Call for Papers

International conference: Muslim Marriages: Plurality of Norms and Practices in Muslim-Majority Contexts

In Muslim minority contexts, particularly in the UK and Europe, some of the prevalent discourses on religious-only Muslim marriages share an underlying assumption of a homogenous, legally recognised and culturally streamlined form of Muslim marriages found in Muslim majority contexts. However, this depiction does not represent the diverse and plural lived experiences of how Muslim marriages are entered into, in societies where the majority of the population are Muslim and state codified Muslim family laws exist. Diversity arises on numerous fronts; from the Sunni/Shia doctrinal differentiations to particular cultural norms which impact on the development of Islamic jurisprudence around family law. Muslim majority states have all devised and developed their own particular forms of marriage laws with lesser and greater degrees of normative religious influences. Furthermore, outside the law and its institutions, in the lived realities of many women and men in these contexts, concluding a marriage is organized and experienced in diverse ways. The result is a plurality of marital relationship norms in Muslim majority contexts, which speak against the idea of a cohesive nature to Muslim marriages. Even if with the codification of family law and its concomitant bureaucratization, there is a push towards homogenization, there is simultaneously a great diversity of legal and social practices.

This call for papers seeks to uncover the plurality in norms and practices in Muslim majority countries, with a central focus on the individual or couple and the way in which they enter into a marital relationship. These marriages may be formal or informal, recognised by the state and simultaneously not recognised by the state (either fully or partially). A necessary element in some country contexts may be the evolving understanding of the nature and parameters of Muslim marriages and questions around legitimacy.

The analysis may present a bottom up or top down approach. All proposals should, however, center upon how the individual/couple opt for particular kinds of relationships, while they may incorporate engagement with other actors concerned with these marital relationships, such as the couple’s families; their socio-cultural circle, the state and its relevant institutions, including family courts, religious institutions, welfare organisations, and/or activists and movements advocating for reform of marriage laws.

All papers need to build on original empirical research. This may take various forms, from an analysis of the debates on these issue, consideration of legal reforms and their practical consequences, analysis of case law on marriage formalities and the approach of the courts to the question of marriage recognition, and the everyday practices of the individuals/couples concerned.
Questions you may wish to tackle can include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Forms of marriage recognition, legally, socially and institutionally;

2. Outcomes of marriage recognition and non-recognition on gender equality, citizenship rights and children's rights;

3. Sexual ethics and marriage conclusion practices;

4. Public discourses on marriage recognition; and

5. Courts and governing plurality of marriage practices.

**Deadline for abstract submission: 21 December 2018**

We welcome abstracts of 300 words outlining the paper and specifying the empirical research undertaken. A short biography of each author (200 words max.) should also be included. Submissions should be made by email attachment in MS Word format with ‘Abstract and Bio’ and your last name in the subject heading.

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Draft papers will be circulated in advance. The deadline for paper submissions is 24 March 2019 (word count 6000-8000 words). The organizers’ aim to publish a selection of the papers either as an edited volume or as a special issue of an academic journal.

**Costs**
The organisers will cover costs for a very limited number of scholars without recourse to institutional funding, including two nights hotel accommodation in Amsterdam and part of travel costs, if indicated during abstract submission.

**Timeline**

**19 December 2018:** Deadline for abstract submission  
**10 January 2019:** Notification of acceptance  
**24 March 2019:** Deadline for draft papers  
**11-12 April 2019:** Workshop, University of Amsterdam

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