

The IIAS reaches out

The last few months have seen many transformative happenings at IIAS: a revamped website, the institute's first summer school, a major EU grant for our urban initiative, and other important events. But I should start by welcoming my new colleague, Dr Willem Vogelsang, to the position of IIAS Institute Manager. Willem is an accomplished scholar – an archaeologist and art historian of Central Asia. After spending years in Afghanistan, involved in cultural-related post-conflict activities, he is now back at his alma mater to help IIAS pursue its growth into a more coherent and meaningful institution serving Asian studies.

Philippe Peycam

WELCOMING A NEW COLLEAGUE often goes with a farewell. Willem's appointment follows the departure of Dr Manon Osseweijer, formerly Deputy Director at IIAS. Manon was my working partner since my arrival at the institute eighteen months ago. She started working for IIAS in 2004. She was an invaluable source of learning, inspiration and support to me. Thanks to her, my beginning at the institute was a smooth and focused one. Dr Osseweijer decided to move on with her already impressive career. And so, on behalf of IIAS's staff and board, I wish Manon the very best in her future endeavours.

Among the other major happenings of the last months, the ones surrounding IIAS's communication overhaul must take prominence, especially with the airing of our new website. The new IIAS website (www.iias.nl), the result of a collective effort under Thomas Voorter's skilful coordination and Sandra Dehue's vital input, has already received widespread acclaim for its visibility and didactic mode of operation. The site vividly highlights the institute's new programmatic and activities architecture, especially its new thematic initiatives. Functions that IIAS has been performing for years – fellowships, publishing, The Newsletter, ICAS, etc. – are gaining in visibility while synergies between them are made more apparent. The new website is of course an ongoing project; during this trial phase we are eager to hear from users. Feel free to contact us if you spot discrepancies or points for improvement. The website and The Newsletter, under the new editorial management of Sonja Zweegers, together with all other IIAS activities, are designed to serve the scholarly community in Asian studies, while aiming to reach out to the civil societies of the Netherlands, Europe, Asia, and beyond.

The effective launch of our three thematic clusters – Asian Cities, Global Projection of Asia, and Asian Heritages – is another major development of the last few months. It started in earnest with the first batch of research fellows who chose one of the three themes for their research project, including, under the Global Asia initiative, the IIAS-ISEAS joint fellowship on intra-Asian connectivity. We received an exceptionally wide range of applications, a majority of which selected the Asian Heritage cluster. Thinking in terms of the dynamics of cultural and knowledge production appears to be a topic of great interest among many young scholars on Asia.

This trend was further demonstrated by the great success of our first annual Summer School, which took place in June, under the topic of "Contested Heritages in Asia and Europe". The programme brought together a group of twenty-four young MA and PhD researchers from fifteen countries – out of two hundred applicants – for six intensive days of discussion, led by Professor Michael Herzfeld and Professor Nira Wickramasinghe, respectively from Harvard and Leiden universities. IIAS intends to continue to explore this ground-breaking topic of Heritage studies and what it means in terms of social agency in Asia and elsewhere.

The Asian Cities cluster also started in full swing with two major events occurring in July, including an international roundtable in Palembang, Indonesia, on the subject of climate change and its impact on Indonesian cities, particularly those coastal cities under the threat of flooding as a result of rising sea levels and massive destruction of their surrounding ecosystems. The event was a perfect example of an IIAS-led

collaboration involving the Indonesian Ministry of Planning ("Bapenas"), nine Indonesian municipalities (including the host city of Palembang and its Mayor, HE Eddy Santana), and a multi-sector organisation, the Pacific Rim Council on Urban Development (PRCUD), with its unparalleled international network of urban scholars, planners, civil society activists and municipality representatives. Made possible thanks to the European Commission-funded EUforAsia programme, the Palembang PRCUD Forum is one of the most daring local policy-relevant initiatives ever undertaken by IIAS as part of its new Asian Cities cluster. It reflects IIAS's new vision to serve as an effective conduit between policy making and social sciences communities.

The Palembang roundtable found its institutionalized expression in the form of a major EU grant awarded to IIAS to support an inter-institutional international knowledge network (Urban Knowledge Network in Asia – UKNA). The award of the 1.25 million Euro grant was largely the result of the efforts of Dr Manon Osseweijer and Dr Gregory Bracken. UKNA is the first international knowledge network of its kind ever to have been constituted. It is, through its association with PRCUD and other networks, about developing new knowledge, and articulating new questions in this critical subject. In this project, like in other new initiatives, IIAS strives to communicate new questions in a way that they reflect the interests and needs of Asia's fast changing societies – a new contextualized knowledge that can help revamp the field of Asian studies.

Philippe Peycam,
Director of IIAS

From the Editor

THOSE OF YOU FAMILIAR with The Newsletter are already aware of its successes as a medium for sharing scholarly knowledge, not only within the academic world of Asian Studies, but among interested parties worldwide. In light of its past achievements I am extremely proud to have been given the opportunity to produce this issue, #58 and my first as editor of The Newsletter, and I fully intend to repeat its success in the future. I have chosen not to make any significant changes to a formula that clearly works, but would nevertheless like to introduce a number of new features and ambitions.

Firstly, the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore (ISEAS) and the IIAS have initiated a new section in The Newsletter that will provide readers with firsthand "News from Asia" that is of scholarly and intellectual interest. The information will be provided by a number of regional editors within Asia. The section in this issue has been compiled by our regional editor, Lu Caixia, a former print journalist and current research associate at the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre (ISEAS). We are extremely grateful for all the time and effort she has put into this task. For future issues The Newsletter hopes to develop collaborations with other Asian institutes

to act as regional editors, so that eventually the "News from Asia" section will represent Asia as a whole. We welcome recommendations for possible partners in this endeavour.

The following new item you will encounter in this issue is found in The Review section. It aspires to present the various regional actors involved in book/film production, websites, blogs, newsletters, poetry and literature, and so forth, relevant to Asian Studies. This issue presents to you a translator, carrying out his profession in Indonesia. The item explores the specific nature of this work as performed in various locations in Asia. We hope to make this a recurring item, and welcome contributions.

In the IIAS network pages of this issue we have chosen to highlight three IIAS fellows, who have written a short piece about their research and IIAS fellowship. A full list of IIAS fellows can be found on the IIAS website. You will also find in this section an introduction to the new research clusters of the IIAS, reports of past events, and announcements. My thanks go to my colleague Sandra Dehue for compiling the IIAS network pages.

I would like to express my extreme gratitude to the contributors to The Focus and in particular Professor Annelies Zoomers, our guest editor for this current issue, for all her input and eventual success, despite the extremely limited time I gave her. Thank you!

I also thank Thomas Voorter for all his work on the new and improved IIAS website, and for introducing it to us here. The IIAS website and The Newsletter will become increasingly interactive as more and more of our readers are opting for the digital version – this will soon include, among others, additional online images, audio/video, and opportunities for feedback on articles. In fact, we hope to receive constructive feedback from our readers in general, so as to work on improving The Newsletter.

Finally, we invite you all to find us on FaceBook and Twitter – and to continue sending in your articles, suggestions, feedback, reviews (www.NewAsiaBooks.org), opinion pieces, etc. We appreciate all your good work, and hope that together we can continue to deliver a publication for us all to enjoy.

Sonja Zweegers, Editor, The Newsletter

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 quarterly publication 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.

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