

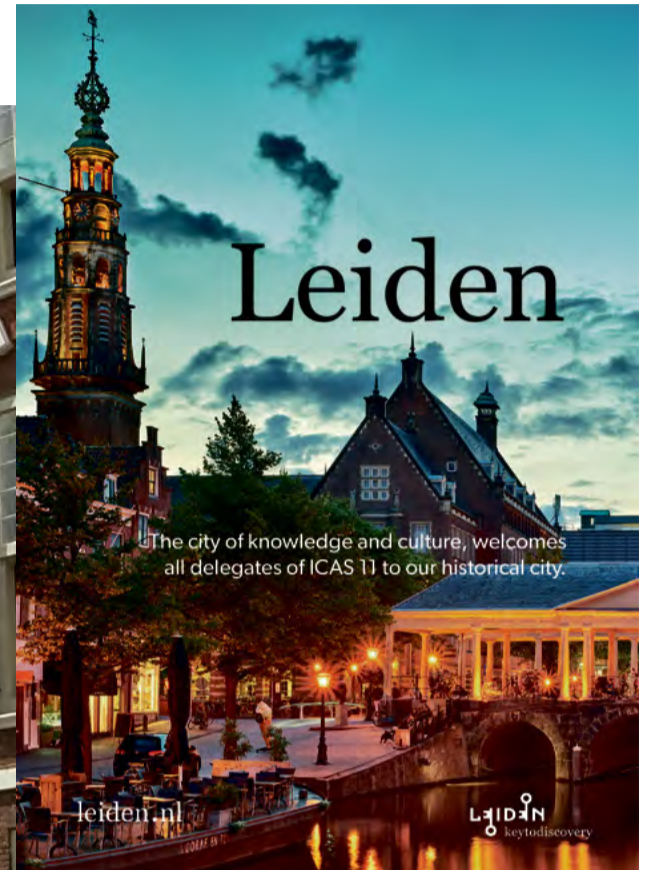
City of Leiden, Host of ICAS 2019

Left: Procession of congress participants to the Hooglandse Kerk.

Right: Poster showcasing the city of Leiden as the host of the 11th International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS 11) in 2019.

Bottom right: Attendees gathering at the Hooglandse Kerk for the ceremony.

Arnoud Nierop



“The city of knowledge and culture welcomes all delegates of ICAS 11 to our historic city.”
This statement embodies the municipality of Leiden’s gratitude for being chosen as the host for the 11th International Convention of Asia Scholars, which took place from July 15-19, 2019. The official opening of ICAS 2019 was evident in the city with a procession of congress participants to the Hooglandse Kerk, where Mayor Henri Lenferink performed the official opening ceremony.

As the oldest university town in the Netherlands, dating back to 1575, Leiden is one of the oldest Dutch cities. The remnants of international knowledge and historical culture are easily noticeable throughout the old city centre. Leiden is a city of science, known today for the presence of the leading Leiden Bio Science Park. Beyond its contributions to medical science, Leiden also has strong ties with Asia, which explains the fitting presence of the IIAS (International Institute for Asian Studies) in the city. The university library holds the world’s largest collection on Indonesia and significant collections on South and Southeast Asia, China, Japan, and Korea. These connections with Asia are also evident throughout the city, including the Hortus Botanicus and the Sieboldhuis. All of these factors made the historical city centre of Leiden the perfect congress location for ICAS 2019.

Dr. Paul van der Velde from Leiden University (IIAS) collaborated with the Leiden Convention Centre to create a bid book to bring the congress to the city. After a successful bid, he contacted the municipality of Leiden to ensure a flawless execution of the congress and its organisation. IIAS and the city of Leiden were dedicated to being outstanding hosts for the 2500 participants attending the congress. The historical city centre served as the backdrop for the congress, demanding a well-organised logistics system to facilitate smooth movement throughout the city. Various buildings in the city centre were utilised for different sessions of the congress. During the breaks, participants had the opportunity to explore the historical buildings and enjoy a leisurely stroll along the beautiful canals of the city.

To ensure a smooth organisation, a close collaboration between IIAS and

the municipality of Leiden was established, with me serving as the intermediary between IIAS and my colleagues at the town hall. In retrospect, I can confidently say that this collaboration was constructive and fruitful, fulfilling our aspiration to make IIAS and Leiden successful hosts for ICAS 11. My colleagues actively participated, offering their insights, organising, and coordinating various aspects of the event. As a result, major public gatherings in the bustling city centre, such as the opening procession through the city, were well-executed and successful.

The participants of the congress visibly enjoyed the city. They were clearly present in the city during the afternoons and evenings, identified by their conference bags and badges. I had the opportunity to witness this up close when I was enjoying a summer evening with my wife, dining on a terrace along the canal. Conference attendees

engaged in lively conversations during their dinner on the terrace, simultaneously, groups of participants passed by engrossed in animated discussions. It was a wonderful sight to see Leiden as a place for socialising and relaxation beyond its role as the host city for ICAS 2019.

As the municipality of Leiden, we were delighted to contribute to the success of ICAS 2019. This sentiment was reinforced during the closing celebration held at the Stadsgehoorzaal in Leiden, where we all concurred that Leiden truly lived up to its reputation as a city of international knowledge and historical culture. ICAS 2019 was a triumph, and I take pride in the fact that the municipality of Leiden played a part in making it a success.

Arnoud Nierop,
Municipality of Leiden,
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