Public Outreach Strategy:
**Useful knowledge**
Contributing to the land, livelihoods and housing questions in Namibia in a socially-relevant way.

“Land, Livelihoods, and Housing” Programme
ILMI Integrated Land Management Institute
and the Department of Land and Property Sciences

2015-17
Why “Useful knowledge”? Background

Traditionally, the research process tends to be a linear one, where public outreach is often placed at the end of the sequence. This effectively reduces its potentials to merely the effect of “an announcement”, rather than exploring its capacities of establishing a dialogue between researchers and a variety of publics. This has to do only partly with a lack of resources, and more with the inability to bridge the gap between ordinary inhabitants and the specialized (often high-level) publics that are traditionally the public of research outputs.

Furthermore, the vast majority of research activities take place not only within the larger cities, but also in the central and privileged areas that contain infrastructure facilities (i.e. auditoriums, libraries, universities). The current reality of Namibia is such that those having access to these spaces are not only a minority, but also often those to whom the issues at stake are not a matter of survival. Extended geographical inclusion would be therefore required to engage and develop presence beyond these spaces of privilege and trigger a conversation between ILMI and a wider constituency.

In order to start grasping the notion of “useful knowledge” it is crucial to diversify the variety of publics in terms of: age, income, gender, occupation, language, amongst others (see list below). That knowledge that is relevant and useful to this widened definition of “public” is what in this case will be considered “useful knowledge”. For ILMI to attain its objectives of meaningfully engage with the questions it has itself set in its Research Programme and realistically expect a different prospect than other previous and currently-existing efforts to address the matter, it is argued that such an approach would be required.

The fundamental need of a public outreach program

Introduction

The principle behind this public outreach programme is for it to be an inseparable component of research efforts, in order to: a) embed research efforts in the everyday lives of the constituencies to whom the programme themes concern, b) enrich the research programme with the nuances grasped by innovative interaction methods between researchers and inhabitants, and c) to democratize the production of otherwise specialized-academic knowledge and turning it into useful knowledge capable of being relevant and handy to ordinary inhabitants.
Preparing a fertile field for actually-existing exchange

Objective

To run a public outreach program that is permanent, comprehensive, and inclusive in order to establish a researcher-public interface geared at producing research outputs that are embedded in on-going socio-spatial processes and useful to a widened definition of “public”.

Towards socially-relevant academic institutions

Strategy

The strategy is relatively simple:

a) to expand geographically,

b) to diversify the variety of publics, and

c) to make this effort permanent.

This necessitates innovative ways of engaging; a few initial ideas regarding this are outlined below. To achieve all this, it is proposed to engage with different practitioners (community workers, cultural organizations, neighbourhood-based institutions) and colleagues (students and faculty from our as well as other schools and institutions) in order to undertake this task. The program will be explicitly a low-cost undertaking, only occasionally requesting support from outside partners for larger commitments (e.g. conference).

Expanding the definition of “public”

Partners

The program will aim not only at a wide and variegated definition of the public, but also at responsibly addressing the actually-existing social reality and calibrate the program in such a way that it remains in permanent dialogue with this expanded definition of “the public”. It is therefore that the program will aim at addressing publics that are variegated in terms of: age (youth, adults); income (unemployed, low-income, middle-income, professionals, elites); geography (towns and cities, rural areas); gender; practice (construction, labour, agriculture, civil society); discipline (legal studies, planning, architecture, economics, sociology, geography, health, engineering, environmental studies); and also that it both addresses and/or reaches a variety of scales (international, regional, national, municipal).

The strategy will keep active contact with both bottom-up structures as well as power brokers through a variety of ways, which may include mass media (e.g. TV, radio) and social networks.

It is also important to note that the program will also aim at engaging colleagues from the School of Natural Resources and Spatial Sciences (SNRSS), other schools at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), as well as outside institutions that are related to the issues laid out in the Research Programme.
Strengthening civic socio-spatial capacities
Activities (preliminary)

The list below contains a set of preliminary ideas that would be in need of further calibration when the concrete projects and publics are further defined.

**Throughout-the-week intra-university roster**
- Brown bag lunch talks
- After-school *conversations*

**Popular education**
- Civic commons: useful knowledge for wider publics
- Production of manuals and posters

**Public gatherings**
- Occasional fairs and exhibitions

**Student-led activities**
- Collaboration with NASA, SRCs

**Citizen-led activities**
- Co-organized events, activities and projects

The previous can entail cultural activities (e.g. film screenings, theatre plays), production of didactic materials (e.g. manuals, radio shows), itinerant exhibitions, etc. Specific outputs can entail any of the following: events, such as workshops, public dialogues, ‘brown bag’ lunches; printed, such as working paper series, pamphlets, posters; digital, such as social media, repository, web-based platforms (video, audio, photography).

“Nothing about us, without us, if for us”

Matrix between components and public

**Preliminary timeline**

The proposed public program aims at being at having an annual cycle, at the end upon which a larger event will take place.
ABOUT ILMI

The Integrated Land Management Institute is a centre of the School of Natural Resources and Spatial Sciences (SNRSS) at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) committed to develop reputable and multidisciplinary research and public outreach activities in the field of land, administration, property, architecture and spatial planning.

http://ilmi.nust.na

Tel: +264 61 207 2483
Fax +264 61 207 9483

ilmi@nust.na