

Mediating Islam in the Digital Age (MIDA)

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions ITN proposal 'Mediating Islam in the Digital Age' (MIDA) has been granted.

An international consortium of research institutes, universities and non-academic partners in six European countries has been awarded the research grant from the Department for Research and Innovation of the European Commission in June 2018. ITN programmes are designed to combine scientific research with an intensive training trajectory for young scholars in order to equip them with the necessary comprehensive knowledge and skills. These researchers work in an inter-sectoral, interdisciplinary and international environment to deepen their knowledge and to find answers to pressing contemporary societal issues.

The MIDA project rests on the premise that digitization and technological innovations have a tremendous impact on Islam, the effects of which are diverse and ubiquitous. They include, first and foremost, modes of expression and communication of religious messages and traditions, and modes of engagement with society. Digitization and concurrent innovations as they emerged in the past decades belong to the list of comparable fundamental technological transformations in human history, such as the invention of paper, printing technology, steam power, electricity and telecommunication, which constituted major upheavals, even if these were not experienced in all societies and by everyone at the same time, in the same way.

It is commonly recognized that the digital revolution will indeed deeply transform human societies, much as the industrial revolution did in the nineteenth century. However, the rapid changes that are currently taking place generate a sense of loss of control and instability among the general public, politicians, journalists, academics, and not least among Muslims themselves. The spread of modern digital media and new technologies of communication, production and dissemination, prompts researchers and social actors, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, to make sense of, and to understand these developments. Consequently, they have shaken up Islam as a field of academic study and have impacted on the ways Islam is to be studied in the future. The specificity of the current digital revolution calls for a re-evaluation of past situations and reflection on future prospects.

MIDA assesses these developments in all their dimensions by formulating three major questions: How does digitization (1) shape Islam (i.e. beliefs, practices, societies, political organizations, social institutions, and outlooks); (2) modify the relation Muslims have with their past; (3) modify and reorganize scholarship and research on Islam?

MIDA takes Islam as a broad field, not confined to theological dimensions as such. The study of Islam implies the study of mediating practices and concomitant social, political and cultural implications in past and present, and consists of three interlocking dimensions. The first concerns texts, doctrines, material culture, and rituals as means to bridge the distance between the individual and the divine, and to generate religious experience and reflection. The second dimension concerns the social, cultural, visual and institutional environments and settings in which mediation takes place, and the actors that are involved. The third dimension concerns social and political institutions and power relations in which mediation is embedded. An overall aim of the project is to understand how digitization instigates renewed attention for the impact of similar processes in the past.

MIDA is coordinated by the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in Paris. The consortium includes twelve beneficiaries and thirteen partner organizations, among which the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Additional information can be obtained by contacting:

Prof. dr. Thijs Sunier

j.t.sunier@vu.nl

Beneficiaries

France

CNRS

CNRS/ IISMM

CNRS/InVisu

Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD)

IRD/ Centre Population et Développement (CEPED)

Germany

University of Marburg

Free University of Berlin

German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Hamburg

Netherlands

Netherlands Interuniversity Institute for the study of Islam (NISIS)

Leiden University/NISIS, Faculty of Humanities

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam/NISIS Faculty of Social Sciences, Dept. of Social and cultural Anthropology

Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen/NISIS Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies

Universiteit van Amsterdam/NISIS Faculty of Humanities, Capacity group Religious Studies

Belgium

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Arabic and Islamic Studies - Faculty of Arts

Spain

Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC)

CSIC-ILC (Instituto de Lenguas y Culturas del Mediterráneo y Oriente Próximo)

CSIC-IMF (Institución Milá y Fontanals)

CSIC-EEA (Escuela de Estudios Árabes)

Bosnia

Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB)

Partner organisations

France

Centre Pompidou

Germany

Forschungsbibliothek Gotha

P + S Medien, Berlin

Netherlands

Brill Publishers

National Museum of World Cultures “Tropenmuseum”

Spain

Casa Árabe

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

Universidad de Granada

Universitat de Barcelona

Bosnia

Faculty of Islamic Studies

Qatar

Al-Jazeera Media Network