



Thirty Years of IIAS

I don't exactly recall when was the first time I met Philippe Peycam, but it was well over a decade ago! However, I do remember we felt empathy with each other and we talked frankly and openly about our institutions (IEEM & IIAS) and how we should do things together. I also fondly remember how I was impressed with his knowledge on Macau and the passionate way he would talk about it. Since then, we had worked together on several projects as well as participated in all ICAS of the last 10 years. Our cooperative efforts covered mostly matters related to Macau's heritage, culture and identity and they have certainly contributed in widening the curiosity and interest of the academic community on matters related to this city/region, as well as establishing a network of learning and researching that goes well beyond the Asian context. Notwithstanding the difficulties that COVID presented to academic cooperation all over, IIAS and IEEM managed to strike an important partnership that is running an ongoing project coordinated by myself and Prof. Mehdi P. Amined "Comparing energy transition in the EU and China". In fact, a topic that is quite different from the previous ones, that shows how wide and deep our working relationship have developed along more than one decade.

We congratulate IIAS and Philippe for such meaningful occasion and hope many decades more of successes!

Macau, 11 July 2023

José Luis de Sales Marques
President of IEEM



Photo taken at the IIAS event "Perspectives on Asian Studies in Latin America" in 2016 (from left to right: Cláudio Pinheiro, Sheyla S. Zandonai, and Paul van der Velde). (Photo courtesy of the author, 2016)

I first heard of the IIAS nearly ten years ago, when a friend shared information about a call the Institute had launched for the Macau Winter School. I had just left France for Canada. Macau, where I had been several times before to conduct fieldwork for my Ph.D. research, appealed to me in ways that freezing Montreal did not. It was familiar and still strange. It had that Asian feeling where all things come alive at once, resonating within the anthropologist in me. I applied. Being selected as one of the twenty participants of a highly competitive event opened a new world of possibilities. Even though that trip to Macau was short, it felt like going out to explore the unknown again. Since then, IIAS has been a way for me to connect and learn, a haven against the uncertainty I faced many times: as a scholar, a person, and a foreigner in nearly every place I have been. Its vocation to normalize otherness and invite the margins to the center is unparalleled. In so doing, IIAS builds a community of belonging among cultural diversity. This, I believe, makes the Institute a great place in which to think of ways to engage that are at the same time intellectual, political, and human. Without a doubt, Philippe Peycam and the terrific team working with him should be lauded for crafting and nurturing a truly global yet close-knit network. There is no place like IIAS.

Sheyla S. Zandonai, University of Macau



Above: Picture with Philippe Peycam, José Luis Sales Marques, and architect Carla Figueiredo at the seminar "Inner Harbour" (2013).

I first heard about IIAS back in 2013. Dr. Paul Rabe was visiting Bangalore and a colleague at the Indian Institute of Human Settlements introduced him as a researcher and practitioner interested in understanding the urban geography of Whitefield, an area I had been engaging with for some years. I was just preparing to screen the next instalment of my *Neighbourhood Diaries* film series (Whitefield Diaries was the previous instalment) and Paul readily agreed to attend the screening in a historic family mansion in a colonial-period bazaar area. As we chatted, he suggested that I should give some thought to joining him on a panel he was putting together for the next ICAS, on urban renewal and community agency. ICAS is where I met Philippe and others from IIAS.

I have since been associated with various IIAS projects and initiatives, including UKNA (Urban Knowledge Network Asia), SEANNET (South East Asia Neighbourhoods Network) and HAB (Humanities Across Borders). Although I have not been directly employed by the institute or its projects, I have had ample opportunities to engage with its material practices. As a humanities-based, community-engaged practitioner and scholar from the Global South who has long promoted interdisciplinarity in research and practice, it's reassuring to see a Global North institute walk the talk.

For IIAS, attempting to decolonize knowledge production practices while co-creating knowledge in ways that are inclusive is neither mere rhetoric nor just academic discourse. Under Philippe's able guidance, the institute understands all too well the trap and resultant limitations of institutionalised forms of knowledge production. It's not easy to consistently walk the thin line bordering many binaries: academic and practitioner knowledge, didactic and pedagogical approaches, community-engaged and expert-driven lenses, global and local knowledge networks, theoretical and applied research.

Nor is it easy to consistently pay attention to what is being said rather than 'who' (by which I mean the designation) is saying it. I respect Philippe and the institute's sustained efforts to empathetically engage with diverse social actors, be they individuals, advocacy groups, or universities. In an increasingly fractured world, such institutions play a crucial role in bridging various socio-cultural, educational, and economic axes. Significantly, IIAS recognises that any such facilitation across axes can only be reasonably democratic, and they frame their work with this self-awareness. Going forward, it would be wonderful to see more platforms like this that actively promotes a need for contextualised understanding of people and places.

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