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Assembling Community Policing: Peacekeeping and the Ghana Police Service's Transformation Agenda

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Abstract

This article shows how peacekeeping experiences manifest in the Ghana Police Service's (GPS) community policing strategies and practices in often inconspicuous and individualized ways. Peacekeeping constitutes an important element of what the article refers to as the community policing assemblage. However, the article emphasises that the shape of the community policing assemblage is conditioned by a wide range of discourses and practices beyond peacekeeping. Global and national policies and strategies relating to policing, including the GPS's own transformation agenda, local and individual interpretations and translations of peacekeeping experiences and what community policing means, all play into how the assemblage is formed. Thus, the article disentangles the effects of peacekeeping and puts it in the context of broader policing in Ghana, based on in-depth interviews and observations with police officers, mainly from the GPS's community policing headquarters in Tesano, Accra. It concludes that while several studies have shown how peacekeeping has shaped Ghana's security institutions and sense of role in the world, it has not been able to chip away at or counteract the deep and deepening control that security institutions in the country are subjected to by politicians. Arguing that the peacekeeping experience may have a profound transformative effect on individual police officers, yet little if any impact in terms of depoliticising the GPS and policing more broadly, is a less sweeping conclusion. However, suggesting that the effects of peacekeeping often are local and individualized, at times deeply embodied experiences, is also a more accurate conclusion empirically.

Keywords: community policing, UN peacekeeping, assemblage theory, Ghana

Résumé

Cet article montre comment les expériences de maintien de la paix se manifestent dans les stratégies et les pratiques de Police Communautaire de la Police Nationale du Ghana, de manière souvent discrète et individualisée. Le maintien de la paix constitue un élément important de ce que l'article appelle l'assemblage de la Police Communautaire. Cependant, l'article souligne que la forme de l'assemblage de la Police Communautaire est conditionnée par un large éventail de discours et de pratiques au-delà du maintien de la paix. Les politiques et stratégies mondiales et nationales relatives au maintien de l'ordre, y compris le programme de transformation de la Police Nationale du Ghana, les interprétations et traductions locales et individuelles des expériences de maintien de la paix et de la signification de la Police Communautaire, sont autant d'éléments qui influencent la formation de l'assemblage. Ainsi, l'article démêle les effets du maintien de la paix et les place dans le contexte plus large du maintien de l'ordre au Ghana, sur la base d'entretiens approfondis et d'observations des officiers de police, principalement de la Direction Générale de la Police Communautaire de la Police Nationale sise à Tesano, Accra. Il conclut que si plusieurs études ont montré comment le maintien de la paix a façonné les institutions de sécurité du Ghana et le sens de son rôle dans le monde, il n'a pas été en mesure d'ébranler ou de contrecarrer le contrôle profond et croissant auquel les institutions de sécurité du pays sont soumises par les politiciens. Soutenir que l'expérience du maintien de la paix peut avoir un effet transformateur profond sur les agents de police individuels, avec peu ou pas d'impact en termes de dépolitisation de la Police Nationale et du maintien de l'ordre en général, est une conclusion moins radicale. Cependant, suggérer que les effets du maintien de la paix sont souvent des expériences locales et individualisées, parfois profondément incarnées, est également une conclusion plus précise sur le plan empirique.

Mots clés: police communautaire, maintien de la paix de l'ONU, théorie de l'assemblage, Ghana.

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Introduction[1]

Dwyer (2017) and Cunliffe (2018) argue that the encouragement to use force in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions can lead to outcomes that are illiberal and anti-democratic in the countries that contribute personnel. Yet, in Ghana's case a dominant narrative has been that "involvement in peacekeeping has contributed to the country's stability and the consolidation of its democracy" (Aning & Aubyn, 2013:288). Aning notes, referencing a history of military coups and rule between the 1960s and 1990s (Oquaye, 2000), that for "a military with the historical burden of intrusion into Ghana's body politic, peace operations are [···] serving as a diversionary strategy to keep the military from domestic mutinies" (2007:138). Ghana has been a consistent contributor of troops to peacekeeping missions since independence in 1957, which has shaped the country's outlook on and declared role in West Africa and beyond (Aning & Danso, 2020).

However, peacekeeping has had a wide range of concrete effects across Ghana's security institutions (Albrecht, 2022). This article analyses how peacekeeping experiences manifest in the Ghana Police Service's (GPS) community policing strategies and practices in often inconspicuous and individualised ways. I argue that the concept of assemblage is helpful in understanding how community policing, as a global discourse and ancillary set of practices, affects order-making practices in Ghana. I demonstrate how different sources of community policing – from global policies, peacekeeping experiences and locally embedded interpretations – assemble different component parts together in larger wholes or what might be referred to as *community policing assemblages* (cf. Müller, 2015:109). The concept of the community policing assemblage, as it stretches "across national boundaries in terms of actors, knowledges, technologies, norms and values" (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2011:95), helps illuminate how ideas and practices from peacekeeping have intersected with domestic security provision and politics, locally in everyday policing practices, and individually as embodied and often deeply personal experiences of transformation (Albrecht, 2022).

The article explores how micro-effects of peacekeeping play into the inherently contradictory work of the GPS's community policing headquarters in Tesano, Accra. Community policing represents a central pillar in the GPS's 'transformation agenda,' initiated in 2017 (Business Ghana, 2018) and constitutes an attempt to counter the police's historically embedded reputation of being corrupt and under political control by projecting the ideals of a transparent and reciprocal relationship between the police and population, "citizen inclusion in public life" and "accountable governance" (Kyed & Albrecht, 2015b:265). The community policing headquarters has been set up, on the one hand to do outreach and education on crime prevention and advocate, and on the other to gather intelligence in lieu of community policing (see Bullock, 2013). This intelligence is then forwarded to other departments dealing with criminal investigations and operations, for instance. As such, in a double pull, the GPS seeks to build community relations, but at the same time undermines the trust that these relations are supposedly built on.

Many officers working in the community policing headquarters have been deployed with peacekeeping missions, which has had a profound impact on how they view their policing roles when they return home to Ghana. However, this experience of personal transformation is often difficult to realise in practice within the confines of the under-funded and highly politicised GPS. To understand how the experience of peacekeeping assembles with everyday policing and is made sense of in the context of community policing, the article's point of departure is the basic assumption that ideas are never simply transferred. When experiences, as they are embodied, leave the context of peacekeeping (Mosse, 2005:16; Mosse & Lewis, 2005:22-23), they inevitably disassemble from one or more multiplicities of actors, things and discourses, and reassemble in others (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2017:15; see Albrecht, 2020:12). The effects of peacekeeping may be comprehensive, structural and spectacular, for instance, when the connection is made to a military's plotting of coups (Dwyer, 2017) or the militarisation of internal security (Hoelscher & Norheim-Martinsen, 2014). However, effects are more often – as is the case with community policing – disjointed, local and individualised with limited, if any, consequences for policing as a general practice (cf. Albrecht, 2018:219). This evidently does not mean that these effects are any less important to fully grasp.

Because peacekeeping experiences manifest in domestic policing in often inconspicuous ways, they are best exposed via the personal investment and long-term commitment inherent to ethnographic methods. This article is thus based on interview data and observations, mainly from 2018-2019.[2] These methods enable access

[1] This article is an output from the research programme Domestic Security Implications of Peacekeeping in Ghana (D-SIP), funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and supported by the Danish Fellowship Centre.

[2] While the data set referred to here was collected specifically in Tesano, among police officers in the community policing headquarters, the article also draws on fieldwork in Nima, an inner-city neighborhood in Accra, where I have carried out ongoing ethnographic fieldwork since November 2018. This latter body of data does not deal specifically with the connection between peacekeeping and policing, but more broadly with police work in urban Ghana. In combination, these two data sets encompass more than eight months of fieldwork and 200-plus interviews ranging from short conversations to hour-long semi-structured interviews.

to the internal values and tacit understandings that guide police work (Bacon et al, 2020), including officers' more nuanced and reflexive perceptions of their roles and what shapes them. Integral to this analysis is how deeply politicised the police and policing in Ghana are, which has intensified during the last two decades, both at a structural level and in the everyday. What is at stake are fundamental, perhaps irreconcilable, contradictions of policing, between discursive and conceptual representations of idealised community policing and everyday practices of policing.

Peacekeeping is, to state the obvious, not the only source of experience for police officers. Indeed, it would be analytically distorting to see peacekeeping as anything other than one among many ways in which conceptions and practices of community policing – indeed, *any* security practice – shape, and are generated and shaped by order-making practices and logics. The challenge is to analytically disentangle and accentuate peacekeeping, not necessarily as a particularly transformative elongated moment of individual and institutional experience, but as forming part of what has shaped community policing in Ghana, among many other influences in both global policy and local practice and experience of order-making. It may be a less all-embracing conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis, but it may also be one that is more accurate empirically.

The article first expands on the notion of community policing as an international assemblage, followed by a discussion of how it has become integral to the GPS's current transformation agenda. Second, it turns to how community policing is enacted by the community policing headquarters in Accra. Third, I present data on how police officers talk about their roles in peacekeeping, and how they see the experience as having fundamentally changed their view on what policing means to them. I conclude by emphasising that the deep, historically embedded politicisation of policing in Ghana means that, while peacekeeping may have a significant impact on officers, it does not fundamentally transform the GPS.

Community policing: assembling global policy and local practice

Grabosky pointed out over a decade ago that community policing "means many things to many people," and "has a wonderful connotation" with its "community" focus (2009:1). In turn, Wisler and Onwudiwe explain how it "started decades ago in liberal democracies," specifically gathering pace in the UK and North America in the 1980s, "and rapidly became a global movement" (2009:2; see also Kyed & Albrecht, 2015a). Community policing has figured centrally in both post-conflict reconstruction and democratisation processes in the global South since the 1990s (Albrecht & Kyed, 2015; Baker, 2008; Brogden & Nijhar, 2005; Wisler & Onwudiwe, 2009). Defined in opposition to centralised and paramilitary forms of state-sanctioned policing (Ruteere & Pommerolle, 2003), it reflects a human security turn in development thinking, and a notion of policing that focuses on the safety and needs of the general population, rather than regime preservation (Duffield, 2004).

The emphasis in this section is on the ambiguity of community policing as it is stretched from an ideational global policy regime of what policing *should* be into how it *actually* occurs in everyday practice. As such, community policing filters into and both shapes and is shaped by the engagement between those who conduct policing and those who are policed. On the one hand, it is a label, a text-as-policy, that is globally recognisable as a way of talking about policing that originates from a specific geographic space and form of government. On the other hand, the position of 'the community' in policing – in practice often embodied by leaders such as chiefs and elders, and security groups emerging outside or in loose affiliation with the state-sanctioned police – is central and a given across the global South, including in urban and rural Ghana. This is why the police commander in Nima Division in central Accra can argue that within his division, they "don't have" community policing, because "it is not formalised" (Interview, Accra, Nov 2018), that is, regularised and institutionalised. At the same time, in everyday policing in Nima, engaging with community members of some level of authority, built up around political connections, tradition or proactive involvement in order-making, is decisive, indeed, the foundation of everyday police work (for more on traditional authorities and policing in Ghana, see Abdallah & Aning, 2022).

Within the framework of what Wisler and Onwudiwe refer to as "a global movement" (2009:2), community policing is a practical manifestation of the interdependence of security and development. It is emphasised as a 'soft,' decentralised version of security sector reform related to community advancement and safety. Community policing is also, as an assumed inclusive and dialogical approach to security, believed to lead to more accountable and less violent police services, which in turn will improve overall state legitimacy (Brogden & Njihar, 2005; Groenewald & Peake, 2004). This speaks to broader global policy discussions over the past two decades about how to transform security and justice as public services, and how statutory and non-statutory actors should be engaged simultaneously in reform efforts (Albrecht & Kyed, 2011). The so-called multi-layered approach, for instance, that emerged in 2006, suggested targeting "the multiple points where service occurs" to strengthen "linkages between state institutions and local justice and non-state providers" (Chirayath et al, 2005:26). In turn, this encouraged the creation of "new mediating institutions wherein actors from both realms [state and non-state] can meet – following simple, transparent, mutually agreed-upon, and accountability rules

to craft new arrangements that both sides can own and enforce" (ibid). Community policing is one institutional representation of the attempt to merge state and non-state, make policing more representative, and as such more aligned with public demands.

International discourse on community policing provides a framework within which to articulate a specific approach to order-making that centres on the importance of engagement between police and public in defining safety needs. However, this discourse and the programming that supports it do not in themselves explain why the notion of community policing resonates in Ghana and many other countries across West Africa (and the global South more broadly). What has been labelled community policing has an effect because these elements intertwine with already existing local structures of authority and practice in 'the community.' They neither 'fill a gap' left behind by limited or absent state services, nor can they be reduced to a by-product of neoliberal globalisation (Pratten & Sen, 2007) or abstracted to a "global movement" of community policing (cf. Wisler & Onwudiwe, 2009:2). Because it inevitably will be embedded in already existing structures of authority, community policing as an institutional expression and practice can never be apolitical, but rather will assemble with specific cultural and historical notions of security and order that are built into relationships of interdependence, opposition and appropriation (Kyed, 2009).

Transforming the GPS

The GPS's "low moral standing" (Tankebe, 2008:190) in the eyes of Ghanaians is widely emphasised in both the literature on policing in Ghana and public discourse. Atuguba (2007:5) asserts that the GPS is both "politicized" and "too powerful," while Aning (2006:3) notes that "an underlying sense of mistrust" characterises relations between police and public. Historically, Tankebe (2008:190) suggests, these characteristics can be traced back to militarised and regime-preserving colonial policing practices that were institutionalised in 1873 with the establishment of the Gold Coast Police Force which became a regime-preserving instrument for the British colonial administration. These characteristics have been retained, or even worsened, since independence and thus policing in Ghana remains "a direct creation of the British colonial powers," according to Boateng and Darko (2016:15). The role of the police, throughout their history, as an extension of the political class in Ghana rather than public servants, is reflected in contemporary everyday policing. The station officer in Tamale explained: "[Upon an arrest of a politically connected figure], if I want to put a small resistance, they call my commander in order to give this guy bail, whether he is bailable or not. Investigation will not even start, and he will be released" (Interview, Tamale, April 2019). Indicated here is that while the GPS struggles with underfunding and has been shaped by neo-patrimonial practices that commonly are equated with corruption, it is to its very core shaped by political interference. Recruitment into the police is a good example. It is no longer possible to become a police officer without political backing, a change from the early 2000s. As Peter, a mid-career officer at police headquarters, explained:

> The unemployment situation, when people are affiliated with political parties – 'we campaigned for you, so help us get jobs.' Government is one of the easiest ways to deliver that; you cannot bring them to a private company, you cannot, so they go to IG [inspector-general of police]: 'I have a hundred people.' The population keeps growing, and job opportunities are not huge. People who have affiliation with the party will use that to get employment. (Interview, Accra, Feb 2019)

In turn, 'political vigilantes' have emerged as a direct challenge to the GPS, recruited as private security guards by the major political parties, as well as individual politicians, as Bjarnesen (2020:297) notes.[3]Thus, while political parties and politicians play a role in challenging the GPS's legitimacy, authority and general room to manoeuvre reflecting their structured competition with each other for power in a competitive multiparty system – the same individuals and collective actors also proclaim to voters that they believe the GPS should be held more accountable. The GPS is on the one hand shaped by any ruling government to support that government's decisions, members and allies. This is a basic condition of policing in Ghana that leaves the police biased and compromised in the eyes of the political opposition and general public. On the other hand, the GPS is expected to carry out reforms that will make it "a world class police service," while following the "standards of international best practices."[4] These pieces of messaging are drawn from the GPS's vision, and were widely reiterated by the police leadership as the 'transformation agenda' was launched in early 2018. The inspector-general of police (IGP) at the time, David Asante-Apeatu, called for "effective management and delivery of justice," including "collaboration both between the criminal justice agencies and with the local communities around the whole

[3] Internal recruitment for peacekeeping is slightly more difficult to manipulate as it is the UN rather than the GPS that has the final say. However, those who are put forward for consideration are selected by police commanders across the country, leaving much room for interference, politically and otherwise, along the way (Interview, February 2019, Accra).

[4] See the GPS's website: https://police.gov.gh/en

country."[5] "To become Agile and Digital," Asante-Apeatu continued, "I am bringing together under the Transformation Programme Office some of the best minds and experts from around the World to lead the Transformation Programme, offer guidance, training and coaching, collaborate and work alongside our Officers."[6]While politicisation of the police from station level to the IGP's office is a structural condition, this is not mentioned in the context of the 'transformation agenda.' Indeed, it cannot be mentioned, and the consequences that emanate from this interference are formulated as a problem that is internal to the police rather than an externally imposed condition. Indeed, the executive secretary to the IGP at the time, Peter Toobu, was quoted as saying, "the police could not transform without a mental transformation and a collective change of mind that would give the service a new face" in order to "operate in a system called policing by consent because they [the police] needed the consent of the general public to enable them [to] do a good job" (Modern Ghana, 2017). Nevertheless, in line with political interference constituting one of the greatest challenges to the GPS, at the foundation of the transformation agenda are the government's "13 strategic objectives," developed by the New Patriotic Party (NPP) while in opposition. These propose to "review & restructure recruitment," "improve police visibility & strengthen community policing" and "improve the training of CID [Criminal Investigation Department] locally & internationally," among other initiatives. In turn, these objectives support "five key themes" formulated by the GPS, such as "community policing" and "CID," centring on "ICT," that is, information and communication technology.[7]

Community policing figures as a central theme in the GPS's transformation agenda and the government's 13 strategic objectives. The orientation towards 'the community', when treated as neutrally distributed interest groups rather than a field of power (Albrecht, 2015:620-621), suggests a well-meaning attempt to challenge the historical foundation of policing in Ghana as distinctly regime-preserving (Boateng & Darko, 2016; Tankebe, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). Indeed, during a focus group discussion (FGD) with members of the GPS's transformation unit, the public's lack of "confidence" in, "respect" for and "satisfaction" with the police were put forward to explain why transformation was needed (FGD, August 2019, Accra). At the same time, it was noted, "as it stands now, we do not have a strategic plan." "This," the unit's deputy explained pointing to a document, "was prepared for 2010-2014. This strategic plan [for the GPS] was not followed through." Hence, he continued, "vision, mission, values – that's where the strategy ended" (ibid). Moreover, no funding is attached to the work of the unit, while "necessary action" relating to its work is taken by the IGP, the 'ultimate Big Man' in the police organisation, to paraphrase de Smedt (2009:583; see also Nugent, 1995). Indeed, in one news report, the importance of the transformation agenda was presented as putting "pressure on Government to adequately equip the Service to better carry out its duties [...] [and] to help make the Ghana Police a world-class police service" (GHBusinessonline, 2017). With limited funding attached to, or strategic direction of, the transformation agenda, and with limited authority to take executive decisions in the transformation unit, the impetus behind the unit was primarily to *signal* good intentions to the public, a direction internally in the police organisation, and, as indicated in the last quote, a call for more funding.

Community policing

The transformation unit's patchwork strategy, limited funding apart from human resources, and lack of authority to make decisions have not undercut messaging inherent to the transformation agenda within the GPS. This became evident during interviews with members from the community policing headquarters. Even though it is formally part of the main police headquarters in central Accra, it was set up in a building in Tesano near the police training school, six kilometres away. This spatial separation represents a pragmatic solution to lack of office space, but also a structural split within the GPS between an identified need, as a member of the transformation unit explained, "for the public to have confidence in the police" (FGD, August 2019, Accra), and a continued bias towards regime preservation (as elaborated in Albrecht, 2022; see also Boateng and Darko, 2016; Tankebe, 2008). It has the effect of compartmentalising community policing, but also accentuates its distance from criminal investigations, operations and counterterrorism – as well as the IGP in central Accra. That only 40 officers with limited options for transportation are attached to the unit further emphasises the void between a transformation agenda that speaks of community policing, and the resources made available.

Nevertheless, because of how transformation has been communicated, there is also a strong sense in Tesano, as one of the leading officers noted, that "the [community policing] unit is spearheading the transformation [of the GPS]. The transformation agenda, when it happens, and it goes down, and is accepted [by the population], it will transform the whole police service into a new force altogether" (Interview, Accra, Nov 2018). "We are the, like, pipeline, we tell the people about their rights," another officer offered (Interview, Accra,

[5] David Asante-Apeautu, 'IGP's message – The transformation agenda': http://www.police.gov.gh/igp-s-message.html
[6] Ibid.
[7] The 13 strategic objectives and five key themes are drawn from a poster hung on the wall of the transformation unit, located in the police headquarters in Accra.

July 2019), indicating a key and contradictory role of the community policing headquarters. These officers are expected to stand on the frontline of the GPS's transformation and promote it to the public, which catches individual officers in having to defend the GPS as an institution, while acknowledging and in the process denouncing everyday occurrences of colleagues taking bribes, demanding unwarranted fines, and seemingly acting with impunity. Because these practices are such an integrated part of policing in Ghana, it is a contradictory movement between alignment and distance from the organisation that community policing officers are part and parcel of, which one officer rationalised in the following way: "Since the transformation agenda is from the IGP, we all have to reform. Nobody will accept bad nuts. Since reformation is coming, you better get yourself in it or the law will take you out" (Interview, Accra, Nov 2018).

Speaking to officers in the community policing headquarters, it was clear that international concepts of what constitutes 'good policing' figured centrally in how they frame their role. The emergence of community policing reflects, to follow Tankebe, "an increasing recognition that in a modern and complex democratic society, any power relationship of command and obedience predicated solely on a deterrent philosophy cannot be a sufficient regulatory strategy for securing public compliance with the law and general co-operation with legal authorities" (2008:186). Conceptions of community policing that are circulating internationally were reflected in how they made sense of their role, and as one officer noted, "community policing is an internationally accepted concept, we wanted to move from a reactive to an active role" (Interview, Accra, Nov 2018).Reflecting liberal-democratic values of engaging the citizenry in essentially providing their own security, community policing was also presented as a necessary means to consolidate democratic policing practices – and, as Ziegler and Neild (2002) suggest, ultimately ensure economic development. Like in other countries, where existing policing agencies are considered to be corrupt and regime-preserving, community policing appears popular by default, and because communities are rarely consulted on their security needs or given the opportunity to hold the state police to account, community policing is seen to hold the potential to transform police-citizen relations positively. This is not just about transforming the police, but also the public:

> In Ghana, one of the biggest complaints, the major one, is about bribery. When they [i.e., the public] come to file a complaint, they need to pay. You have to be given a medical form to go to the hospital. You have to pay. When you want bail, they charge money. Your passport is missing, you have an extract of occurrence[8] – you have to pay. When you come to the police station, as a civilian, you have to pay. There are certain cases where the civilian should be educated. (Interview, Accra, Nov 2018)

Such moments of education, at times bordering on open confrontation, played out in several ways during fieldwork for this article. On one occasion, in a busy lorry park in Lapaz, a suburb of Accra, five officers ended up in loud, impassioned, if not aggressive, discussions with drivers and street vendors complaining about the police fining them and taking bribes, when they felt they had done nothing wrong. In turn, the officers would both discuss whether the fine was in fact appropriate, and explain the law to them so that they would know when to resist unlawful police practices. The police officers had gone to the lorry park as part of outreach activities that they regularly carried out, discussing policing with the public, and the public's own responsibility to push back on police officers not following the law.On several occasions during our fieldwork, in Legon and North Kaneshie for instance, police officers lectured school children and churchgoers about how to stay away from crime and recognise criminal activity. These 'educational' activities are carried out to show the GPS's willingness to form partnerships between police and communities in fighting crime and disorder, ultimately to eradicate mutual suspicion and hostility, and include both police and the citizenry in defining and responding to local security needs, while making policing generally more proactive. As one officer explained:

> When you come here [to Accra], what are you going to do? It is becoming more dangerous in Accra, because of lack of work, the youth want quick money, they don't want to suffer. They don't want to go from one to two, they want to go from one to ten. Some of our politicians capitalise on this situation, grab them, and use them [that is, primarily young men]. This unit [the community policing headquarters] has been set up to partner with the community through a proactive strategy to reduce crime, so that the community will be safe. We try to sell the concept, because people think of the police as corrupt. We want to remove that. (Interview, Accra, Nov 2018)

Ironically, in its mission to foster trust, community outreach has an extra benefit for the GPS of providing intelligence to aid investigations. During patrols of select neighbourhoods of Accra, officers spoke to community members, including local neighbourhood watch groups, in the areas that they visited, and reported their observations and conversations back to the commander of the police district in which they patrol. It is at this

[8] Extract of occurrence refers to when a case is transferred from one station to another, from a regular station to a specialized unit and when a case is reported in the wrong jurisdiction.

point, officers explained during interviews, that policing and intelligence gathering merge, as this information is often circulated to other GPS departments conducting criminal investigations.

Policing in peacekeeping

A community policing assemblage is conceptually and practically constituted by complex and multidimensional networks that materialise in a localised space. They have many different origins and include abstract notions of global policy regimes as well as concrete experiences like those made during deployment with peacekeeping missions. The process by which these networks come together may be largely invisible to the citizens who are meant to benefit from the safety provided by community policing, perhaps less so to the police officers themselves,[9] yet are nevertheless real in their material effects (Higate and Utas, 2017). What is clear is that as the idea of community policing travels, the way that police officers reinterpret and reinvent the policy idea becomes key to explaining how it transforms, intertwines and influences order-making at home. Ideas are not simply 'diffused' or 'dispersed,' which illuminates the diversity and contingency of the links between things and people in translating and relocating ideas from one place to another. Change is not the outcome of *an* interface or *an* event, but a dynamic and permanently evolving process that may nevertheless appear unchanging, reproductive and static at any given point in time.

Thus, changes to how assemblages are configured are relentless, occurring through processes of innumerable instances of social interaction. In each of these myriads of instances, resources, practices, things and people are partially disassembled and reassembled ad infinitum and in slightly different constellations. This opens a space for transformation, however minuscule and insignificant to macro-political dynamics it appears in the short and medium-term. In the context of this article, these are the micro-effects of peacekeeping that often do not garner much academic attention, but nevertheless are often life-changing to the officer who goes. The analytical strength of assemblages is that they capture and accentuate this element of dynamism and unpredictability as well as the multitude, potentially innumerable, components that constitute them. The peacekeeping experience – just like the GPS's transformation agenda and local structures of authority – becomes one such source of transformation to how police officers see themselves in this world and enact their role.

Gideon, station officer in the community policing headquarters, had been on several tours both to Sudan (Darfur) and East Timor, while other police officers had been in Somalia and South Sudan. In Darfur, Gideon, like many other officers, once they arrived in the mission area, deployed away from the mission's headquarters in smaller team sites, and often in connection to internally displaced person (IDP) camps. Because not all sites had adequate numbers of civilian personnel, the police component would commonly "represent the civilian one, having the most daily interaction with IDPs and receiving feedback on their needs and local developments from them" (Caparini et al, 2015:23).

In this role of communicating with IDPs, the aim was simultaneously to mentor and build capacity of the local government police, and specifically support community-oriented policing in Darfur, through the establishment of community policing volunteers in the IDP camps. Gideon had served with UNAMID for almost two years in 2008-2010 in El Geneina, West Darfur, one of four sector headquarters, where he managed the operations desk. "Basically," he explained about his time in Darfur speaking in the present, "we are supposed to support IDPs at the various camps, and my duty takes me to have a meeting with GOS [Government of Sudan] police" (Interview, Accra, Oct 2018). In short, like in Ghana but in the more extreme context of war, they were caught in the middle, mandated to support the Sudanese government, in relation to a population that neither recognised nor trusted it:

> Kalma [a camp of 90,000 IDPs in 2007] in Darfur, it was a city in a city that opposed the [Sudanese] government in everything. This idea of community policing came, was introduced in Sudan, but the Sudanese [government] had another idea, can I say primitive? It was like, the government is controlling, and the people in Kalma did not want the government to control. The bottom line was that we had to reduce levels of crime in the camp. We talked to Sheikhs, we wanted to eat with them, but it was not easy, when you see their food. And they eat breakfast around 11AM, so they eat, and we talk. They eventually saw me as part of them, I gradually got some influence. That is where we started to introduce the [community policing] concept, and they gave us volunteers to train. (Interview, Accra, Sept 2018)

Such experiences in a context of war like Darfur, of doing outreach, identifying needs among the IDPs, reporting on developments in the camps up through the UN hierarchy, and trying to establish institutionalised links to the Sudanese police – basic community policing were bound to shape officers' outlook on their work as they returned home. This was not only, indeed, probably not even primarily, in terms of technical ability, given that the basic

[9] As the crime officer in Nima Division noted in passing: "From what I understand, something was derived from the US system, and then the UN, and then the local setting" (Interview, Accra, Nov 2018).

components of community policing are well-known to most Ghanaian police officers. Indeed, going and speaking to leaders in a community both to explain why they have come and to garner support, is not only expected but also a matter of self-protection for the police and, in peacekeeping, also the military (Albrecht & Podder, 2020). By extension, it was inevitable that staying in Darfur as an ordinary Ghanaian police officer would be a physical, bodily experience with a lasting, very personal transformative effect.

Apart from witnessing the deterrent consequences of war, deprivation and fear became key characteristics of going to Darfur. Nicholas, now an officer in the community policing headquarters, had served in Darfur, where, among his roles, he was "asked to perform night patrols," he recalled, "it wasn't easy, because the rebels where my IDP camp was [Kalma 1] were coming to attack almost every evening and firing into the camp" (Interview, Accra, July 2019). At the same time, "there are also criminals who hijack cars, and if you don't give it to them, they will kill you. Kidnapping – another problem" (ibid). Such insecurities – and hardship – extended beyond work. Nicholas continued, alluding to the inequalities within missions in terms of access to resources, which ultimately shape the distribution of danger and supplies (see Cold-Ravnkilde et al, 2017):

> That time [when I was there] there was no accommodation in the [UN] camps [for us], so I was in the town, Nyala, where we were allowed to rent our own apartment. We were Ghanaians and two Fijians. It was very risky. The weather is terrible, so when the heat comes it's over forty, not easy. I would soak a towel and put it over me – at midnight it was dry. Even the UN generator will not function well, and when the heat is too much the generators find it difficult. The UN gave us a small generator, but we could not put it on throughout the night. When you go as a police adviser, you are independent of yourself [sic], and where you stay is not a UN problem. (ibid)

Professional and personal experiences like these – whether by police or military officers – have a lasting effect, as was communicated without exception in interviews undertaken for this article. Apart from being a deeply personal experience, a self-identified change in behaviour was recognised in those who went. Recently promoted to assistance commissioner, the Nima division commander, who as a former teacher often carried out training of police staff explained: "Those who have been in mission have a better approach to policing – in terms of human rights, they are aware, cultural understanding, operations, they are able to involve their knowledge, their skills" (Interview, Accra, Aug 2019). While being mindful of how events are explained and rationalised ex post facto, necessitating a methodological investigation of both discourse (interviews) and practice (observations), the personal experience of transformation inherent to leaving Ghana for missions in Darfur and South Sudan, among others, was a recurrent theme in all interviews for this research. As one criminal investigator in Accra noted, echoing his peers: "When you come back [to Ghana] that international exposure shapes your mind and career" (Interview, Accra, July 2019).

The transformation

There is no doubt that for most police officers monetary gain — the potential to earn up to five times their normal salary (Aubyn et al, 2019) — is a big motivator for going on peacekeeping mission. As one officer in the community policing headquarters who had not yet been on mission noted: "First is the money, if I am honest, the dollar. That's why I want to go. Second, I feel happy to make people happy, make peace" (Interview, Accra, July 2019). Beyond financial gain, individual officers describe it as a genuinely transformative experience. "For benefits," Kwaku explained, "we have benefited a lot." He continued:

> My first time going to the UN, there were so many things I didn't know about: impartiality, diversity, SEA [sexual exploitation and abuse], 'no means no.' It has helped in Ghana. The way I used to see things before I left. Meeting the UN standard, talking about human rights – I was not so focused on it, I don't consider it to be, how do I put it, it was something I wasn't working with. This gender perspective. When I got there, I read about gender, and I was posted to the gender desk, and that is how I got to understand the depth of it, how it worked. When I came here, it had changed my perception of gender. In terms of policy, it should be included, they [women] should be part of it, they should be treated as men are treated, not to look down on women. (Interview, Accra, Nov 2018)

Kwaku's explanation of the profound change that he experienced by going to Darfur is characteristic of how most police officers would speak of their peacekeeping experience. Police officers alluded to the transformative effect of undeniable hardship and deprivation, but also the freedom to reflect on and broaden their existing beliefs and practices through exposure to the realities of war and engagement with colleagues of other nationalities and policing traditions. It was presented as a moment of authenticity that allowed for narratives of identity to be told, through a claim of lasting change of self, as a person and as a police officer. The UN also provided a context in which the burden of political interference, expectations to make money beyond their salary and the lack of both adequate equipment and transportation had been – if not eradicated – then lifted to a considerable extent

compared to serving in Ghana (for more on the difference between peacekeeping and local policing contexts, see Aubyn, 2022).

The implication here, then, is that peacekeeping *also* represents a tangible escape from, and a framework within which a transformation of who they are can take place. Afua, another community policing officer, put equal stress on this element of transformation in her daily routine as a direct outcome of the perspective that working in Darfur had given her: "I have been to Darfur on two occasions," she explained, "and I was the gender officer both times" (Interview, Accra, Nov 2018). Afua compared Darfur and Ghana, suggesting how the former put the latter into perspective, but also that acting on what she saw was easier in peacekeeping than when she returned home:

> Working in the gender unit made me to understand the needs of women – coming back, I realised that what was happening there [in Darfur] is happening in my own country. What I decided to do [upon returning], I am planning to move to DOVSU [Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit]. My mission experience made me understand the issues affecting women and children. Protecting women and children has become one of my desires. Child protection, when you go to Darfur, you see that children are not taken care of. We go to the deep villages within Accra, and you see the same thing. Domestic violence, it is there, women are not ready to report. Rape cases, in Darfur, we have them in Ghana, when we talk to them to report, they refuse. Three years ago, there was a man who slept with his daughter – five pregnancies. We talk to them, we try to follow up, the girl was not ready [to report]. It became difficult to take on a case like that. When you go to the mission and you see women and children suffer, it is pathetic, my mind goes back there. In the mission, I had capacity to do something, but in Ghana, what can I do? I try to do the little I can. The father and girl, I asked where the mother lives, and move her to the mother.The mission made me understand that certain problems are not only mission problems, we have them in our country, but we are just not aware. (Interview, Accra, Nov 2018)

Taking on a double role, police officers perform as implementers in an intervention space (Darfur), but it is inevitable that they channel those experiences into how they think about their role and operate back home (Ghana). These multiple processes of disassembling and reassembling of an intuitively understood policy concept (community policing) in different contexts provide insight into how ideas are generated, travel, integrate and shape existing practice and discourse. By paying attention to experiences, reflections and actions of the people who embody the intervention, we see how international policies are not uncritically accepted by those who handle their translation into contexts that carry their own structures of power, and often affect interveners as much as they are able to affect and shape it. In short, practices and discourses have different meanings and effects depending on the different constellations of power, authority and material things that they are articulated and enacted in.Studying intervention through the lens of implementers in this way reveals intervention as characterised by ambivalence, rather than necessarily confidence in the practices that they themselves are part of (Philipsen, 2020). At the same time as Gideon took part in developing and implementing community policing–related practices in the context of the UN, he, and those of his colleagues who also went on peacekeeping missions, would return home with an understanding of the importance of these experiences in a Ghanaian context:

> The experience there [in 2008–2010] shaped me when I came here [to the community policing headquarters in 2011]. When I saw the people that I worked with there, when I came to Ghana, it made me feel that working with everyone is possible. And it is helping. For instance, the difficulties we had getting volunteers in our own country. If it is possible here, it should be done there. We start with advocacy. (Interview, Accra, Nov 2018)

There is the sense of ontological transformation that the peacekeeping experience produces in those who go, who, according to their own analysis and experience, have become better police officers as a consequence. They report that their communication skills are better, they understand the problems that they are confronted with in more nuanced ways, and they are more sensitive to both the needs and concerns of civilians. Peacekeeping gives individual officers a genuine chance to reflect on their work back home. The important take–away here is how police officers wish to present and communicate what deploying with a peacekeeping mission has meant to them in how they interpret their work. Of equal importance, not least in the context of this article, is how those experiences project onto their role as police officers in Ghana. The politicisation of the GPS, underfunding of everyday policing, and the neo–patrimonial logic that governs order–making (and authority) thwart what interviewees for this article considered to be the positive aspects of going on peacekeeping.

Being deeply politicised and economically lopsided ultimately mean that policing is for the poor. This is commonly accepted within the police. One community policing officer in Tesano remarked: "Our ministers, politicians, those people with big, big companies, you will never see them at the police station" (Interview, Accra, July 2019). Political direction is integral to policing, and not just because the president appoints the IGP, often singled out as the original source of politicising the GPS, or as discussed above in how recruitment has become a way for politicians to reward supporters. It is at the back of any police officer's mind when he or she makes

an arrest. The consequences of arresting someone who is politically well-connected or, indeed, a politician could have considerable implications, from not being able to pursue a case, shut down through a phone call, to being transferred to another police district. This is what happened to one informant who had not served in southern Ghana for over a decade:

> I was working with MTTU [Motor Traffic and Transport Department] at the time. We encountered two vehicles that turned out to be of high-level officials, but we did not know initially, there was no description on the cars, indicating that they were government vehicles. When they wanted to leave the scene, I said it would be better if they would go to my office, process them and grant them bail. As I entered the car, I realised that it was a government vehicle, and when we got to the junction where the police station was, I realised that they were not going to stop. I told them that what they were doing was illegal, basically kidnapping. I picked one of the bags in the car; luckily it was his laptop bag and I threw it out the window. When X realised that, they parked the cars and gave me a good beating. I was alone, so they beat me and threw me into the bush. Somebody saw me being beaten, he stopped and came to my rescue. They were taken to the regional police headquarters. The police did the investigation, it came out that they had beaten on duty. Subsequently, I was called to the office, the inspector-general said that the people would be charged to court, but he also said: 'If these people are sent to court, what do you gain? How do you want them to be treated?' But the decision is not for me to take. The next thing I saw was a move to the north. (Interview, location not disclosed, April 2019)

The case appears extreme. However, the fear of being punished, possibly by transfer, would often come up in conversations with police officers about what would happen if they did not obey orders 'from above.' In short, all police officers in Ghana must manoeuvre a police organisation that is shaped fundamentally by these dynamics. When peacekeeping experiences are reassembled as police officers return to the community policing headquarters in Tesano, the process may have changed the individual's perception of his or her role as an officer, but this does not lead to structural changes in how policing is done in Ghana.

Conclusion

This article shows how the experience of peacekeeping plays out in the context of community policing in Ghana. The article has shown how the notion of assemblages challenges the assumption that peacekeeping mainly influences countries that host missions, and that what happens at one level, eg, the international, can be isolated from another level, eg, the local. The practices and discourse of peacekeeping reach across state boundaries, intersect with domestic security provision in national institutions and everyday policing. At the same time, the article emphasises that focussing on assemblages in the abstract and – primarily – as global phenomena belittles the role of the individual in giving shape to, transporting, and practicing it. To understand the influence of peacekeeping on policing in Ghana is not just to understand the institutions involved, but also the micro-effects that are both embodied and often personal experiences of transformation (Albrecht, 2022).

The point that this article also makes is that there is a danger of overestimating the transformative effect of peacekeeping which, even though it may have a substantial impact, has not fundamentally altered how security as a whole is organised in Ghana. Honing in on and isolating peacekeeping for the sake of clarity, and narrowly focusing on the mission deployment can lead to the assumption that the peacekeeping experience is somehow more significant and transformative in shaping a police officer's experience of his or her role than, for instance, the politicisation of policing that occurs in Ghana. Indeed, what has been and remains a key challenge to the police's ability to translate the idea and vision of community policing into practice is reflected in how policing actors are co-opted to support the political and personal agendas and power positions of other influential actors, including party politicians, public officials, etc (Kyed & Albrecht, 2015b:2). Political direction occurs at all levels of the GPS, from headquarters and the office of the IGP, who is appointed by the president, down to the local police station. Policing practices are, as a rule, biased in favour of the ruling party, and as one police officer noted, explaining the underlying rationale of this:

> The police council comprises the president, so who elects the IGP? It's the president. So, he [the IGP] is going to work in line with his [the president's] instructions and can therefore never be effective. Until the police becomes an independent entity every police officer here in Ghana will work in vain. (Interview, Accra, Nov 2018).

Such politicisation transpires in a variety of ways, including, as one high-level officer noted, in "arbitrary reassignment and posting." He continued:

> I was involved in HR, finance first, and then HR, and there is a lot of political interference. We have a bad political system where a politician can send a list of people working in his area to

> the IGP that these people are not belonging to our camp, 'we don't want this man in our area.' They will put so much pressure on you. (Interview, Accra, Feb 2019)

The overlap of political interests and policework saturates all levels of the GPS. However, while many interviewees emphasised how intensification of political interference is connected to the re-emergence of multipartyism under the 1993 Fourth Republic, and the greater access of elected officials to the state apparatus that democratisation opens up, this relationship has a considerably longer history. Indeed, it is embedded in colonial administration which established the Gold Coast Police Force in 1873.In this historically embedded and structurally conditioned context of policing, members of the community policing headquarters end up carrying out a range of contradictory roles. During outreach in schools and churches and interactions with people during foot patrols, police officers are urged to talk about the GPS's transformation. But these roles simultaneously align police officers with and distance them from the GPS. The transformation unit's discourse of building unprecedented levels of "trust between the police and community" (Interview, Accra, Aug 2019) in itself exposes the current *lack* of trust, and the destabilising effects of politicised and neo-patrimonial order-making logics that condition policing. "The IGP," Gideon explained, "introduced the transformation agenda to meet international standards; it's like a doctor treating himself before treating others" (Interview, Accra, Nov 2018). Certainly, the micro-effects of peacekeeping will not fundamentally alter politicisation of policing in Ghana, but they undoubtedly have a lasting effect on the individual police officer.

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