactment of the comprehensive and cross-cutting policies which give strategic meaning to prevention entails a great deal of coordination across multiple policy areas and policymaking levels. This paper argues that the possibility for prevention to mean different things to different actors has implications for the formulation, delivery and outcomes of policy. Firstly, the absence of a single common understanding of prevention poses a challenge to collective problem-solving in the context of multi-level government. In particular, it risks hampering the coherence, and therefore the effectiveness, of prevention policies. Secondly, decentralizing the capacity to design and implement prevention to local authorities may increase the place-appropriateness of policies but produces a tradeoff between national-level policy comprehensiveness and local-level coordination.

Consequently, in a first instance, we set out the theoretical puzzle posed by prevention policy and preventative spending for policy coherence and coordination. Second, we analyze the way in which prevention is deployed in policy discourse, and integrated into policy and law, in three case studies of prostitution policy in Scotland and the rest of the UK. Finally, we briefly discuss the extent to which contemporary Scottish and British prostitution policy is ‘coherent’.

A Puzzle: Prevention policy

Prevention policy can be seen in the context of two, often separate, developments: the longstanding drive to ‘join up’ government and address policies holistically, and the desire to reduce the cost of public services through ‘early intervention’ to reduce demand. Since the late 1980s, successive UK governments have implemented public sector reforms aimed, first, at overcoming departmental fragmentation and fostering efficiency and economies of scale through increased coordination, then, during the Blair government, at modernizing British politics and policymaking through joined-up government (Kavanagh & Richards, 2001). Joined-up government refers to a range of actions aimed at “aligning formally distinct organizations in pursuit of the objectives of the government of the day” to overcome the limitations posed by disjointed agencies pursuing competing goals and delivering partial results (Ling, 2002). Joined-up government implies a particular understanding of good policymaking. According to this perspective, policy should be made strategically, in a manner that focuses on outcomes; it should be informed by evidence and expert knowledge; and it should seek holistic solutions to policy problems. Moreover, accountability is reframed in terms of effectiveness, the yardstick for which is agencies’ delivery of specified results.

While determining these outcomes remains the remit of coordinated central government, development of the policies and services through which to deliver these outcomes may be undertaken within the framework of ‘new localism’. New localism recasts the relationship between central government agencies and local authorities in terms of flexible coordination that tasks local authorities with delivering national outcomes by implementing policies and services that best suit their communities’ needs and capabilities. This new relationship is nested in a governance framework which integrates local authorities into new outcome-based audit, accountability and performance management processes (Stoker, 2004).

The turn towards joined-up government reflects a shift towards understanding pervasive and seemingly intractable policy problems as ‘wicked issues’ (Kavanagh & Richards, 2001; Ling, 2002). What makes issues like social injustice, homelessness, or environmental degradation, ‘wicked’ is that they appear to be intractable. The three principal characteristics of wicked issues is that there is no immediately obvious solution to them, they involve a diversity of stakeholders and organisations which do not agree with each other, and necessarily involve behavioural change as part of the answer (Rittle & Webber, 1973; Clarke & Stewart, 1997; Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002). Two dimensions of these issues make them particularly difficult to solve effectively through public action: their tendency to be boundary-spanning, that is they span the remit of multiple government departments; and their complexity, that is, they are the result of many interconnected factors and go on to further compound individuals’ and communities’ experiences and opportunities. Accordingly, policy efforts to resolve these wicked issues must be cross-cutting, coordinated and coherent.

Since 2007, the tall task of addressing these ‘wicked’ issues in the UK has been further complicated by the global financial crisis, which led to significant public spending cuts and a policy of fiscal retrenchment. With less money to spend on public services and a growing, changing and ageing population, political attention has shifted to the potential of prevention and preventative spending to provide a strategic, holistic, and coherent approach to tackling complex problems, in keeping with the tenets of joined-up government. In this context, the lure of saving costs while improving lives has put preventative spending and policymaking on the political agenda, but with the potential for Scottish and UK Governments to define their tasks in different ways.

Indeed, the prevention agenda differs north and south of the border. On the one hand, Scottish government has placed prevention and preventative spending at the heart of its public sector reform. Indeed, in 2011, the Scottish Finance Committee (SFC) released its *Report on preventative spending* in which it stated a clear preference for holistic preventative and early intervention policy strategies over reactive action (SFC, 2011). This was followed by the Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services, chaired by Dr. Campbell Christie, calling for Scotland to make a “decisive shift to prevention” by transferring resources from reactive policies and towards those that seek to defuse, preempt or prevent negative social outcomes. The enactment of this new prevention agenda in Scotland is characterized by the alignment of a broad ‘philosophy’ of prevention with sensitivity to the needs and assets of disparate communities. On the other hand, the UK government has adopted a more piecemeal, or departmental, approach to weaving prevention into key areas such as crime, early years, and troubled families.¹ Furthermore, the complex constellation of powers and remits in the UK is set to be further transformed in the wake of the September 18th 2014 Scottish independence referendum, no matter the outcome.

The notion that prevention is better than cure makes intuitive sense. Prevention suggests the preemption of hardship and expense. Although definitions vary, prevention is considered to come in three main forms: *primary prevention* refers to

¹ See, for example: Department for Education and Department of Health (2011), *Supporting Families in the Foundation Years*; the inclusion of ‘preventative’ measures in the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime, and Policing Act (2014).

² REF problem definition

³ Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, Section 46(1), and the Prostitution (Public Places) (Scotland) Bill 2007.

⁴ Criminal Law (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 1995

⁵ Placing advertisement of advertisements in public telephone boxes is illegal in England and Wales

interventions aimed stopping problems from emerging in the first place, akin to whole-population approach to immunization; *secondary prevention* refers to early interventions aimed at stopping problems from getting worse, which often involves targeting high-risk groups; and *tertiary prevention* refers to actions aimed at mitigating and pre-empting the damaging effects of problems that already exist (Freeman: 1999). To engage in prevention, policymakers must overcome a number of obstacles. Some of these constraints are common to policymaking in general (Cairney, 2012: 92) and include difficulties imposing a new institutional path (Pierson, 2004), garnering attention and support (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993), overcoming partisan or public opposition, agreeing on process and objectives in conditions of uncertainty and ambiguity (Wolfers, 1952; Zahariadis, 2003, 2007); and the lack of adequate resources. Other challenges are more particular to policy approaches that seek policy coherence and coordination to address cross-cutting problems.

From the literature on policy coherence, we know that the absence of a common view, or shared ‘policy image’, hampers effective and coordinated responses (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Jordan & Halpin, 2006). In the case of prevention policy in the UK, this would mean that the current vagueness and ambiguity associated with the term may constitute an obstacle to integrating activity in related areas in such a way as to yield the best outcomes in a cost-effective manner. In addition, the literature on complexity suggests that no amount of coordination or deference to evidence can entirely design out unpredictability, especially when so many actors are involved, at multiple levels of government, and policies are difficult to control (Geyer & Rihani, 2010; Room, 2011; Cairney and Geyer, 2015).

Finally, combining insights from the literature on multi-level and boundary-spanning policy-making, we know that there tends to be a tradeoff between centrally orchestrated policy coherence, and the flexibility and place-appropriateness of policies and services designed and delivered from decentralized agencies (Peters & Savoie, 1996). This means that there may be tensions inherent to government efforts to achieve both coordination and coherence in policy. The implication here is that effective prevention is as much a matter of politics as it is of policy. This means that a system-wide shift to prevention will require concrete efforts to foster partnerships, set channels of communication, and build shared understandings. The challenge of optimal coordination is further complicated in countries like the United Kingdom, which feature asymmetric devolution of political and policymaking powers to different regions. Consequently, in attempting to overcome the tradeoff between effectiveness and holism, and offer a cross-cutting, coherent, and coordinated approach to enduring ‘wicked’ issues, prevention policy poses an interesting puzzle for public policy theory. Moreover, because of its constituent parts feature different policymaking capabilities and different policy objectives, the UK offers an empirically fruitful comparative lens through which to investigate the politics and policy of prevention. In other words, although Scotland remains part of the UK, it is still valuable to compare the, now distinct, UK and Scottish Government policies on prevention.

Prevention and prostitution in the UK: A comparative case study

This paper presents the preliminary findings of a case study of one policy area where prevention has garnered increasing attention: prostitution policy. Prostitution policy refers to actions or courses of action pursued by governments that deal with the provision, purchase, facilitation and/or coercion of commercial sexual services and its associated activities. This case study fits into a wider comparative project aimed at exploring the development, implementation and evaluation of preventative policies across multiple key Scottish government policy areas including mental health, early years, and employment. The selection of the policy issues that make up the sample was undertaken purposively, in order to identify and choose cases rich in information, and which might shed empirical light on the intricacies, challenges and opportunities involved in developing prevention policies in contemporary Britain (Patton, 1990).

Prostitution policy was selected because it particularly manifests the complexity of prevention policy-making. In this sense, prostitution policy constitutes an intensity sample. An intensity sample is an “information-rich” case that “manifests the phenomenon of interest intensely” without constituting an extreme case, which yield inferences that cannot easily be generalised to a wider population (Patton, 1990: 171). As an intensity sample, prostitution policy exhibits certain analytically relevant characteristics more intensely than many policy problems. Firstly, prostitution is the epitome of boundary-spanning policy problems. Boundary-spanning policy problems are those that implicate multiple policy subsystems in the search for a policy solution (Jochim & May, 2010). Because social life does not exist in a vacuum, most social phenomena involve multiple policy systems. Nevertheless, depending on how it is understood, prostitution involves a greater diversity of policy areas than many other issues. Indeed, prostitution can be considered to incorporate elements of social equality and rights (as a form of gendered exploitation), of labour and taxation (as a remunerated activity), of policing, violence and crime (as a historical fixture of organised crime), of (im)migration (as an activity which impels labour migration or human trafficking), of urban insecurity (as a source of street-based disturbances), of social welfare (as an expression of individuals’ structural and personal destitution), and of health (as a perceived risk and vector of disease and addiction). In this sense, difficulties involved in deploying prevention in the area of prostitution are likely to be informative of the challenges involved in developing cross-cutting, boundary-spanning prevention policies in other complex areas. Secondly, there is a demonstrable link between prevention and policy ‘framing’ or problem definition². Because of the strident discord that characterises them, prostitution policy debates in the UK offer us a vivid diversity of problem definitions and concomitant ideas regarding prevention. Indeed, when governments talk about preventative prostitution policy, they highlight the aspects of prostitution that represents the most pressing problem (for example, are they seeking primarily to prevent trafficking or reduce the spread of STIs?) and, either explicitly or implicitly, what causes the problem (for example, is it principally caused by criminal networks or by socio-economic inequality?).

A taxonomy of prostitution policy regimes

What continues to drive the political debate on the issue of prostitution is the concern that it is a problematic ‘real world’ phenomenon that endures and eludes control,

² REF problem definition

leading to grave harm and criminal excesses. However, unlike the debates over other enduring and pervasive injustices like poverty or ill health, which primarily concern how they should be tackled, the debate over prostitution is divided over exactly how, and to what extent, it even is a problem. This disagreement over the meaning and consequences of prostitution is reflected in the variety and divergence of policies addressing it (St.Denny, 2014). These policies and programs are embedded in larger governance frameworks which amount to social and policy regimes. As social regimes, these frameworks embody a “set of rules stipulating expected behaviour and “ruling out” behaviour deemed undesirable” (Streeck & Thelen, 2005: 18). As policy regimes, they formalise these rules in a political governing arrangement established to coordinate expectations and organize behaviour in this particular policy area (Kratochwil & Ruggie, 1997; Streeck & Thelen, 2005). These regimes involve several dimensions: power arrangements, since a regime necessarily entails support from at least one powerful group; a policy paradigm, that is to say the framework of ideas and values that specify the nature of the policy problem, and the appropriate means and ends of addressing it (Hall, 1993); the organisational arrangements and implementation that govern action in that issue-area; and the policy itself.

Historically, governments have dealt with the issue of prostitution according to three main types of policy regimes. Prohibitionism criminalises all parties involved in prostitution. Regulationism recognises a distinction between forced prostitution and voluntary sexual labour, regulates the consensual provision of sexual services and the employment of sex workers, and criminalises coercive exploitation. Finally, abolitionism refers to regimes that have abolished the system of state-regulated prostitution. In this way, abolitionist regimes do not criminalise the sale of sexual services, for the sake of not punishing individuals in prostitution – considered victims of exploitation – but outlaws profiting from, exploiting, encouraging, and facilitating the prostitution of others. Recently, this tripartite taxonomy of prostitution policy governance frameworks has been extended to reflect the increasingly divergent and idiosyncratic national approaches to this policy issue. In particular, the advent of the so-called “Swedish model” of criminalization of the purchase of sexual services (CPSS), and the decriminalisation of commercial sex between consenting adults in New Zealand. In reality, prostitution policy regimes are ideal types, with stakeholders, activists and political actors expressing ideas and policy preferences that tend more towards one conception or the other.

Prostitution policy in the UK and Scotland

Abolitionism originated in the United Kingdom, where a campaign to abolish the system of state-regulated prostitution led by the International Abolitionist Federation in the late 19th century impelled an international social movement which subsequently shaped prostitution in many other countries (Limoncelli, 2006). In keeping with the country’s historical abolitionist stance, prostitution, that is “the exchange of sexual services for some form of payment” (Home Office, 2004: 14), is not in itself illegal in the United Kingdom. However, current policy has evolved to criminalise most of the activities associated with prostitution by means of various pieces of legislation. This includes: loitering or soliciting in a public places or the purposes of prostitution,³

³ Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, Section 46(1), and the Prostitution (Public Places) (Scotland) Bill 2007.

owning or running a brothel,⁴ placing advertising for prostitution in certain places,⁵ kerb crawling,⁶ pimping benefiting from the earnings of prostitution,⁷ trafficking,⁸ and paying for the services of an individual who has been “subjected to force”.⁹

The most recent prostitution policy reforms in England are the changes brought in by the Policing and Crime Act 2009. While most of the previous legislation remains in force, this act aimed to disincentivise the purchase of sex by removing the need for policy to prove persistence in this behavior – which was considered notoriously hard to do (Home Office, 2008). In addition, the act created a strict liability offence for individuals found purchasing sexual services from a person subject to force. The 2009 act follows on from a number of policy reviews and inquiries such as *Paying the Price* (2004), *A Coordinated Prostitution Strategy* (2006), *Tackling the Demand for Prostitution* (2008), and *Shifting the Burden* (2014). Despite the tendency for these reviews to increasingly call attention to the role of clients in perpetuating prostitution through creating a demand for it, the UK government has so far shied away from the implementation of a full demand-side ban on prostitution by means of CPSS. Instead, the UK proceeds by tinkering at the edges of its traditional abolitionist policy regime. On the one hand, it continues to refuse to criminalise prostitution directly, in order to avoid ‘revictimising’ individuals in prostitution. On the other hand, it implements strategies aimed at prohibiting the exploitation of the prostitution of another, and hampering the possibility of easily participating in licit prostitution. The most recent policy inquiry, undertaken by an the all-party Parliamentary group on prostitution and the global sex trade, calls for the UK to adopt a policy of CPSS but, so far, no legislative proposal to this effect has been tabled.

Since devolution, the Scottish Parliament has pursued its own policy and legislation on the issue of prostitution. In many regards, Scottish prostitution policy continues to be similar to that of the rest of the UK. The most recent prostitution policy reform in Scotland is the Prostitution (Public Places) (Scotland) Act 2007. This act created new offences related to kerb crawling, loitering, and soliciting in public places. However, Scotland has come closer than the rest of the UK to overhauling its prostitution policy regime. Indeed, the early 2000s were spent debating the decriminalization of street-based prostitution in certain urban areas and, conversely, the late 2000s featured attempts to implement a demand-side ban on prostitution by means of client criminalisation. So far, Scotland has not opted for either of these approaches, but the policy debates have nevertheless had an impact on the form and objectives of prevention in contemporary Scottish prostitution policy.

While prostitution has recurrently featured on the Scottish political agenda since devolution, it is not in itself a stated priority in the Scottish government’s plan to

⁴ Criminal Law (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 1995

⁵ Placing advertisement of advertisements in public telephone boxes is illegal in England and Wales under the Criminal Justice and Police Act. Newspapers featuring advertisements for illegal prostitutional activities and brothels can be prosecuted under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

⁶ The Sexual Offences Act 1985, updated by the Policing and Crime Act 2009 and the Sexual Offences Act 2003, and the Prostitution (Public Places) (Scotland) Act 2007

⁷ The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and the Sexual Offences Act 2003, section 53.

⁸ Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003

⁹ Under the Policing and Crime Act 2009 this is a strict liability offence, which means that clients can be punished even if they were not aware the individual they were purchasing sexual services from had been subjected to force or coercion.

achieve ‘a decisive shift to prevention’.¹⁰ Rather, prevention in this area is functionally subsumed under the government’s plans to shift resources and services to prevent ill health, unhealthy behaviour, crime and unemployment. Nevertheless, in the context of prevention policy in Scotland since the Scottish Government’s ‘decisive shift’, prostitution also constitutes a critical case. As a critical case, it has “strategic importance in relation to the general problem” (Flyvberg, 2004: 395). In this sense, in order for the Scottish Government’s claim that it is seeking to a system-wide transformation of public service design and delivery to privilege prevention to hold true across all policy systems, we should be able to find evidence of preventative efforts in the area of prostitution policy. Not least of all because prostitution tends to constitute a critically complex and pervasive iteration of socio-economic inequality and destitution. Absence of preventative efforts in the area of prostitution would therefore permit the logical deduction that the current preventative agenda is not as broad and cross-cutting as implied by government rhetoric.

Evidence of efforts to introduce prevention into prostitution policy could take several forms. Prevention could appear in very targeted and precise ways, including interventions that are specific to the phenomenon of prostitution such as the distribution of condoms to prevent the risk of contracting and spreading infections. Prevention could also be framed more broadly as either prevention of the socio-economic causes of people entering prostitution, or the inclusion of prostitution as a in more general preventative efforts to mitigate socio-economic inequality in society as a whole. In other words, because prostitution policy is not a stated priority for either the UK or the Scottish government, we may not find a prostitution ‘prevention policy’ but, rather, prostitution policies articulated in relation to broad and vague prevention themes.

Case studies

The recent attempts in Scotland to either decriminalize prostitution or criminalise clients were diametrically opposed in their principles and motives, yet proponents of both deployed ideas and discourses linked to prevention in order to justify their policy preferences. The possibility for opposing sides to mobilise a similar rationale, coupled with the ascendancy of prevention in Scottish policymaking, makes prostitution policy in Scotland an empirically rich case for investigating how prevention is understood and imagined by policymakers; and how the ongoing (re)imagination of what prevention means can affect the politics of prevention policy. What follows is an analysis of the images and understandings of prevention relating to prostitution policy in Scotland, as they appear in the relevant policy debates and documents. This paper therefore presents a comparative case study of three key prostitution policy debates. The first case examines the Prostitution Tolerance Zones (Scotland) Bill proposed in the early 2000s. The second case looks at the Proposed Criminalisation of the Purchase of Sex (Scotland) Bill debates in the early 2010s. The third case shifts geographic focus and looks at the development and legacy of the 2006 Home Office *Coordinated Prostitution Strategy*. The first two cases allow us to analyse the evolution of prevention in Scottish prostitution policy debates over time, starting before the government announced a specific prevention agenda. The last case offers a comparison between policy debates in Scotland and those in the rest of the UK.

¹⁰ As evidenced by the lack of national performance indicator pertaining to prostitution.

Case Study 1: The Prostitution Tolerance Zones (Scotland) Bill

The Prostitution Tolerance Zones (Scotland) Bill was introduced as a Member's Bill on September 8th 2003 by independent MSP Margo MacDonald. The bill proposed to grant local authorities the powers to "designate an area forming part of the authority's area as a 'prostitution tolerance zone' [...]".¹¹ The decision to establish a tolerance zone would be at the discretion of local authorities, and no local authority would be required to do so if it did not want to. The proposal was explicitly based on the idea that local authorities are "best qualified to decide which management model is most suited to their locality."¹² Of the 32 Scottish local authority areas, only the four representing Scotland's biggest urban hubs expressed a direct interest in the bill: Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee. Further, the MSPs behind the bill were keen to stress that the aim of the policy was to *decriminalise* prostitution in certain areas, exempting soliciting and other related activities from prosecution, rather than to *legalise* or *regulate* prostitution in general.

The bill framed the policy problem 'pragmatically', that is, in terms of what were perceived as immediate practical considerations facing local authorities.¹³ In essence, the bill hoped to grant local authorities a legal basis with which to manage a real-world problem they were currently dealing with on an ad hoc basis through unofficial tolerance zones where individuals in prostitution were not actively prosecuted for soliciting in order to permit health and support groups to access vulnerable individuals in a geographically contained area. As a corollary, those who were sympathetic to the bill stressed the negative consequences of local authorities having no legal basis with which to manage prostitution on their area. In this way, not being able to officially circumscribe prostitution to specific areas would hamper any efforts to cater to the health and security needs of individuals in prostitution, or to prevent prostitution in general by helping vulnerable individuals before they become involved.

The bill's 'pragmatic' framing irrevocably clashed with detractors' 'principled' opposition. In particular, representatives from Glasgow council argued that creating a framework through which to formalise decriminalisation through official tolerance zones was tantamount to the government implicitly endorsing a conception of prostitution as a freely exercised job or lifestyle:

"we are against accepting an official tolerance zone because that would mean accepting that the women who are involved have chose this way of life. That would mean that we accept prostitution as a lifestyle, which the council would never do."¹⁴

¹¹ Prostitution Tolerance Zones (Scotland) Bill, p. 1.

¹² Prostitution Tolerance Zones (Scotland) Bill, *Policy Memorandum*, p. 2.

¹³ "[T]he Bill recognizes that while prostitution is not desirable, it is endemic in a number of areas of the major cities of Scotland, and thus presents a number of challenges to local authorities and the policy and other public services." Prostitution Tolerance Zones (Scotland) Bill, *Policy Memorandum*, p. 1.

¹⁴ Councillor James Coleman, Glasgow, Local Authorities Committee hearing, 14/01/2003.

More generally, formally shifting the responsibility for managing prostitution to local authorities was considered problematic because it served to bring the state back into the regulation of prostitution. Critics therefore argued that the answer was not to help local authorities institutionalize prostitution as an unavoidable reality. Instead they called for a long term approach based on maintaining ad hoc and unofficial tolerance zones in historic red light areas while working with voluntary and statutory partners towards the disappearance of prostitution. To a large extent, this approach lined up with the preferences of the Scottish Executive, which was largely opposed to the bill on the grounds that it was premature to pass piecemeal legislation concerning 'problem' management when the larger issue of prostitution policy was yet to be fully examined and discussed.

Alongside the problems of kerb-crawling and service providers' access to a vulnerable population, the issue of the bill's preventative potential was recurrently raised throughout the debate. Stakeholders and policy actors on both sides of the discussion repeatedly stressed the need for prevention to be at the heart of policy responses to prostitution. Accordingly, proponents of the bill stressed three main secondary and tertiary preventative functions of tolerance zones, which were perceived to either stop problems from worsening or to mitigate their damaging effects: prevention of physical violence to individuals already working in prostitution; prevention of health problems linked to prostitution; and prevention of substance and alcohol misuse. Proponents of the bill also expressed a belief in its capacity for primary prevention and, more specifically, the role it could play in preventing entry into prostitution. These arguments all hinged on tolerance zones offering a circumscribed area in which the target population could be approached by relevant support and health services. This logic was implicitly stretched to primary prevention, with the argument that it would be easier for support groups to identify and those vulnerable to entering prostitution by working with and around those already operating, and who are often instrumental in facilitating or discouraging newcomers. The argument of prevention of entry into prostitution was particularly deployed with regards to preventing children and young people from entering into, or being abused through, prostitution. Conversely, opponents repeatedly expressed concern that official tolerance zones would, on the contrary, compromise primary prevention efforts by sending the signal that the state considered prostitution to be a legitimate activity.

Ultimately, the Expert Group on Prostitution, which was set up to conduct a prostitution policy review and advise the Scottish Executive on its options, published a report recommending that traditional soliciting offences be replaced by prosecution of offensive behaviour, nuisance or harm arising from prostitution-related sexual transaction. The Group also dedicated two full chapters to prevention of involvement and early intervention to prevent entry into prostitution in its report to the Scottish Parliament (Expert Group on Prostitution in Scotland, 2004). It concluded that, while local authorities are faced with different challenges and should be able to choose their own response, certain policy objectives were common to every area and should form the core of any future Scottish prostitution policy strategy. This included the need to prevent vulnerable children and young people from becoming involved in prostitution and preventing relapse of individuals who had exited prostitution.

While the Expert Group only had an advisory function, its advice, coupled with the staunch opposition of Glasgow Council representatives and abolitionist third sector groups, and the Scottish Executive's reticence led to the tolerance zones bill being withdrawn on November 30th 2005. Nevertheless, the Expert Group report was used as the primary basis for policy in the following years. Most notably it was used to inform the Prostitution (Public Places) (Scotland) Act 2007 which created new offences tackling nuisances arising from prostitution. The bill was accompanied by an increase in funding to local authorities and their partners in a bid to tackle and prevent prostitution, and by the publication of *Guidance for local authorities and their community planning partners on street prostitution*. This document stipulated that "local authorities [...] have a part to play in a Scotland-wide strategy to reduce, and ultimately eradicate, street prostitution" and that, in particular, they "have a role in preventing vulnerable young people and women in their area from becoming involved in prostitution" (Scottish Executive, 2007: 1). It stressed the need for local authorities to integrate a consideration for prevention new and existing policies, even in areas where street-prostitution was not perceived to be a policy issue. With particular regard to street-based prostitution, evidence of the effects of the Expert Group report and the subsequent guidance document can be found in the policy progress reports of several large Scottish cities in the following years.¹⁵

Case Study 2: The Proposed Criminalisation of the Purchase of Sex (Scotland) Bill

Several attempts at penalising clients of prostitution have been made in Scotland, in 2010¹⁶ and 2012¹⁷. These legislative efforts have taken different forms (amendments, and Private Members Bills) but all aimed to create an offence for the purchase of sex. The last attempt, the 2012 Proposed Criminalisation of the Purchase of Sex (Scotland) Bill (2) was lodged the year after the Christie Commission and enjoyed greater scrutiny and consideration than the others. This bill therefore offers a good lens through which to analyse prevention policymaking on the issue of prostitution in an era of supposedly 'transformational' public sector reform.

The bill framed the issue of prostitution as a form of exploitation and violence against women which had to be addressed by disrupting "the market that tolerates and fuels" it (Scottish Parliament, 2012: 19). While the rationale behind the bill made explicit reference to prevention,¹⁸ emphasis on this preventative capacity is nevertheless low. However, prevention can be inferred from the reiterated assertion that a demand side ban would reduce demand and, in so doing, prevent entry into prostitution. The consultation document, for example, states that if the bill is introduced, "there will be

¹⁵ For example, Dundee City Council's (2008) *Progress Briefing on the Reduction of Street Prostitution* states that the £200,000 it received as part of the Scottish Government external funding to help cities reduce the frequency of street prostitution "by the development of a collaborative initiative by Dundee Partnership member organisations" is partially earmarked for "preventing vulnerable groups being involved".

¹⁶ In 2010, Labour MSP Trish Godman introduced an amendment to the Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Bill. After the amendment fell, she brought forward a Private Member's Bill aimed at criminalising clients later the same year.

¹⁷ After Godman stood down as an MSP, Labour MSP Rhoda Grant took ownership of the issue and lodged a first Proposed Criminalisation of the Purchase of Sex (Scotland) Bill in May 2012. After it fell, she lodged a second in September of the same year.

¹⁸ "the proposed bill would strengthen the work to prevent and address commercial sexual exploitation in Scotland through criminalising those who engage in paid-for sex", Scottish Parliament (2012: 7)

a reduction in the market for sex meaning fewer people will become involved in prostitution” (Grant, 2012: 52). The most explicit discussion of the preventative potential of the bill concerned its capacity to indirectly prevent human trafficking by the same token was also recurrently voiced: “Human trafficking is not the focus of the proposed legislation. However, by tackling demand for the purpose of prostitution, these activities will be disrupted.”¹⁹ Brief mention is made of the bill’s potential to cut costs in the long term, as a reduction in prostitution would see fewer cases of prostitution related offences brought to courts.²⁰

The policy documents also shows little evidence of the proposal seeking to implement a cross-cutting, coordinated and comprehensive policy strategy. Instead, Grant focuses on two mechanisms through which the bill would act. Firstly, she stresses that the bill could enable policy authorities to tackle prostitution by granting them the powers with which to prosecute clients. Secondly, she argues that criminalising the purchase of sex is the key to bringing about societal change regarding the acceptability of prostitution and raise awareness of the issue.

Ultimately, the bill failed to secure sufficient cross-party support, not least of all because the Scottish Government did not back it. The right to introduce the bill was therefore not secured, and it did not proceed to Committee stage. There is no evidence of the proposal having either an effect on preventative interventions in the context of Scottish prostitution policy, or contributing to the discussion of prevention and preventative spending in Scotland.

Case 3: The UK Government Coordinated Prostitution Strategy

In 2004, the Home Office began to undertake the most significant review of its prostitution policies and laws since the foundational Wolfenden Committee report in 1957.²¹ This review started with a Home Office evaluation, which aimed to present evidence-based recommendations about the most effective approaches and actions with which to tackle street prostitution (Hester and Westmarland, 2004). The evaluation dedicated an entire chapter to diversionary and preventative interventions. Discussion of prevention of entry into prostitution in this document is explicit, very precise, and makes reference both to scientific research and case studies of best practice across the UK. It focused heavily on prevention through early intervention with young people vulnerable to entering prostitution. The review emphasised policy coordination and partnership working as crucial dimensions of effective prevention, and called for training and resources to be given to specialised teams which would work in partnership with generic services to provide support, referral and liaison. More broadly, it recommended a strategy of “holistic support” which integrated generic and targeted services to individuals in, or vulnerable to entering, prostitution (Hester and Westmarland, 2004: xiii).

¹⁹ Scottish Parliament (2012: 8).

²⁰ Scottish Parliament (2012: 27)

²¹ The *Report of the of the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution* (1957). The work of the committee served as the basis for the Sexual Offences Act 1956 and the Street Offences Act 1959, which together soliciting, loitering for the purposes of prostitution, and living on the earnings of prostitution.

Based on the findings and recommendations of this evaluation, the Home Office published a consultation entitled *Paying the Price* (Home Office, 2004). In keeping with the policy evaluation, this consultation stressed the need for a national prostitution strategy that integrates prevention of entry into prostitution at its core: “Prevention is of prime importance. [...] This paper looks at the preventative measures that need to be in place as well as the support and protection required by those particularly at risk, or already drawn into this vicious cycle” (Home Secretary David Blunkett, in Home Office, 2004: 5). Prevention is broadly defined as “alleviating the circumstances which make young people vulnerable to exploitation and coercion into prostitution” (Home Office, 2004: 9), or in terms of the problems that need to be prevented: unsafe use of the internet, domestic violence, child abuse, unhealthy relationships, homelessness, substance misuse.

However, the document presents an overview of specific local preventative interventions aimed at young people across the UK. These programs vary in their objectives. Some aim to reduce youth involvement in crime, or youth substance misuse, others still at protecting runaways or disabled children and young people from abuse and exploitation. These programs therefore fall into two categories: broad educational and diversionary interventions for entire age cohorts; and targeted support and prevention interventions for high-risk groups such as runaways or homeless youth. These ideas are linked to the ideas, put forward in the consultation, that prostitution is a boundary-spanning problem that correspondingly requires cross-cutting policy responses. In particular, it highlights the cluster nature of vulnerability to prostitution, arguing, for example, that children who have been subjected to violence in the home, and young people who have experienced homelessness, are more likely to be abused through prostitution. Comparatively little specific attention is given to prevention of risks associated with individuals already in prostitution. Instead, the question of how to address prostitution as a social reality is addressed by calling for a “coordinated strategy to deal with the issues arising from prostitution” (Home Office, 2004: 81). To this end, the document presents the different policy regimes and frameworks the UK can look to and learn from, including CPSS and decriminalisation, but does not indicate a preference.

The UK Government responded to this by publishing its *Coordinated Prostitution Strategy* in 2006 (Home Office, 2006). In this document, prevention is integrated into the strategy from the outset, with a statement asserting that “[t]he strategy will focus on disrupting sex markets by preventing individuals, and particularly children and young people, from being drawn into prostitution” (Home Office, 2006: 1). Prevention of entry into prostitution is also justified with regards to its inherent worth and practical value: “Once an individual becomes involved in prostitution it can be difficult to find a route out. The long-term damage, both emotionally and physically, can be significant. This means that prevention is a crucial element of the strategy” (Home Office, 2006: 1). The strategy demonstrates the same attention to preventing children and young people from becoming involved in prostitution as *Paying the Price*. Similarly, adults are rarely the object of preventative action, and are discussed in terms of support for exiting prostitution. The issue of preventing harm and health risks to adults in prostitution is framed in terms of ‘harm reduction’ rather than ‘prevention. Finally, the document argues that, in order to be truly coordinated, this prostitution strategy must fit in for the UK’s anti-trafficking action plan. As a result, the prevention of trafficking is not brought in as a primary policy objective.

In 2014, the *Coordinated Strategy* remains the primary basis for designing strategies to tackle prostitution in the UK. Its recommendations regarding prevention are still cited in operational guidance documents (ACPO, 2011), and in local government planning documents²². Moreover, an all-party parliamentary group recently released a report calling for many of the same policy objectives set out in the *Coordinated Strategy* to be translated into official policy, though few direct mentions of the strategy are explicitly made (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Prostitution, 2014). From commissioning the initial policy review in 2004 to publishing *its Coordinated Strategy 2014*, the Home Office appears to dominate the contemporary prostitution policy process in the UK. This tendency has led to criticism that the issues of crime and punishment related to prostitution are being prioritized over the health and occupational risk reduction needs of individuals in prostitution (Soothill and Sanders, 2004; Cusick and Berney, 2005).

Discussion

What the case studies reveal is that prevention matters in prostitution policy debates in the UK. Ideas pertaining to prevention are evident in policy debates over time across Scotland the rest of the UK, across multiple levels of government. However, the extent to which prevention is prevalent in these policy debates and how it is framed vary. Three key points emerge from the analysis.

Firstly, while the Scottish Government's commitment to a decisive shift to prevention through public sector reform is relatively new, prevention has been a key fixture of prostitution policy in Scotland since devolution. Indeed, discussion of how to address prevention through policy was more explicit and sustained in the debate over proposed tolerance zones in the early 2000s than it was in the years when budget reductions were propelling preventative spending onto the Scottish Government agenda. This can be explained by the fact that prevention has been a historic fixture of state and third sector intervention into prostitution. This is also true of most social policy issues dealing with inequality and poor outcomes. This therefore raises questions about the extent to which Scotland's 'new' commitment to prevention constitutes a decisive break. Instead, it may be that the more significant changes brought about by this 'turn' to prevention concern the delivery of services and the measurement of outcomes in specified policy areas like early years and health. The notion that prevention has historically been at the heart of social policy issues like prostitution policy also helps explain why, despite less evidence of a specific prevention agenda in recent UK Government rhetoric, there appears to be the same commitment to prevention in prostitution policy across the UK.

Secondly, while Scottish and UK prostitution policy debates feature a common attention to substantive issues such as the need to build 'prevention' into prostitution policy strategies, the Scottish cases studies both manifest certain characteristics more particular to Scottish policymaking. Not least of all, the cases exemplify the disadvantage of particularistic (rather than broad), non-executive bills on matters of

²² For example, the 2011 Suffolk *Prostitution and Sexual Exploitation Strategy*, available at: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/suffolk.gov.uk/Emergency%20and%20Safety/Community%20Safety/2011-10-11%20Suffolk%20Prostitution%20and%20Sexual%20Exploitation%20Strategy.pdf> [accessed 17/08/2014]

secondary political importance (in relation to the government's program and priorities), in the current Scottish political system. This is due to an institutional design which privileges, on the one hand, incremental changes, and tinkering at the margins or adapting existing politics (Keating, 2010), and, on the other, the subordination of particularistic non-executive legislation to broader and more comprehensive reforms (Jones, 2006). Evidence of this preference can also be found in policy discourse when, in both policy debates, the argument was made that reforms concerning the modalities of management or criminalization of the purchase of sex were premature and shortsighted without the development of a broader Scottish government strategy on prostitution. In this sense, change efforts concerning matter of secondary or peripheral importance, especially those put forward by means of non-executive legislation (members', committee, or private bills), may be more easily achieved through secondary legislation, administrative devolution or ministerial discretion – none of which were meaningful or feasible options for this type of path-departing policy proposal. These cases are therefore illustrative of the power differential that exists between the executive and the legislature in Scotland. Consequently, in both cases, the curtailment of contentious policy proposal on a low-priority matter, put forward by means of non-executive legislation is unsurprising.

Since neither bill was implemented, the main difference between the proposed prostitution zones bill and the proposed criminalization of the purchase of sex therefore concerns their indirect impact on prostitution policy. The proposed criminalization of the purchase of sex bill had no particular effect on prostitution policy, other than raising the profile of the policy issue in public and media attention for a short time. On the other hand, the proposed prostitution tolerance zones bill was directly responsible for setting up the Expert Group on prostitution that would later influence Scottish prostitution policy with its findings and policy recommendations. This highlights the potential for the Scottish Parliament to set the policy agenda and indirectly effect change, even if the initial policy proposal fails (Cairney, 2007). Indeed, the bill was only withdrawn after the Scottish Executive announced it would heed the advice of the Expert Group.

Thirdly, while discussion of prevention is evident over time and space, what actors consider needs to be prevented with regards to prostitution appears to change over time. The earliest policy debate featured a wide range of ideas concerning the object(s) of prevention, from the prevention of health risks and substance misuse associated with prostitution, to the prevention of violence towards individuals in prostitution. In contrast, later debates focused closely on two prevention aims: the prevention of entry into prostitution; and to a lesser extent, the prevention of trafficking. Further, the need to prevent entry into prostitution was primarily framed as preventing children and vulnerable young people from entering into, or being abused through, prostitution. The increased focus on new categories of victims (children and coerced migrants) coincides with the ascendancy of definitions of prostitution as an inherently violent form of exploitation. This change in the way the policy problem is perceived in the UK is nested into the broader transformation of European and global frameworks aimed at protecting vulnerable persons set out, for example, by the 2000 United Nations *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*. Nevertheless, the causal impact of the changing prostitution prevention discourse must not be overestimated. Indeed, while the prevention of prostitution-related nuisances such as kerb-crawling

and soliciting through penalisation, which had dominated political discourse on prostitution in the UK throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Kantola and Squires, 2004) is less prominent in current policy debates, it has nonetheless remained a central objective of all new prostitution related law. In this sense, there appears to be a difference between the ideas regarding prevention that make it into prostitution related laws, and the ideas that inform broad policy strategies such as the ones set out in the *Coordinated Strategy* or the *Guidance for Local Authorities*.

Finally, the politics of “new localism” seems to be institutionalising the role of Scottish local authorities in delivering prevention. This speaks to the decisions made by policy actors regarding the tradeoff between national-level policy coherence and local-level outcome-based policy coordination. Both the proposed tolerance zones bill and the criminalisation of the purchase of sex bill aimed to provide a formal basis for state intervention into prostitution beyond the traditional abolitionist penalisation of prostitution-related nuisances and crimes. Because of the institutional constraints facing private Member’s Bills on controversial issues in the Scottish Parliament, it is not surprising that the first bill was withdrawn and the second fell. However, despite not being enacted, the proposed tolerance zones bill served to place the issue of prostitution policy reform on the political agenda and indirectly impel legal and policy change through its commissioning of an Expert Group. The changes that resulted saw the Scottish Executive refine its framework of criminal offences regarding street-prostitution, and delegate greater freedom and responsibility to local authorities and their community planning partners with regards to delivering support and prevention to individuals in prostitution. Since then, the Scottish Government has not seriously reconsidered granting local authorities a stronger legal basis from which to intervene into prostitution on their territory. To the extent that Grant’s bill aimed to force the Scottish Government to adopt a coherent and formal policy de facto prohibiting prostitution through a the criminalisation of the purchase of sex, it fell foul of the current prostitution policy framework which sees local authorities restricted to using existing power at their discretion, often resulting in ad hoc and unofficial ‘tolerance’ of prostitution in certain areas. In this way, there appears to be a tradeoff between national-level policy coherence and local level coordination. More broadly, this tendency also distinguishes the North and the South, with the central UK Government showing a greater propensity to give strategic policy guidance, compared to the relative freedom afforded Scottish local authorities and their Community Planning Partners.

Conclusion

In 2011 the Scottish Government announced that a ‘decisive shift to prevention’ would form one of the four pillars of its comprehensive program for public sector reform (Scottish Government, 2011: 1). The benefits of shifting resources towards preventing problems from emerging in the first place were framed in terms of cost-effectiveness and long-term sustainability in a time of austerity and increased service demand. In this way, prevention was presented as a holistic approach to tackling complex, clustering and boundary-spanning ‘wicked’ issues. Correspondingly, preventative approaches to designing and delivery policy and public services are now envisaged as integrated, comprehensive and coordinated efforts. As a result, prevention presents a challenge for government because it supposes striking a balance between the centripetal force of rational and joined-up government, and the

translation of broad objectives into meaningful action by a variety of actors across different departments and geographic areas.

Shedding light on how these organisational and procedural equilibria are negotiated in the context of the rising prevention agenda in Scotland is necessarily a comparative exercise. This paper therefore presented a comparative case study of three prostitution policy debates across Scotland and the UK: the proposed tolerance zones (Scotland) bill of 2003; the proposed criminalization of the purchase of sex (Scotland) bill of 2012; and the development of the Home Office Coordinated Prostitution Strategy. Prostitution policy epitomises 'wickedness' with its intractability, while at the same time being a sufficiently low priority policy issue to test whether or not there has been a truly system-wide translation of the post-Christie prevention agenda. Moreover, comparing Scottish and UK policy debates on the issue allows us to draw inferences about any putatively 'distinct' policymaking or preventative policy on the issue in Scotland.

Two tentative conclusions can be drawn from this case study. Firstly, despite 2011 presenting a watershed year for the systematic shifting of resources and efforts towards prevention in Scottish public services, preventative approaches to public policy and services are not new. Indeed, prevention was a fixture of prostitution policy (and in many other policy areas) in Scotland long before the Christie commission was set up. Conversely, attention to prevention in the area of prostitution policy did not increase in the years after the Christie commission. This raises the question of whether efforts to implement the system-wide 'decisive shift to prevention' announced by the Scottish Government in response to the Christie commission recommendations are, in practice, more particularly focused on a few specific policy areas such as early years, education or health. This issue could be addressed by extending the comparison to different policy sectors in Scotland.

Secondly, 'prevention' can be interpreted and represented in different ways in policy debates. The case studies illustrate how, with regards to prostitution, conceptions of what, exactly, it is that should be prevented change over time. These cases suggest a gradual convergence, in both Scotland and the rest of the UK, towards a focus on preventing the exploitation of children and young people in prostitution, and towards the de facto 'prevention' of prostitution through criminalising the purchase of sex. Nevertheless, preventative approaches of one form or another were recommended in all the policy debates. Thus, on the one hand, the rhetoric of prevention is a ubiquitous fixture of contemporary prostitution policy debates. On the other hand, preventative policy practice on the ground continues to be dealt with in an ad hoc manner by certain local authorities and third sector association. This suggests that the geographically differentiated manifestations of prostitution, which requires the development of locally adapted solutions, presents a significant challenge to the development of the common prostitution policy 'image'. This has implication for the coordination of effort in the context of rational, outcome-seeking, joined-up government.

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