Conference Programme

"Knowledge Exchange about Muslim Societies: Policy and Research Synergies"

3 and 4 November 2010

Golden Tulip Flamenco Hotel, Zamalek, Cairo, Egypt

Organised by Project Office IRP in collaboration with the Social Development Department (DSO), Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Introduction

The Project Office Islam Research Programme (Project Office IRP) organises in collaboration with the Social Development Department (DSO) of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs a number of conferences as part of the research programme "Strengthening Knowledge of and Dialogue with the Muslim World", in short Islam Research Programme. The second conference of the series takes place on 3 and 4 November 2010 and brings together the policy officers and researchers currently participating in one of the nine IRP research projects.

Besides providing a platform to exchange knowledge and experiences, this working conference aims to train researchers and policy officers in carrying out and making use of policy-relevant academic research. Different phases of the interface between research and policy-making will pass in review during a keynote address, four interactive workshops, and a closing session.

The keynote address will be given by Dr. Hania Sholkamy, an Egyptian anthropologist (PhD London School of Economics and Political Sciences), and an assistant research professor at the Social Research Center of the American University in Cairo. Her keynote address, entitled "Knowledge of Ourselves and Knowledge of Others: Research as critical reflection", will offer a diagnosis of the politics of research in Muslim contexts in the present day and make an attempt to elaborate possible alternative ways to overcome the pathologies and difficulties of common sensitivities and misunderstandings, which can affect the quality, credibility and use of research findings.

After the opening session the participants will take part in four workshops, which will concentrate on themes relevant for the process of policy-research interaction in general, and for the Islam Research Programme in particular: experiences of and challenges to the IRP research projects; knowledge translation and dissemination; visual rhetoric and media; and the societal impact of research. We end the two conference days with a plenary session on the lessons learned and recommendations for the near future.

Workshop Themes

1) Presenting the project teams and their research: experiences and challenges
In the first workshop, moderated by Martin van Bruinessen and Benjamin Soares, each project team presents key information about their projects in a short presentation (not to exceed 8 minutes), focusing on the following: 1) main research questions and personnel; 2) major

challenges to the research; and 3) depending on the stage of the project, the nature of interactions with the Embassy and the interface between research and policy-making. The project teams will be grouped into three clusters (Islamic actors/sharia; State-society interaction; and Civil Society) and will be asked to reflect on these issues in their presentations. Following each cluster's presentations, there will be a brief, more general discussion that will focus on comparison and relevance for the other country teams.

2) Texts in translation; from interview to policy brief
The focus of this workshop, facilitated by Anke van der Kwaak and Karin Willemse, is sharing expertise and experiences in knowledge translation and dissemination. By applying a participatory methodology whereby researchers and policy makers work on the same material, research texts will be translated into policy texts. We will use radiant thinking by linking, connecting, and associating on parts of interviews, in order to gain alternative perspectives on research findings. The workshop consists of two intersecting parts. In the first part of the workshop, participants will work in subgroups of both researchers and policy makers to contextualise and categorise research results in order to map out underlying issues and challenges as well as to detect silences. In the second part participants will work in the same groups. On the basis of their research questions they will be asked to translate the words, images and associations identified in the first part of workshop into an outline of a policy brief.

3) Elements of visual rhetoric and the visual language toolkit
Visual rhetoric is the fairly recent development of a theoretical framework describing how visual images communicate, as opposed to aural or verbal messages. It examines the relationship between images and writing and is different from the study of visual or graphic design, in that it emphasizes images as sensory expressions of cultural meaning, as opposed to purely aesthetic consideration. This workshop, facilitated by Koen Geurts, explores basic methods and examples of media that can be used to streamline the communication between multiple recipients or groups with different objectives in general, and between researchers and policy officers in particular. We will determine essential textual fragments and use methods to find a relevant visual translation. Furthermore the workshop will offer theoretical updates concerning visual media in general (social media, infographics etc.).

4) Research and societal impact
In this workshop, facilitated by Sylvia Bergh and Dina Shehata, the participants will reflect on the question of what societal impact their research could or may have. "Societal impact" can be defined as 'changes in behaviour, policies, capacities, and practices that the research has contributed to, directly or indirectly' (e.g. change in embassy/government policy, working practices of an NGO, reduction in poverty in a certain area, strengthened civil society input into policy processes, etc). Researchers and policy officers will identify the kind of changes at the level of society relevant to their own IRP research projects and describe the implicit or explicit "pathways of change". This involves answering questions such as who are the relevant actors in national governments and society that would need to take up the ideas to bring about the desired societal change? What kind of coalitions and networks would be needed? And what would be conducive political and economic contexts? After these "pathways" have been described individually and compared and discussed within the project teams, the workshop will conclude with a discussion on the role of the researchers and policy officers in bringing about this societal change.

3 November	
08:30 – 09:00	Registration, coffee and tea
SESSION 1	
09:00 – 10:30	Chair: Jos van Beurden
09:00 – 09:05	Welcome by Dennis Janssen, Project Coordinator Project Office IRP
09:00 – 09:15	Opening address by H.E. Susan Blankhart, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Arab Republic of Egypt
09:15 – 09:45	**Knowledge of Ourselves and Knowledge of Others: Research as critical reflection** Keynote address by Hania Sholkamy, Research Associate Professor, Social Research Centre, American University in Cairo
09:45 – 10:30	Plenary discussion
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee/tea break
SESSION 2	
11:00 – 13:00	**Workshop1: Presenting the project teams and their research: experiences and challenges** Andalucia/Florencia room Facilitators: Benjamin Soares, Senior Researcher, African Studies Centre, Leiden, Member, Academic Advisory Board, Project Office IRP Martin van Bruinessen, Professor, Utrecht University, Member, Academic Advisory Board, Project Office IRP
13:00 – 14:30	Lunch
SESSION 3	
14:30 – 18:00	Parallel workshops (coffee/tea break 16:00 – 16:30)
	Workshop 2: Texts in translation; from interview to policy brief Andalucia room Facilitators: Anke van der Kwaak, Senior Advisor & Researcher, Royal Tropical Institute, Member, Academic Advisory Board, Project Office IRP Karin Willemse, Assistant Professor of Anthropology of Africa, Gender and Islam, Erasmus University, Rotterdam, Consultant in Qualitative Research Methodology, Member, Academic Advisory Board, Project Office IRP
	Workshop 3: Elements of visual rhetoric and the visual language toolkit Florencia room Facilitator: Koen Geurts, Creative Director (Design Office KOENGEURTS.NU), Tutor Design & Concept, The Royal Academy of Arts, The Hague, Consultant & Trainer of "Visual Journalism"
18:30	Departure for dinner at Lakeside Café – Al-Azhar Park

4 November	
08:30 – 09:00	Coffee and tea
SESSION 4	
09:00 – 12:00	Parallel workshops (coffee/tea break 10:30 – 11:00)
	Workshop 2: Texts in translation; from interview to policy brief Andalucia room Facilitators: Anke van der Kwaak, Senior Advisor & Researcher, Royal Tropical Institute, Member, Academic Advisory Board, Project Office IRP Karin Willemse, Assistant Professor of Anthropology of Africa, Gender and Islam, Erasmus University, Rotterdam, Consultant in Qualitative Research Methodology, Member, Academic Advisory Board, Project Office IRP
	Workshop 3: Elements of visual rhetoric and the visual language toolkit Florencia room Facilitator: Koen Geurts, Creative Director (Design Office KOENGEURTS.NU), Tutor Design & Concept, The Royal Academy of Arts, The Hague, Consultant & Trainer of "Visual Journalism"
12:00 – 13:30	Lunch
SESSION 5	
13:30 – 16:30	Parallel workshops
	Workshop 4: Research and societal impact Andalucia room Facilitator: Sylvia Bergh, Lecturer, International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University, Rotterdam, Member, Academic Advisory Board, Project Office IRP
	Workshop 4: Research and societal impact Florencia room Facilitator: Dina Shehata, Senior Researcher, Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Cairo, Member Cairo project team
16:30 – 17:00	Coffee/tea break
SESSION 6	
17:00 – 18:00	**Closing of the conference** Plenary debate Chair: Jos van Beurden
18:30	Reception at the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
20:00	Departure for dinner at Abou El Sid Restaurant

5 November	
09:00 – 13:00	During the morning after the two conference days, Project Office IRP would like to offer the different IRP project teams the space and time to discuss their own research projects. Both the project coordinator as well as the members of the Academic Advisory Board of Project Office IRP will be available for discussions and/or questions.