

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2011

NI-Damascus / NI-Beirut / NI-Amman

With pleasure, we inform you about the activities which have recently taken place at the Netherlands Institute in Damascus (NI-Damascus), the (to be established) Netherlands Institute in Beirut (NI-Beirut) and the Netherlands Institute in Amman (NI-Amman). In this newsletter, the 3 Netherlands Institutes in the Levant present their activities for the months January – May 2011. This newsletter will start by presenting the recent activities of NI-Damascus, followed by the recent activities of NI-Beirut (to-be-established) and NI-Amman.



Director: Astrid Rijbroek (director@ni-damascus.org)
Deputy director: Kathelijne Smits (deputydirector@ni-damascus.org)

NIASD contact information

Mail address: P.O. Box 36103
Mezzeh, Damascus, Syria
Visitors address: East Mezzeh,
Al Farabi, Street no. 85, Damascus, Syria
Tel: 00963-11- 61249790, 61249791,6117622, 6120515
Fax: 00963-11-6120515
Website: www.niasd.org

1. Institutional

Yearly Nuffic conference and training days (15 - 17 March 2011)

NI-Damascus director Astrid Rijbroek was present at the yearly Nuffic conference at 15 March 2011 in the 'Beurs van Berlage'. The central theme of the conference was 'multilingualism in higher education'. During the conference an information session took place in which the goals of the Netherlands Academic Institutes abroad were presented and a meet and greet was facilitated between directors of the Institutes and interested visitors. After the conference, Astrid Rijbroek participated in a Nuffic 'Study in Holland' training day at 16 March and a conversation day with Nuffic staff on 17 March 2011.

Ahmed Abo Sheker assistant at the institute (April 2011)



Ahmed Abo Sheker started his introduction period of working as an assistant at the institute in April 2011. Ahmed is familiar with the institute since he has worked before on a freelance basis in busy times. He succeeded assistant Waleed Shekho on 1 May 2011 who worked at the institute since 2006. Waleed will leave Syria to start his study program at the 'Hogeschool van Amsterdam': University of Applied Sciences in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. We thank Waleed for his work at the institute and welcome Ahmed.

Formation of the Advisory Committee (January – April 2011)

During the last couple of months, preparations were made for the formation of the Advisory Committee for NI-Damascus, NI-Beirut and NI-Amman. The formation of this committee is required by the statutes of the Foundation Netherlands Institutes in the Levant, the foundation through which the three institutes are being operated. The Advisory Committee will advise the Foundation Board and the institutes on policy and other matters and will gather two times a year. Five Dutch experts representing the operational fields of the institutes (science and education, culture and international cooperation) have been approached and have indicated to be available for the Advisory Committee. The appointment of these members by the board of the foundation is expected shortly. The Advisory Committee should be distinguished from our already existing Committee of Recommendation.

2. Science and Education

Intensive Arabic language program for Dutch university students (27 February – 26 April 2011)

From February 27 until April 26 NI-Damascus facilitated a fulltime Arabic language program for fifteen Dutch university students as part of their Bachelor's Program Arabic Language and Culture at the University of Leiden, the University of Amsterdam and the Radboud University of Nijmegen. The program was developed as replacement option for the program in Cairo at the NVIC, which, due to the recent uprisings in Egypt, had to be cancelled just before the start of the lessons.



The program at the institute in Damascus has been taught by a team of three Syrian teachers and was developed in close cooperation with the NVIC in Cairo and the three universities in the Netherlands.

Students followed a full time academic program, consisting of the subjects Syrian Dialect, Writing, Literature, Listening and Media Arabic. In addition to these subjects, the students were introduced to various aspects of Syrian society and culture during weekly excursions and lectures by guest speakers (Capita Selecta). Activities included the following:

- March 3: a lecture by UN official Willem Steijlen followed by a trip to the destroyed city of Quneitra on the Golan Heights;
- March 10: a visit to the Dutch embassy in Damascus;
- March 17: lectures on the topic of gender in Syrian society by Syrian scholar Dr. Iman Ghafari and project manager Dana Omari;
- March 24: meetings within the topic of the art scene and cultural organisations in Syria with Maya al Katib from the Makan Association and Abir Boukhari from All Art Now;
- March 31: a visit to the Assad Library, the Zahiriyeh Library and the calligraphy museum;
- 7 April: a lecture by Dr. Wael Seif, teacher at Damascus University and local project manager in the Syrian-Dutch Water Cooperation project, on the topic of Syrian-Dutch cooperation on water issues and a tour at the Water Information Centre of the Water Resources Directorate of Homs;
- 14 April: a presentation by Martijn Leefink about churches in the Middle East. Followed by visits to the Presbyterian and Syriac Orthodox churches in Bab Touma, where students met preacher Butros Zaour and bishop Jean Kawak, respectively.



The study program was supposed to take place from 27 February 2011 until 26 May 2011. On 26 April 2011, however, the board of the institute decided to stop the program at the institute due to safety reasons. The institute assisted all students with their travel arrangements and all students left Syria within a few days. Together with the Universities in the Netherlands, the Syrian teacher team and the NVIC in Cairo, the NIASD arranged the possibility for all students to finish the program with exams and papers in order for students to receive the ECTS that were initially reserved for the program.

Preparations and promotion of three NI-Damascus summer courses 2011: 1. Intercultural Communication, 2. Christian and Islamic Art and Architecture, and 3. Arabic (January-April 2011)

During the period January – April 2011 preparations for the three summer courses took place. The institute has worked on the promotion, registration and communication with students.

Unfortunately, due to the current travel advise for Syria of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the institute decided on 19 April 2011 to cancel all three summer courses for this year:

- Summer course Arabic: 14 July-10 August 2011;
- Summer course Christian and Islamic Art and Architecture: 19 June-10 July 2011;
- Summer course Intercultural Communication: 26 June-7 July 2011, second edition.

Untill the date of cancellation, a total number of 68 students applied for the summer courses. All applicants were informed about the cancellation and the coursefees have been reimbursed.

First session of the “Training Course in Project Development and Management for Women 2011” (18-21 January 2011)

Together with the Danish Institute in Damascus, the first session of the training course “Project Development and Management for Women” 2011 was held at the institute from 18 to 21 January. This course, designed by the Maastricht School of Management, has been delivered by MSM trainers Patrick Martens and Mieke van Riet. The course is sponsored by Dutch NGO HIVOS, The Royal Netherlands Embassy in Damascus and the Danish NGO KVINFO.



The 21 selected participants (both women and men) are all working in small to medium sized Syrian organizations and are engaged in project-based activities with a special focus on women and gender issues. In this first session of the course, the participants were familiarized with the initial stages of the project cycle. The participants will continue to develop their technical and personal skills necessary for successful project development and management in three 3 to 4 days follow-up sessions. The second session has been rescheduled and will take place in October 2011.

This course is a follow up of the earlier succesful training course “Project Development and Management” (PDM) which was delivered in 2008-2009.

Assessing and processing first round of MENA Scholarship applications (March 2011)

Upon the request by the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Damascus, the institute assisted in the processing of the applications for the MENA Scholarship Programme. A total of 70 applications were evaluated based on their experience and motivation. Of the 70 applicants, a number of mid-career professionals working in the fields of Water Management, Environmental Sciences, Business Administration and Management, Agriculture and Geology and Earth Sciences will be finally selected by NUFFIC to receive a scholarship which will enable them to follow a short course related to their area of expertise in the Netherlands.

The program is an initiative of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is administrated by the Dutch higher education organization Nuffic. Selected applicants will study at any of the four

participating higher education institutions: the International Institute for Geo-information Science and Earth Observation (ITC), Maastricht School of Management (MSM), UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education, or Wageningen International. More scholarships will be available for later courses at the same institutions. The application deadline for the second round is on July 1, 2011. More information and the application form can be found on our website www.niasd.org

Expert meeting “Internationalization of Higher Education in Holland, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan” (25 & 26 March 2011)

An expert meeting on “Internationalization of Higher Education in Holland, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan” took place on 25 and 26 March 2011 at the institute in Damascus. The meeting was originally scheduled for December 2010 but had to be postponed due to bad weather conditions at the time.

The meeting provided experts from all four countries an opportunity to exchange information and views and engage in discussions about developments with regard to the internationalization of higher education in their respective countries. The expert meeting was followed by a public dissemination seminar at Damascus University on 27 March 2011.



The following experts participated in the meeting, which was prepared and moderated by Taco van der Zwaag:

- Dr. Billeh from Jordan: president of the to be established University of Madaba, which will be accredited by the New England States Commission of Post Secondary Education (in the US). It will Jordan's first private not for profit university.
- Prof. Khasawneh from Jordan: former President of Yarmouk University, former Professor in Soil Chemistry, Dean and Vice President of the Jordan University of Science and Technology and former Minister of Agriculture in Jordan.
- Dr. Waddah Nasr from Lebanon: Associate Professor of Philosophy, American University of Beirut.

- Mr al-Shalabi from Syria: coordinator of TEMPUS Project: Skills and Career Center-Pathways to the Labor Market and former director of international and cultural relations at Damascus University.
- Dr. Al Ayoubi from Syria: director of the Tempus EU Program at the Ministry of Higher Education in Syria and assistant professor at the Faculty of Economics at Damascus University.
- Dr. De Wit from Holland: Professor Internationalisation of Higher Education at the School of Economics and Management of the University of Applied Sciences in Amsterdam, visiting professor at the Centre for Academic Practice and Research in Internationalisation at Leeds Metropolitan University (UK), founding member and past president of the European Association for International Education (EAIE).
- Dr. Beerkens from Holland: Senior Policy Advisor Internationalisation at Leiden University, the Netherlands.

Meeting of Dr. Beerkens and Dr. De Wit with Dr. Wael Mualla, President of the Damascus University (March 2011)

Prior to the expert meeting “*Internationalization of Higher Education in Holland, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan*” the institute facilitated a meeting between Dutch experts Dr. Beerkens and Dr. De Wit and Dr. Wael Mualla, President of the Damascus University. During the meeting the matter of internationalization of higher education was discussed.

Public day on ‘Internationalization of Higher Education in Syria – Lebanon – Jordan – and the Netherlands’ at the Damascus University (27 March 2011)



The expert meeting on the ‘Internationalization of Higher Education in Holland, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan’ was followed by a public conference in which the experts, lead by dr. Hans de Wit, shared their insights with an interested public that were gained during the expert meeting of the prior days. The public conference took place at the Rida Said Conference Centre of the Damascus University.

NI-Damascus Lecture Series 2011 (24 March 2011)

Three lectures took place as part of the NI-Damascus Lecture Series 2011. All three lectures took place on the same evening at the institute:

- The first lecture ‘*The Moroccan Troops in the Spanish Civil War*’ was given by Ali Al Tuma, Ph.D candidate at Leiden University;
- The second lecture ‘*A new Light on East-West Networks in the interwar period: the Archive of Zeki Kiram*’ was given by Dr. Umar Ryad, assistant professor of the study of Islam in the modern world at the Leiden Institute for the study of religions;

- The third lecture '*Key-Persons of Snouck Hurgronje's Muslim Network*' was given by Prof. Dr. Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld, Professor Emeritus of Islamic Studies at Leiden University, The Netherlands.



Co-organisation of the seminar 'Réseaux orientaux et occidentaux en Europe et au Proche-Orient dans l'Entre-deux-Guerres' (21-23 March 2011)

Prior to their lectures at the institute in Damascus, Prof. Dr. van Koningsveld, Dr. Ryad and Mr. Al Tuma participated in the seminar '*Réseaux orientaux et occidentaux en Europe et au Proche-Orient dans l'Entre-deux-Guerres*', organised by IFPO (l' Institut français du Proche-Orient), the Leiden University Center for the Study of Islam and Society de l'Université de Leiden (LUCIS) under coordination of Dr. Ryad and NI-Damascus. The seminar consisted of 3 days of lectures by an international group of experts and discussions with a parallel digital exposition of the archives of Zeki Kiram.

Visit of Paul Meerts to Syria (March 2011)

Paul Meerts, International Negotiation Analyst, Advisor to the Director and Senior Fellow at the Clingendael European Studies Programme, visited Damascus in March 2011. After having provided a seminar in 'international negotiation' for Syrian diplomats at the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paul would visit the Kalamoon University on 20 March 2011 to provide a lecture/training on 'international negotiation' for a class of students in International Relations and politics. Although Mr. Meerts provided the seminar, the lecture at Kalamoon University could, unfortunately, not take place.

Pottery course by Dr. Bram van As, Dr. Niels Groot and Dr. Loe Jacobs at Damascus University (8-12 May 2011)

In cooperation with the institute, Dr. Tamoum of the Faculty of Archeology of Damascus University, Dr. Niels Groot, Dr. Loe Jacobs and Dr. Bram van As of the University of Leiden made preparations to give the annual 5 days ceramic course for Syrian Archeology students at

the Damascus University from Sunday 8 until Thursday 12 May 2011. Due to the situation in Syria, this course could not take place and was cancelled for this year.

Assistance to the archaeological team of prof.dr. Peter Akkermans of the Faculty of Archaeology of Leiden University (April 2011)

The institute made preparations for the yearly Tell Sabi Abyad excavation team led by prof.dr. Peter Akkermans of Leiden University. Preparations included maintenance of the Nissan Patrol Jeep, production and purchase of working materials and official documents. The team planned the excavation works from the end of April to the beginning of July 2011, but this plan had to be postponed to a later date.

Preparations for the studytrip of Dutch archeology students to Syria led by Prof. Dr. Herman Teule (February - April 2011)

The institute has made preparations for a study trip of 20 Dutch students in archeology of the Radboud University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands. The studytrip is initiated and guided by Prof. Dr. Herman Teule, Director of the Institute of Eastern Christianity at the Radboud University of Nijmegen. The theme of the studytrip is 'Christian Syria' and focusses on christianity in Syria in historical and current perspective. Student will stay in several Christian monasteries and will pay visits to relevant sites in and near Damascus, Seidnaya, Ma'lula, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, Palmyra and Hasake. The trip was scheduled for the period 14 – 27 July 2011, but is now postponed to a later moment.

Library (March – May 2011)

During the months of March, April and May, NI-Damascus has extended its library by purchasing new academic literature on the focus topics 'Gender', 'Politics and International Relations', 'Global Challenges' and 'Internationalization of Higher Education'. A total number of 64 books have been purchased, among which are publications in English written by Dutch academics working at Dutch universities or working at universities outside the Netherlands and English publications written by Syrian, Lebanese and Jordanian academics working at local universities or universities outside Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. A start was made to reorganize the library according to the 9 focus themes which were chosen by the institute.

Educational Fairs (February and April 2011)

From 26 until 28 February 2011, the institute was present at the educational fair EDU 11-2011 which took place in the Sheraton Hotel in Aleppo, Syria. During this fair many people were informed about the different study possibilities in Holland.

From 27 until 30 April 2011 the Netherlands Institute in Beirut (to be established), in cooperation with the



Netherlands Institute in Damascus was present at the 'Forum Forward' fair, a career/study event that took place in the Biel conference centre in Beirut. During the fair, a large number of students visited the stand of the institute for information and a total of 300 students registered themselves on the contactlist of the institute in Beirut.

Study in Holland presentations (February – April 2011)

Several presentation about the study and research opportunities in the Netherlands were provided at different universities by Martijn Leeftink of the Netherlands Institute in Damascus. One of the presentations took place in cooperation with the Netherlands Institute in Beirut (to be established) and one presentation in cooperation with the Netherlands Institute in Amman. The following activities were organized:

- ✓ A presentation on Political Science and International Relations was held at the Kalamoon University on 19 February 2011. This presentation was postponed in December 2010, but could now take place. About 35 students attended the presentation.
- ✓ During the EDU fair in Aleppo, a presentation about the study opportunities in the Netherlands in the field of rural development and Agriculture was held at 28 February 2011 at the Aleppo university, faculty of Agriculture. A total of 70 students and university staff attended the presentation.
- ✓ Together with the director of the Netherlands Institute in Amman, Erik Marinus, a presentation was held at the Hashemite University, located just outside the town of Zarqa in Jordan. The presentation took place at the faculty of Environment and Natural Resources on 10 March 2011 and addressed the study opportunities in the Netherlands in the field of watermanagement and environment. A total of 75 students and university staff member attended the presentation.
- ✓ In cooperation with the (to be established) Netherlands Institute in Beirut, a presentation was held at the Lebanese American University in Beirut on 29 April 2011. The presentation addressed the study opportunities in the field of Political Science & International Relations in the Netherlands.



Marjolein Schut, intern at NI-Damascus (16 January – 31 May 2011)

When I had only my thesis left to write for my bachelor in History at the University of Amsterdam and a whole year to do this, I decided I would use one semester for an internship abroad. Considering my minor in Classical Culture and the subject of my thesis being Early Christianity, Syria would prove to be the ideal destination. The NIASD offered me the opportunity to prepare a seminar within the focus area of History & Archaeology. The title of this seminar, scheduled for 25 and 26 October 2011, will be 'Settlement Dynamics in Marginal Areas in the Near East (300 BC – AD 700)'. To make this happen, I had to bring together Dutch, Syrian, Lebanese and Jordan scholars working within this field of expertise. The internship has given me a way to combine the rather

theoretical background of my study with a more practical way of working within the institute.



Anne Hordijk, intern at NI-Damascus (1 February – 31 May 2011)

After having completed my BA degree in Liberal Arts & Sciences at Roosevelt Academy in Middelburg, I decided to move to Syria for a year. The first months in Damascus I spent studying Arabic. Then I got the opportunity to get some institutional experience as an intern at the institute. During this internship I worked on updating and reorganizing the contacts of the institute in various academic, institutional and cultural fields.



Susan van den Hoek, intern at NI-Damascus (1 March – 1 May 2011)

After finishing my study in Social Psychology, I wanted to do something different. I have had a big interest in the Middle-East for a long time and I decided to just go and see it for myself! In Jordan I had a great experience as a volunteer in a primary school. Now I'm doing an internship at NI-Damascus. It's so interesting to work in an intercultural environment and I am really beginning to understand the Arabic culture. Both of these experiences have taught me a lot and I would recommend to anybody who wants to understand something about the Arab world, go there and experience it yourself!

Study in Holland team meeting at NI-Damascus (25 & 26 January 2011)

NI-Beirut and NI-Amman visited NI-Damascus to attend a Study in Holland team meeting on 25th-26th January 2011.

Dutch courses (7 January – 24 March 2011)

A beginners course Dutch language, taught by Mrs. Trees 't Hooft, took place at the Institute. In total, 12 students, among which Syrian, Iraqi and Iranian students, participated in the course.

And furthermore...

- ✓ NI-Damascus facilitated private language lessons Arabic for 1 student at the institute
- ✓ NI-Damascus facilitated private language lessons Dutch for 11 students at the institute

3. Culture

Cultural project: 'To the You I call the Other' by Adelheid Roosen and Merel de Groot (7 – 17 March 2011)

Dutch artists Adelheid Roosen and Merel de Groot realised the 10 days project 'To the You I call the Other', together with 18 students of the High Institute of Dramatic Arts and the Faculty of Fine Arts of Damascus University, Syrian visual artist Shaheen Abdullah, Dutch sculptor Anne-marth Hogewoning, Dutch video artist Bart Majoor, Psychiatrist Dr. Samer Jahshan, the High Institute of Dramatic Arts: Dr. Ajaj Salim Alhafiri, Dean and the Faculty of Fine Arts of Damascus University: Dr. Abdel Naser Wanous, Dean. NI-Damascus was the co-producer of this project.

Prior to the project, Roosen and De Groot paid preparing visits to Syria in December 2010 and January 2011 in order to do research for the project and contact relevant persons and parties in Syria. During these visits the institute assisted their preparations and the artists staid in the institute's guestrooms.

During the project, the group of artists and students together searched for the other. In their search for the other, the group paid two special visits. First, they visited the 'Centre for People with Special Needs/Psychiatric Disorders' in Deir Attiyyeh, Syria, where they spoke to Dr. Samer Jahshan, psychiatrist of the Centre. Dr. Samer Jahshan invited the project group for a two days painting session at his Centre, during which a life-size painting was made together with patients with Down's syndrome, psychiatric disorders and autism. The second visit was a 1 day visit to the elderly home 'Mar Mansour Monastery' in Seidnaya, Syria. The group invited the old people and patients living in the elderly home for a dance session. During this search for the other, Adelheid and Merel experienced that 'the Other' does not exist.



The materials and contacts gathered during the project, have inspired the Dutch artists and Syrian students to produce a final performance on Wednesday 16 March 2011 at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Damascus University, during which the audience could experience a combination of

video art, sculptings, painting, visual arts and drama. Elderly people of the 'Mar Mansour Monastery' were guests at the final performance.

The materials gathered during the project will be part of a dance performance that will take place in the Netherlands during the 3rd edition of the 'Dancing on the Edge – theater and dance from the Middle-East' festival that will take place in the Netherlands in December 2011.

Activities in the context of the EU funded project "Cultural Participation for Heritage Regeneration" (11 January 2011)

Under the Local and Regional Cultural Activities scheme of the Delegation of the European Union to Syria, the project "Cultural Participation for Heritage Regeneration" is jointly funded by the Delegation and by the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Syria. The project is implemented and coordinated by the Institut Français du Proche-Orient (IFPO), in partnership with the Syrian NGO Art Renaissance Association, the Danish Institute in Damascus (DID) and NI-Damascus.

In the context of this project the three winning art works of the competition "Art in the City" were inaugurated: art work "the big chair" at Arnous Square, art work "Moment" at Souk Sarouja main street, and art work "Installation" at the public garden near Yalbugha Mosque. Herewith, the project 'Cultural Participation for Heritage Regeneration' came to an end.

NI-Damascus Filmprogramme 2011 (January – May 2011)

The NI-Damascus staff have been working on translating Dutch films into Modern Standard Arabic. From a total of 17 films that will be screened at the institute this year, subtitles for 4 Dutch films have now been produced by the staff of the institute and incorporated in the DVD's by Syrian company Pro Action. The films with Arabic subtitles will be screened in the fall of 2011.

And furthermore...

- ✓ NI-Damascus deputy director Kathelijne Smits participated in two meetings of the EU Film Festival steering committee, organized by the Delegation of the European Union to Syria. The film festival, for which Dutch film 'Wit licht' is selected as the Dutch contribution was planned to take place in Syria from 12 May until 28 May 2011, but is now postponed to July.

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[to-be-established]

Director: Taco van der Zwaag (director@ni-beirut.org)

Assistant-Manager: Michael Huijer (assistantmanager@ni-beirut.org)

1. Institutional

Registration procedure of NI-Beirut in Lebanon (January 2011)

Early January 2011, the dossier of the to-be-established Netherlands Institute in Beirut arrived at the Lebanese Council of Ministers, the final stage of its registration procedure. Shortly after, however, on 12th January 2011, the Lebanese government fell, which caused a delay in finalizing the registration procedure. The to-be-established institute has to await the formation of a new government. As long as we are in the process of registering, the institute cannot hold public events in Lebanon, but within the frame of its possibilities it continues to lay the groundwork for future institute activities and continues to expand its networks.



Production and publication of the annual reports 2010 of NI-Damascus, NI-Beirut and NI-Amman (January – April 2011)

In his capacity of deputy regional coordinator of the Netherlands institutes in Damascus, Beirut and Amman, Taco van der Zwaag prepared and coordinated the production of the annual reports 2010 of the three institutes in cooperation with his colleagues in Damascus and Amman.

Meeting with Lebanese Dutch Business Association (Beirut, 5 April 2011)

On 5 April 2011, Taco attended a meeting of the Lebanese Dutch Business Association (LDBA) at the Netherlands Embassy in Beirut, in order to see where the LDBA and the to-be-established NI-Beirut may be of mutual assistance to each other, for example with regard to internships.

2. Science and Education

Marketing Dutch Higher Education: Forward Forum fair (Biel, Beirut, 27-30 April 2011)

Assistant-manager of NI-Beirut to-be-established, Michael Huijer, manned the Study in Holland stand at the Forward Forum job and educational fair at Biel in Beirut. Free lancer Farah Kanaan helped him with that. This Study in Holland stand was arranged by Michael in cooperation with the Netherlands institute in Damascus. The Study in Holland stand was visited by more than 300 Lebanese students whose contact details were registered.

Marketing Dutch Higher Education: marketing and selection MENA Scholarship Programme 2011 (March 2011)

Upon the request of the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Lebanon, NI-Beirut to-be-established helped the embassy with marketing the MENA Scholarship Programme 2011 and oversaw the MENA Scholarship application process for the 1 March 2011 deadline. There were 9 applicants in total under this deadline and all applicants were eventually awarded a scholarship.

Documentary Making workshops by Rob Rombout at the AUT (12-13 May 2011) and the LAU (15-16 May 2011)



Following Rob Rombout's successful documentary workshop at NI-Damascus in April 2010, two Documentary Making workshops by this Dutch Brussels based documentary maker were arranged for in Lebanon. In cooperation with NI-Damascus these workshops were held at the AUT (American University of Technology, in Halat) and at the LAU (Lebanese American University, in Beirut). In total 34 Lebanese students participated in

these workshops. In cooperation with NI-Amman, an additional documentary workshop by Rob Rombout was organized on 18-19 May 2011 at the Royal Film Commission in Amman.

Participation in Study in Holland team meeting in Damascus (25 January 2011), the NUFFIC annual congress (15 March 2011) and a NUFFIC training day (16 March 2011)

Taco van der Zwaag attended the NUFFIC annual congress on 15th March 2011 in Amsterdam and participated in a NUFFIC Study in Holland training day in The Hague on 16th March 2011. Earlier, Taco and NI-Beirut assistant-manager Michael Huijer attended a Study in Holland team meeting in Damascus on 25 January 2011, together with the colleagues of NI-Damascus and NI-Amman, to discuss the Study in Holland activities of the three institutes.

Expert meeting “Internationalization of Higher Education in Holland, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan” (Damascus, 25 & 26 March 2011)

NI-Beirut director Taco van der Zwaag prepared, organized and moderated the expert meeting on internationalization of higher education in Holland, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, which took place at NI-Damascus (see also page 5 of this newsletter). After the expert meeting at NI-Damascus, in which experts from each of these four countries participated, a public dissemination seminar was held at Damascus University on 27 March 2011.

Establishing contacts and preparing exchanges between actors in the Dutch and Lebanese higher education sectors (January – April 2011)

During the first few months of 2011, Taco van der Zwaag visited several researchers and institutes in the higher education field in Holland with an eye on establishing contacts and encouraging exchanges with counterparts in Lebanon. This resulted, for instance, in connecting the gender studies institutes of Nijmegen, Beirut and Amman. On 9th June 2011, prof.dr. Willy Jansen (director Institute for Gender Studies at Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands) will deliver a lecture at the Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) at the Lebanese American University in Beirut. This lecture, addressing the question why women studies are still relevant, will be presented by the LAU in cooperation with the Netherlands Institute in Damascus. Following that, prof.dr. Willy Jansen and IWSAW director, dr. Dima Dabbous-Sensenig, will fly to Amman, Jordan, for an expert meeting organized by NI-Amman on women participation in higher education. That expert meeting, in which also Syrian and Jordanian colleagues will participate, is to take place in Amman on 11-12 June 2011.

Visit of Dutch theater and dance professionals to the Lebanese American University in Beirut (20 April 2011)

For Daniella Groenberg of the Theater Instituut Nederland, Laurens Runderkamp of SICA and Marta Rozsa and Natasja van ‘t Westende of Dancing on the Edge, Taco van der Zwaag arranged an introductory meeting with dr. Mona Knio of the Communication Arts Department of the Lebanese American University in Beirut on 20th April 2011 (see picture).



Graduation Ceremony at the Ecole Supérieure des Affaires (ESA) in Beirut (8 April 2011)

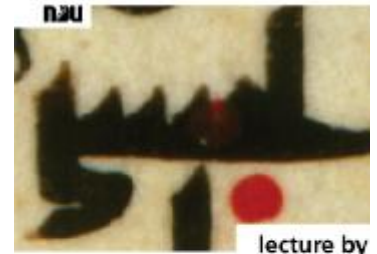


On 8th April 2011, Taco attended a graduation ceremony at the Ecole Supérieure des Affaires (ESA) in Beirut, where graduates of the executive masters programmes financial management and Islamic financial

management received their diplomas. These programmes are delivered by ESA in cooperation with the Rotterdam School of Management (RSM) of Erasmus University Rotterdam. After the graduation ceremony, Taco met with prof.dr. Jaap Spronk of RSM and he later visited him in Rotterdam on 26 April 2011.

Meeting with Dutch researcher-calligrapher and Arabic script software programmer Thomas Milo (Amsterdam, 29 April 2011)

In Amsterdam, Taco van der Zwaag met with Dutch researcher-calligrapher and Arabic script software programmer Thomas Milo, who had been invited to deliver an Arabic script grammar and calligraphy workshop at Notre Dame University (NDU) in Lebanon in the first week of May 2011. On Friday 6 May 2011, Thomas Milo also delivered a public lecture at the NDU on Arabic script grammar.



Thomas Milo
Arabic Script Grammar
Y?

Friday May 6, 2011
at 4.00pm
Abou Khater Auditorium

Visitors and guests at NI-Beirut (January – April 2011)

A number of people paid short introductory visits to NI-Beirut during the last couple of months, including Robert Coelen of Stenden University, Ton van Pijl of Erasmus University Rotterdam and Daniella Groenberg of the Theater Instituut Nederland. Furthermore the institute housed several guests in its guest room: Aurora Sottimano (18-22 March 2011), Randa Nassár (23 March – 12 April 2011), Rob Rombout (12-17 May) and Meltem Halaceli (17 May – 4 June 2011).



NI-Beirut guest Aurora Sottimano (18-22 March 2011)



“On my first field research trip to Beirut during the current turbulent times, I have been lucky to find a warm welcome at the to-be-established Netherlands Institute in Beirut. My primary interest is Syria: as research fellow at Amsterdam University in 2009 I completed a study of the linkages between Syrian domestic and regional developments, for which I carried out field research in Damascus with the assistance of the Netherlands institute there. This year I welcomed an invitation of Saint Joseph University in Beirut which gave me the chance to pursue a

second research project, on the generation gap and the emergence of youth as key actors in the emerging civil society (a project originally prepared in the context of the HIVOS Knowledge Programme). The facilities of the to-be-established Netherlands Institute in Beirut, such as a guestroom, a working internet connection and a quiet study environment, made my work easier and pleasant. I am still in the midst of exploring the wealth of resources that Beirut offers to students of the region. The city itself, with its amazing combination of memory and modernity and a varied intellectual life, embodies the multiple and complex challenges that confront the Middle East, with the added bonus of a cosmopolitan and lively atmosphere, especially in the neighbourhood where the institute is located. Lebanon’s riches in terms of cultures and heritage, and its centrality to modern Middle East affairs, surely deserve much more study. I definitely intend to return in the future!”

3. Culture

Screening of Dutch shorts and animation films at the American University of Technology (Halat, 17 January 2011)

In cooperation with NI-Damascus a screening of selected “shorts and animations from Holland” took place at the American University of Technology (AUT) for students of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of that university.

Eunic-Lebanon meeting (29 March 2011)

As an observer Taco van der Zwaag attended a meeting of Eunic-Lebanon at the Mission Culturelle Française in Beirut. Eunic is an initiative in which the French, German, Italian, Romanian and British institutes in Beirut cooperate. The name Eunic stands for “European Union National Institutes for Culture” and aims to enhance cooperation in the field of culture between the various European institutes. Taco also attended the launching event of Eunic-Lebanon on Saturday 14 May 2011 (“*Green Your Culture*”). Recently also the Spanish Cervantes institute joined Eunic-Lebanon.

“Amsterdam Stories USA”, work-in-progress presentation by Rob Rombout at Zico House (Beirut, Saturday 14 May 2011)



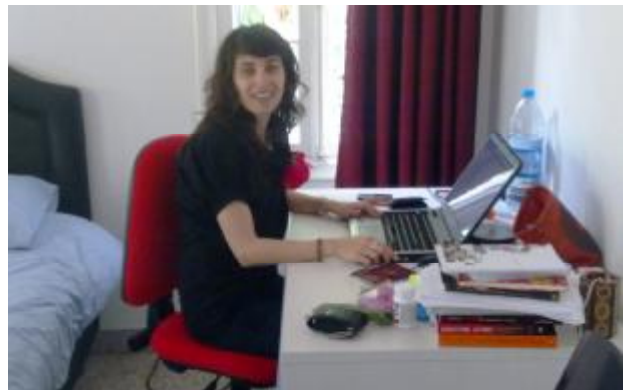
In between Rob Rombout’s two workshops in Lebanon, Zico House hosted Rob Rombout for a public work-in-progress presentation about the documentary “Amsterdam Stories USA” which Rob is presently working on with Rogier van Eck. Amsterdam Stories USA is a road movie and mosaic portrayal of the little-known America following the migratory flow of the past through sixteen North American towns, sites, and populated places, all of them called “Amsterdam” or “New Amsterdam”.

Presentation by Florian Göttke of the Dutch Art Institute (Beirut, 10 April 2011)

On 10th April 2011, Taco van der Zwaag attended Beirut’s ‘Zico House’ for a presentation by Florian Göttke of the Dutch Art Institute (DAI, part of the ArtEZ Institute of the Arts). Florian followed the imagery of the toppling of Saddam Hussein’s statue throughout the world. At Zico House, Taco met with several DAI students and with Gabriëlle Schleijsen (DAI, Rietveld Academy).

NI-Beirut guest Randa Nassár (23 March – 12 April 2011)

“In February 2011, I was privileged to hear that the Netherlands is represented in an Arab country such as Lebanon. Based in Beirut, my wish came true to be safe in an environment that I did not know anything of. As a Palestinian/Dutch film writer/director not having been in Lebanon before, in a time in which there is a lot going on in the Middle East, I was privileged to stay in the guest room of the to-be-established Netherlands Institute in Beirut to work on my film project that I myself developed. During my three weeks there, I had the possibility to accomplish so many things to further the preparations for my film project “Silent Witness”. Director Taco van der Zwaag as well as assistant-manager Michael Huijjer helped me a lot with getting in and around Beirut. They made me feel welcomed and were very generous in helping me and letting me use the facilities of the to-be-established institute. It made me feel safe and at home. I am glad that such an institute is being established in Lebanon and is building a bridge between the Arab and Dutch cultures. I am definitely coming back because there is still so much to be accomplished!” Randa Nassár - Writer/ Director/Teacher in film



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1. Institutional

Registration Netherlands Institute in Amman

We are proud to inform you that as of 21 December 2010 the Netherlands Institute in Amman is formally established in Jordan. On that date NI-Amman was registered at the Jordanian Ministry of Social development, under the umbrella of the Ministry of Interior.

Since then, NI-Amman has worked hard to build up its network and to make itself known in the field of Higher Education in Jordan. We have visited universities, researchers, institutes for Higher Education, etc. This is an important ongoing effort for the years to come as well.

The institute in Amman is preparing new activities such as an expert meeting, lectures, a workshop and Study in Holland promotion. We are looking forward to informing you about all these activities in due time.

2. Science and Education

Study in Holland presentation (March 2011)

During an earlier visit to the Hashemite University in December 2010, NI-Amman and the university decided it would be mutually beneficial to organize a presentation on Study in Holland. On 9 March 2011, Martijn Leeftink (Education Advisor NI-Damascus) and Erik Marinus (Director NI-Amman) visited the Hashemite University, located just outside the town of Zarqa, Jordan. Martijn Leeftink gave a target presentation on Study in Holland in the field of *Water Management and Hydrology*. The presentation was well attended by students from the faculty of Environment and National Resources.



Dutch Alumni Club

In Jordan there is a Dutch Alumni Club (DAC). The members of this club are Jordanians who have all studied in the Netherlands and with this club they want to inform Jordan about their (great!) experiences whilst studying in the Netherlands. NI-Amman is building relations with the DAC and both institutions are enthusiastic about their cooperation in the future. On Sunday 17

April NI-Amman assisted the club by hosting their general assembly meeting at the Netherlands Institute. During this meeting, the DAC and NI-Amman stressed their intentions to work together in connecting higher education in the Netherlands and Jordan.

Intern Sophie Schellens at the institute (middle of April until the end of June 2011)

Sophie: “Starting from the 18th of April until the end of June, I will be an intern at the Netherlands Institute in Amman. Accidentally, while conducting research for my thesis on women empowerment in Syria, I came across the vacancy for an intern at NI-Amman. I was very excited about this position, because as an intern I would assist in organizing an expert meeting on gender studies in Amman. Also, during the suggested period I would already be in the region, and the internship provided a good reason to extend my stay in the Levant.



And here I am, in Amman. I gladly put my Post Master Conflict and Development on hold and I am now assisting Erik Marinus in the activities of NI-Amman, meanwhile practicing my Arabic. I am looking forward to make a contribution to the goals of NI-Amman and to experience the spring and summer via outdoor activities in Jordan.”

Visit to University of Jordan by students from the University of Amsterdam

On Thursday 28 April, a group of 30 students in anthropology from the University of Amsterdam visited the University of Jordan. NI-Amman had organized that the students were given a lecture by Dr. Alsoudi (head of Department of Sociology) who gave a socio-political perspective on the Middle East in general and Jordan in specific. The professor was also very willing to answer all the questions of the students after the presentation and they engaged in a lively discussion. After the lecture the students were given a tour of the campus of the University of Jordan. It presented an opportunity for the students to get an impression of Jordanian student life and of their own possibilities for studying in Jordan.

The students, as well as the staff members from the University of Jordan thought the visit was very interesting and educational.



Study in Holland team meeting at NI-Damascus (25 & 26 January 2011)

NI-Amman visited Damascus to attend a Study in Holland team meeting at NI-Damascus on 25th-26th January 2011 where also NI-Beirut was present.

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