**The spiritual is political: Exploring transformations in religion and development.**

**Two-day workshop in The Hague 25-26 June 2015**

Hosted by the Centre for Religion, Conflict and the Public Domain and Sustainable Society, University of Groningen,

and Knowledge Centre Religion and Development, Oikos

Across academia, policy and practice there is growing recognition of the importance of religion in development. Yet exactly how and why religion matters remains an underexplored issue in each of these different contexts. Often academics, policymakers and practitioners will focus on the influence of religious leaders on politics and public life, on the role of churches, mosques and temples as meeting places in the community, providing safe spaces for people to share ideas and learning, as networks of volunteers that provide support for development initiatives on healthcare, education, child protection, microfinance, to name a few. Much of this interest in religion, however, is highly “secularized”. There is almost no consideration of the impact of spirituality, belief, religious experience and practice on community transformation. This is in part also reflective of a neglect of the interconnections between personal and communal transformation in development as well – social transformation does not just “happen” – people choose to make it happen and the reasons why they choose to do so are complex, but religion, including personal experiences of religious and spiritual transformation, can often be a part of those reasons.

In this workshop, we want to explore these themes further – how and why do religion and spirituality matter in development? What are the interconnections between individual and social transformation and what role does spirituality play in personal and social transformations? How can understanding of and reflection on individual, personal experiences of religious and spiritual transformation be incorporated in and contribute to the development of more religious-sensitive policymaking and practice within traditionally secular development institutions and approaches?

The workshop will bring together policymakers, practitioners and researchers working for a range of different institutions and organisations related to and interested in development. It will run across two days. The first day will be a series of focused conversations organised around three key subthemes:

* Religion, gender, sexuality and intimacies in development programming
* Personal and social transformation entangled
* Rethinking leadership in religion and development

Preliminary programme

25 June

9.30 am– welcome coffee and tea

10.00 – Introductory session, background to the project, presentation of report, critical feedback – Erin Wilson, Nikki Haze (Centre for Religion, Conflict and the Public Domain, University of Groningen), Brenda Bartelink (Knowledge Centre Religion and Development)

10.30 – Response by Marie Juul Petersen, Danish Institute for Human Rights

10.50- Discussion

11:30-11:45am – coffee break

11:45am-1:15 pm – Themed discussion session 1: Religion, gender, sexuality and intimacies in development programming – academic introduction, practitioner response

1:15pm – 2pm – Lunch

2-3:30pm – Themed discussion session: Personal and social transformation entangled – academic introduction, practitioner response

3:30-3:45pm – coffee break

3:45pm – 5:15pm – Themed discussion session: Rethinking leadership in religion and development – academic introduction, practitioner response

5:15 – 5:30pm – wrap up and close

Dinner

26 June

10-12noon – Public Panel session discussing questions and themes from previous day

Noon – 2pm – Working lunch to discuss funding proposal and future projects (closed session)

The workshop is part of a larger research project funded by the NWO Added Value in the Humanities program.