

Minutes of the NFA General Meeting, 18 June 2018

Agenda

1. Opening
2. Minutes of the last General Meeting in 2016
3. Report on the Golestan Foundation
4. Update on Persian Rose Garden
5. This year at NIAS. Report by the Director. Including NIAS community online.
6. Election of the NFA Board
7. Financial Report. Report of the Auditing Committee
8. Appointment of a New Auditing Committee
9. Ideas for the future, and change of NFA statutes and bylaws
10. Other business
11. Closing

1. Opening

Philip Spinhoven (Interim Chair) opens the meeting and welcomes everyone. Melissa Green is absent because she is in Australia. Spinhoven discusses the situation of having an interim NFA board and expresses the board's enthusiasm to revitalize the alumni organisation of NIAS.

2. Minutes of the last General Meeting, 27 May 2016

No questions or comments.

3. Report on the Golestan Foundation

Golestan Board members Paul van den Broek and Michiel Westenberg are present and excuse Volker Manuth (who is abroad). Three points are discussed.

- The Board has decided unanimously to make some statutory changes.
 - a. A change to the rules regarding the recipients of the Golestan Fellowship. The statutes now state that the Golestan Fellowship should be awarded to a scholar with a foreign nationality. The board would like to change this to a "preference" for a scholar with a foreign nationality. In this internationalized day and age the current statutes seem to unnecessarily limit the pool of recipients.
 - b. The board would like to include an article about the terms for board membership and re-election.
 - c. Current statutes dictate that two out of three board members should be foreign; the board proposes to reduce this to one out of three. This is more practical and efficient if decisions have to be made in the physical presence of a board member.
 - d. The board would like to add the provision that at least one of the board members should be an academic. The exact wording ("someone holding a PhD"; "with an affiliation to a university/research institute") should be further discussed.
- Westenberg elaborates on the financial report: the foundation is in good financial health. It follows a conservative financial strategy, with half of its total assets (~ € 1.1 million) invested in relatively low-risk investments. The net profit from return of investments, dividends, and bank interest this year amounts to about €33.000. From this income, the fellowship costs (one fellow every two years), the maintenance of the rose garden and

banking/accountant/advice fee costs are paid. The net result of 2017 is about + €8.500. The budget has been approved by the NFA Board.

Question: Golestan Foundation operates under the assumption it will continue perpetually, and bids against an unknown future. Are there alternatives, e.g. spend the money in a certain amount of time?

Answer: As custodians of Bash's endowment, it seems fairest to maintain the endowment as long as one can.

- The board invites NFA members to come forward if interested in serving on the Golestan Board

4. Update on the Persian Rose Garden (by Golestan board)

The Persian Rose Garden, part of the endowment by Professor Bash, cannot stay on the old premises. It is carefully taken down and stored. The Golestan Foundation and the KNAW are exploring the possibilities for its relocation. It is an option to have it relocated on the premises of Paul Smulders, a Wassenaar resident, who would like to organize public events in the Rose Garden. Another option is to have it nearer to NIAS in Amsterdam, in the garden of the KNAW's Trippenhuys, currently under construction. This would maintain the affiliation to NIAS fellows better than the Wassenaar option. A downside would be that the size would need to be trimmed. The board proposes to the general membership to have the possibility of locating the Rose Garden in the Trippenhuys' garden investigated.

Question: Is it possible to have the Rose Garden in the Bushuis garden?

Answer: Yes, this has been explored, but the Bushuis garden was too small

Remark: Persian Rose Gardens are at the birth of public gardens in the West (Vondelpark, Cental Park), this might convince the city of Amsterdam to give off any necessary permits. The rose also symbolizes clandestine science.

Remark: the Rose Garden should ideally be accessible to the public

Question: How must we imagine moving the garden?

Answer: It is already stored, in protective materials, even the rose bushes, in a way that it can be rebuild

Suggestion: Look into possibilities to have the Rose Garden rebuilt on a rooftop. The board responds that this would most likely be rather expensive.

The board asks the membership whether it supports the board's preference to have the Trippenhuys garden actively explored further. The membership supports this unanimously.

5. This year at NIAS

Jan Willem Duyvendak gives an update of the current year and discusses future plans.

- Change in Directorate: in January 2018 both the new director and institute's manager (Angelie Sens) started
- The Research Group 2017/18 consisted of 44 fellows and 3 theme groups
- NIAS is content about the gender balance (52% female/48% male) and diversity and balance of different disciplines (43% humanities, 43% social sciences, eoomics and law; 14% interdisciplinary)
- The geographic background of fellows' affiliation is unbalanced, as most foreign fellows have an affiliation from Anglo-Saxon Western universities. NIAS wants to work to improve the number of fellows from Latin- and Middle America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

- Duyvendak's impression is that the current research group is very active, both socially and scholarly, with a high degree of self-organisation. All fellows are now given the opportunity to hold a seminar, and the seminar format has been experimented with (including discussants from outside of NIAS; pre-circulating papers and chapters). As is confirmed in exit-talks, fellows are very positive about the institute, and the overall functioning of the institute fits with their expectations.
- In the fall of 2017, NIAS was evaluated, as is customary for all KNAW-institutes once every 5 years. The evaluation consisted of a self-assessment report by the NIAS directorate, followed by an evaluation by an external committee. Both reports are available on the NIAS website. The evaluation was very positive, with an excellent for research quality and relevance to society, and a very good for viability (with financial circumstances and the recent budget cuts as issue of concern). The evaluation report also refers to alumni and alumni policy, with the recommendation to cherish alumni.
- The (self)evaluation is part of a larger evaluation project (the "portfolio evaluation") to evaluate all institutes from NWO and KNAW and consider the role of these institutes within the Dutch knowledge system. These kind of evaluations bring to the fore that NIAS is not easily compared to other institutes because of its of a different kind (no own research area, temporary fellowships, etc).
- In the past year, NIAS has formulated new ambitions and new plans. It wants to emphasise its role as intellectual magnet. The annual lecture in the Walloon Church by Walter Scheidel was a great success, with an audience of 250 attending the lecture. This initiative will be continued. NIAS will also reach out to new audiences such as PhD students during Summer Schools. Fellows and former fellows may play a role in teaching, while staying in the Fellows House and the NIAS offices during the summer.
- NIAS, upon the initiative of the NFA, is also developing plans for alumni to be able to come over in July and August, to make use of the accommodation facilities for academic activities such as workshops, conferences or a (new) project. This would strengthen ties with alumni.
- As a result of the move from Wassenaar to Amsterdam, NIAS is now nearer to the KNAW Humanities Cluster (Meertens Institute, Huygens ING, IISH) as well as the Uva Humanities faculty. The area around NIAS has a extremely high concentration of historians and other humanities scholars, which offer opportunities for cooperation, but also for collectively reaching out to a larger audience. There are plans for organising a science festival or open house.
- The number of workshops have been reduced in the last two years, but NIAS intends to return to the workshop tradition, stimulating fellows to hold more (international) meetings at NIAS
- NIAS wants to organise a series of public lectures in which for example alumni are invited to return to NIAS to present their books written at NIAS

Question: How is social life at NIAS currently, the quality of the social commitment?

JWD: Important question. This year was an active group which organised a reunion at the end of the year amongst themselves. There is always a challenge to make a year group internally coherent as second semester and theme groups arrive later. The Fellows House is a place for social life and could be used more as such.

Question: What are developments of NIAS in an international context, as daughter of mother IAS (Princeton)?

JWD: NIAS continues to be part of NetIAS and their EURIAS programme– 22 European IASsen who cooperate on research mobility with EU-funding. This EURIAS programme will stop in 19/20. NIAS, as first European IAS, is also part of the SIAS network, consisting of 9

independent institutes for advanced study. The SIAS members come together annually to exchange experiences and discuss shared concerns such as diversity policies, the nature of interdisciplinarity, application procedures. These meetings are very inspiring and fruitful.

Question: What is NIAS' relation with Dutch universities?

JWD: Theo Mulder visited all CvB's and received their support for NIAS; fellows come from all universities and uni's see the advantages of an IAS. There is a worrisome development that some universities set up their own university-based IAS. As the "IAS" label is not protected, this means all IASsen can be quite different.

Suggestion: add "Royal" to the NIAS name. JWD will think about how to position NIAS in relation to UB-IASsen.

- A preview of the online NIAS community is presented. The online community is a secure platform for current, future and former fellows to interact. It should stimulate interaction from between cohorts. It will be possible to add events yourself, e.g. to invite other alumni to conferences, public talks etc. Alumni will receive a link to register to this community by email.

6. Elections of the NFA Board

Philip Spinhoven, Roxane Farmanfarmaian and Emmanuel Berger have functioned as interim-board members, together with sitting board member Melissa Green. The director and one staff member (assigned by director) are automatically part of the board. The NFA board nominees were put forward to the general membership by email prior to the General Meeting. No objections have been raised, and no other candidates have been put forward.

The general membership supports and applauds the candidates. Philip Spinhoven (Chair), Roxane Farmanfarmaian (Secretary) and Emmanuel Berger (Treasurer) are officially elected NFA Board members.

7. Financial Report. Report of the Auditing Committee

The auditing committee, Theo Kuipers and Bernet Elzinga, approve the financial report 2016 and 2017 and have no further questions. There is concern about the capital on the NFA accounts (€ 12.207,97 on 31 December 2017). The Board acknowledges the need to generate more income.

8. Appointment of a New Auditing Committee

Anne Baker and Johanna Söderström are appointed as auditing committee for 2018.

9. Ideas for the future, and change of NFA statutes and bylaws

- The NFA suggests a number of new ideas to strengthen the relationship between NIAS alumni and to make a NFA membership most beneficial to fellows. Roxane Farmanfarmaian refers to the self-organised cohort 17/18 reunion and the commitment it shows for fellows' own attachment to cohort group. She poses the general question of what the character of the NFA should be, what fellows want to gain from membership and what elements are important to NFA-members. Is it mainly to organize class-based reunions?

The option is raised to organize city-based reunions, to meet people who have been at NIAS (in different cohorts) in your own near area. Also to work together, on interdisciplinary ideas.

Attending NFA-members mention they are not only interested in meeting their fellow fellows, but also in keeping informed about developments at NIAS. The wish is expressed that NIAS and the NFA cooperate closely.

- NFA members may stay at the NIAS Fellows House and apartments during the Summer or at other moments when the accommodation is not used
- The board members have been looking at the statutes, which are rather outdated (from 1997). They propose to update the statutes and submit them to a notary. This would change the legal position of the association (from informal to formal association), reaffirm its independence from NIAS, and would clarify the legal responsibilities of the board members.
- The membership supports the idea to revise and update the statutes.

A discussion about the following statutory articles follows:

Article 3:

Comment – it says “optimum functioning of NIAS” but this is strange – to have the alumni organization promoting the functioning of NIAS, it should promote optimum functioning of former fellows community

Article 5:

Financial support can be obtained by membership fees but also gifts

Article 7:

Should membership be reserved for full fellows only, should staff members be included in the board, and what should be the right number of board members? Comments:

- number of representatives in board seem sufficient
- there could be different categories of membership (including staff and others connected to NIAS)
- staff membership does not need to be a lifetime membership
- there should be a procedure to resend membership
- director should be a member as it shows commitment to NFA and ensures continuity, and guarantees support of NIAS facilities
- NFA should have input in NIAS too, to be able to give feedback and to have a bidirectional exchange
- Could be extra fellows added as board members, to create balance
- Why only have temporary fellows from the current year group, and not have them serve for a longer term? Could be more practical but also to ensure alumni policies to be in line with existing situation
- Consensus seems to be that tie with NIAS is important, and needs to be institutionalized

By-laws section 1 and 2:

The Board suggests to make the fees section less specific and more procedural. No objections raised by membership.

- One of the benefits of NFA membership could be access to other IAS institutes. It could promote relationships between all IAS-alumni, e.g. an international IAS alumni network, or priority when applying or similar advantages
- The idea is raised to have a travel budget or facilities available for board members from abroad

10. Other Business

No other business are raised.

11. Closing

Philip Spinhoven thanks the members and current fellows for their presence and contributions.

Actions:

- Anyone interested in serving on the Golestan Board, please contact Paul van den Broek (broekpwvanden@fsw.leidenuniv.nl)
- Next time make it clearer that General Meeting documents are included when the reminder for the NFA Day is send around