

# Developing sustained collaborations

I was recently asked to reflect on IIAS's collaborative and partnership philosophy. I take the opportunity of this tribune to elaborate on the subject, especially as my attention and that of many of my colleagues is currently focused on two ongoing major initiatives: our new humanistic pedagogical programme 'Humanities Across Borders, Asia and Africa in the World', and the tenth edition of ICAS in Chiang Mai next July.

Philippe Peycam

I SEE ACADEMIC collaborations and partnerships as primarily a civic effort that should be built around intellectual dialogues and interactions, involving different segments of knowledge in society in a closely connected world. Ideally, they should be framed around inclusive institutions and programmes that ought to act as bridges or facilitators with the capacity to focus on open methodological and intellectual perspectives, beyond the mere promotion of narrowly defined disciplinary projects or of individual or institutional trajectories.

The adventure and success of IIAS as a local-global connector has comforted me in the idea that there is a need for a kind of civic-minded institution that is not only capable of countering a trend towards fragmentation and marginalization currently affecting humanistic scholarship (under the prevailing neo-liberal model). The need is also to critically address contemporary-related issues to be framed

in their historical and geographical ecologies, through interdisciplinary, local-global collaborative engagements. Such institutions should ideally draw from trans-regional networks of scholars and organizations from both the South and the North. An inclusive intercultural platform is a good alternative to an academic tradition built on the definition of segmented knowledge 'areas', with the risk of confinement of 'studies' in narrow epistemological boundaries.

IIAS stands as an academic 'public service' born during a still recent era in Europe when notions of public good and solidarity stood above those of outright competition between institutions and people(s). It aims to serve as a bridge between different intellectual and cultural traditions and between what are deemed 'high knowledges' and more 'popular' or 'vernacular' ones. Closely connected to a historic academic institution, the University of Leiden, yet operating autonomously from it, IIAS concomitantly supports research, teaching and social policy engagements in ways that transcend disciplinary, institutionally or geographically segmented 'area studies'.

IIAS operates a number of initiatives under each of its inter-disciplinary thematic clusters ('Heritage and Culture', 'Urbanization', 'Asia in the World'): a double-degree program in critical heritage, the multi-sector platform Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA), the facilitation of inclusive Africa-Asia and Latin-America 'axes of knowledge', and the new Mellon-supported trans-regional pedagogical initiative, 'Humanities Across Borders'. Each of these initiatives seeks to experiment with new dialogical forms with outcomes not restricted to the quantifiable delivery of publications or taught courses, but rather, to the incubation of organically framed academic 'deliverables' likely to take shape in consonance with local contexts and needs.

To do so, the Institute supports a range of signature methodological 'services', each aimed at a broadly defined Asia Studies community: the widely (and freely) disseminated resource periodical 'The Newsletter' (50,000 readers); the

International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) with its multi-format activities, its five-language book prizes and its global governance; the Institute's Summer/Winter *in situ* masterclasses – a model also applied to IIAS's local-policy applied events. The synergies built between IIAS's multiple activities contribute to its programmatic coherence. They explain the rather considerable global role IIAS commands in relation to its actual size (16 staff members only).

Beyond the organizational setting, building lasting partnerships and collaborations requires a sense of an overarching purpose. In its operations, the Institute is often asked to facilitate interactions between academic and intellectual communities, particularly in societies where formal higher education is neither as established nor institutionalized as in 'northern' regions, but where unexploited forms of creative intellectual, artistic and pedagogical agencies often thrive outside universities. IIAS's role as a civic academic facilitator allows it to support a collective strategy, for instance for the development of a local museum (Eastern Nusa Tenggara, 2012; Delhi, 2016), or for the revitalization of an urban area (Taipei, 2012; Yangon, Macau, 2014), or a cultural and social tradition (Pingyao, 2015).

Our institute operates *in and beyond* traditional academic circles, involving different actors as co-producers of knowledge: artists, urban planners, architects, craftsmen/women and other practitioners of 'embodied knowledge'. It also seeks a sustained dialogue with hard scientists, policy makers, public intellectuals, civic actors and other 'social educators'. The extended humanistic pedagogy supported by the 'Humanities Across Borders' new programme or the civil society-sensitive ICAS events, in Africa, Latin America and soon at the upcoming ICAS 10 in Chiang Mai, Thailand, are expressions of the Institute's versatility as a truly global platform for Connected Knowledge.

Philippe Peycam, Director IIAS

## Distinction for Secretary of the International Convention of Asia Scholars

HIS MAJESTY King Willem-Alexander of the Kingdom of the Netherlands has named Dr Paul van der Velde, Officer in the Order of Orange Nassau. The Commissioner of the King in the Province of Zeeland awarded Van der Velde the decoration during a ceremony on 5 November 2016, in Middelburg.

Van der Velde receives the distinction for his exceptional services during his working life and for his societal side activities benefitting society in general. Amongst other things he actively promoted a better position for historians in society



and was co-founder of the *Historisch Nieuwsblad*, a periodical reporting on history in a journalistic way. He played a major role in the establishment of the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) and the foundation of the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS). He founded the ICAS Book Prize, which over the years has become one of the most prestigious prizes in the field of Asian Studies. At a regional level he was, for more than 25 years, editor-in-chief of the *Zeeuws Tijdschrift*, a periodical sparking debates on many issues relevant to the province of Zeeland. He also founded the Zeeland Book Prize.

**ICAS 10** The 10th International Convention of Asia Scholars

20-23 July 2017  
Chiang Mai, Thailand

Experts in the field of Asian Studies will meet in the delightful Northern Thai city of Chiang Mai. Events will include: panels and roundtable discussions, keynote speeches, and the first ICAS Asian Studies Book Fair. Enjoy the multitude of networking opportunities, possibilities to share your research and to meet with academic institutes and publishers

[www.icas.asia/icas10](http://www.icas.asia/icas10)

Register, reserve your exhibition booth or advertise at ICAS 10  
\*register before 1 April to benefit from the early bird rate

IIAS International Institute for Asian Studies

CHIANG MAI UNIVERSITY

### The Newsletter and IIAS

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) is a post-doctoral research centre based in the Netherlands. IIAS encourages the multi-disciplinary and comparative study of Asia and promotes national and international cooperation.

The Newsletter is a free periodical published by IIAS.

As well as being a window into the institute, The Newsletter also links IIAS with the community of Asia scholars and the worldwide public interested in Asia and Asian studies.

The Newsletter bridges the gap between specialist knowledge and public discourse, and continues to serve as a forum for scholars to share research, commentary and opinion with colleagues in academia and beyond.

[www.iias.asia](http://www.iias.asia)

### IIAS Main Office

International Institute  
for Asian Studies  
PO Box 9500  
2300 RA Leiden  
The Netherlands

### Visitors

Rapenburg 59  
Leiden  
T +31 (0) 71-527 2227  
[iias@iias.nl](mailto:iias@iias.nl)

### Colophon

The Newsletter #76 Spring 2017  
Managing editor: Sonja Zweegers  
Guest editor for The Focus: Minna Valjakka  
Regional editors: Terence Chong (ISEAS), Kyuhoon Cho (SNUAC), Lena Scheen (NYU Shanghai), Edwin Jurriëns and Ana Dragojlovic (Asia Institute of The University of Melbourne).  
The Review pages editor: Wai Cheung  
The Network pages editor: Sandra Dehue  
Digital issue editor: Thomas Voorter  
Graphic Design: Paul Oram  
Printing: EPC, Belgium

### Submissions

Deadlines for drafts: Issue # 77 – 15 March 2017,  
Issue # 78 – 15 July 2017, Issue # 79 – 1 December 2017  
Submissions and enquiries: [iiasnews@iias.nl](mailto:iiasnews@iias.nl)  
More information: [www.iias.asia/the-newsletter](http://www.iias.asia/the-newsletter)

### Subscriptions

For a free subscription:  
[www.iias.asia/subscribe](http://www.iias.asia/subscribe)

To unsubscribe, to make changes (e.g., new address), or to order multiple copies: [iiasnews@iias.nl](mailto:iiasnews@iias.nl)

### Rights

Responsibility for copyrights and for facts and opinions expressed in this publication rests exclusively with authors. Their interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the institute or its supporters. Reprints only with permission from the author and The Newsletter editor ([iiasnews@iias.nl](mailto:iiasnews@iias.nl)).