Seeing like the International Community: How Peacebuilding Failed (and Survived) in Tajikistan

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The international community claims transformative power over post-conflict spaces via the concept of peacebuilding. International actors discursively make space for themselves in settings such as the Central Asian state of Tajikistan which endured a civil war during the 1990s and has only seen an end to widespread political violence in recent years. With the work of James C. Scott, this paper challenges the notion that post-conflict spaces are merely the objects of international intervention. It reveals how, even in cases of apparent stability such as that of Tajikistan, international actors fail to achieve their ostensible goals for that place yet make space for themselves in that place. International peacebuilders may provide essential resources for the re-emergence of local forms of order yet these symbolic and material resources are inevitably re-interpreted and re-appropriated by local actors to serve purposes which may be the opposite of their aims. However, despite this 'failure' of peacebuilding it nevertheless survives as a discursive construction through highly subjective processes of monitoring and evaluation. So maintained, peacebuilding is a constitutive element of world order where the necessity of intervention for humanitarian, democratic and statebuilding ends goes unchallenged. This raises the question of what or where – in spatial terms – is the locus of international intervention: the local recipients of peacebuilding programmes (who are the ostensible targets) or 'the International Community' itself (whose space is re-inscribed as that of an imperfect but necessary regulator of world order). .

Introduction[1]

It is now widely accepted that many of the peacebuilding policies and practices of 1990s were over-ambitious, ineffective and at times counter-productive (Lund 2003; Paris 2004; MacGinty 2006). Moreover, this failure was a product of a very subjective process of policy design where post-conflict spaces were to be changed in the image of the interveners. The actors of the 'international community'[2] envisioned or 'saw' post-conflict spaces according to how they saw themselves: as liberal or Wilsonian (Paris 1997, 2001). This 'mission civilisatrice', it is argued, often brought a return to conflict and dysfunctional politics (Paris 2002). Critics have shown that the *praxis* of peacebuilding is weak and inconsistent (Paris 2004), with a consolidation of peace occurring in only a minority of cases of international assistance (Doyle & Sambanis 2006). Thus, it is often noted that peacebuilding leads at best to a return of basic security and 'negative' peace whilst conflict transformation towards 'positive' peace remains elusive (Lund 2003; Junne and Verkoren 2005). More radical critics raise questions about the 'low standards' of peacebuilders who apparently accept

pragmatically this 'negative' peace and label it a (relative) success (MacGinty 2006). Meanwhile reformers advocate a policy shift towards statebuilding in the International Community (Paris 2004; Doyle & Sambanis 2006), a move which implies an endorsement of Paris' thesis that the liberalism which works for us doesn't necessarily work for them (Paris 2006). However, reality may not be so easy to discern and agents may not be so in control of the process as prevailing opinions suggest. By contrast it may be that peacebuilding 'fails' to meet its transformative objectives and 'survives' in an enhanced statebuilding discourse not because of reality but despite it. In other words, the shift from peacebuilding to statebuilding in post-conflict spaces is based not on the discovery of objective reality of the post-conflict territories but on inter-subjective, inter-textual relations of space-making.

This paper considers this puzzle in the particular context of Tajikistan. By the standards of negative peace Tajikistan can and is claimed as a success (Doyle & Sambanis 2006: 332, fn 6), but by the standards of positive peace it is an abject failure. This problematique highlights the need to investigate two concomitant areas of study. The first regards the nature of international intervention and why it failed to achieve its objectives of liberal reform and democratization; the second concerning the nature of the peace itself and why it has held. In short we have two broad research questions of the Tajik peace:

1. How and why has peacebuilding failed in Tajikistan?
2. How and why has negative peace held in Tajikistan?

These questions are deeply interconnected and hard to separate. However, they are also complex and difficult to handle within the context of a single paper. Thus, this paper takes the former of these two questions and provides an answer to that question which is illustrated from a specific area of peacebuilding in Tajikistan: the international NGO community's peacebuilding and decentralization initiatives in Tajik communities. Many of these programmes, including the ones I studied during fieldwork, failed in terms of the ambitious goals they set themselves. However, addressing the question of how peacebuilding failed raises a further and in many ways more fascinating question: despite this 'failure' (to reach specific goals in a given context), how does the approach 'survive' (as a credible strategy of peacebuilding in the eyes of international NGOs)? The answer to this question tells us much about the spatial complexity of post-conflict settings and the role of simulation in the maintenance of contemporary world order.

My argument is elaborated with respect to the work of James C. Scott, in particular his 1998 study, *Seeing Like A State*: *How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Much like the high-modernist, often state-socialist, interventions which Scott profiles, peacebuilding takes the form of a rational design: a normative technique to do something to an object, an 'other', in order to elicit behavioural and ideational change in that object. In the complexities of local context such a grand narrative inevitably meets local processes which determine its working out in practice. Local actors take exceptions to its model, subvert its techniques, and reappropriate its resources to further their authority and livelihoods in context. Peacebuilding – to return to our question – fails as it is a 'thin simplification' of reality which is unable to achieve its goals in local spaces. As Scott argues with respect to the case studies of state intervention which he studied, formal design depends on informal, contextual processes.

> In each case, the necessarily thin, schematic model of social organisation and production animating the planning was inadequate as a set of instructions for creating a successful social order. By themselves the simplified rules can never generate a functioning community, city, or economy. Formal order, to be more explicit, is always and to some considerable degree *parasitic on informal*

processes, which the formal scheme does not recognise, without which it could not exist, and which it alone cannot create or maintain (1998: 310, my emphasis).

This dynamic of conflict yet interdependence between the formal and informal is not simply a question of social organization, but of space. It highlights the disjuncture between the macro- and micro-levels of a given intervention. I adapt Scott's approach to questions of international peacebuilding to explore the nature of the interaction between local, elite and international spaces. In the discursive relations between these constituencies I find the inter-subjective processes by which knowledge is produced in post-conflict international relations.

My field research in Tajikistan involved both discourse analysis of written and oral data and ethnographic participation with international organizations in communities, sometimes as a consultant-evaluator of peacebuilding programmes. It constitutes an attempt to use the in-depth study of a single case to make propositions about the general phenomenon of international peacebuilding in order to stimulate debate and further research. Thus, the processes of 'failure' and 'survival' which I chart here refer to the tension between the discourse and the practices of the particular programmes which I studied. However, the proposition I wish to make is that this dynamic may be, in some form, an inherent feature of peacebuilding. The argument is developed in four parts. Part one introduces the case of post-conflict Tajikistan and three discourses or communities of understanding and acting in that context: international, elite and popular. This constitutes what Hansen (2006) calls a multiple 'selves' approach. In the second part the paper focuses on the international 'self' of post-conflict Tajikistan looking at how the International Community sees peacebuilding in Tajik localities. The paper then goes on to briefly summarise the nature of failure; the triumph of local practices of adaptation and reappropriation over international models and processes. Finally, the paper discusses how peacebuilding survives in the International Community through processes of monitoring and evaluation.

Post-Conflict Tajikistan

In May 1992, shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan entered a destructive civil war which cost upwards of 100,000 lives and left around 250,000 as refugees. A peace agreement was not signed until June 1997 between the government, dominated by cadres from the region of Kulob (especially the President's home town of Danghara), and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) composed of a wide-ranging group of factions led by the Islamic Revival Party and representatives of the Rasht Valley region. While the 1993-1997 peace process culminated in a *de jure* peace with the UTO, and the 1997-2000 period brought a fragile *de facto* peace between the factions, it was the years after 2000 when peace was consolidated. The year 2000 brought the creation of the UN Tajikistan Office of Peacebuilding (UNTOP) to replace the earlier UN Mission of Observers to Tajikistan (UNMOT), in order 'to consolidate peace and promote democracy' (UNSC 2000). The OSCE also shifted its focus towards peacebuilding issues such as security sector reform and support for political parties. However, the way that peace has been consolidated is in many ways diametrically opposed to international norms. Whilst political violence has significantly diminished, government has become increasingly authoritarian.

The period since 2000 has seen the increasing political dominance of Rahmonov's Danghara clique. The 70:30 split of posts between government and opposition which had been part of the peace agreement was no longer maintained and only a few former-opposition figures still remained in position.[3] A June 2003 referendum served to change the constitution in fifty areas, for example allowing two seven-year presidential terms, raising the possibility of Rahmonov staying in office until 2020. However, this shrinking of

the circle of power has primarily involved work behind the scenes, such as the use of 'administrative resources', *kompromat* ('compromising materials') and state pressure to remove political opposition. Targets have included both opposition figures from the war, most prominently Mahmudruzi Iskandarov, the leader of the Democratic Party, and some of President Rahmonov's former allies, including Ghaffor Mirzoyev, the commander of the presidential guard. Quantitative data provide further evidence of this trend towards increasing authoritarianism. Freedom House's index reports that Tajikistan remained firmly within its 'not free' category for both civil liberties and political rights across the period, 2001-2006 (7 = most unfree; 1 = most free). As shown in fig. 1 below, despite marginal improvements as the peace treaty was implemented after 1997, there has been a gradual yet consistent decrease in freedom since 2001.

Fig. 1: Nations in Transit Democracy Score, *Freedom House*, 1997- 2006

	1997	1998	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Democracy score [7 = least free; 1 = most free]	6.20	5.95	5.75	5.58	5.63	5.63	5.71	5.71	5.93

Post-Conflict Interpretations, Post-Conflict Spaces

Thus whilst Tajikistan is a country at peace, no one seems to be able to explain with any great conviction or credibility how it got there, and particularly how and why it remains there. Practitioners and analysts of international peacebuilding have been sceptical about the durability of Tajikistan's peace – often predicting a return to conflict in the future (See Schoeberlein 2002; Lynch 2001; Hall 2002; Collins 2003; ICG 2001). Yet alternative propositions for peace have a distinctly neo-liberal orientation. They posit what is denoted critically as a 'liberal peace' (Paris 2004; Richmond 2005) which, in Bertram's terms, 'entails building the political conditions for a sustainable democratic peace, generally in countries long divided by social strife, rather than keeping or enforcing peace between hostile states and armed parties' (1995: 388).

Under the influence of this discourse of peacebuilding, analysts have proposed various partial explanations for the Tajik puzzle. 'War weariness' (Schoeberlein 2002), the effects of labour migration (Olimova and Bosc 2003) and cultural passivity (Olimova and Bowyer 2002) are all suggested as reasons why Tajikistan remains authoritarian yet without violence. There may be some truth to each of these explanations, yet the success of Tajikistan in avoiding further war is more than a historical anomaly or a temporary reprieve, and the lack of progress in democratisation more than a matter of impatience with an inevitably long-term process. The paradigms used by internationals, leaders and citizens in Tajikistan are all faulty as they each fail to capture the social character of Tajikistan's peace. However, popular and elite representations cannot merely be cast aside by the social scientist in favour of better explanations based perhaps on economic networks or informal political institutions. Rather, a better explanation should take account of the work that discourses do – their reductions, oversights, affirmations and negations – in producing and reproducing social realities of peace. It is such 'peace' which internationals, elites and subordinates together make and remake.

This 'peace' is interpreted in contrasting ways in different political communities. One theorization of this complexity is through a discourse analysis and ethnography of 'multiple selves.' This concept is borrowed from Hansen who explores the relational character of identities and how they produce, and are reproduced by, foreign policies (2006). She distinguishes between studies of single and multiple 'selves', where a 'self' is a spatially determined group with a common sense of identity (2006: 73). While a study of foreign policy (like Hansen's own work) can be a single 'self' study, a study of a peacebuilding process under international intervention (such as this) must explore the relations between multiple 'selves'.

My research delineated three inter-connected but separable 'public transcripts' (Scott 1990) – discourses – of the Tajik peace. They are:

(i)   International peacebuilding
(ii)   Elite *mirostroitelstvo* (Russian: peacebuilding)
(iii)   Popular *tinji* (Tajik: peacefulness/wellness)

The demand of brevity affords me little space to elaborate on the nature of these three discourses which are detailed at length elsewhere (Heathershaw 2007a, 2007b). The table below provides a stylised summary of the three approaches. Each discourse employs ethical, spatial and temporal dimensions (Hansen 2006). The global discourse of peacebuilding found in the International Community is practised in the programmes and projects of international organizations, including the UN, OSCE and international NGOs. Its overall approach postulates a liberal peace with an ethical individualism, a spatial demarcation of state and civil society (or top-down and bottom-up), and temporal ideal of progress. Secondly, Tajik and former Soviet elites practice an approach to conflict resolution often labeled *mirostroitelstvo* (Russian: peacebuilding), related to authoritarian approaches to *mirotvorchestvo* (Russian: peacekeeping) discussed elsewhere (MacKinlay and Cross 2003). It is a peace enforcement approach which denies an autonomous space of civil society to influence government and idealises the 'authority' (*avtoritet*) of the state above the people, and a post-conflict 'stability' (*stabilnost*) where economic growth and social control are valued over liberalization and reform. Finally, *tinji* (Tajik: peacefulness/wellness) is a practical ethos of post-conflict survival found in Tajik localities; an approach of conflict avoidance and accommodation. Most Tajiks shun political involvement of any kind, and deny the existence of conflict or tension in their villages. This 'harmony ideology' (Bichsel 2005) has a tremendous purchase, despite its deceptions, as a self-regulatory institution of rural communities.

These local discourses of 'peace enforcement' and 'conflict avoidance' are not immutable but socially constructed and maintained. Nevertheless they have evolved throughout periods of international intervention and have conditioned elite and popular responses to these initiatives. In some ways, as is explored below, they have been emboldened during international programmes. Should we simply understand this as a failure of peacebuilding? Or, should we try and understand these discourses in terms of their 'positives', i.e. their functions, and how they shape the contestation of post-conflict space between internationals, officials and locals? I take the latter course.   In such a way we can chart the reproductions and adaptations in representations across three discourses during post-conflict international intervention.

Fig. 2: Summary Table of Discourses of Peace in Tajikistan (from Heathershaw 2007b)

Level	Discourse	Spaces	'Public transcript'	Overall Approach (Ideology)
GLOBAL	Peacebuilding	International. The programmes and projects of the International Community	- Individualist - Liberal-democratic	Democratisation (Neo-Liberalism)
ELITE	*Mirostroitelstvo* (Russian: peacebuilding)	Elite. Official/state institutions, many large NGOs, academic & cultural elite	- *Avtoritet* (authority) - *Stabilnost* (stability)	Peace Enforcement (Neo-Sovietism)

POPULAR	*Tinji* (Tajik: peacefulness/ wellness)	Local. Particularly those areas most affected by the conflict	- Denial of conflict - Unity/cohesion - Anti-politics - Focus on livelihoods	Conflict Avoidance and Accommodation

Seeing like the International Community

To speak of seeing like the International Community and to delineate a single international discourse of peacebuilding in Tajikistan is potentially misleading. This iconoclastic move, found in an emerging literature on the 'liberal peace' (Paris 2004; Richmond 2005), is regarded as a misrepresentation by many practitioners who regard themselves as pragmatists. It is also increasingly out of touch with discursive trends, in the policy and academic worlds, where peacebuilding is being increasingly understood in the conservative terms of statebuilding where security is the principal goal. At the same time, representatives of humanitarian agencies, for example, tend to emphasise so-called 'bottom-up' peacebuilding and the promotion of reconciliation and community dialogue within and between communities (see Anderson 1999, Lederach 1997). How is one to make sense of this in terms of discourse analysis? Whilst there is a great deal of commonality among the positions taken within a given 'self', in each case we see a number of contending variations on the main theme. We can also begin to reveal the 'hidden' transcripts which question these public accounts.

In this paper my concern is principally with the 'community peacebuilding' concept of development agencies. The policy discourse of non-governmental peacebuilders is inter-textually produced according to the demands of donors who increasingly seek to reconcile such 'bottom-up' work with wider statebuilding goals. However, despite this cohabitation with interventions for order and security, community peacebuilding is represented as radical and transformative where 'civil society' (from the 'bottom-up') can engender 'good governance' (from the 'top-down'). The concept of the Community-Based Organisation (CBO) has emerged to reflect this idea of civil society development partly as an antidote to the centralising demands of the post-conflict state and the corruption of elites (Ball 2002: 37).

The discursive construction of a 'civil society' role in peacebuilding is integral to the design and implementation of such programmes in Tajikistan. Promoting community-based development and decentralisation has been a priority goal of the International Community in Tajikistan for some time, particularly during the early years of this decade (DeMartino 2004). Abdullaev and Freizer's 'peace building framework' identified people's opportunities to 'participate in local decision making and policy formulation through reform of local self governance bodies and the development of more efficient community development institutions' (2003: 53). By Spring 2004 the rapid expansion in the volume of peacebuilding programmes across the country encouraged the UNDP to bring the various agencies together in the Tajik capital, Dushanbe, to share information about 'community-linked development' and coordinate activities to 'promote decentralisation and provide a stronger framework for governance at the municipal level' (UNDP 2004).

Of all these players, USAID is the largest national donor agency in Tajikistan and has been the most significant actor in community peacebuilding. Until 2006 implemented a number of major community programmes through international NGO contractors. Its Community Action Investment Program (CAIP) was the largest ever community-based programme in Tajikistan and is imbued with specific peacebuilding objectives.[4] CAIP's stated goal was to 'help prevent conflicts and promote broad

based-citizen dialogue and participation', to achieve 'improved standards of living, more active and engaged citizens and more open, accountable local government' (MCCAR 2005: 1). The methodology of CAIP, as implemented by Mercy Corps, entailed 'the democratic election of Community Action Groups (CAG), transparent, sustainable, and accountable management of projects, and advocacy for support from local government and community residents' (ibid.).[5]

Assumptions about the disaggregation of space, implicit within peacebuilding discourse, are foundational to such programmes. Thus it is assumed that CBOs can be established in an autonomous realm of civil society. Some further contend that the local neighbourhood group (or *mahalla* committee) already provides a participatory forum for community decision-making (Freizer 2004: 18) which simply needs institutionalizing. This rather apolitical view of the mahalla is problematic and raises a much greater issue which will be explored through the rest of this paper. The question is how the boundary between 'state' and 'society' gets lost in both the ambiguities of 'community' (as invoked by international peacebuilders) and the material necessities of scratching out a living (as practiced in Tajik villages). On the one hand, this intermingling is an aspect which is present in Tajik communities, regardless of international intervention, due to the dual societal and state roles of local elites. On the other hand, international NGOs deliberately blur the boundary in their discourses in order to express positive engagement between 'state' and 'civil society' – the dual subjects of peacebuilding. Mercy Corps, for example, includes non-military bodies of the state (presumably including the Presidential Administration) in its definition of civil society. A senior staff member of Mercy Corps in Tajikistan remarked, 'you may ask "well, what isn't civil society?" Well, I'd answer that the military isn't civil society and, in some countries, they are a large part of the state.'[6] However, when the same individual represents both the 'state', as a member of the district administration, and 'civil society', as a member of the CAG, we have to question to what extent state and civil society are actually institutionally separable in the first place.

How Peacebuilding Fails

I will now go on to summarise my findings regarding the impact of CBOs on communities, particularly those of Mercy Corps' CAIP. I will briefly look at the three principal phases of the programme: establishing and training the CAG; community decision-making; and conducting social and infrastructure projects. I contrast the claims of the official evaluation of the programme (of which I was part [MCCAR 2005]) with local elite and popular practices and representations, which were indirectly affected by international intervention. This raises an interesting question of evaluation – how did we get it so wrong? – that I will go on to discuss.

The spatial assumptions of community peacebuilding, outlined above, inscribe local context as a matter of secondary consideration. As Giffen and Earle note, while rhetorical recognition of 'local culture' is standard, assumptions about post-war and traditional society mean that in practice a methodological assumption of *carte blanche* is dominant (2005: 37). This type of approach is common among NGOs and sometimes even publicly acknowledged. The Mountain Societies Development Support Program (MSDSP), which also administered the CAIP programme, prides itself on its ability to 'indigenise' their CBO and argues that '[our] analysis of the institutional framework at the village level showed that there was a "vacuum" ' (Tetlay 2001: 3). MSDSP contends that pre-existing institutions could be disregarded given that they 'were not particularly development oriented and were not what could be called "participatory".' (ibid.). However, whether one assumes a governance 'vacuum' in the community, or whether one idealises pre-existing institutions, the problem remains that one cannot necessarily expect the peasants and elders, who are the very object

of interventions, to concur. This is confirmed by the 'hidden transcript' of programme staff. One CAIP manager reflected after the end of the programme,

> Is it really sustainable to create new groups rather than work with existing structures, like these elders [*aksakal* or *mahalla*] committees? The problem is that the relationship between the two was not planned for in the programme.[7]

Thus, in effect, international NGOs tried to introduce formal institutions into Tajik communities in which informal institutions of self-governance were already quite well established. This meant that the processes of forming CBOs were distorted by those institutions and ideas to the extent that international assistance served to *re-form* pre-existing institutions.

The table below summarises and contrasts the findings of the official evaluation of the programme (of which I was one of three internationally-employed researchers [MCU 2005]) based on substantial survey data, with my own independent ethnographic research and discourse analysis (often conducted alongside the official study [Heathershaw 2007b]). These contrasts indicate how discourse which takes for granted the autonomy of CBOs can lead to findings which are, at times, the very opposite of local elite and popular accounts. In many villages, local leaders sought to combine different CBOs which had been initiated by different agencies (including the UN and numerous NGOs) into a single body which was then run by the same leadership group which had been dominant in the village prior to the intervention. Such groups often equated success with closeness to the state and most groups included members who were state employees. However, neither 'state' nor 'civil society' is the crucial category here. Informal patterns of power predominate as the elite network which occupies the 'state' spreads its reach across the regions of the country. Practices of communal labour (*khashar*), in this light, are top-down initiatives which perform the authority of leaders.

Fig. 3: Official Evaluation versus My Findings

	Official Evaluation (MCU 2005)	My Findings (Heathershaw 2007b)
Institutional Basis	**The Community Action Group.** CAIP was 'moderately successful in institutionalising the organisational arrangements' of the CAG (MCU 2005: 15-16); success would be determined by formal plans for future development and registration as NGO.	Under CAIP, the CAG was the *re-formation* of the local neighbourhood committees (*mahalla*) or groups of elders (*aksakals*); success understood locally as the *pre-existing group of leaders* serving as contact point for all international interventions (Heathershaw 2007b: .268-270).
Decision-making procedures	**Community Meetings led by CAG.** CAIP was, 'highly successful in engaging the local population in participatory and democratic change processes at the community level' (p.26).	*Informal patterns of power*; villagers acquiesce to decision of head; decisions made, in advance, outside of meetings – at namaz or over tea in the choihona (pp.270-272).

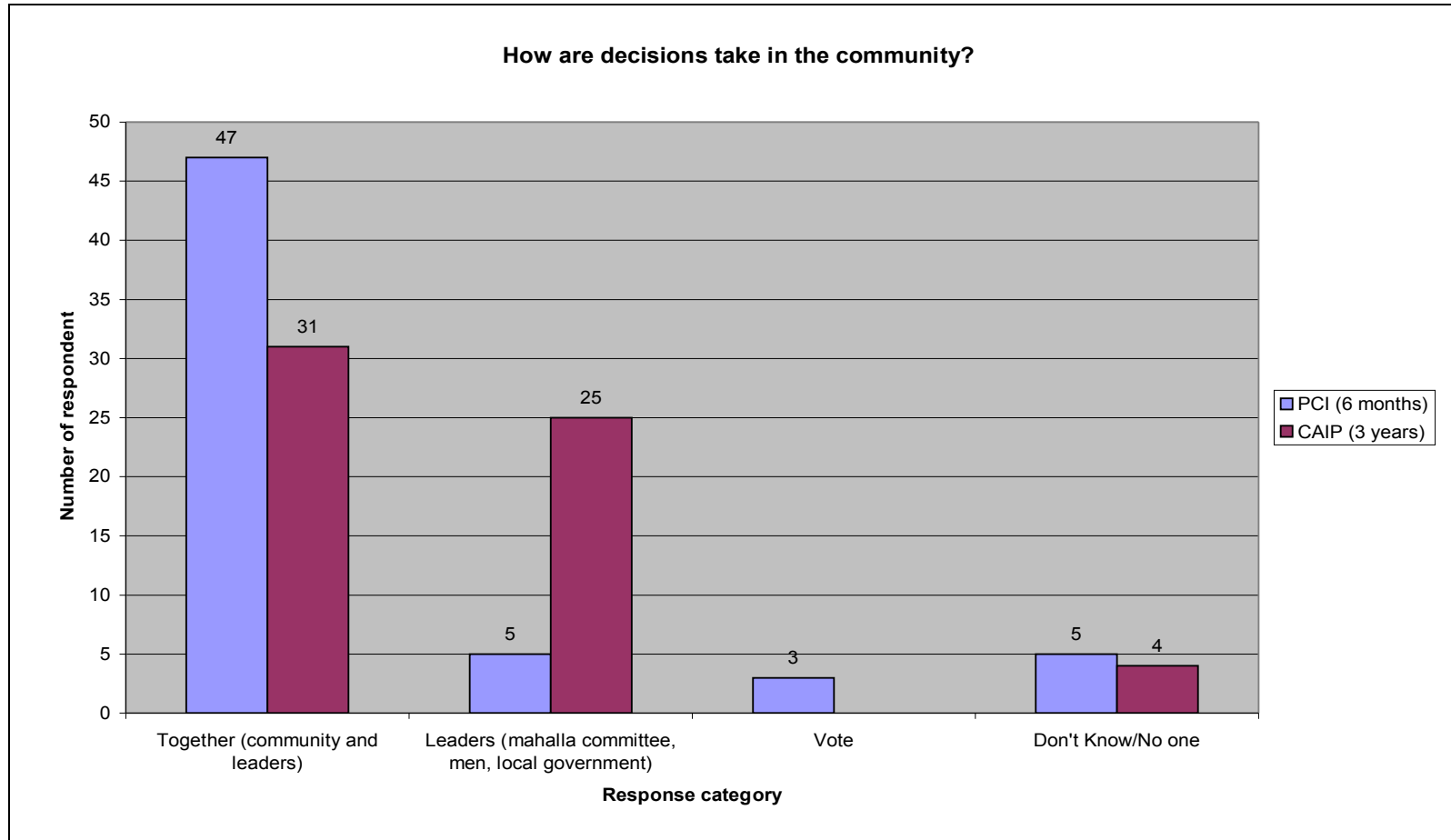| Conducting projects	**Communal labour (khashar)** *khashar* romanticised as a voluntary institution which can simply be 'harnessed' by NGOs.	*khashar* performs the **authority of leaders** who, resourced by the NGO, direct the people to work (pp. 272-276);

The imperative to homogenise the CAG under the existing leadership is clearly analogous with the ethics of 'authority' and 'stability' found in *mirostroitelstvo* discourse. Moreover it corresponds to a mode of elite dominance over subordinates which has been re-established in the regions of Tajikistan following the peace agreement. This process has reconstituted hegemonic authority to a greater or lesser degree across the country and has been inadvertently advanced by international assistance. The head of the community (*raisi mahalla*), as the key entry-point into the community, is emboldened by access to foreign funding. He receives requests for support directly from heads of households and then discusses it with the group. 'They respect us because we are respected,' one group member noted,

> but they don't listen often because they know we have no financial means to build a new sportsground or new classrooms. It depends on what we can provide. If, for example, a donor buys pipes for a water system all the people will listen to us as they will see we've been able to do this.[8]

Such testimonies support my general findings that elite hegemony and patriarchal leadership was reinforced by international interventions.

This account of the emboldening of local patriarchal authority under international intervention is not merely anecdotal but was found consistently in the communities I studied. It can be analysed in terms of the increasing complementarity of *tinji* and *mirostroitelstvo* discourse (and corresponding practices) within communities. Fig. 4 compares communities at the beginning of another Mercy Corps/USAID programme with a similar approach, the Peaceful Communities Initiative (PCI), with those at the end of CAIP. It shows two main response categories to the open question, 'How are decisions made in the community?' The first category, 'together' includes those answers which emphasise the community as a whole, or the community with its leaders making decisions (in accordance with *tinji* discourse). The second category of answer, 'by leaders', includes those answers which emphasise an independent decision being made by leaders (including 'by the mahalla committee', 'by the men', 'by aksakals', 'by local authorities', or some combination of these groups in accordance with *mirostroitelstvo*). Research conducted at the beginning of the PCI programme showed an overwhelming majority of villagers (47 out of 60) answering 'together'. Research conducted at the end of the CAIP programme, however, showed many fewer respondents giving this response (31 out of 60) and many more saying they were taken by 'leaders' (25 out of 60). Such analysis is not statistically significant but is indicative of findings from my wider discourse analysis and ethnographic research which show a significant shift towards the renewal of elite domination under international assistance (see Heathershaw 2007a).

Fig.4: 'How are decisions taken in the community?' A comparison between the beginning and end of international programmes[9]

How are decisions take in the community?

How Peacebuilding Survives

We have seen how international representations of community peacebuilding contradict how such interventions are imagined and practised by elites and subordinates. These contrasts raise questions about how peacebuilding's ambiguity is sustained and whether conflicting accounts can be reconciled into a single narrative of local governance which is acceptable to international peacebuilders, elites and subordinates. However, this ambiguity – this multiplicity of representations and of spaces – might actually be functional in itself. To speak counterfactually, community peacebuidling programmes such as CAIP would not get funded if they were believed to be part of the re-constitution of elite domination and manipulated by elites in the ways argued here. For the International Community, such discourses are functional to their legitimacy and, by extension, their very presence in Tajikistan. It would be tempting to argue that cynical programme managers manipulate data to positively represent their work; that their real aim is stability and that the transformational goals of community peacebuilding constitute mere rhetorical gloss. There is some truth to this but, at closer examination, it is an overly agential explanation and lacks evidence. In my explanation, agency remains, but in a much more interdependent form. Here, individuals (be they programme managers or peasants) re-produce, adapt and mediate the established discourses of their community (be it local or international) and thus reinscribe spatially-defined boundaries between themselves and others. This inter-textual process of reproduction – how peacebuilding survives – is most clearly shown in processes of monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is an integral component of any major, donor-funded programme. International staff spend a considerable proportion of their time producing various images and texts to represent their programme in terms which will be appreciated by an audience in Washington, London or Berlin. It is these practices which explain how an intervention, which has had very little direct impact on the practices of communities, can plausibly be considered to have transformed a community and be worth millions of dollars of assistance. As noted above, the official CAIP evaluation acknowledged that the impact on Tajik communities was less than anticipated. However, the reasons for the lack of complete success in this area were deemed to be internal programmatic issues where Mercy Corps had not paid sufficient heed to institutionalising the CBO after it was up and running. Thus, it argues a 'much higher level of achievement' could have been reached by 'a clearer articulation of the process of capacity building' (MCU 2005: 39). In such a way a considerable degree of success was rescued for the programme and, more importantly, for the idea of the CBO and the identity of the International Community as a whole. In this specific way we can say that peacebuilding – the discourse – 'survived'. Interventionism, we are told, largely works and, where it fails to achieve its objectives, it can be improved through factors endogenous to the programme such as 'articulation of the process' by international actors. The evaluation report does not even consider factors exogenous to the programme including the political, economic and social dynamics of the local setting. Community development, as discussed at the beginnning of this chapter, is thus written as something which can be made intelligible and managed by the International Community.[10] In this sense, the report depoliticises and objectifies the highly political and relational processes of the reestablishment of legitimate order taking place in Tajik communities. In cases where international agencies are examining themselves – as was the case with CAIP[11] – quantitative analysis is all the more subjective. How is such knowledge produced? I argue that two processes of power-knowledge are at work here: quantitative and textual representation and narrative and visual simulation.

Quantification and Representation

The reduction and distortion of local practice, which is prevalent in M&E, is particularly acute in quantitative analyses. In accordance with the principles of new public management thinking common to the International Community, CAIP was designed with SMART objectives.[12] SMART objectives are the foundational act of reducing a complex social and political environment to a set of quantifiable indicators in order to achieve objectivity, transparency and accountability for the programme. In the official evaluation the external consultants conducted a social survey according to a statistically valid sample of respondents as well as focus groups and elite interviews according to standard interview forms. Many of the questions asked required closed answers which could be transposed numerically. The evaluation was designed this way in order to make our data quantifiable according to the requirements of the donor, USAID, who kept an index to rank communities across the region according to their degree of success in terms of programme objectives. Quantification can thus provide standardisation where the same attributes can apparently be measured anywhere in the world. It demands a method and model which is apparently universalisable. Within the International Community, an M&E consultancy business has mushroomed to meet this demand, where individuals who know a model are hired to evaluate a programme in a region which they have never visited before. In our case the lead consultant had not previously visited Central Asia and did not visit Tajikistan – where 60% of the programme resources were invested – at all during the evaluation.

Fig. 5: Respondents completing 'individual' questionnaires, Jirgatol district, April 2005

The problem with such a standard or 'objective' approach is that it requires numerous 'subjective' judgements by the researcher to deal with the significant complexities of the social and political processes going on in Tajik localities. The

practice of fieldwork demands such reflection and interpretation at every turn. For example, the question 'how have you changed during the programme?' assumed that the respondent would interpret 'you' as 'I' the individual (rarely the case), that they would accept 'change' and not find this idea unsettling (often not the case). Demanding a written answer to such a question also assumed that (often semi-literate) respondents would be comfortable answering alone without consulting their colleagues. Usually, this was not the case (see fig.5). Throughout the evaluation, I found that questions often received defensive 'we' answers. The categorisation of data was also shaped by how the reader viewed the data. I observed in numerous meetings of the research team and programme staff how those who worked on the programme would understandably try and represent it in the best possible terms and broadly in accordance with programme objectives. To a certain extent such inter-subjective influences are common to all social research but it is a particular problem with quantitative methods, especially in M&E exercises, where assumptions of objectivity are being made.

An illustration of the differences this inter-subjective, inter-personal process can make is shown in two attempts to classify data on community 'change' graphed in the following two figures.[13] Version one (see fig. 6) of that chart shows a version done by my colleague, according to the instructions of the lead consultant. It finds 39% of respondents say 'I' am 'committed to work with community using democratic principles'. Version two (see fig. 7) shows my version, composed – in a more discretionary and less 'scientific' manner – having seen chart one and found it to be a distortion of what I had heard from community members. It finds 42% of respondents saying 'we' are 'more united [in our] approach to development in the community.' It is not clear how we judge which of these representations is more valid. Both charts necessarily reduce a huge range of data, gathered in and translated from four languages, to just five categories. For example, my category of 'Increased Ability to Manage Projects' (fig. 7) is around three times more common among (overwhelmingly male) local government leaders than women's group members. It includes both statements about authority (e.g. 'I think that my authority has been increased among people') and those implying acquired skills (e.g. 'project selection').
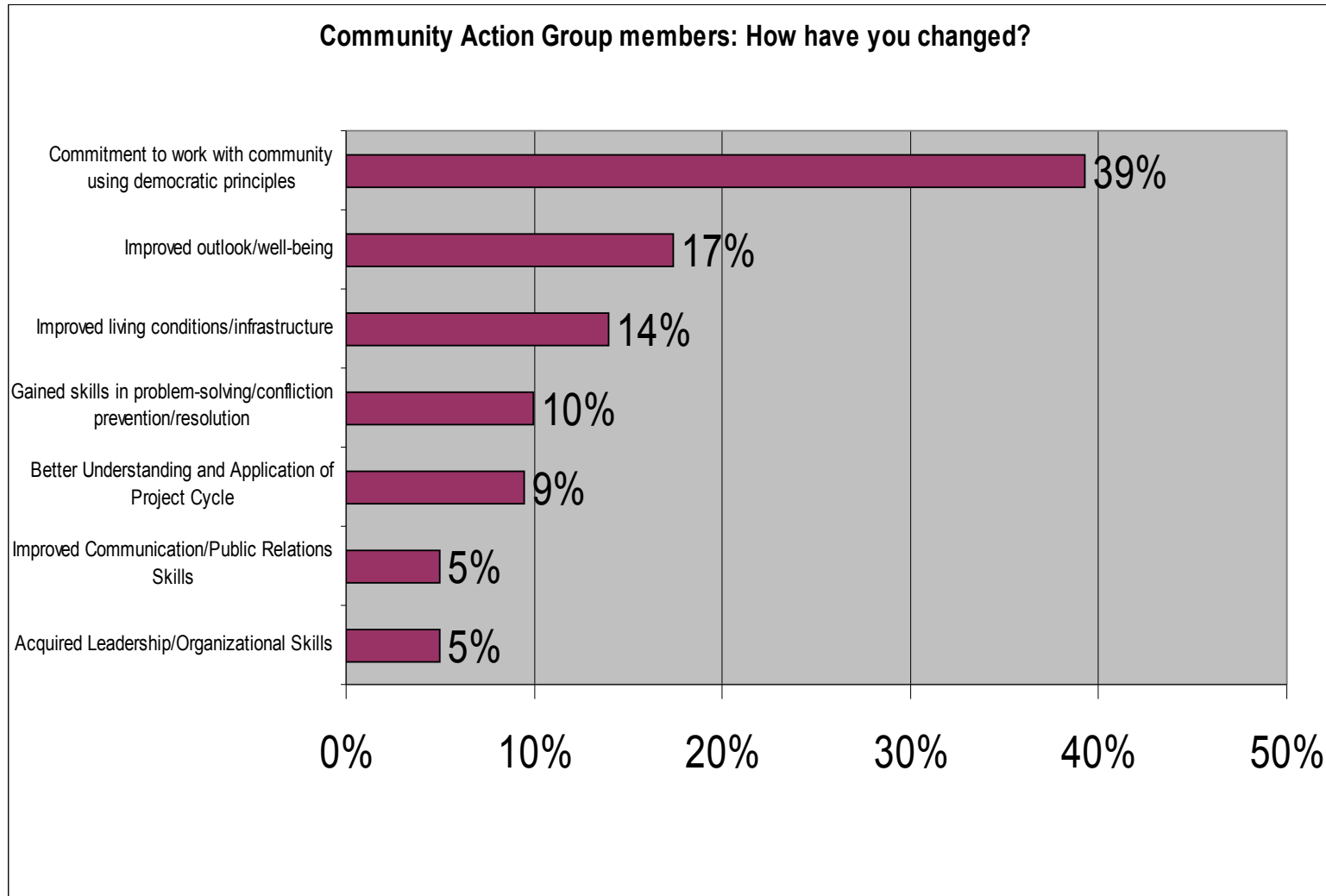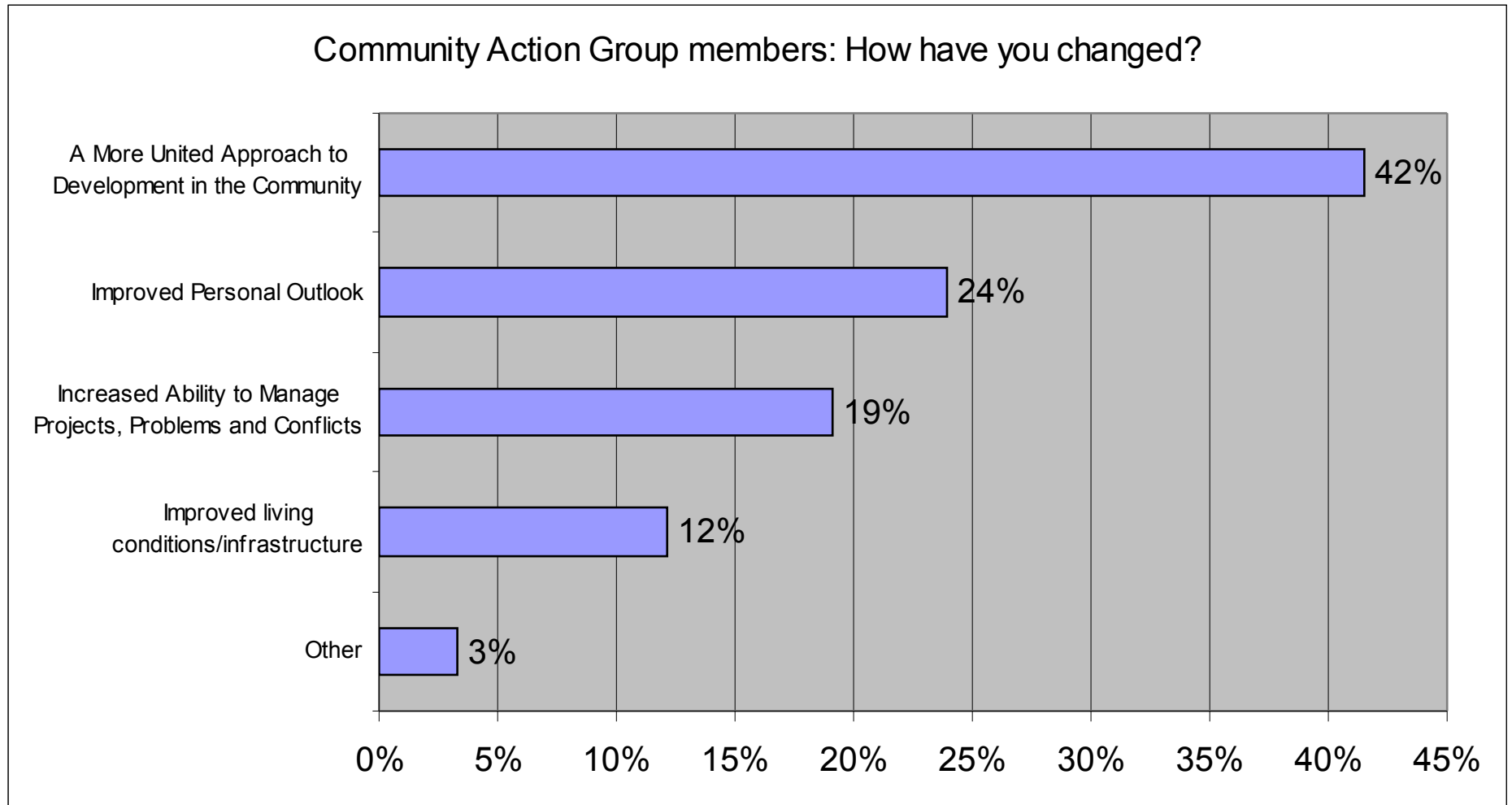
Fig. 6: 'How have you changed?' Chart version one

Community Action Group members: How have you changed?

Category	Percentage
Commitment to work with community using democratic principles	39%
Improved outlook/well-being	17%
Improved living conditions/infrastructure	14%
Gained skills in problem-solving/confliction prevention/resolution	10%
Better Understanding and Application of Project Cycle	9%
Improved Communication/Public Relations Skills	5%
Acquired Leadership/Organizational Skills	5%

Fig. 7: 'How have you changed?' Chart version two

Community Action Group members: How have you changed?

A More United Approach to Development in the Community	42%
Improved Personal Outlook	24%
Increased Ability to Manage Projects, Problems and Conflicts	19%
Improved living conditions/infrastructure	12%
Other	3%

While our research sought to account for these validity questions by conducting several exercises of classification and re-classification, the sheer complexity of this picture can never be conveyed in quantitative representation with the necessarily reductive moves.[14] Moreover, while the two charts give very different pictures, neither shed much light on what actually happened in communities and why. In short, much is left to the eye of the beholder. He/she may discern from figure 6 that 39% of community leaders in CAIP communities are indeed 'democratic'. It is via this kind of subjectivity that illusory international understandings are reproduced.

Stories, Images and Simulation

Keeping the very idea of 'community peacebuilding' going involves more than numeric representation of objectives met. In a multinational and multilingual International Community, any given textual or numeric form of representation is only one part of a wider symbolic order increasing reliant on the visual dimension. Stories and images from CAIP communities were a hugely important part of Mercy Corps' narration of the programme. Pictures and images are particularly important in the International Community as they break representational boundaries of language and allow the visualisation or 're-envisioning' (Debrix 1999) of success and progress in peace operations. Photographs and 'success stories' are crucial accompaniments of quarterly reports to donors. They are particularly important as the decision-makers of donor agencies are unlikely to spend much time reading formal M&E reports. Success stories' are told in such a way which inscribes a clear distinction between 'state' or 'government' and 'civil society' or 'community'. Under such discourse, the separation of the civil society from state – which is an inherent assumption of community peacebuilding – is inscribed even if, paradoxically, the 'state' must be subsumed into 'civil society'.

During my fieldwork I had personal experience of this phenomenon. In June of 2005, I was asked by Mercy Corps to study one of the cases considered most successful from the thirty-five CAIP communities in order to provide a 'success story' for the programme's final report. I chose the community of Kizil Ketmen, near Sharituz, close to the Afghan border, and opted to spend a week there conducting research and living with the head of the CAG. Compared to previous CAIP communities where I had conducted research, Kizil Ketmen was, indeed, a flagship case where a large number of projects had been completed over the course of the programme, including a major rehabilitation of irrigation canals. Thus, I wrote and photographed a story of success, 'The Village of Kizil Ketmen: on an Upward Trend' (Heathershaw 2005b). In the account, I tried to explore this story of success with quotes and examples which showed how local leaders had to work amid a corrupt government and an exploitative economy. Nevertheless, I wrote for an audience. My account introduced Kizil Ketmen in terms such as 'progress', 'challenges' and 'change', and was illustrated with pleasing photographs. In my portrayal, as was the case in peacebuilding discourse in general, the CAG was presented as an institution independent of 'the state' that functioned as an agent of change. The case study concluded:

> Like many other grassroots leaders and community members, they have been begun to see that change for the better can really impact their own lives and that of their fellow community members. Hope, like water, is beginning to flow through Kizil Ketmen again (Heathershaw 2005b: 12).

However, Kizil Ketmen's CAG included state representatives and it was clearly these elites as well as their contacts in local networks (without which projects could not have been conducted) which benefited most from these projects (Heathershaw 2007b). The

point here is not that I deliberately misrepresented the village. Rather, I did not tell the whole story. Indeed it is not possible to tell the whole story.

As an evaluator, I was in a certain sense 'trapped' by peacebuilding discourse. This 'entrapment' took place due to the broader context of the International Community: I understood that I was paid to produce a story which would show-case the successes of CAIP to an audience of paymasters; I was part of a team of dedicated international and local staff many of whom believed in the programme (albeit for different reasons); I myself had developed a personal perspective that CAIP had achieved some good for poor communities (despite failing to achieve its peacebuilding objectives) and did not want to denigrate its achievements. Thus, M&E tells us a considerable amount about the social and political relationships between evaluator and evaluated. In this sense, as a form of (mis)representation, it serves a very important function: it keeps international cash coming for 'community development' in the sincere hope that such programmes are benefiting communities and bringing about a more just world. Whilst the discursive practices of M&E do not necessarily constitute direct manipulation or fabrication of data, programme coordinators are often quite ambivalent in private about the conclusions of evaluations and the nature of their work. In conversation with one Mercy Corps programme coordinator I remarked that such programmes might work better if they had more plausible aims. He/she noted that 'if you wrote a realistic proposal the donors are not interested, so you have to write something that interests them and then you end up with a programme which is really hard to implement.'[15] Such testimonies exhibit a certain amount of cynicism and scepticism in private, but not do not constitute the widespread public disclosure that would challenge the whole idea of 'community peacebuilding'. Moreover, they bear witness to the power of discourse to shape how 'community' is practiced in peacebuilding.

Conclusions

Community peacebuilding in Tajikistan 'failed' in the sense that international programmes did not achieve their stated goals in practice. It 'survived' because simulacra of peacebuilding were retained in the evaluation of these programmes. The argument made here evokes the provocative satire of conflict prevention in Central Asia by Megoran (2005), whilst echoing the argument of Debrix (1999) regarding the simulation or 're-envisioning' of international peacekeeping. It raises the question: if the local community is simulated, what or where is being discursively constructed? Debrix's *Re-Envisioning Peacekeeping* followed a Foucauldian tack to demonstrate how peacekeeping's function of 'riot control' is re-presented by the International Community. The UN, he notes, 'must represent world order in its absence' (1999:16). Debrix thus regards UN peacekeeping practice as simulation where the world body presents a façade, a form without substance, 'that would have to be ideologically filled in order to obtain signification and a sense of purpose' (1999: 6). Peacekeeping and by extension peacebuilding are not hegemonic in that their goals are achieved and represented as such. Rather, they are hegemonic because their success is simulated. In this sense Debrix argues,

> Peacekeeping does not represent (disciplinary) liberal ideology. Once again, it simulates it. Peacekeeping depicts a fantasy space or dream land of international affairs (where peacekeeping operations are successful, governance is realised, etc.) inside which claims to neoliberalism on a global scale can be made (Debrix 1999: 216).

Peace operations, although 'failing' in a given practical case, produce simulacra of their ideal world. In such a way imaginations are captured and 'failed' strategies continued.

It is my argument that community peacebuilding in Tajikistan is a specific case where international intervention has supported practices of domination in local governance whilst simulating democratisation via international peacebuilding discourse. Furthermore, I propose that this process is, in one form or another, commonplace in post-conflict peacebuilding. This claim can be refined and tested through further research. For now, it holds two potential yet fundamental theoretical implications for the study of intervention in post-conflict spaces. The making of such fundamental points can only be considered a meaningful contribution given the theoretical under-development of the field. Firstly, studies of post-conflict space should investigate the mutability of the hegemonic liberal peace and the *resilience of local spaces*. In Tajikistan, it is the local context which is imposed upon peacebuilding (in the re-appropriations of international programmes to embolden local elites) as well as peacebuilding which is imposed upon the local context (as locals are relieved of control of how their communities are represented internationally). Thus, the liberal peace perhaps isn't as homogenous or hegemonic as is often suggested; as a form of 'governmentality' its reach into local post-conflict spaces is extremely limited. This calls into question the assumptions behind leading policy reports advocating the extension of peacebuilding to statebuilding (UN 2004). Paris, in an influential academic study, calls for an adjustment of peacebuilding practice in terms of 'institutionalisation before liberalisation' (IBL), thus 'avoiding the pathologies of liberalisation, while placing war-shattered states on a long-term path to democracy and market-oriented economics' (Paris 2004: 235). However, this approach reproduces a subject-object conception of peacebuilding where localities are analytically significant only in terms of the extent to which they follow an externally-imposed model of instiutionalisation. In making this argument, Paris thus repeats the very same fundamental ontological error which led to the failed imposition of liberalisation in the 1990s. As Scott has shown, external actors, however powerful, are in no position to impose models which run counter to local informal processes. They are but one community of players whose ideals and materials are adapted and re-appropriated by local elites who offer gateways to interventions and by local people who might resist them as alien or implausible. The hegemony of the 'liberal peace' is only meaningful in the globalised post-conflict spaces of the International Community, and in the imaginaries of donors, policy-makers and the citizenries of Western states.

Secondly, my analysis suggests that peace is produced inter-subjectively and *inter-spatially*. Whilst this paper is not the place to provide a thorough answer to the second question I posed in the introduction (How does peace hold?), the answer to the first question does hold some implications for the second. Grand narratives such as peacebuilding remain 'thin simplifications' of the practice of international peacebuilding. 'Exceptions' to peacebuilding themselves are subject to symbolic orders and forms of representation found in the worlds of local elites and subordinates. 'Neoliberalism, as an ethos of self-governing,' Ong notes, 'encounters and articulates other ethical regimes in particular contexts' (2006: 9). This is the inter-subjective nature of peace which, rather than adhering to any objective condition or subjective interpretation, consists of the complex constitution of legitimate social and political relations. The answer to the question of how peace holds cannot meaningfully be found in a particular model but in the multiple discourses and practices of post-conflict spaces. Thus, this paper proposes that we must move beyond the idea of a single peace and towards theoretical and methodological approaches that allow us to grasp the diversity of experiences of multiple communities in post-conflict spaces. International interventions may not build peace directly and effectively but they do contribute

indirectly and affectively. Scholars of peace operations must interrogate the ethical and political conflicts of international assistance. Otherwise they may become part of peacebuilding's failure.

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[2] Hereafter I will denote the community, collective subject or 'self' (Hansen 2006) of international peacebuilding as the International Community (capitalised). This approach to discourse analysis of international peacebuilding is justified at further length in Heathershaw 2007a.

[3] In 2006, the last prominent oppositionist, Mirzo Ziyoev, Minister of Emergency Situations was removed from his position.

[4] CAIP, running from 2002-2005 was a three-year, USD27mil regional reconstruction programme which also worked in other perceived 'conflict-prone' areas in the Ferghana valley of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

[5] Mercy Corps, as one of four contractors for CAIP, established a community action group (CAG) in thirty-five communities in Khatlon and Rasht regions. The CAG model was based on the community initiative group (CIG) employed by Mercy Corps under another USAID programme, the Peaceful Communities Initiative (PCI) in Sugd oblast. Phase one of PCI ran from 2001-2004 in thirty-six communities in Tajikistan while a two-year follow-up began in thirty-one new communities from 2004 to 2006. Both CAIP and PCI were also employed in the Ferghana Valley of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, also considered 'conflict prone' according to the International Community.

[6] Personal communication, senior staff member, Mercy Corps, Dushanbe, April 2005.

[7] Interview, Programme Officer, Mercy Corps, 31/05/05.

[8] Group interview, Mercy Corps Community Initiative Group, Margedar, 27/06/05

[9] CAIP findings from a survey of 60 villages in April/May 2005, at the end of the three-year programme; PCI findings from a survey of the same number of respondents across five villages in Asht and Panjakent raiyons in June 2005, six months into the programme.

[10] For a discussion of how politics gets reduced to questions of policy by humanitarian actors see Duffield (2001), ch.4.

[11] All three 'external' evaluators, including myself, became Mercy Corps employees and over the course of the evaluation worked very closely with Mercy Corps staff.

[12] SMART objectives are those which are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed.

[13] Data was based on 331 completed questionnaires filled out by CAG, Youth and Womens' group members in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Around 60% of the data is from Tajikistan (MCU 2005: 7).

[14] Following my involvement in this evaluation I worked to try and develop my own methodology to M&E using the qualitative techniques of ethnography and discourse analysis similar to what has been used throughout this research. I subsequently conducted mini-evaluations for Mercy Corps and GTZ during the midway point of their programmes. See Heathershaw (2005c, 2005d).

[15] Interview, programme officer, Mercy Corps, Dushanbe, 31/05/05