
Diversity Management: Police and Minorities

On 20 March 2012, **Guy Ben-Porat**, Lecturer at the Department of Public Policy and Administration, the School of Management, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel, delivered a lecture on the role of the police in diversity management. The lecture "**Diversity Management: Police and Minorities**" was held in the framework of the Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Research and Studies on Eastern Europe (MIREES).

Invoking his research experience in Northern Ireland and studies of the impact of economic globalization on peace processes, the speaker presented the peculiar role played by the **police** in rebuilding ethnically heterogeneous states. Drawing on available research, the guest argued that policing is often a controversial issue in diverse societies, with often tense relations between police and minorities in post-conflict societies. The main challenge lies in the perception by **minorities** of the police not as a public service, but as their enemy due to unequal (perceived as unfair) treatment. This challenge derives from the modern state's illusion of overlap between the state and the nation. According to Ben-Porat, the police have to develop capacities to engage with diversity and serve minorities properly. Given strong biases and prejudices which interfere when interacting with minorities, police reform is not just about willingness, but also about capacities and knowledge. The speaker presented **empirical findings** of differences between communities in terms of their trust in the police. He advocated the need for equality and recognition of specific needs, and engagement with the community and individual needs.

Subsequently Dr. Ben-Porat presented various **diversity-managing models**. The American liberal model is focused on the individual, considering ethnocultural differences a private matter. The French assimilationist model is based on a melting pot approach which aims at homogenizing people, reducing their differences to the minimum (folklore). The Belgian consociational model institutionalizes divisions in the state arrangement. The Canadian multicultural model provides a practical example of managing a multicultural state. Multiculturalism was adopted as a way of life in Canada, with elaborated multicultural training and practices. The speaker summarized the diversity-managing models by arguing that they all recognize equality, but only the Belgian and Canadian types recognize differences.



Arguing that the groups should perceive the state as legitimate, the speaker analyzed top-down and bottom-up **models of state-building**. He proceeded to present empirical evidence of the gaps between different communities in the way of seeing the police, based on the examples of the USA and Israel. The available research reveals that minorities have problems with the police in terms of overpolicing (being subject to disproportionate control measures on the part of the police) and/or underpolicing (a lower level of service provided to minorities).

Dealing with the reasons for **police reform**, the guest pointed out legitimacy problems, operating difficulties and the need to get cooperation from neighborhoods. He then presented three types of

reform which include police diversification (changing the makeup of the police), changing practicisim (training police officers and revising procedures) and community involvement (the most challenging task of overseeing the police).

The last part of the lecture was devoted to **research** conducted in Israel. The practices of recruitment, training and community policing were explored by means of focus groups and surveys of Arab citizens. The conclusions revealed that police-minority relations are tense, underscored by either real or perceived discriminations.

The lecture was followed by a **lively discussion** on minority engagement in the police and the diversity management idea as applied to the police.

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