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Governing, but not Producing Security? Internationalised Community Security Practices in Kyrgyzstan

Philipp Lottholz / Arzuu Sheranova

Abstract

This article tackles the fraught relationship between security discourse, on the theoretical level, and security experience and practice on the ground. It argues that the efforts of the Kyrgyzstani authorities to reform and thus create sustainable and needs-based community security and law enforcement structures have so far largely been performative or even "virtual", meaning that they have focused on governing, but not producing security. The argument is first developed out of literature on state building, the security sector and police reform from a global perspective and in the context of Central Asia and Kyrgyzstan, more specifically. In a second step, we draw on insights from fieldwork, professional experience and grey literature to examine Local Crime Prevention Centres (LCPCs), which are communal-level public bodies where local administrations and residents potentially co-produce needs-based forms of security. However, we also show that the work of these bodies is still dependent on international support while lacking the conditions and facilitation that only executive actors can provide.

Keywords: Security practices, community security, international cooperation, Local Crime Prevention Centres (LCPCs), Kyrgyzstan

The large-scale inter-communal clashes that struck the southern Kyrgyzstani cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad and their environs in June 2010 have become a turning point in international policy towards the country and the region more generally. In their aftermath, several intergovernmental organisations, including various United Nations Agencies, the OSCE and European Union, have run various post-conflict reconstruction, peacebuilding and community security programmes (e.g. Megoran et al. 2014). Over time, these programmes have become less focused on immediate issues of conflict prevention and peacebuilding and have begun to tackle questions of how more sustainable forms of tolerance and

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peaceful coexistence can be fostered between and within the communities affected by the 2010 clashes and resultant tensions. Now that ten years have passed since the "Osh events", it is increasingly important to reflect on the extent to which these events and the lessons drawn from them have led to changes in the way community security and conflict prevention are practiced across Kyrgyzstan and to look at the policy approaches and institutional basis foregrounding such practices. In this paper, we seek to undertake this task and to critically enquire to what extent more holistic and sustainable forms of security have been fostered across Kyrgyzstan by the security and law enforcement programmes and policies of the past years.

Within this special issue, we seek to tackle the difficult and often fraught relationship between security discourse on the one hand – that is, the debates occurring and statements being made in the public sphere – and the forms of security that people experience and practice on the ground, on the other. Drawing on Heathershaw's (2014) conceptualisation of the "global performance state" in Central Asia, we argue that Kyrgyzstan's efforts to reform and thus create sustainable community security and law enforcement structures have so far largely been of a performative or even "virtual" nature. That is, while governmental, ministerial and other key actors have passed legislation, action concepts and decrees, they have not been substantially, or at least not sufficiently, involved in changing law enforcement practices on the ground. With this focus, we seek to widen the scope of much security studies scholarship on discursive processes of securitisation and legal and formal dynamics of policy-making and to bring it into conversation with an analysis of actual practices on the ground.

Various scholars have shown how practices constitute an important dimension of security and how they can escape the ambitions of policy and legislative frameworks, and, on the contrary, even contribute to the re-shaping or failure of such frameworks (Hönke 2013, Distler 2016). In the case of Kyrgyzstan, we would argue that the government and other leading policy-making actors focus their actions on "governing security", i.e. taking key decisions on what provision and maintenance of security should look like in such a way that central power and control is maintained. Meanwhile, when it comes to actually "producing security", i.e. ensuring that the law enforcement, conflict, and crime prevention mechanisms produce the desired outcomes, we observe a less active role of national executive actors. Rather, what appears to happen is that "producing" or "doing security" on the ground is outsourced to a number of intergovernmental organisations, including international as well as domestic NGOs. While this approach of "governing, but not producing security" may be the result of limited budgetary, cadre and knowledge capacities, we show that it foreshadows inherent limitations for the possibility of establishing and maintaining secure communities across the country. This is because superficial and performative reform steps do not create sustainable new mechanisms and pro-

cedures that would facilitate the work of community-level actors, who instead remain dependent on funding and approval from above.

Our paper adds to a growing literature on internationalised and transnational forms of security sector reform and governance. In the case of former Soviet states, the most frequently observed processes are police reforms introduced following the pattern of so-called "democratic policing" implemented in the former communist Central and East-European states, aimed at "transforming the former militia, characterized with a longer history of protecting the regime and abusing citizens' human rights" (Mesko et al. 2013: v–vi). The idea of policing thus had to be transformed – in line with the understanding that police should address the needs of the public, not those of the regime (ibid.).

For instance, Erica Marat's recent book on *The Politics of Police Reform in Post-Soviet States* (2018) has demonstrated how reform efforts in Kyrgyzstan, Georgia and Ukraine draw extensively on international financial support and conceptual templates. However, and especially in the case of Kyrgyzstan, Marat also shows how law enforcement reform has not led to significant changes in the top-down and often punitive approaches used by the Kyrgyzstani law enforcement apparatus, which to a large extent still maintains its Soviet legacy. These observations are in line with Heathershaw's work on sector reform and its role in processes of peacebuilding in post-civil war Tajikistan, where the Tajik government has made use of international funding and capacity-building support and has discursively propagated the achievements of reform while the forms of peace and security experienced by average citizens have not significantly improved (2009: ch. 6). The resulting performative and superficial character of security in post-conflict states, or "global performance states" as Heathershaw terms them in the Central Asian context (2014), appears to be a more widely observable feature alongside sustained forms of instability and insecurity experienced by populations subject to internationalised statebuilding (Bliesemann de Guevara 2012: 13–14) and transnational security governance (Hönke 2013).

In adding to these perspectives, we are not suggesting that there is an ideal approach to "producing security", by which safety issues in communities can be resolved sustainably. However, by shedding light on the institutional architecture and practices of security in communities across Kyrgyzstan, we show that the governing of security and its practice on the ground need to be brought into conversation and cooperation if effective and sustainable institutions, policies and practices are to be created and maintained. We illustrate this with the example of Local Crime Prevention Centres (LCPCs), bodies subordinated to local government structures and comprising a number of what could be called municipal civil society structures, such as Courts of Elders (*aksakals*), women's committees and neighbourhood committees. This paper is based on our research findings and work experience with some of the communities discussed in this

paper. During his PhD and post-doctoral research, Lottholz conducted participatory observation during fifteen community visits, alongside 17 interviews and cooperative research with various partner organisations (see Lottholz 2018: ch. 5, Saferworld 2016). Sheranova's perspective is based on longstanding practical experience at Saferworld's programme and her PhD research conducted since 2017. Thus, in addition to explicitly quoted material, our analysis draws on a large amount of practical experience and reflections from our personal work in the community security process and from participant observations in the field.

The capacity dilemma: Internationalised security governance and practice

Before venturing into the empirical context of security governance and practice in Kyrgyzstan, we briefly elaborate our conceptual approach and its relevance for literature on internationalised and transnational security sector reform. Put briefly, our observation from both the literature and our analysis of dynamics in Kyrgyzstan is that security governance in states emerging from conflicts, crises and regime transitions often faces a capacity dilemma (see Mesko et al. 2013, Friesendorf 2019). That is, governments and state institutions are often so short of capacity to provide and maintain security – both in financial terms and in terms of know-how and practical capacities – that they are notoriously dependent on the help offered by international actors.

The international response usually involves security sector reform (SSR) with some recent ideas of "shifting the governance focus from the state alone to what might be thought of as a 'whole of society' approach to security governance" (Froestad / Shearing 2012: 2). These include either intergovernmental organisations – including, in particular cases, intervention forces – or domestic civil society and internationally operating NGOs, who bring their international funding and capacity to take over the functions and working packages that state actors are unable or unwilling to take on. Such cooperation is often sought not out of opportunism but as a result of insufficient state budgets, as highlighted by, among other scholars, Berit Bliesemann de Guevara, who has pointed to "structural inequalities in [the] international system" that foreground "non-western states' inability to generate financial potential to fulfil their tasks" and "establish a legitimate monopoly of violence on their territory" (2012: 7–9). While utilising the help of non-state actors might indeed be handy for temporarily addressing security challenges – especially for governments interested only in governing security, but not doing the actual security provision work – it is problematic in the long run as such a division of labour rarely leads to the establishment of security institutions and practices acknowledged by society. Our

analysis of the problem of "governing security" without actually producing it seeks to highlight this problem and to indicate steps forward where governmental actors' agendas on the one hand and "security on the ground", on the other, are too much out of touch.

Scholarship on post-conflict peacebuilding and security sector reform has already outlined the pattern of governing without producing security that we wish to highlight in this article. The concept we find most instructive in this regard is Heathershaw's notion of the "global performance state" in Tajikistan (2014). Here, Heathershaw has noted how "the activities of international organisations, which must be authorised by state officials" serve to "reaffirm[ ] the authority of the state to act as a gatekeeper to external actors and supreme political authority in the territory" (2014: 36). Analysing the example of local government reform in the early 2010s, Heathershaw finds that "while the roles of the presidential administration and donor organisations were primary, parliament was, at best, a secondary actor, and civil society groups were absent" (2014: 46). "This primacy of performance (an ostensibly national legislative process) over content of local government (actual decentralisation)", he further argues, "indicates the globality of the Tajikistani state" (2014: 47). The "empowerment of the state's executive apparatus" (ibid.: 48), which Heathershaw diagnoses as an outcome of this globalised performance, corresponds to what we term the governing of a process – in that case, local governance reform – without actual involvement in the practical implementation of changes on the ground.

In a similar analysis of security sector reforms in the more immediate aftermath of the Tajik civil war, Heathershaw has shown how the interpretation and framing in terms of national sovereignty appears to have been of greater importance than the actual measures carried out (2009: ch. 6). That is, demonstrating unity and allegiance with warlords newly incorporated into the state served to assuage the temporary and often frail nature of these agreements, which have proven unsustainable and insufficient throughout the years (2009: 143). Similarly, the case of the handover of control of the southern border with Afghanistan from Russian to Tajik command was orchestrated as a reclaiming of sovereignty, while the involvement of Russian and Tajik personnel hardly changed, as the same Tajik soldiers continued to serve in the border units with Russians continuing to work in advising roles (2009: 149).

In analogy to Heathershaw's perspective, our analysis seeks to show how executive activities in law enforcement reform have been limited to symbolically meaningful acts such as passing legislation, concepts and decrees with the accompanying declarations. Yet, as we further show, the lack of concrete action to implement reform – or at least provide the necessary conditions for doing so – points to the performative nature of reforms, which are essentially governed but not put into practice. The argument extends and conceptually situates existing research on law enforcement reform and community security in Kyrgyzstan.

Although analyses in this area remain few and far between, recent research has shed light on the dynamics between discursive and publicly visible policy formation processes on the one hand and on-the-ground practical changes on the other.

Most importantly, a chapter in Erica Marat's *The Politics of Police Reform* examined how the police reform process in Kyrgyzstan has been increasingly influenced by civil society and particularly human rights organisations, who have called for more concrete changes in law enforcement and security practice. The politicisation of this particular state institution was, as Marat shows, related to the perception of police forces and their still militarised approach, structure and working methods as a potential "source of injustice and a threat to public security" (2018: 90, 92). To address these issues, the then-Minister of Interior Affairs launched, among other things, a pilot programme titled "Safe City" (Russian: *Bezopasnyi Gorod*) which, based on the role model run in Tbilisi, Georgia:

> […] encouraged law enforcement officers to engage in neighborhood policing: instead of serving a shift at one precinct in the capital, law enforcement officers were given ten liters of gas and sent out to drive around the city, ticket traffic violators, and respond to emergencies. Cops were expected to interact as "social partners" with citizens just as much as they were expected to fulfill the traditional duties of law enforcement officers on patrol. (Marat 2018: 97)

Although suspended after a one-month trial period, the programme, Marat finds, had a positive effect in making police respond more rapidly and deal more competently with violations. Marat further maps out positive changes brought about by civil society and various individuals who have held the police to account (2018: 100ff.). She also points out how then-PM Otorbaev famously encouraged people "to videotape and take photos of traffic police officers [breaking the law]" and thus hold them accountable (cited in Marat 2018: 98). Nonetheless, reform initiatives have arguably subsided in recent years and Marat's insights have not covered realities beyond the placatory actions of authorities and reform dynamics in urban centres.

Peacebuilding and security programming since 2010: From projects to structural change?

In this section, we provide an outline of the landscape of international peacebuilding and community security projects as well as police reform efforts in Kyrgyzstan since 2010. Because the state's immediate post-conflict responses were related mainly to physical reconstruction but not security, these will not be discussed here. Given the fallout of the conflict and continuing tensions,

the involvement of international organisations appeared very much needed in Kyrgyzstan. As demonstrated in Appendix 1, more than ten international organisations funded and implemented peacebuilding, conflict prevention, mediation and reconciliation programmes in the south of the country and nation-wide. Furthermore, efforts to create more systemic and sustainable change in community security and law enforcement were again limited to internationally supported projects and initiatives, which, however, did not prompt authorities to "own" or substantively implement new approaches to security.

The peacebuilding projects run in Kyrgyzstan can be divided into two types: short-term peacebuilding and long-term peacebuilding projects. Short-term peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of the conflict mainly encouraged communication and cooperation between local communities and local governments to reconcile communities and help them recover after the conflict, as well as to prevent conflicts from breaking out anew (see ACTED, OSCE, Saferworld, the UN and USAID prevention networks in Appendix 1). With the direct involvement of local community representatives in the process of conflict prevention and improvement of local security, these activities demonstrated the idea that local communities can and should be part of the process of community security provision.

Long-term peacebuilding projects that have run from 2014 onwards shifted their focus to making peace sustainable and maintaining security, by both working with local communities and involving the national government to bring about policy and legislative changes. Primarily international actors and domestic NGOs, rather than the government, were the ones who piloted community policing practices in various communities. For example, the OSCE's Community Security Initiative (CSI) project (2010–2015), apart from working with 63 rural locations, provided expertise on police reform to improve legislation and policing approaches on the national level. While this programme was focused on capacity-building and practical change in the police, several international organisations, including USAID and Saferworld, concluded that so-called Local Crime Prevention Centres were more sustainable platforms to train and practice long-term community policing than other established networks or groups. LCPCs are formal bodies made up of local community representatives (*aksakals* or "elders", women and youth) and neighbourhood police inspectors to jointly prevent and resolve local security-related issues (see 2005 Law on Crime Prevention in Table 1 below). Thanks to international efforts, in some project locations, communities and local governments understood the importance of collaboration in security maintenance, while in other locations, the role of local governments or communities remained weak because of a lack of state support. Most LCPCs lack financial support from municipal budgets and have received relatively little attention in national-level policy-making. To address this, some international organisations

that were more oriented towards long-lasting peace and security turned to working with LCPCs and reforming police and law enforcement agencies.

In the understanding of international organisations, law enforcement reform was directly related to the maintenance of communal peace and security, because reforming the police was a longer-term response and strategy to ensure multi-ethnic policing approaches, to increase trust towards the police and to reduce conflict potential. On the other hand, the reform of law enforcement agencies had been demanded by civil society for years, going back to the early 2000s. Following violent mass protests against the government, the subsequent ouster of then-president Bakiev and inter-ethnic violence in 2010 in the southern part of the country, domestic NGOs and activists successfully put the issue of police reform back on the agenda (Marat 2018; see Table 1 below for dynamics in national legislation).

After a state commission, ministries and civil society organisations had proposed and discussed their concepts for law enforcement reform, a consensus was achieved in 2013 when the government adopted the decree "On Measures of Reforming the Internal Affairs Bodies" (see Table 1). In July 2016 a presidential decree on Law Enforcement Agencies Reform (2016) was signed based on the decision of the Defence Council of the Kyrgyz Republic (2016). The main tasks of the approved reform plan were the restructuring of the police force and the reduction of duplicated functions by creating six new police departments that replaced the previous 12 departments: Community Security Department; Crimes Department; Department on Countering Extremism and Illegal Migration; Department on Fighting Drug Trafficking; Crimes Investigation Department; and Internal Investigation Department (Presidential decree on LEA reform 2016: Art.3.2). The Ministry of Internal Affairs was supposed to become involved with serving community security and safety (ibid.). In particular, under PM Isakov (2017–2018) police reform received substantial state support (see Lottholz 2020). The government also adopted a pilot project on establishing police patrols in 2019–2020, which drew on positive experience with the abovementioned "Safe City" project in Bishkek (Marat 2018: 97). As part of this initiative, patrol officers were assigned additional responsibility for community security within designated areas.

The role of civil society and international organisations in police reform in Kyrgyzstan was crucial, as the country largely relied on international support and funding to implement most of the announced measures. The government's role was largely limited to legislation, while international efforts served to implement the newly introduced measures. As Table 1 demonstrates, after the launch of the police reform, the government primarily amended and adopted new legislation, while it did not participate in the actual implementation of reform measures on the local level. On the ground, most of the empirical work

was done by international projects. International organisations practiced and promoted police–community partnerships in security provision. International organisations such as the OSCE and UNDP arranged police–community meetings, trained national and regional police staff and management on community policing, provided the needed equipment and cars, built or rehabilitated LCPCs and police stations, and improved access to police in remote areas (see the CSI and other projects in Appendix 1).

As further analysed elsewhere (Lottholz 2020, Sheranova 2020) such projects did yield positive effects on the security situation in participating communities. However, for the new legislative and policy changes to be put into action across the country, implementation efforts would need to be replicated in all communities, whether on a project basis or otherwise. As pointed out by Zubenko (2019), despite the structural changes, such as restructuring the police departments, systemic changes, such as approaches to policing, were not implemented by the government. A report to the *Jogorku Kenesh* (parliament) by the NGO network Civic Union "For Reforms and Result" (2018b) noted that there was not a single assessment or report conducted by the government on the launched police reform activities. It also stated that the parliament did not act in its full capacity as a body regulating and monitoring the police reform, and thus cannot be named as an "owner" of the police reform (ibid.). Thus most implemented activities, such as annual public surveys on the Kyrgyz police or police–public partnership events stayed donor-dependent and did not take on a systematic character.

In this light, it can be argued that because existing implementation activities were not maintained or "owned", let alone scaled up by the government, they necessarily remained weak and partial. This limited scope of government action on legislation and policy programming – while leaving implementation to rank and file staff, other involved actors like local administrations and the initiative of civil society and international organisations – is what we would call governing, but not producing security, as top-down actions are not augmented by more meso- and micro-level actions to ensure that legislation is put into action. With their focus on amending or passing new legislation and decrees on reform measures, the government, ministerial and other executive actors were little involved in the implementation of reform measures on the local level and also failed to ensure the tracking and assessment of reform progress. This "primacy of performance [...] over content" (Heathershaw 2014: 47) in practice demonstrates that the authorities were primarily interested in governing but not actively producing security, thereby leaving security mechanisms on the community level provisional and continuously dependent on funding and approval from above.

Table 1: Dynamics within national legislation related to community policing (2002–2016)

	Laws	Concepts	Decrees
2002	**Law on Aksakal Courts (Courts of Elders)** legal enshrining of *aksakals* as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism subordinate to local administration and law enforcement		
2005	**Law on Crime Prevention** creation of LCPCs for coordination of public bodies, primacy of executive authority and law enforcement	**Concept on Reforming the Internal Affairs Bodies until 2010** strengthen community-oriented policing approaches; first attempt to organise on the national level police reform idea	
2007/8		**Regulation No 276 "On Coordination Activity of LEAs"** sets out mechanisms for coordination between various LEA services to ensure rule of law, public security & crime prevention	**Decree No 162 of the MIA "On Implementation of the Law on Crime Prevention"** implementation of the law and establishment of LCPCs to carry out crime-prevention activities within local territorial districts
2013			**Governmental Decree No 220 "On Measures of Reforming the Internal Affairs Bodies"** strengthening cooperation between the police and communities in the provision of public security and crime prevention
2015/16	**Amendments to the Law on Crime Prevention (2005)** indicates sources of financing of LCPCs at the local level. LCPCs can be established as legal entities (like NGOs) and receive money from domestic and international funds or grants	**Decision of the Defense Council of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Measures of Reforming the Internal Affairs Bodies"** defines police reform areas within the Ministry of Internal Affairs as well as steps for reform	**Governmental Decree 547 "On Adoption of Regulation on Interaction Mechanisms between Internal Affairs Bodies and Civil Society Institutions"** sets out mechanisms of interaction between civil society institutions (including LCPCs) and police **Governmental Decree 747 "On Adoption of the Template Statute of LCPCs"** recommends that local government bodies adopt the statute of LCPCs to organise their activities **Presidential Decree "On Measures of LEAs Reform"** approves police reform steps and measures within the Ministry of Internal Affairs

Source: Compiled by Philipp Lottholz and Arzuu Sheranova

Producing vs. just governing security: Local Crime Prevention Centers and their policy and legal frameworks

Having set out the landscape of security programming in Kyrgyzstan and corresponding practices, as opposed to mere governing processes, we now turn to a more close-up analysis of security practices at the municipal level. Starting with a vignette of a capacity-building project in one Local Crime Prevention Centre (LCPC) implemented by the international NGO Saferworld and the Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI), we discuss the impact of this work in the broader context of these and other international and civil society organisations' efforts to produce security. In a final step, we show how effecting sustainability in such security practices is only possible if legal and wider governance frameworks are linked and correspond to each other.

Case Study: the LCPC in Mady, Southern Kyrgyzstan

The LCPC of the municipality of Mady is one of several examples of the positive impact of community engagement in security maintenance in collaboration with the police. This analysis draws on our own experience in profiling LCPCs and local security working groups[1] and outputs of the work of LCPCs (Saferworld 2016, Eginalieva / Shabdanova 2016).

Located in the Kara-Suu region in Osh province, close to the border with Uzbekistan, Mady is a multi-ethnic municipality made up of several Kyrgyz and Uzbek majority villages, relations between which also worsened after the Osh clashes. In 2008, the LCPC Mady was established following the decree of the Ministry of Interior Affairs adopted the same year. In most *ayil okmotus* (village administrations) like Mady these institutions were established in a rushed top-down manner, which often left local municipalities scarcely understanding the role and importance of LCPCs. Like many LCPCs, the one in Mady was made up of local government representatives, such as the deputy head and secretary of the Mady *ayil okmotu*, the head of the Social Affairs Department and other staff members. With membership mostly consisting of local municipality members, the LCPC did not have a separate premises but conducted its activities in the *ayil okmotu* office. The most important function of the LCPC was the mediation of disputes between community residents on various everyday issues, such as family or property disputes, conflicts over access to water or land, petty crimes, hooliganism and school bullying. These were dealt with by the *aksakal* courts or courts of elders, an alternative dispute resolution mechanism operating according to customary law while also obliged to statutory law,

1 Sheranova as staff of Saferworld Kyrgyzstan from 2013–2017, and Lottholz in a short-term LCPC profiling study in July 2015; see Lottholz 2018: ch. 5.

which forwards irresolvable cases to law enforcement organs (see Beyer 2015). Between 2008 and 2010 the LCPC's *aksakal* court had registered 85 cases (on average 28 per year), 71 of which were successfully mediated so that they did not reach the state court.

After the regime change in 2010, the fate of the LCPC in Mady, like that of other LCPCs throughout the country, was not clear. As the head of the LCPC acknowledged on 1 August 2014 during an interview with Sheranova, from 2011 to 2013 Mady LCPC existed only formally and the number of cases directed to the LCPC significantly decreased to 29 (on average 9 cases per year).[2] The LCPC lacked state support, needed its own premises to operate effectively and its popularity among the communities decreased. As a result, most people preferred not to contact the LCPC in the event of disputes. Only in 2014, when the Mady municipality became involved in Saferworld's Community Security Programme, was the activity of the LCPC revived. In January 2014, a Community Security Working Group (CSWG) was established, which decided to revive the activity of the then inactive LCPC. The Community Security Working Group members wrote several letters to the Mady municipality and Mady local police station requesting support for the group's initiative on the re-establishment of the LCPC. As a result of the efforts of both the working group and its supporters from Saferworld, in February 2014, the Community Security Working Group in Mady officially evolved into the LCPC with a new charter and membership.

Mady municipality allocated a separate office for the LCPC in a room in a school and covered a basic refurbishment, while the local police department helped with the renovation of the flooring. Finally, the new membership body of the LCPC completely replaced the members who had worked there until 2013, which foregrounded a fresh start, strong ties and high motivation among the new team (see Figure 1). "CSWG members in the framework of projects with Saferworld demonstrated themselves very positively and because this group is trained to work on security issues, the municipality suggested that the group members become official members of the LCPC," explained the deputy head of the Mady *ayil okmotu*.[3] As he described, before the project, the municipal administration had not recognised the LCPC as an important institution. However, after the project, they understood the importance of the LCPC's preventive work: "The LCPC successfully resolved a number of disputed issues before they escalated to the municipal level," said the head of the Mady municipality during an interview. "Within only eight months since the re-establishment of the LCPC in February 2014, it had resolved 19 disputes, which is still a high number in comparison with previous years."[4]

2 Interview by Sheranova with the head of Mady LCPC, Mady, 1 August 2014.

3 Interview by Sheranova with the deputy-head of Mady municipality, Mady, 1 August 2014.

4 Interview by Sheranova with the head of Mady municipality, Mady, 1 August 2014.

If before, the old LCPC's membership had consistesd of *ayil okmotu* representatives, after the project, the Mady LCPC became a public institution because it was made up of community representatives. Moreover, the programme contributed to establishing a partnership and cooperation with the police. Before, cooperation had only taken place between the police and the municipality. This was, of course, important as well, but had led to insufficient appreciation of the opinions of the local population on security-related issues. For instance, the issue of conflicts between Kyrgyz and Uzbek schools had been previously addressed through post-conflict explanatory investigations by the local police and school administrations without actual analysis of the conflict's root causes for the prevention of future altercations. To prevent future clashes between youths, members of the LCPC spoke to teachers, pupils and some parents and thus learned that the children lacked interaction with each other and that activities for building constructive relations and trust between Kyrgyz and Uzbek youth were needed.

A small initiative on the prevention of conflicts between schoolchildren and the reduction of interethnic tensions was funded by Saferworld as part of wider efforts for the re-activation of the LCPC. The municipality and police office jointly supported the initiative by hosting a so-called "Tolerance Festival" (*Festival tolerantnosti*) in the town's House of Culture with the participation of schoolchildren. This illustrates how the new LCPC became more capable of representing community voices on security to law enforcement organs and local administrations and of implementing joint initiatives to address the causes of conflict and insecurity.

Figure 1: Members of the LCPC Mady after a working meeting, 2014

Source: Foundation for Tolerance International, 2014

Under Saferworld's Community Security Programme, Mady LCPC held regular meetings with communities (villages) to discuss and define security-related issues, which were then communicated to law enforcement organs and local administration. Furthermore, it jointly designed and implemented small action plans to address these concerns, for instance by conducting activities calling for interethnic tolerance and friendship among schoolchildren (such as festivals and "corners of tolerance" at schools), creating public spaces for leisure and interaction (e.g. the installation of a gazebo in the central park) and others. In brief, under the Community Security Programme, the LCPC was able to take the initiative, to communicate community concerns or security issues, to make decisions on their own and also to exchange their experiences and views with LCPCs from other towns.

Such capacity-building and the establishment of the institutional status of the LCPC are very important developments because they changed both municipal and local public perceptions about the role and place of the LCPC in local security maintenance. According to the head of the LCPC,

> in the past, the LCPC's work priority was determined by the municipality, which highlighted issues on which the LCPC should focus. But now these are identified by the LCPC itself when working with communities. The LCPC determines what to focus on in its preventive work based on frequent discussions with the local population, including issues raised individually.[5]

Initially, the attitude of neighbourhood police inspectors to the LCPC had more of an "invitational character" (*priglasitelnyi kharakter*), limited to requests for assistance with the resolution of disputes and crimes, as the head of the LCPC recalled.[6] Police officers would call LCPC members, mostly *aksakals*, and invite them to resolve disputes, as they were respected elders in the communities. However, after the project the neighbourhood police inspectors would treat the LCPC members more as their colleagues and listen to their opinions. The LCPC in Mady succeeded in serving as a dialogue platform between the community and the police, able to bridge and to facilitate a conversation between both sides.

Successes and limitations of community security programming

In putting the above case study into context and assessing its representative character for the way people on the municipal level engage in this practice, it is worth considering in further detail the work done jointly by Saferworld and the Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI). As already indicated, these two organisations have conducted their Community Security Programme since the year 2013 and have supported 32 LCPCs during that time, including the refurbishment of office premises and other in-kind support. Among other docu-

5 Interview by Sheranova with the head of Mady municipality, Mady, 1 August 2014.

6 Interview by Sheranova with the head of Mady LCPC, Mady, 1 August 2014.

ments (e.g. Saferworld 2015, Saferworld 2019), a key example of their output that presents the impact of the programme is a brochure titled "Success Stories. Local Crime Prevention Centres in Osh, Jalal-Abad and Batken Provinces" (Saferworld 2016), which was prepared for the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other key partners of Saferworld based on a tour of profiling visits by a consultant, who was assisted by Lottholz.[7]

It is, course, reasonable to view our accounts of these success stories, including the above account from Mady, with a certain degree of scepticism – and to question how representative and unbiased they may be. Yet, as argued in discussions on the trade-offs of cooperative approaches to research,[8] the point of the brochure and our analysis here is not and cannot be to deliver objective evidence of the effects of the intervention of Saferworld and its partner FTI, e.g. in terms of reduced rates of crime or violent incidents or changed security perceptions of residents that can be attributed to the Community Security Programme. While this is the task of analyses by the implementing NGOs and/or further in-depth research, the purpose of this initial analysis is to point out the mechanisms of engagement, mobilisation and activation not only for dealing with insecurity as such, but especially for encouraging cooperation on these issues between local administrations and law enforcement on the one hand, and civil society and wider community populations on the other. Overall, even though Mady and the other "success stories" are but a small number of communities throughout the vast territory of southern Kyrgyzstan, the issues they dealt with and ways of overcoming them are very similar not only to the OSCE's Community Security Initiative (OSCE and El-Pikir 2013) but also to a project run by the NGO network Civic Union "For Reforms and Result" under the title "Developing Mechanisms of Social Partnership on Questions of the Provision of Public Security and Crime Prevention" from 2015 to 2016 (CURR 2016). Similar patterns and trajectories were also found in a more recent project run by the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) under the title "Addressing Social Disparity and Gender Inequality to Prevent Conflicts in New Settlements" (UNFPA 2017), in which the focus of local security working groups and LCPCs was more on relations between municipal administrations and the not infrequently neglected population, as well as issues of the delivery of social and health services.

Taking into account all the LCPCs or local security working groups and other entities trying to bring about more effective approaches of producing security, we count about 119 communities (Saferworld / Foundation for Tolerance International: 32, CU: 12, UNODC: 2, OSCE CSI: 63, UNFPA: 10) where capacity-building measures for better production of security have been taken. This demon-

7 See Lottholz 2018: 176–198 for an in-depth discussion of results from the profiling visits and follow-up research on LCPCs.

8 Lottholz 2018: 176–198 and Lottholz 2020: 72ff.

strates the large-scale effort that international organisations, as well as national NGOs, have made in terms of helping to create and maintain safer communities in Kyrgyzstan. It also illustrates how these organisations help the government and different stakeholders within the state deal with the capacity dilemma discussed above. As we have shown, while there might be limits in terms of whether and how LCPCs can help solve security issues on the municipal level, we argue that, provided that all stakeholders are involved in the work of these bodies, it is a more inclusive and potentially more effective mechanism of addressing issues than approaches where law enforcement organs are the primary or only actors dealing with issues.

At the same time, this overview of the coverage of international organisations (IOs) and national NGOs leads to the question of what is happening in the municipalities where no projects or programmes for activating and capacity-building of LCPCs are run. While more systematic research is needed to confirm the present challenges and limitations of LCPCs' work, there are a number of studies that have pointed out the key problems in recent years. One good indication can be gleaned from a "situational analysis" report by UNODC and the Women Support Centre (2018) prepared as part of the above-mentioned UN project (UNFPA 2017), which found that out of 10 LCPCs in communities in the "new settlements" or *novostroiki* located outside Kyrgyzstan's capital Bishkek, only three were working more or less formally, while another three only existed on paper and another four had seized to exist. While *novostroiki* could be considered as special cases with a set of specific problems related to their disputed legal or administrative status, they can be considered as rural areas within Bishkek's urban periphery, and issues of community security are of reasonably similar character as in other communities. This was indicated in earlier analyses by the Civic Union "For Reforms and Result" in 2014, according to which nearly all surveyed non-governmental organisations working on security-related issues in Kyrgyzstan noted LCPCs as ineffective or "dying" bodies and found residents unaware of LCPCs and their activities. For instance, a survey conducted in Osh and Bishkek in 2013 suggests that 74 per cent of residents were not aware of LCPCs (CURR 2014: 10). Sheranova further cites findings from Saferworld research conducted in 2010 that "the LCPCs existed only on paper" and that many of them lacked an understanding of core functions, lacked training in conflict resolution and appropriate working conditions, and that most LCPCs are inefficient because of poor state funding that leaves staff unmotivated and forces them to work on multiple positions at the *ayil okmotu* level (Sheranova 2020: 126).

From our own experience and interviews with people working in this sector, it is realistic to assume that a third if not less of all 557 municipalities have actively working LCPCs, with most of these bodies existing only on paper but

not actively operating.[9] With activities often being close to zero, it is no surprise that people are usually completely unaware of LCPCs, let alone their functions and purposes, or mistakenly believe *aksakal* courts to be the sole institution doing security-related work in their community (UNODC / WSC 2018: 9). Another report from a national forum on "Co-Security and Crime Prevention Policy" corroborates these findings (CURR 2018a: 17).

Although the Law on Crime Prevention (adopted in 2005 and modified in 2015) states that LCPCs are local mechanisms of conflict prevention and mediation, they are not part of the National System of Early Warning and Conflict Prevention led by the State Agency for Local Governance and Inter-Ethnic Relations (Russian abbreviation: GAMSUMO).[10] While it could be argued that the main responsible early warning bodies – so-called "consultative interethnic councils" and "public reception centres" throughout multi-ethnic communities (ibid.) – are sufficient to ensure the system's effectiveness, the fact that LCPCs are not integrated in the state agency is another missed opportunity to make them more relevant. Furthermore, LCPCs do not participate in the regional discussion on security and conflict-related issues arranged by Regional Coordination Councils – a local dialogue platform to coordinate on issues related to peacebuilding and conflict resolution – despite their general eligibility to do so (CURR 2014).

All of these observations point to the fact that the efforts of IOs and national NGOs to create, activate and sustain the production of security on the municipal level need to be scaled up to nationwide efforts to deal with insecurity and prevent crime and violence in communities across the country. Here, it becomes clear that the "production" and "practice" of security cannot be transformative on their own but need to be scaled up through processes of replication, standardisation and regulation of the production of security. In other words, the "governing" of security needs to be made responsive to what is needed to produce security "on the ground".

Thus far, however, attempts to improve the conditions, standards and policies to shape a more conducive environment for LCPCs' production of security have been of limited success. Since the events and projects from which these accounts were taken, new changes and progress have been brought about that give reason to hope. For example, the minimum term for neighbourhood police inspectors has been set to three years, enabling them to develop closer ties with the communities they serve. At the beginning of 2020, a new salary package with a 40 per cent wage increase for internal affairs and law enforcement was passed and could help to address the often precarious economic situation (and corresponding pressures towards succumbing to illicit and illegal activities) of

9 Interviews by Lottholz with ex-MIA staff (Bishkek, 24 May 2019) and a representative of the Civic Union "For Reforms and Result" (Bishkek, 10 September 2019).

10 See http://gamsumo.gov.kg/ru/?page_id=1276 (accessed 27 October 2020).

these professional groups (Sputnik 2019). Besides these improvements of the preconditions of security work at the community level, governing elites and civil society have prepared a new draft law "On Crime Prevention" and a corresponding "National Strategy for Crime Prevention", which will address the issues raised above and have the potential to outlast the current backsliding into populist rule. In this sense, it seems that further steps are being taken to enable the governing of security – i.e. legislative and policy programming that set the wider frameworks and standards of security provision – to accommodate the issues and needs raised by organisations and people involved in practices of security provision on the ground.

Summary

We have mapped and traced the linkages of community-level practices of security on the one hand, and their institutional, policy and legal ramifications, on the other. Bridging the divide between discourse-focused and practice-based approaches to security studies, we have argued that a problem in Kyrgyzstan in the aftermath of inter-communal clashes in 2010 – a situation similar to that of many other countries transitioning from violent conflict or political rule to democracy– is that power holders limit their scope to "governing, but not producing security". That is, authorities often limit their actions to securing the effectiveness of key state institutions and capacities to quell re-emerging conflict and protests, but only rarely and to a lesser degree get involved in processes geared towards creating and maintaining safe communities at large.

To situate our argument theoretically, we have drawn on literature of security sector reform and peacebuilding in Central Asia and beyond to show how community security reform in Kyrgyzstan can be understood through Heathershaw's concept of a "global performance state" that carries out superficial, if not "virtual" reform to curry international support while maintaining internal stability and control (Heathershaw 2014; see also 2009). That is, as in neighbouring Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstani authorities allow security and law enforcement programmes financed and run by international organisations and domestic NGOs while steering these in ways beneficial and unchallenging to their own interests. Our analysis of data and existing research on community security in Kyrgyzstan demonstrates that reform towards community-based policing was largely performative and artificial. In particular, Kyrgyzstan lacked a substantial reform that produced security on the ground, even if authorities succeeded in enacting a superficial performative reform. Heathershaw's "global performance state" concept is best suited to explain this discrepancy. As the analysed practices on the ground demonstrated, the state responses were limited to the adoption of

new policies, concepts or amending laws, while actual work at meso- and micro-levels was handled by various international and civil society organisations. Bearing in mind that the presence of these international projects is of a short-term nature, a serious step is needed for the government to move from "declarative" reform steps to "real", tangible ones that deal with the way security can be maintained in communities across the country.

Given the capacity issues described above one could argue that a limited scope of government action and delegation of tasks to civil society and international actors is only logical. However, we would further clarify what we think authorities need to do in order to produce, rather than just govern security. Taking the concrete example of LCPCs as a prime body for the production and maintenance of security on the communal level, for these bodies to function across the country authorities would need to, first, ensure financial support and salaries for staff, then to further facilitate the clarification of the legislative framework and jurisdiction of LCPCs and, lastly, to ensure that joint policing in communities and other activities aimed at building trust between communities and the police are actually implemented, tracked and assessed in terms of their impact. Most community-level activities are currently run and supported by international projects, and their longevity without such external support seems limited.

Finally, let us summarize a number of implications raised during our analysis that we find worth elaborating. First, by comparing the actual practices of security and law enforcement with the authorities' stance toward legislation and policy-making, we have demonstrated the importance of such a multi-level perspective when it comes to grasping security affairs in a given context. The insights from the paper require further research to be consolidated, but also provide entry points for future studies that could analyse the importance of LCPCs from the perspective of nodal security governance or from anthropological and ethnographic perspectives. Second, Kyrgyzstan's Local Crime Prevention Centres are a unique institution combining the traditional adjudication and mediation of *aksakal* courts with contemporary and widely-circulating concepts of crime prevention. With the necessary support and scaling up by the state, LCPCs could play a crucial role in bringing the country's decades-long police reform efforts to success. Third, beyond this particular context, the cooperation of various stakeholders within LCPCs could also serve as an example for the implementation of community policing in other states currently working to transform their police (such as Ukraine, Georgia, Mongolia, and others). Even if some of these have been referred to as successful cases, the longevity and depth of these success stories remain to be proven and require further in-depth research and evaluation.

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Appendix 1: Peacebuilding and security programmes in Kyrgyzstan, 2010–2019

Project Name	Implementing Organisation	Aims	Outreach	allocated amount in EUR	Donor	Year
Police Advisory Group Program upon the request from interim president Otunbaeva in 2010, soon replaced by CSI	OSCE Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe	assist Kyrgyz police in post-conflict rehabilitation, improving policing capacities, maintaining public order	South-wide: 52 unarmed police officers		OSCE	July 2010
Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) various projects as part of the Immediate Response Facility	UNHCR, UNDP, UNODC, OHCHR, UNICEF, UNFPA UN Women	conflict reconciliation and conflict prevention, youth and women's empowerment, women's networks, equal access to infrastructure	South-wide: youth and women's networks, Water Users' Associations, Youth Centres	8.86 million	United Nations	2010–2011
The Kyrgyz Republic Transition Initiative / Office of Transition Initiatives and 300 implementing partners from both civil society and local administrations	The International Resources Group representation (IRG) in the Kyrgyz Republic	conflict mitigation, improving governance, support of political transition (securing democracy, support of long-term development)	Nation-wide: 450 projects involving 300 implementing partners: local self-governance, national institutions, INGOs, NGOs, LCPCs, youth (Youth Banks), women (Women's Banks)	17.72 million	USAID	2010–2013
Youth Theater for Peace (YTP)	IREX International Research & Exchanges Board	peace promotion through youth theatres	Nation-wide: 33 school theatres, 284 youth trained in innovative theatre methodology (Drama for Conflict Transformation)	971,872	USAID	2010–2014
Community Security Initiative (CSI)	OSCE Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe	improving public trust in the police and enhancing safety and security in the communities	Nation-wide: provided with 28 international police advisors, 18 "mobile police stations" in 63 rural administrations, 2,500 police officers trained		EU and 21 individual governments	2010–2015
REACH a joint initiative for informing more effective humanitarian action	TASK coalition led by Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED)	conflict mitigation, socio-economic mapping	Nation-wide: local communities, INGOs, NGOs	5 million	EU	2011–2013
Yntymak Jarchylary "Peace Messengers"	IRET, Aimira, Alga local NGOs	conflict mitigation	Nation-wide: 550 peace messengers made up of women, youth and community leaders		OSCE	2011–2013

Improving Livelihoods and Peacebuilding in the Fergana Valley	GIZ	peacebuilding, improving livelihoods, food security	South-wide: 137 villages, farming households	1.5 million	German government (BMZ)	2011–2014
Territorial Youth Councils	IRET local NGO	building capacity of youth, strengthening inter-ethnic tolerance and mutual trust, maintaining peace, later mostly capacity building in youth work	starting in 12 territorial councils of the city of Osh, then extended to Jalal-Abad, Batken, and Tokmok		OSCE	2011–2016
COMTACA Conflict Mitigation through Targeted Analysis and Community Action in Kyrgyzstan	ACTED	early warning analysis and response	South-wide: early warning networks and local self-governance	1.77 million	USAID	2012–2014
Women's Peace Banks	EFCA Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia	improving the role of women in peacebuilding, conflict mitigation	South-wide: 16 Women Initiative Groups, 160 Peace Bank members, 413 mini-grants	1.04 million	USAID	2012–2014
Preventing Conflict through Participatory Approaches to Community Safety in the Ferghana Valley	Saferworld (UK)	community security through local partnership with security providers	South-wide (and Tajikistan): Local Crime Prevention Centers, security providers	478,941	Foreign Commonwealth Office UK	2012–2015
Projects under Peacebuilding Priority Plan (PPP) upon the request from the President of the Kyrgyz Republic in 2012 to support long-term peacebuilding	UNHCR, UNDP, UNODC, OHCHR, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women	rule of law, justice, improving public-state trust, improving human security, promotion of national cohesion, support of new policies and reforms	Nation-wide: 96 municipalities: youth, women, local self-governance, national governance	13.38 million	United Nations	2013–2016
The Good Governance and Public Administration Strengthening (GGPAS) Programme	IRG	improving state service delivery, democratic growth, support of long-term stability and development	Nation-wide: local self-governance, national institutions	11.45 million	USAID	2013–2016
Community Security Effectiveness / Community Policing	Saferworld UK	support of activities of LCPCs and local police, improving community-police partnerships	Nation-wide: Local Crime Prevention Centres, security providers, NGOs, national government	4.51 million	US State Department	2013–2019

Source: Compiled by Philipp Lottholz and Arzuu Sheranova