



Designing Community Policing Models

The relevance of political and security factors

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Community policing is a widespread paradigm of policing in the contemporary world, but is manifested in various ways. More knowledge is needed about the decisive factors that facilitate specific styles of COP models.

In Kenya, two national COP models have been developed, the County Policing Authority (CPA) and Nyumba Kumi (NK), which differ in their approaches, content, and goals. The experiences from Kenya offer insights into the relevance of contextual political and security features on the formation of COP strategies.

This analysis is based on fieldwork in Kenya in 2016-2018, interviewing representatives from international organizations and embassies in Nairobi, Kenyan national human rights organizations, local civil society organizations, government representatives, ordinary citizens in Nairobi, and Kenyan academic experts in various fields, in addition to relevant secondary sources.

In Kenya, COP has been hotly debated over the last two decades, and two contested and parallel national COP models have developed. The County Policing Authority (CPA) is the legal framework for COP in the new Kenyan Constitution 2010. Nyumba Kumi (NK) is a neighborhood watch initiative initiated after the terrorist attack on the Westgate shopping mall in 2013. These COP models differ in their approaches, content, and goals, and can be understood not only as competing, but as reflecting different political viewpoints in Kenyan politics and society.

Characteristics of COP

The precise meaning of COP is controversial in Kenya as it is elsewhere. It has been used to describe specific problem-solving on the beat, as well as a 'philosophy' - grand strategies of policing that are community-sensitive, accountable, and transparent. However, key characteristics of COP are community partnership, problem-solving, decentralization and a commitment to policing a limited geographical area. COP is often understood as a strategy of policing, with the police developing closer relations with the community. In practical terms, COP represents a wide range of initiatives.¹ The Kenyan experiences are illustrative of this and show the variation of COP models' content, goals and approaches.

Kenya's two COP Models

The 2010 constitution of Kenya indicates that the national police should promote and foster a relationship with the community through community policing initiatives. CPAs were created by the National Police Service Act of 2011 to promote democratic policing by way of engaging the broader community in security issues, bringing together stakeholders at the county level to discuss security issues. CPA shall act as an important interface between communities and the National Police Service at the county level of government. The local governor is to act as chairperson, but it should also have local community representatives. The CPAs were to feed directly into the County Security Committees. They are also left to determine a further decentralization of sub-county and ward policing committees.

In 2013 after the Westgate attack, the Kenyan government initiated a parrallel national community policing initiative, Nyumba Kumi (NK). The name itself means "ten households" in Swahili, reflecting the idea that ten households should form a surveillance unit to solve mainly insecurity problems. Citizens are made responsible for getting to know at least ten of their neighbors, and to help security personnel with information gathering regarding possible criminal activities while additionally reporting

community policing committees at a higher administrative level within the NK structure. These committees are led by county commissioners, sub-commissioners and chiefs.

Variations of the models

CPA and NK have significant differences. In this regard, more importantly, are the differences reflected in the structures of their administration. CPA has created a new framework whereby all security organs at the county-level are governed under civilian authority.² CPA builds on the new administrative structure of government set out in the 2010 constitution. The constitution introduced a new decentralized structure, with devolved functions, duties, and services. It devolved executive powers by introducing the governors' offices which are elected officials and are not appointed by the president.³

NK has similarities to the old constitutional framework and the centralized system, where officers in administrative posts, county commissioners, sub-commissioners, chiefs, were appointed by the president. The controversial National Coordination Act 2013 gave powers to the county commissioners and subjected and duplicated the roles of governors. The county commissioners, sub-county commissioners and chiefs replaced the intended County Policing Authority (CPA). Hereby, NK is a centralized policing structure, coordinated from the office of the president.

Political and Security Challenges

These COP models illustrate how the complexity of contextual features influences the design of models for community policing (COP) in a post-colonial developing country. Generally, the ideas that inform crime control strategies vary considerably according to political and cultural traditions, and are results of political choices and administrative decisions, which are colored by social and cultural patterns.⁴

In Kenya, COP is strongly tied to politics and power structures, and these are vastly influenced by ethnicity. The Kenyan COP strategies follow the political dividing lines in the country. There are contrasting ideological perspectives on security structure with one roughly supporting the decentralization of security (CPA) and another favoring centralization (NK). These ideological perspectives on security are central to understanding the design of Kenya's two COP models.

Moreover, CPA was a part of the devolution in Kenya, the broader political and administrative reform that devolved functions, duties and services

from the center to the grassroots and the periphery. Linked to these wider political reforms was a larger package of strategic police reforms aimed at decentralizing the security structure, transforming and democratizing the police, and improving police-citizen relations. The police reform also evolved significantly from the evidence of the police brutality and escalation of post-election violence in 2007-2008. On the other side, the NK initiative was established to encourage the public to become actively involved in promoting national security as the result of rising terrorism and violent extremism after the major terrorist attack at Westgate shopping mall.

The donor community has also had interest in the development of COP initiatives in Kenya but has faced major challenges in influencing the evolution. The donors have mainly supported CPA, but representatives from donor communities interviewed claimed that the Kenyan government's priority of implementing NK has neglected the process of implementing the CPA.

Conclusions

The COP models, CPA and NK in Kenya demonstrate clearly how prevailing contextual features lay the premises for the design of the COP model - particularly how closely linked policing and politics are, and the political influence on the formation of COP models. Moreover, changes in the security context can modify the prioritized COP model. The rising threat of terrorism and violent extremism has led the Kenyan government to emphasize COP strategies, with a focus more on information flow and surveillance than on democratization, police reform and trust building between the police and the community.

Understanding the underlying contextual factors is pertinent to comprehending why various COP models are established, the types of model that are realistic in respect of each country, and which interests and processes can influence the development of COP models. Disregarding these factors will limit local, national and international actors' possibilities to influence the evolution of promising COP models.

These underlying socio-cultural factors show the importance of localities in the emergence of crime control strategies and the opportunities of transferability of crime control and public safety policies across diverse social contexts. This may explain the challenges of implementing western COP models in developing and transitional countries, and the significant variations of COP models worldwide and within a country.

Key Lessons

- COP models are shaped by underlying contextual factors, particularly tied to politics and power structures, and the security context
- The rising threat of terrorism can lead to COP strategies emphasizing more information flow and surveillance than democratization and police reform.
- Understanding the formation of COP strategies is pertinent for local, national, and international actors' potential to influence the development of promising COP models.

Notes

- 1) Brodgen M, Nijhar P. Community policing: National and international models and approaches: Willan Pub.; 2005. Casey J. Implementing Community Policing in Different Countries and Cultures. Pakistan Journal of Criminology. 2010;2(4):55-70
- 2) Agade KM. Changes and challenges of the Kenya police reserve: The case of Turkana county. African Studies Review. 2015;58(1):199-222
- 3) Cheeseman N, Lynch G, Willis J. Decentralisation in Kenya: the governance of governors. JMAS. 2016;54(1):1-35
- 4) Garland D. The Culture of Control; Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2001.

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The Project

The ICT4COP research project seeks to understand human security in post-conflict settings by researching community-based policing and post-conflict police reform.

The Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) is the project coordinator.

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