

Minutes of the NFA General Meeting, 14 June 2019

Agenda

1. Opening
2. Minutes of the last General Meeting in 2018
3. Report on the Golestan Foundation
4. This year at NIAS. Report by Fenneke Wekker (Head of Academic Affairs)
5. Election of the NFA Board
6. Financial Report. Report of the Auditing Committee
7. Appointment of a New Auditing Committee
8. Change of NFA statutes and bylaws: voting
9. Other business
10. Closing

1. Opening

Philip Spinhoven (Chair) opens the general meeting and welcomes everyone. Philip excuses board member and treasurer Emmanuel Berger because he is in Brazil. Spinhoven introduces two representatives from this year's fellows group that were added to the board: Aná Mariá Gomez Lopez and Fabian Krämer.

2. Minutes of the last General Meeting, 18 June 2018

No questions or comments.

3. Report on the Golestan Foundation

Golestan Board member Paul van den Broek is present and excuses Michiel Westenberg (ill) and Volker Manuth (abroad). Van den Broek gives an update on the following points:

1) Finances

Goal of the Golestan Foundation is to support one full-year fellowship every two years. To be able to do so, the foundation aims to have a minimum balance of 1 million euro. The interest is used for the fellowship and to contribute to the maintenance of the garden. The good news is that the Golestan Foundation funded a fellow this year, for five months. The bad news is that the investment returns were disappointing, leading to a loss of 36.000 euro compared to last year, which amounts to a loss of 6,5%. There is now a small buffer of only E16.000. The budget has been approved by the NFA Board. At this point, if the Golestan Foundation funded one more fellow, it would fall below the threshold of 1 million euro. So there is a need to be cautious, and find ways to reduce costs. It is currently unclear who carries the costs for the Persian Rose Garden.

Question: So does this mean there will be no fellow next time?

Answer: We would like to fund a fellowship, as it is the main purpose of the Foundation.

2) Statutes

In 2018, some statutory changes were discussed and approved by the membership. These changes have not been put in effect due to legal procedures. There are some judicial issues to be resolved first around Bash' testament (written in old-German and not registered under Dutch law). The Golestan Foundation aims to complete the legal process next year.

3) Persian Rose Garden

The Persian Rose Garden, part of the endowment by Professor Bash, cannot stay on the old premises. It is carefully taken down and stored. In 2018, the Golestan Foundation, NFA and the membership decided to have the option explored for the Rose Garden to be relocated to the Trippenhuis' Garden, currently under construction. The KNAW and the board have moved forward in this direction, and moving the garden to the Trippenhuis seems the most viable option. In the Trippenhuis Garden, the main elements would be rebuilt: the tiles and water in the middle. There would be no surrounding walls, but the original roses from the rose garden can be replanted here and used as a wall of roses, separating the garden from its environment. There will also be benches. Van den Broek shows a picture of the design, though this is not the finalised version. The Golestan Board states it is happy with the planned design, with minor alterations such as the benches.

Question: an important element from the original rose garden seems lost, and that is a sense and feeling of balance. Could the final design take balance and symmetry into account?

Answer: The board will see if this can be taken into consideration, but also points to the balance that will be provided by the greenery/green wall.

Question: In the shown picture, one of the wall panels with a Quranic verse seems to be missing. Could that be included too?

Answer: The board will check this. The plaque would need to be included.

Question: How does this plan relate to the initiative by Paul Smulders to have the rose garden relocated to his property, which was pursued with consent of the board?

Answer: In preparation of the move and in the knowledge that there would not be space to have the rose garden near the Spinhuissteeg, several plans were pursued, including with the Nieuwe Architectuur Institute in Rotterdam. Then Paul Smulders, NIAS' neighbour, offered to take over, initially to keep it where it was and use the garden as site for public poetry readings and more. The Golestan board was involved in this plan and discussed the possibilities, but this plan was rejected by the municipality of Wassenaar. That's when the Board's conversation with Smulders stopped. Smulders went on planning to relocate the rose garden to another area. NIAS-KNAW listened to these plans but also indicated to explore other options. For the Golestan Board, aim of the Rose Garden is its availability to fellows. The board did not want to encourage Smulders' plan to have the garden located to the location "In 't Groene Hout", which is not easily accessible and in the middle of nowhere, and part of a somewhat commercial enterprise, and does not have the same quality as an area of contemplation.

Question: The neighbour made considerable costs, and it would be right to deal with that in a fair and considerate manner.

Answer: We want to be open to Paul Smulders and have to deal with the matter in a considerate way. But the Golestan Foundation did not encourage the second plan.

Question: Who actually owns the Rose Garden, is it now stored and owned by Paul Smulders?

Answer: The KNAW owns the garden, and has it stored, not Smulders.

Question: Who would take care of the maintenance of the garden in the Trippenhuys?

Answer: I am not sure, but I assume it will be the same company who will take care of the maintenance of the KNAW's garden.

Question: Can the design for the Rose Garden in the Trippenhuys still be rearranged and use all tiles?

Answer: Profound changes would not be possible, but we can ask to use as many tiles as possible.

4. This year at NIAS

Fenneke Wekker (interim Head of Academic Affairs) gives an update of the current year and discusses future plans, also on behalf of Jan Willem Duyvendak.

- It has been a dynamic year (as in years before)
- In December 2018, institute manager Angelie Sens had to leave, and in January, Fenneke Wekker and Josip Kesic were appointed as interim managers. Fenneke Wekker is now in the final phase of her job application as NIAS's future Head of Academic Affairs.
- The current year group is "a wonderful year" with 42 fellows and two theme groups – one on commodities frontiers and one on comparing wars of decolonization (which is part of a larger project co-organised with NIOD and KITLV).
- The composition of the year group 18/19 shows quite a good gender balance: 46% female, 54% male. NIAS continues to strive for a 50/50 balance. The countries of affiliation show an acceptable geographical spread, but it is one of the main aims to improve global cooperation and have more fellows from the global south.
- The year group is characterized as a strikingly focused and hard-working group. They tell that they are producing more than ever before in their career and that they sometimes completely changed their focus from one talk at the coffee machine or as a result of the seminars when confronted with different views.
- This year NIAS has encouraged the writing of grant applications more explicitly. It started a grant writing group, which was well-received and successful.
- In 2019, NIAS saw the end of a large evaluation process. In the fall of 2017, NIAS was evaluated, which 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 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). This (self)evaluation was followed up by 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. This portfolio evaluation report was completed this year and emphasizes NIAS' status aparte as an institute that cannot be compared with other research institutes. As a place where curiosity-driven researchers are free to carry out their own projects it is becoming even more unique because of recent developments at Dutch universities. The commission

recommended the repair of cutbacks to foster places like NIAS. The KNAW Board has affirmed the relevance of NIAS and its status aparte. The NIAS directorate is happy with the outcomes and conclusions of these evaluations.

- The NIAS directorate is looking at the selection procedures (with application numbers tripled since 2015) with fresh eyes. How are fellows selected? Do we reach the groups that we want to reach?
 - One aim is to protect applicants' privacy as best as possible, which is one of the reasons to try a project-based anonymous application procedure. This means that only the project proposal is sent out for external review, without cv. The (newly installed) Academic Advisory Board will assess the complete applications.
 - Another goal is to offer fellowships to as many people as possible, and for example, to avoid IAS-hopping. NIAS currently offers 240 fellows months, which will be increased to 335 fellows months next year, striving for 400 months in the future. This is to increase success rates, also for early career scholars.
- NIAS' core business is selecting and facilitating, bringing together disciplines, but in the coming years NIAS will more actively bridge arts and sciences, as well as NIAS and society at large. NIAS will continue to organize public events at Spui25 and also wants to organize events with both current fellows and alumni, also as a way to stimulate the fruitful exchange between different cohorts.
- The NIAS directorate will formulate a strategy for 2020 – 2025 next year, which will be made available online.

Question: if you do not send personal data about applicants to external reviewers, is it not more difficult for the reviewers? Does it lead to objections?

Answer: It is a pilot and NIAS will evaluate this procedure after one year. So far, it has not led to any objections, but some reviewers respond that they are unable to review because they know from the written proposal who the applicant must be.

Comment by Fabian Kraemer: in Germany there are also two ways to evaluate applications and they have different names: *Personenförderung* or *projectförderung*. At WiKo in Berlin, they support persons. At NIAS, they have now opted for *projectförderung*. It is interesting to see whether this works and makes IAS more easily available to a larger number of scholars, especially since having a fellowship at an IAS provides the opportunity to write another application, and so it is a self-fueling system.

5. Election of the NFA Board

Philip Spinhoven (Chair), Roxane Farmanfarmaian (Secretary) and Emmanuel Berger (Treasurer) have served on the board in the first year of their term. Melissa Green has stepped down as board member. Two representatives of the current year group, Ana María Gómez López and Fabian Krämer are nominated by the board to become board members. NFA-members Theo Kuipers (Prof Em Philosophy of Science, RUG, 1982/83, 1996/97, 2009/10) and Jacob Thaisen (Ass. Prof. of European Languages, University of Oslo, 2014/15) were put forward as board candidates. No objections have been raised prior to the general meeting, nor during the meeting itself. The general membership supports and applauds the four new candidates. The Chair welcomes them all by proclamation.

6. Financial Report. Report of the Auditing Committee

The auditing committee, Anne Baker and Johanna Söderström, have found no irregularities in financial report 2018 (€ 559,44 more revenues than expenses). They have signed a written approval form. There are no further questions.

7. Appointment of a New Auditing Committee

Wayne te Brake and Anne Baker are appointed as auditing committee for 2019.

8. Change of NFA statutes and bylaws

In 2018, the membership approved the board's proposal 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 proposed new statutes and bylaws, which incorporated last year's comments, were distributed before the General Meeting. They still need to be finalized and formalized by the notary. The official voting needs to take place during another meeting with the members.

- Comment on the bylaws: who exactly can be affiliate? It would be good to specify who qualifies (for example members of the Academic Advisory Board).
- Article 18.9 - Suggestion to delete article 18.9, as it is unnecessary and does not fit NFA (a meeting with all members present will not occur)
- Article 20.3 – do we need a quorum in this article? Without a quorum you might get an arbitrary situation, but with the NFA's lifetime membership setting a quorum in percentages is not workable either. Setting an absolute number seems the most viable option. Suggested is to set the number of members that should be present at a meeting to change statutes at 20 persons. This number is accepted.
- Spinhoven explains the provision in the bylaws on the fees: the idea is to set a minimum fee, with the possibility to pay more. If someone would want to pay more than 500 euro, that is a donation. There is also the provision for fellows (such as the scholar-at-risk or artist-in-residence) to request to pay less.
- Comment: should there not be a maximum of two term mentioned in the by-laws?
Spinhoven: the term limit is fixed in the statutes.

There were no further objections raised by the membership. Spinhoven thanks all present and is happy that the NFA can move forward with streamlined statutes.

9. Other Business

- Former fellow Joy Connolly (2011/12) will organize a NIAS alumni satellite meeting in New York on 1 November. This is a trial to see whether this formula could be repeated in other countries. All are welcome to attend if in the neighborhood.
- By request of the NFA, NIAS now offers three-week summer stays for former fellows. These Alumni Stays are for individual projects or theme-group projects and include an office, a studio at the Kloveniersburgwal, and use of the library services. The stays can take place in July and August, when year group fellows are not present. All are encouraged to apply.

10. Closing

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