

Police, Public and Diversity: Complicated relations

This Interlabo is organised by the CRiS research group of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and the OD Criminology of the National Institute of Criminalistics and Criminology. Both partners are also involved in the POLSTOP Cost Action.

Since the death of Adil during a police pursuit in Brussels on the 19th of April 2020 and later, on a much more international scale, the death of George Floyd by the knee of a police officer in the USA on the 25th of May 2020, police violence towards minorities has, once again, been in the public eye. In both organising research centres, recent qualitative studies were completed that offer insights on how the local Belgian police deals with the public on all its (super-)diversity. These studies focused specifically, and certainly not solely, on the relation between police officers and people of colour or different cultures. Each looked at a specific part of police work, police culture or police, thus being able to understand better how policing works and what and how problematic issues regarding the diverse public can be identified.

A first research concerns a two-year action-research by the NICC and finances by Unia on the identification and tackling of problematic mechanisms of police selectivity in one local police force in a super-diverse population. This research focused on police patrols and their intervention. This presentation will zoom in on how police patrols deal with police reactivity: police intervention following a demand or a call from the public.

A second research is a PhD at the VUB focusing on stop and search techniques, often in a proactive police intervention. One particular aspect will be discussed: how within specific police cultures the public is foremost seen as a hindrance to the aimed order, albeit through different lenses.

A third research by the VUB financed by Open Society Justice Initiative looks into the way diversity, especially at a policy level, is being shaped within the police, and the way police officers with a migration background, situate themselves as police officers within this whole.

In this Interlabo, we aim to grasp the different mechanisms, aspects of culture or composition of the police force that surround policing in the current social and societal climate, and stimulate a deeper understanding of problems and reproaches regarding policing, taking the (super)diverse contexts and its challenges into account.

Programme

Chair : Carrol Tange (NICC)

10h Welcoming and Introduction *Sofie De Kimpe (VUB)*

10h15 Reactive policing : Citizens as commanders of police interventions
Sarah Van Praet (NICC)

10h45 Discussant
Jacques de Maillard (UVSQ & CESDIP)

10h55h Questions

11h10 Distrust of citizens and police controls
Inès Saudelli (VUB)

11h40 Discussant
Mike Rowe (University of Liverpool)

11h50 Questions

12h00 Lunch Break

13h30 Diversity within the local police
Ruben Kramer (VUB/UGent) and/or Yana Demeyere(VUB)

14h00 Discussant
Helene Gundhus (Norwegian Police University College)

14h10 Questions

14h30 Debate

Where & When

Venue: Teams (hosted by the Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Date: April 30th 2021