

PUBLIC HEALTH, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The Centre initiated a project on ‘Public health, science and technology in Muslim societies’ in September 2021. There is an urgent need to study the relationship between science and society in Muslim countries and to facilitate a deeper understanding of their interdependence, for which the Centre is adopting a holistic approach and will bring together concepts from different academic disciplines to strengthen the scholarship around this topic. The long-term goal of the project is to scope and facilitate the establishment of a collaborative research network across Islamic countries. The project hopes to bring together a group of countries with a common heritage, to use science as a solution for local and global challenges, and as a vehicle to unite peoples.

The Project seeks to develop a ‘think tank’ function. As the first step, a sub-project on ‘Disruptive technologies and Muslim societies’ is engaging with issues arising from emerging technologies from the vantage point of the cultural, ethical and religious norms of Muslim societies. Many technological developments taking place today will have global disruptive effects, primarily in the areas of climate change (and its mitigation), energy, human health (and disease), and food and food systems. What impacts will disruptive technologies have in the Muslim world and what cultural and ethical challenges do they present? A range of socio-cultural issues arising out of disruptive technologies and their implications require discussion. Clear articulation of the scientific, ethical, religious and practical considerations of these technologies will determine how readily such advances are adopted by Muslim societies. The aim initially is to produce short policy papers on these topics through an internship scheme. In the longer term, the aim is to appoint research fellows for more substantial projects.

To promote the project and develop academic links both within and outside Oxford, a ‘Public Health, Science and Technology Seminar Series’ has been established, with seven lectures held during the Hilary and Trinity Terms. A Fellows’ Roundtable on ‘Islam and Future Foods’ was held in November 2022. One more Roundtable Meeting with external stakeholders, which would cover several emerging technologies, is planned during this calendar year.

The project is led by Professor Sir David Clary, King Salman Fellow and Professor Shahid Jameel, Sultan Qaboos bin Said Fellow.