

IV. News from TRI's National Networks of PhD Theses Writers

Report from the Dutch-Flemish Network

by Renee Frissen

On October 4, 2012, the recently revived **Dutch-Flemish Network of Terrorism and Radicalisation Researchers** (which fused with the Dutch TRI network) organized its first meeting. This network of junior researchers discussed current and future ethics and practices of studying terrorism and some of the resulting dilemmas. In this meeting, network participants focused on the subject of 'secrecy'. *Jelle van Buuren*, member of the organizing committee, introduced the topic with a short statement on a fundamental paradox of secrecy: it is both a legitimate, necessary aspect for the defense of a resilient democracy but, at the same time, it can pose a threat to the fundamental values of democracy. According to *Van Buuren*, terrorism researchers need to focus more on the 'logic of practice' to adequately address this paradoxical field of study - rather than solely studying institution-produced policy documents. Yet, how to find creative ways to surmount or circumvent the 'wall of secrecy'? The more 'practical' you get, the more you appear to become involved in issues that are politically touchy and charged.

In a challenging lecture, professor *Bob Hoogenboom* used analytical tools from sociologists Georg Simmel and Gary T. Marx to address this issue. He claimed that there are too many 'middle of the road' studies and that the new generation of researchers should engage in more ground-breaking and border-transcending research. We should, he said, look for the 'hard and dirty data' (as Gary T. Marx called them); we will not find these by simply obeying the rules as these exist today. Some of the young researchers recognized the need for unconventional research, but were at the same time hesitant to step on the toes of the recognised leaders in this field of research, especially when this takes the form of a confrontation with their own thesis supervisors. Another difficulty addressed by participants dealt with the question: how to scientifically process unconventionally acquired data? *Liesbeth van der Heide*, member of the organizing committee, concluded the day by discussing the future of the network. The members all agreed that a semi-annual meeting with researchers from different universities is very useful, especially when dealing with the larger issues of our field. For more information on the network and future meetings, check: <http://www.campusdenhaag.nl/ctc/nvnt/> (in Dutch)

- Report by Renee Frissen (TRI coordinator of the Dutch-Flemish network).