

The Promoting Pluralism Knowledge Program

The Kosmopolis Institute of the University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht, the Netherlands in collaboration with the Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (Hivos)

The Promoting Pluralism Knowledge Program is an international academic-practitioner collaborative in India, Indonesia, Uganda and the Netherlands.

The Netherlands Pluralism Program

The international Pluralism program is coordinated by the [Kosmopolis Institute of the University of Humanistic Studies](#) (Dr. Caroline Suransky, Co-Chair of the program and Prof. Henk Manschot, Director of the Kosmopolis Institute) and [Hivos](#) (Ms. Ute Seela, Co-Chair of the program) in the Netherlands.

Together, they manage the overall program and create opportunities for international collaboration between participating institutions and organizations, such as international conferences and seminars, regional management meetings and multi - and bilateral exchanges. Initiatives include:

- *Pluralism working paper series* - The pluralism working paper series aims to reflect the broad range of theoretical and empirical work that is undertaken in the program. The series is intended to stimulate discussion and critical comment and contains publications in three categories: academic research (-in-progress) papers; practice-based reflections and interviews and conversation. Contributions to the series thus far include work by Prof Abdullahi An-Na'im and Hon. Justice Aftab Alam (Supreme Court of India). Working papers can be accessed via: <http://www.uvh.nl/News.asp?oId=1&oChapter=2&hId=sub211>
- *Open Democracy* - The Pluralism Program is associated with the *open Democracy* initiative, which is a UK based independent global current affairs website, dedicated to promoting human rights and democracy through dialogue and debate. Within the network, the insights and analysis of three international research/knowledge programs are published in articles and blog-type entries on a monthly basis, accessible via <http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/religion-gender-politics>
- *Annual International Summer School: Pluralism and Development* - Each year, an international summer school takes place in one of the participating countries. Selected graduate students and staff from universities and civil society based organizations meet for a month for an intensive program of lectures, workshops and excursions. The summer school is formally part of the MA program of the University of Humanistic Studies.
- The 2010 blog, jointly written by participants, can be accessed via: <http://www.hivos.net/Hivos-Knowledge-Programme/Communities/Pluralism-Summer-School>
- *Pluralism PhD Program* - The PhD program is multi-locational and an integral part of the regional programs in Indonesia, India and Uganda. The program is incorporated into the PhD Graduate School of the University of Humanistic Studies, which is the primary certifying institution. Academic supervision is done in cooperation with the

Centre for the Study of Culture and Society (CSCS, Bangalore), the Center for Religious and Cross Cultural Studies (CRCS, Yogyakarta) of Gadjah Maja University and Uganda Martyrs University (UMU, Nkozi).

- *Kosmopolis Research – and Activities Program* - The Kosmopolis Institute research program is connected to the University of Humanistic Studies thematic program on Citizenship in Intercultural Societies. An example is the Pluralism Working Paper no. 2 on ‘The Hidden Dimension of the Secular’. The Pluralism program is also connected to UvH research initiatives on Humanism and Ecology (working group on Green Humanism) and links issues of pluralism, human development and sustainable development. Example of this is the publication “Life on Earth; a Human Story”. A third example is research that is conducted in connection with the publication (end 2010) of brochure for CSO’s about pluralism and civic reason.

The Kosmopolis Institute and Hivos regularly organise events such as seminars, dialogues and film evenings to discuss issues related to Pluralism and Development. Recent examples include a film- and discussion evening on homosexuality in Uganda (documentary: Victor and Georgina) and a seminar on the report ‘Development Aid that Makes a Difference’ of the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy.

Indonesia Pluralism Program

The Pluralism program in Indonesia started in 2008 and is coordinated by Dr. Zainal Abidin Bagir of the [Center for Religious and Cross Cultural Studies \(CRCS\)](#) at the Graduate School of Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta. A regional team, consisting of academics, NGO based staffs and a representative of the Hivos Regional Office in Jakarta, determines the agenda and scope of the program.

The key concept explored in the Indonesian program revolves around the notion of civic pluralism, with a focus on religious identity as probably the most important component that makes up today’s Indonesian diversity. The research conducted in the program is organized along four dimensions of ‘management of diversity’: (1) *Recognition* of different religious and/or ethnic communities; (2) *Representation* of the interests of different ethnic and/or religious communities within the Indonesian democratic structures; (3) Economic and social *redistribution* for different religious or ethnic communities and its relationship to conflict; and (4) Social / community engagement with the above mentioned issues at local levels. To explore these dimensions, the program focuses on three inter-related spheres: Agency (experiences of pluralism and the development of civic competences); Structure (civic culture, mechanisms, procedures, possibilities and obstacles) and Negotiations (means and ways of dealing with cultural and religious diversity, the morality of compromise and resistance, the difficult dialogues in negotiating diversity, etc).

In broad terms, the program, as translated into research strategy, consists of two main areas: it looks at *laws and regulations* which contribute positively or negatively to the creation and maintenance of a civic pluralist society and *local communities’ practices* in dealing with issues related to diversity. These works are expected to help create a map of Indonesian diversity in several layers, from national to local levels and from the theoretical to the more concrete issues.

As part of the Pluralism Knowledge Program, since 2008 CSCS produces an *Annual Report on Religious Life in Indonesia* which includes information on religious demography, analysis of issues related to places of worship, defamation of religion (esp. with regard to non-mainstream religious groups within religions), religion and public policies and specific contemporary developments in religious life in a given year.

Other research includes more general and theoretical aspects of the pluralism discourse (as related to Indonesian constitution; current, decentralized local politics; gender issues and the youth) and a number of researches on local practices of pluralism throughout the country, including Java, Bali, South Kalimantan, South Sulawesi, North Sumatra and Papua. The local researches fall within three clusters of issues: (a) Understanding pluralism through everyday life and practices in local communities; (b) Exploring inter-religious and inter-ethnic encounters and the interplay of ethnic and religious identities and (c) Best practices for managing cultural and religious diversity within local communities.

India Pluralism Program

The [Pluralism program in India](#) started in 2008 and is coordinated by Prof Sitharamam Kakarala of the [Centre for the Study of Culture and Society \(CSCS\)](#) in Bangalore. The India program is developed in consultation with a regional team that includes academics, NGO based staff and representation of the Hivos Regional Office in Bangalore. The India program consists of initiatives in diverse Indian states, including Gujarat, Karnataka, Bihar, Kerala, Tamilnadu and Goa. The initiatives under the programme primarily focus on two core themes:

- *Human Rights, Pluralism and Rethinking the Secular State*: emerging challenges and dilemmas before human rights and secular interventions of civil society groups in countering the rapidly growing Hindutva majority fundamentalism and its various manifestations such as communalism and communal violence. Initiatives here include studies into the role of civil society in post 2002 Gujarat violence, emerging context of inter-religious tensions and communal violence on the west coast of Karnataka, the impact of state-initiated remedies in the form of special judicial inquiries and commissions in providing justice to the victims of communal violence.
- *Faith and Diversity*: the dynamic interaction between social and cultural diversity on the one hand and 'faith'-based identities on the other and its implications for social action interventions. The theme is pursued through an active collaboration of Patna Collective, a Patna/Delhi based group, and consists of mapping: (a) how questions of caste, class and gender are influencing transformation processes within Muslim identity formations in India; (b) what kind of civic spaces are emerging within the Muslim community in addressing the challenges posed by communal violence and demands of everyday peace and coexistence. The study locations include Bihar (Pasmada Muslim Mahaz), Tamilnadu (women's mosque movement) and Kerala (solidarity movement of Jamat-e-Islami). A study of mapping common-worship sites in Goa is also part of the theme.

CSCS is in the process of creating five archives: (a) Gujarat, (b) the Pasmada movement archive (caste question in Islam); (c) the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Belief; (d) Gender, Religion and Reform; and (e) common worship sites. The archives aim to facilitate pulling diverse civil society and academic materials on the themes of pluralism into a single window of access; create opportunities of dissemination beyond conventional publication and create a substantive source of research and reflection.

Uganda Pluralism Program

The Pluralism program in Uganda started in 2009 and is coordinated by Ms. Emily Drani and Mr. John de Coninck of the [Cross Cultural Foundation of Uganda \(CCFU\)](#) in Kampala. The overall objective of the program is to contribute to the reconfiguration of debates on governance and popular perceptions of diversity and democracy in Uganda. The scope and direction of the Uganda program is developed in consultation with a regional team which includes academics, NGO based staff and representation of Hivos Head Office in the Hague.

The Uganda program undertakes initiatives in a number of districts across the country, including Mpigi (Central Uganda), Amuru, Pader and Dokolo (Northern Uganda) and Kibaale (Western Uganda).

At this stage, the main focus of the overall program lies on what has been termed “domesticating pluralism”, and investigates how local concepts and practices of pluralism are generated, communicated and acted upon. The program aims to develop new understandings of the implications of many forms of diversity (ethnicity, religion, political affiliation) in local contexts. Three dimensions are central: (a) understandings and lived realities of pluralism and democracy (b) intra – and inter ethnic/community differences and (c) processes of marginalization.

Other studies and consultations are conducted on the theme of family roots as important markers of identity in Uganda and on managing diversity in secondary schools. In addition, CCFU aims to provide a platform for dialogue on pluralism and the accommodation of difference in the run up to the 2011 national elections in Uganda.