

## GERN – Interlabo

# Aspects of Police Legitimacy

Friday, November 28th 2014

### Organisers:

dr. Antoinette Verhage

prof. dr. Lieven Pauwels

prof. dr. Paul Ponsaers

prof. dr. Jeroen Maesschalck

### Venue:

Het Pand (Priorzaal)

Onderbergen 1

9000 Gent

(Belgium)

## Programme:

9.00 u Registration

9.30 u Welcome and introduction

9.45u-10.30u Trust in police procedural justice. Testing and elaborating procedural justice theory. Drs. Anjuli Van Damme

*10.30 u – 11 u: Coffee break*

11.00u: Reflection by dr. Ben Bradford, University of Oxford

11.45 u Discussion

*12.30 Lunch*

14.00 -14.45u Professional judgments on the legitimacy of police use of force. Drs. Jannie Noppe

14.45u Reflection by dr. Justice Tankebe, University of Cambridge

15.30u Discussion

15.45-16.00: Conclusions and drink

## Police legitimacy

Although we recently see an improvement in police legitimacy scores for the Belgian police, as compared to scores in the late 90s and early 2000s (about 85% of the surveyed Belgian population stated to have some level of trust in the police - HRJ, 2010), police legitimacy keeps being challenged in many ways. This can be challenged through cases of excessive use of force by police officers (e.g. the case of Jonathan Jacobs in Belgium), and is exemplified by relatively low levels of willingness to cooperate with the police.

Police legitimacy is built around several important axes: that of public support and cooperation, the fact that this is based on the level of trust that people have in the police (giving an impetus to obey their requests), that of the extent to which the public assess the way in which the police exercise their authority (and hence their monopoly of violence) and that of the police officers' self-confidence in the moral validity of their claims to exercise power over others (self-legitimacy).

A number of leading scholars have studied police legitimacy from diverse viewpoints, such as external and internal legitimacy. Bradford, for example, looks at the justification of power (external legitimacy). He concludes that people accept the police's right to dictate appropriate behavior not only when they feel a duty to obey officers, but also when they believe that the institution acts according to a shared moral purpose with citizens. This also explains why people are willing to comply with the law (Bradford et al, 2012).

Contrary to Bradford and his colleagues, Tankebe examined the internal aspect of legitimacy (*self-legitimacy*), or the police officers' self-confidence in the moral validity of their claims to exercise power over others (Tankebe, 2011). According to Bottoms & Tankebe (2012), studying the self-legitimacy of police officers is important because audience legitimacy can only be successful if police officers believe in the moral rightness of their own legitimacy. Furthermore, they claim that police officers can only act effectively if they believe in the moral justification of their actions (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012). Both viewpoints will be given attention in the seminar, though focusing on recent research in Belgium. This will allow us to apply international research findings to Belgian research.

## Practical information:

Attending the conference is free, but registration beforehand is obliged. Please e-mail [Anjuli.VanDamme@ugent.be](mailto:Anjuli.VanDamme@ugent.be) before November 21, to register.