

NIAS in the Academic Years 2018-2024



NIAS

Netherlands Institute
for Advanced Study
in the Humanities
and Social Sciences

self-evaluation

Amsterdam, 25 October 2024

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APPENDICES

- NIAS 2018 SEP Committee’s Report
- KNAW Reaction on the 2018 SEP Report
- NIAS Director’s Reaction on the 2018 SEP Report
- NIAS Scientific Board’s Reaction on the 2018 SEP Report
- NIAS 2020-2023 Strategy Plan (only available in Dutch)
- Summary of the NIAS 2020-2023 Strategy Plan (in English)
- 2023-2024 Update of the 2020-2023 Plan (tables of targets and activities)
- NIAS Action Plan for DEI (March 2024, awaiting final KNAW approval)
- Terms of Reference (ToR) NIAS 2024 SEP Committee

A photograph of a man and a woman at a professional event. The man, on the left, is wearing a dark suit jacket over a light blue button-down shirt and a white surgical mask. He is holding a rolled-up document and a pen. The woman, on the right, has long blonde hair and is wearing a white short-sleeved shirt and a brown skirt. She is also wearing a light blue surgical mask. In the background, a large screen displays the words 'WASTE PRESENTATION' in red and white. Other people are visible in the background, some also wearing masks. A thin blue vertical line and a thin blue horizontal line intersect in the center of the image.

1.

Introductory Notes

1. Introductory Notes

A lot has changed at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS) since the previous SEP evaluation, partly due to our relocation from Wassenaar to Amsterdam. The current evaluation period (the academic years 2018-2024) was also profoundly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which greatly impacted multiple cohorts of fellows. As a ‘liquid’ organisation, welcoming new groups of fellows twice a year, NIAS experienced considerable disruption. Researchers faced difficulties focusing on their projects, and the challenges of building a cohesive research community were exacerbated by isolation, with scholars confined to their homes during the institute’s forced closure. We mention ‘community building’ with some emphasis, since in the evaluation period NIAS fundamentally transformed from a space where individual fellows came to primarily focus on their own projects to a vibrant environment where collective learning is a daily practice. A (diverse) community does not only ensure better research outcomes, it also facilitates collective reflections on meta-themes that urgently need our attention in a world where academia seems to gradually become reduced to a shadow of its original ambitions. Universities, once intellectual sanctuaries for scholars to focus on teaching and research, have transformed into competitive arenas, driven by metrics, heavily reliant on external research grants and increasingly guided by policy-based research agendas.

NIAS is the exact opposite, and proudly so. But in a context where academia is changing so much, we cannot simply continue as we have. We must deal with increasing numbers of applicants, many of whom seek to escape the pressures of university life. These applicants come from all corners of the globe, reflecting our commitment to globalisation and diversity. They also encompass a wide range of ages, career stages, disciplines, genders, sexualities, and other identity markers. Our goal is to ensure that all feel welcome and at home at NIAS. In response, both our curriculum and staff have evolved. This self-evaluation presents NIAS as it is - its strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges - while illustrating how we have changed and continue to transform. The committee will be eval-

uating a ‘moving object’, an institution that has seen fundamental change, yet is, while further developing, still firmly rooted in its guiding principles: ‘blue-sky’ research and slow science.

It is at this point that we present the first Case Study. It introduces the increasingly communal practice of NIAS - information we consider important for all subsequent chapters. The same goes for the following key information about our institute.

We are one of the institutes of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW). During the evaluation period, NIAS operated with an average core staff of seven full-time equivalents (FTE). Our research capacity amounted to 300 months per year, supporting around thirty fellows per semester. The academic year is divided into two semesters, with the summer offering short-stay fellowships and visits from members of the NIAS Fellows Association (NFA). Our total annual financial turnover is approximately 3.5 million euros. ●

The NIAS Community Curriculum

What is it that researchers actually do at NIAS? They enjoy their retreat; some even find refuge. All seek focus and intellectual adventure. But by doing what, exactly?

Every workday morning some thirty fellows arrive at the NIAS office building. Twenty of them woke up in a studio at the nearby Fellows House, or in one of our family apartments elsewhere in Amsterdam. The other ten commuted from their own homes in the city and the country. After some small talk with peers at the coffee machine, they climb the stairs to the library to pick up some books they ordered. They are grateful. We know, for invariably the NIAS library services are highly appreciated in the fellows' exit evaluations. Fellows then retreat to their offices. They try hard not to log into any other email account than the NIAS one. After all, they are exempt from tasks at their home institutes.

Tranquillity falls. Until it is lunchtime. For every day at 12.30pm the fellows queue up at the buffet for a hot vegetarian lunch. Sharing this meal is an 'institute' within an institute for advanced study. Participation is explicitly expected. It helps forge a community of fellows that are not only dedicated to their individual work, but also committed to coaching each other and to collective learning. In recent years, we have emphasised the importance of dedication to the collective, and we now also ask applicants to articulate both their expectations of the group and the contributions they aim to make. At the lunch tables, all kinds of ideas come up for collaborative activities.

The other 'institute' is the weekly seminar. Every fellow is designated one Thursday afternoon to request the group's comments and advice on their research. Key is a presentation that is accessible to all, no matter what their discipline or field. The seminars are therefore pre-discussed between the speaking fellow and the NIAS director or head of academic affairs. An introductory note and a small set of reading materials are distributed one week ahead by the internal communications officer. The format of the 90-minute seminar is flexible. All are invited to expand their seminar into a proposal for a NIAS expert workshop and/or into a proposal for a five-day workshop at our partner's, the Lorentz Center in Leiden.

NIAS staff members also offer fellows opportunities for exposure. Whether it is a newspaper interview, a public event, or a meeting with peers relevant to their work, we take the initiative to connect fellows with these platforms. In recent years, we have focused on fostering external engagement, ensuring that fellows benefit from the local scene—and that the local scene benefits from them.

Fellows take part in the Creative Writing Workshops, the Grant Writing Group, and in reading groups that they set up amongst themselves. They participate in a critical tour of the NIAS premises, which were once part of the Dutch East India Company headquarters, and in a visit to the Anne Frank House. Some of the cultural activities we offer are rather touristic, while others are designed to inspire deep reflection on the distinct historical narratives of the Netherlands.

In the evenings and weekends fellows go to concerts, plays, exhibitions and festivals that they picked up on in the Weekly Update. They may organise a pizza party in the communal lounge of the Fellows House. It is theirs, as long as they respect the House Rules and allow all to feel comfortable, if not at home. The House, and so much more, was introduced to them in the Introduction Week, which is packed with individual and group sessions, and concluded by a festive welcoming dinner and, since September 2024, a 'Lottery of Care'. This is a theatrical game in which required behaviour is positively communicated, and fellows and staff alike are invited to consider not only the professional, but also the social needs of others, to try to help if and where needed.

Over the years under evaluation, the traditional NIAS curriculum of lunches, seminars and focused individual work has been expanded to include a fuller-fledged collective programme. To sustain it, we developed, in the pressure cooker following the 7 October 2023 Hamas attacks in Israel, a thorough update of our Code of Conduct. Departing from the core value of commitment, it clearly states social and academic behaviours that are undesired. Our code update preceded that of the Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) and has since become a key reference in discussions within KNAW. It also informs exchanges in our intervention networks, including the Network of European Institutes for Advanced Study (NetIAS) and SIAS, a consortium of ten renowned institutes founded on principles similar to those of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and Stanford.

Of course, this curriculum does not make all fellows and cohorts feel equally at ease and connected. After all, they bring the whole world into the institute and the world is a contentious place. In addition, Amsterdam can in many ways be very far from home. But still, NIAS fellows testify in their exit reviews that their time with us turned out to be transformative, not least due to the curriculum presented here, and the care that peers and NIAS take of them. ●



2.

Scope and Process

2. Scope and Process

2.1 SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

NIAS is not a research institute with a research programme as such, and with tenured faculty or PhD students. Traditional outcome measures do not hold, since NIAS refrains from requiring concrete output from its fellows, and the fellows are not formally employed by NIAS. We have therefore tailored the evaluation criteria of this SEP assessment. With reference to its mission of offering time and space for focus, of offering retreats and refuge (see Chapter 4), the standard SEP evaluation criteria have been adapted for the assessment of the NIAS performance in the academic years 2018-2024.

- Instead of 'research quality', NIAS focuses on 'academic performance', not just in terms of the climate for individual and collective research by our fellows (what we have come to call our 'owl function', after our logo), but also in terms of the insights we generate on academia and the ways it is or can be practiced today, along with the actions we take to enhance these (our 'canary function'; see Chapter 7);
- With reference to 'open science' NIAS focuses on the engagement of stakeholders in its institutional performance. Among these, the partners that support fellowships at NIAS play a vital role.

Given this specific context, the following three future-oriented questions are to be addressed:

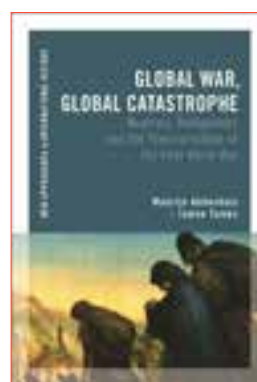
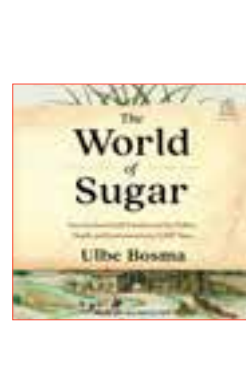
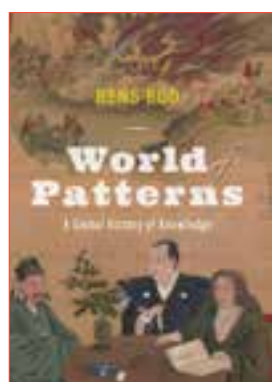
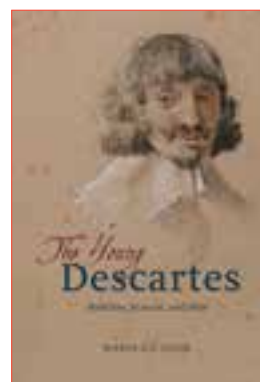
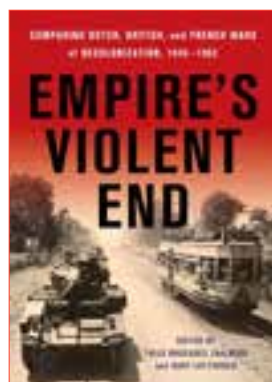
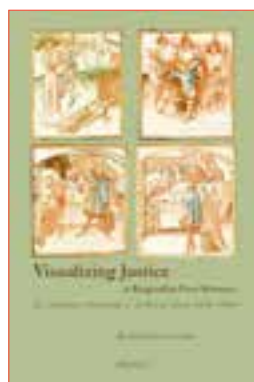
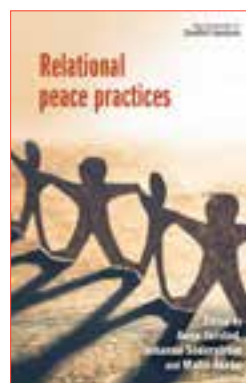
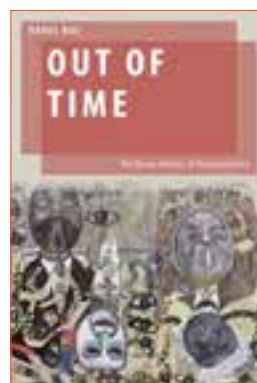
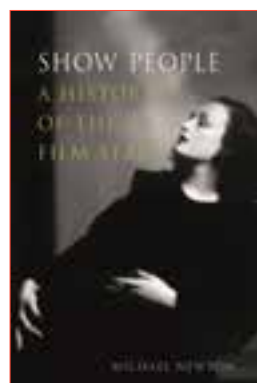
1. How can NIAS optimise its recruiting process to form fellows groups that are diverse in various ways, competent in carrying out their research projects, and committed to contribute to the broader themes NIAS considers important?
2. How can NIAS optimise the material, organisational, social and intellectual conditions that are conducive to free individual and collective reflection?
3. How can NIAS strengthen its national role (in the Netherlands) as intermediary across disciplines, connecting the worlds of arts and sciences, and using various sources of knowledge, building on research, experience and imagination?

2.2 PROCESS

NIAS is one of the twelve institutes of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW). The Terms of Reference for the 2024 NIAS evaluation committee have been defined by the Board of Directors of KNAW, which can be seen as the NIAS Board, in consultation with the NIAS Directorate, and with reference to the institutional performance evaluations that take place between the NIAS and KNAW Directorates every six months. Furthermore, the recommendations of the previous Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP) committee have been taken into consideration. For our reflection on these, see Chapter 8.

Within NIAS, all staff have fundamentally contributed to this self-evaluation. They have generated many basic data, which have partly been made explicitly available in this report. Its actual writing was a co-creative process of a group among them. ●

2. Written at NIAS selection 2018-2024





3.

Academic Contexts

3. Academic Contexts

When NIAS was founded in the early 1970s, it was the first institute for advanced study in continental Europe, and a paragon of interdisciplinarity and internationalisation. Both ambitions were quite unique in the Dutch academic landscape of the time. By now, universities have more than caught up on these fronts. Every institute today claims excellence in internationalisation, and the current debate has shifted to whether it has gone too far. Meanwhile, interdisciplinarity has nearly become a buzzword, often turning into a constraint that forces all research to conform to a mold.

Given these developments, NIAS has sought, in the past years, to align the values of blue-sky research and slow science, which were the reason for it being founded, to present realities. What is it that is currently crucial but lacking in academia and that an institute for advanced study should offer to its principal beneficiaries, the research fellows? What are today's frontiers of academic practice? Which academic ideals can foster exploration and discovery? To find out, we needed to analyse the roles that the original strategies of interdisciplinarity and internationalisation played. And they still do, although partly in a different way than in the rest of (Dutch) academia.

3.1 INTERDISCIPLINARITY

For the notion and practice of interdisciplinarity at NIAS, we found and now bolster a 'light' form of collaboration that is rather characterised as cross-pollination. Whereas in mainstream academia interdisciplinarity often stands for intensive collaboration between people with somewhat related disciplinary backgrounds, at NIAS the focus is rather on free and curious deliberation between individual researchers from all corners

of the academy, both within and beyond the scientific realm per se.

Historically, NIAS has attracted fellows primarily from the humanities and social sciences; they applied in our open competition. However, there has not been a compelling reason to exclude fellows from the hard sciences, possibly aside from the fact that they generally have access to far more fellowship and grant opportunities. To ensure the inclusion of scholars from these fields, NIAS maintains, among other partnerships, a close collaboration with the Lorentz Center in Leiden, resulting in over twenty multidisciplinary workshops each year. Additionally, and in line with its ambition to incorporate more forms of research than scientific, NIAS has formed alliances to invite journalists, writers, and artists to join the fellows community. Between them, fellows often find inspiration from their peers in an organic, informal way that accommodates individual needs and strengths. The NIAS environment encourages unexpected questions and shifts in the direction of projects.

Fellows can implement collaborative, interdisciplinary research within theme groups at NIAS. However, NIAS fosters intellectual cross-pollination for all fellows. Through a dynamic process of community building, researchers from diverse disciplinary backgrounds engage with each other to explore not only their specific research questions but also the underlying assumptions that shape them. The discussions extend beyond specialists in their own fields. Together, they tend to focus on broader, fundamental issues, such as methodology, epistemology, research ethics and publication strategies.

3. Academic Contexts

3.2 INTERNATIONALISATION

Not only was interdisciplinarity partly given a new, distinctive interpretation, so was internationalisation. NIAS's ambition is to facilitate a research community in which researchers from all over the world are represented. Before, NIAS predominantly received fellows from other 'Western' countries, but more recently, we understand and practice internationalisation as pro-actively accommodating fellows from groups and parts of the world that until now have been underrepresented in Dutch academia, and at NIAS as well. We do this because we are committed to distributive justice: there is no valid reason why 'Western' fellows - who are already privileged in terms of academic conditions - should disproportionately benefit from NIAS.

But there is another reason why we extend our reach. Knowledge does not arise in a vacuum, and researchers are not 'free-floating' intellectuals. The worlds in which they operate affect their choice of research topics, their methods, and their discoveries. Knowledge exclusively created and shared in a 'Western' context is epistemologically and ontologically poorer than knowledge created and shared in multiple places. A scholar from a so-called source community, for example, will 'create' different facts about the provenance of artefacts than an outsider. The coming together, sharing and collective evaluation of knowledge, not only from a variety of disciplines but also from different worlds, are the great benefits of a diverse group of researchers. After all, the way we organise and deal with knowledge is a model for how we imagine society: a unilaterally 'white' enterprise, or a multicoloured undertaking characterised by epistemic justice.

'Solutions to the problem of knowledge are solutions to the problem of social order' (Shapin & Schaffer, 'Leviathan and the Air Pump', Princeton University Press, 1985, p. 332). In other words, by organising the way we deal with the production of knowledge in a specific way - blue-sky, slow, collective and diverse - we also, in a sense, represent a specific kind of society, both in-house and outside. At the same time, this invites us to reflect on the place-making nature of knowledge.

Facts are interventions: they change the locations they are developed in, and travel to. The nature of the NIAS fellows groups entails articulating and reflecting on such place-making.

3. Academic Contexts

3.3 PUBLIC OUTREACH AND IMPACT

Since our relocation from Wassenaar to Amsterdam, which was just fresh at the time of our previous SEP evaluation, we have been focusing on substantiating the public role of the institute. We wholeheartedly embraced this KNAW requirement and started out by staging our fellows. We believe that they do not only enjoy reaching out to audiences beyond academia, but also have very valuable contributions to make to public debate. Moreover, we want to help strengthen the public role of researchers in times of distrust of science and the emergence of alternative facts. And, last but not least, we hope to bolster our fundraising effort by nurturing brand awareness of NIAS. It is particularly this last ambition that has played a major role in a policy shift that we have made over the last two years, resulting in a new-found equilibrium in our public mission: we have undertaken a thorough diversification of the ‘general audience’ we were targeting, and have made detailed choices for more exactly defined publics and the ways in which to target them. We will revisit this point in Chapter 5.

Here, we now wish to share an observation on the relationship between science and politics, partly in light of the emergence of anti-democratic, radical-right parties in the Netherlands and other countries. Given the experiences of other institutes for advanced study and their apparent role of ‘signalling’ such tendencies by being among the firsts under attack, NIAS is keen to contribute to critical thinking about the relationship between politics on the one hand and individual scholars and academic institutions on the other. Being part of and contributing to this complex debate is first of all important for NIAS itself. We recently experienced the damaging effect of rising political tensions between fellows on the atmosphere within the institute and the values NIAS stands for. Secondly, it is important to shed more light on the connection between the ‘scientification of politics’ on the one hand, and the ‘politicisation of science’ on the other. As we become more involved in politics and policy, it will also be the other way round, with political agendas shaping, or even manipulating scientific research and academic discourse. Exploring

distinctive responsibilities of the political and academic spheres and keeping appropriate distance seem urgent tasks in the current juncture.

In summary, NIAS has reinvented itself in recent years. Original strategies - internationalisation and interdisciplinarity - have been updated and so they are still relevant for the core mission of unencumbered research. The same applies to the core values of such research, which are blue sky and slow science. They are values that have gained extra topicality in our accelerating world. To these original ideals, we have recently added new ones, especially regarding the public role of scientists and academic institutions such as NIAS. We aim to be more public-oriented, simultaneously guarding against an overly intimate relationship between science and society. ●



4.

Missions, Visions, Strategic Goals, and KPIs

4. Missions, Visions, Strategic Goals, and KPIs

4.1. 2020-2023

The NIAS 2020-2023 strategy was entitled ‘An intellectual Haven for Research in the Sciences and Arts’, and can be summarised as follows:

NIAS’s mission is to offer an intellectual haven to a diverse year group of international scholars, journalists and artists and provide these NIAS Fellows with the opportunity to devote themselves to an independent research project of their own design. NIAS will ensure that this unique facility becomes even more widely known at home and abroad. We will promote our mission enthusiastically both within and beyond the academic community.

NIAS views diversity and intellectual freedom as prerequisites for ground-breaking research. However, currently, academics are often commissioned by governmental bodies or businesses; their results considered less ‘desirable’ or ‘useful’ than expected; their research constrained by the dominant paradigms in a certain discipline. In addition, they are under political pressure in many parts of the world. Havens are therefore very urgent.

Three goals were set to achieve the given mission:

- Promote NIAS’s profile in Amsterdam, the Netherlands and internationally by targeting a broad range of academics, writers and artists as well as local and national governments, businesses, media, research centres, cultural and civic organisations;
- Attract enough high-quality fellowship applications to be able to build diverse and balanced year groups in terms of discipline, topical relevance, career stage, gender, cultural and geographical background;
- Provide a safe workplace for fellows, alums, staff and visitors; a curiosity-driven environment that is welcoming, non-competitive, inclusive and encourages intellectual openness.

The respective Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of these main goals read as follows:

- Increased participation by the above-mentioned groups at NIAS events, debates and responses to NIAS in (social) media;
- Improved diversity in the year groups by demonstrated evidence of a higher proportion of fellows from non-‘Western’ regions; an equal gender balance; an increased range of career stages (excellent early-stage scholars and retired established scholars); a fair representation of disciplines from the social sciences and the humanities;
- Questionnaires collected from fellows, staff and visitors to measure satisfaction concerning service level, facilities, and safety culture.

4. Missions, Visions, Strategic Goals, and KPIs

4.2. 2023-2024 and 2025-2029

With a SEP evaluation taking place in 2024, the 2020-2023 plan was extended for one extra year. While preparing, we evaluated that all three KPIs had been rather ambitious, also given the staffing issues and further internal contexts (see Chapter 5). We also found that they partly did not mobilise the best strategies for realising the main goals. This primarily applied to the strategy of participation in live debates and social media (see Chapter 5.3). While still pursuing the grand plan of 2020-2023 into the future, we reformulated the KPIs for 2023-2024 (see also the attached 2023-2024 plan of targets and activities):

- Increased participation and partnership:
 - attract strategic mediums (such as press);
 - align partnership with institutional interests;
- Bolstered and balanced diversity in the year groups:
 - realise equal shares of Dutch, Global North and Global South fellows;
 - develop an artistic research policy;
- Enhanced collective fellows' experience:
 - make explicit the collective dimension of NIAS;
 - have a keen eye for intellectual and social wellbeing of fellows;
- Improved staff wellbeing:
 - promote connection among the new staff members;
 - develop up-to-date views and practices of wellbeing.

These KPIs offered room for experiment and development. This was on point, as, parallel to the implementation of the 2023-2024 plan, we set out to design the 2025-2029 strategy plan. This plan is considered tentative until the results of the SEP evaluation come out. In it, renewed vision and mission statements (in this order) read as follows:

In the planning period 2025-2029, NIAS will operate on the conviction that the societal task of academic research is to ask new questions and find alternative solutions to the challenges facing people and societies. This task can be effectively fulfilled only if academic freedom is guaranteed.

NIAS offers a diverse group of established and talented researchers in, and at the crossroads with the social sciences, humanities, and the arts, for a period of five or ten months, the space, the time and the freedom to work unencumbered and undisturbed on a topic that they, on the basis of their academic knowledge and experience, consider urgent. NIAS also engages them in exploring academic freedoms worldwide, and actively contributes to the promotion and defence of these freedoms.

The shifts made in the new vision and mission are, firstly, that academic freedoms are now core to our vision and, secondly, that the mission is explicitly subdivided in 1. proving them (to fellows), 2. studying them, and 3. defending them. The latter calls for a more public-oriented understanding of our task. See Chapter 7 on the next multi-annum plan. ●

A photograph of a group of women in a meeting. One woman with short blonde hair and glasses is speaking into a microphone. Other women are seated around her, listening. The room has wood-paneled walls. The image is split vertically by a thin white line.

5.

Implement- tation

5. Implementation

We now dive into the circumstances in which NIAS worked to realise its goals, how they were overcome and made effective.

5.1 TEAM BUILDING AND WELLBEING

A crucial intervention in the 2020-2023 plan was the establishment of three staff units, each reflecting one phase in the experience of the primary target group at NIAS: our fellows. In Wassenaar, the NIAS team had been working together in a largely ‘organic’ way. In Amsterdam, the staff had become much leaner. Thus, the urgency became palpable to develop more efficient ways of working and the NIAS team was subdivided into ‘Acquisition and Selection’ (meaning acquisition of fellows), ‘Programming and Profiling’ (to realise the institute’s public ambitions) and ‘Facility and Continuity’ (continuity referring to the engagement of alums). Communications was at the time considered a team in support of the three others.

The new organisational set-up produced focus. But it did not release the pressure of the disbalance between, on the one hand, the expectations of the KNAW and the ambitions of the 2020-2023 NIAS plan, and, on the other, the very small NIAS staff of seven FTE on average over the evaluation period, with additional support hired from ‘outside’ and from a KNAW-based shared service centre (see below). Following the relocation from Wassenaar to Amsterdam and the major budget cuts involved, several staff members had been reassigned to other KNAW units. And just as the institute was starting to recover from the upheaval, COVID struck, compounding the challenges. The strain became overwhelming, leading to high absenteeism, which, at its peak in early 2023, soared to around 30 per cent. Although partly caused by non-work-related illnesses, it put in motion the vicious circle that includes burnouts and staff turnover.

Responding, NIAS embarked on the strategic effort to ‘restore’ its staff and did so by shifting to more senior officers who can work in pro-active compliance with the strategy and are aware of the processes and aims

beyond their own tasks. The organisational set-up was slightly tweaked: the institute’s new communications officers developed an organisational unit and sub-team in its own right. This reflected the need of the institute to work on its public position and impact, and to also strengthen its fundraising effort.

The members of today’s team are dedicated and highly motivated. Given that the group is relatively new, we had to (re-)invent effective and enjoyable ways to collaborate. While we have made significant progress, this remains an ongoing process. A coherent system of internal coordination was developed, with one staff member appointed specifically for internal communication. She introduced the highly appreciated ‘week-start’ meetings, which, along with the Institute Manager’s ‘Friday Letter,’ are integral to the monthly full-staff meeting. These meetings now follow a structured agenda, addressing one key policy or strategic issue, alongside reviews of progress and decisions about responsibilities, roles, and actions. Through these platforms, staff have been kept informed about budget constraints, including the negative financial results in 2023 and 2024. They were also introduced to their individual financial responsibilities, including budget monitoring and achieving coverage, via an easily accessible presentation of the ‘numbers.’ A month-by-month work plan (attached to this self-evaluation) further promoted budget discipline.

At all times, however, the NIAS leadership underlined that nobody at NIAS carries any responsibility all alone. Those responsible for primary and secondary processes were proactively invited to request support in the staff meetings, and to offer it. Moreover, NIAS fostered staff wellbeing by explicitly recognising their efforts and achievements, by inviting their participation in the design of an acceptable workload and, thus, institutional ambition, and by putting staff before fellows on occasion. Early 2023, for example, the Directorate decided to postpone the major conference on ‘Belonging’ that was scheduled for June to October, as staff capacity and motivation were at an all-time low. That same spring, we also brightened up the office building with living plants and a friendly colleague coming to take care of

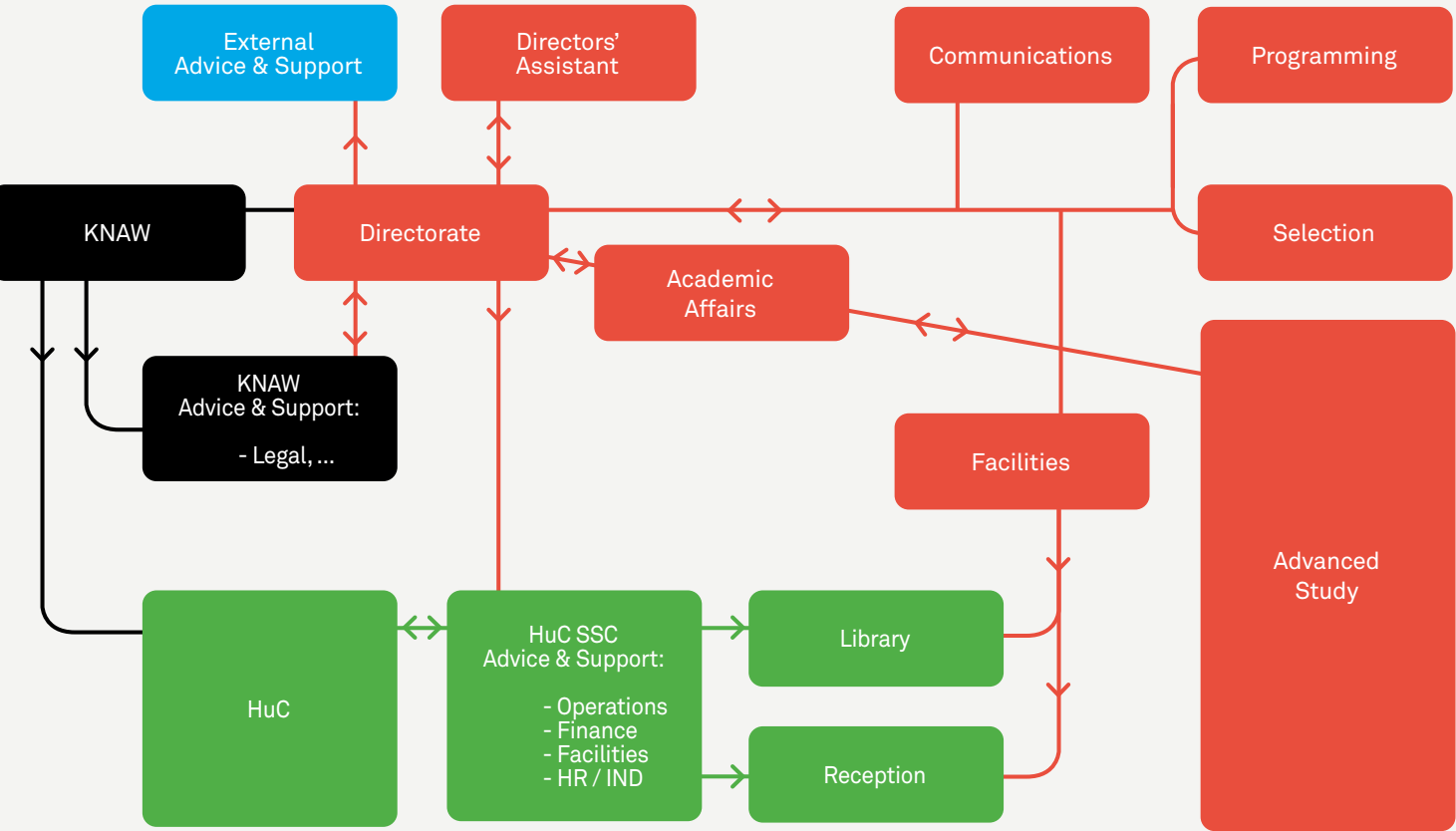
5. Implementation

them every week. Furthermore, we picked up on staff outings and other social events, while the NIAS leadership procured advice on additional effective practices of wellbeing. Takeaway: wellbeing may never be an extra task of employees, disguised as perks. It is basically the leadership’s responsibility that all feel ‘in the Goldilocks zone,’ as our trainer put it, ‘just right.’

NIAS Organisational Chart – work in progress, April 2023

Team as per June 2023, next to the Fellows:
Dindy, Anja, Eveliene, Dewie, Lukas, Merlijn, Fatos, Zoé, Jill, Klaartje, Rachida, Bernike, Isabel, Berthon (HuC), Lidy (HuC), Erwin (HuC), Elly (HuC), Sandra (HuC), Astrid (HuC), Rina (HuC), Marlous, Jan Willem, Nora

- NIAS staff
- KNAW staff
- Staff hired from Humanities Cluster Shared Service Centre
- non-KNAW colleagues



5. Implementation

5.2 TEAM DIVERSITY

NIAS is convinced that a diverse team is the better team. Moreover, it is preconditional for the management of a community of fellows that is diverse in many ways. We literally have the whole world under one roof, encompassing its often intense conflicts. In the period under evaluation, the staff itself indeed became more diverse. They also took part in and much appreciated a training on diversity (2021). From 2023, staff members have been in the Diversity Working Group of NetIAS, the European-wide intervision network of institutes for advanced study. In 2024, we embarked on a [deep democracy training programme](#). At every staff meeting, behavioural values, initially taken from a neighbouring institute, were on the agenda as an invitation to report and discuss incidents and develop our own behavioural values. In 2024, we came up with the core concept of ‘commitment’, namely to each other, to each other’s work and responsibilities, to the NIAS mission, and to the integrity of the institute and the Royal Academy (KNAW).

In the meantime, and in compliance with KNAW requirements, we drew up the NIAS Action Plan for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. In it, we discern four lines of action that we aim to walk down parallel to the 2025-2029 strategy plan (see Chapter 7), but on which we embarked already in 2024. The big dream of the Action Plan applies to both staff and fellows and reads ‘A worldwide and warm NIAS network’. It continues: ‘NIAS believes that the more diverse the research community, the richer the inquisitive dynamics. At the same time, NIAS realises that with more diversity, more controversy and feelings of unsafety may arise. The better we manage to avert these, the more sustainable the network of fellows, alums, partners, publics and staff. And the more sustainable the network, the more solid the support base for curiosity-driven research. This is important as this research is at risk.’

The following concrete goals were set in the Action Plan, while progress is measured by smart actions (see the plan attached):

- Enhance the wellbeing of staff and fellows alike (safety and equity);
- Strengthen staff sensitivity of inclusion (safety and equity);
- Make all facilities in the NIAS offices and housing accessible to all (accessibility);
- Further diversify the cohorts (representation).

In this paragraph, we reflected on the wellbeing of the staff and our efforts towards sensitising ourselves of diversity and inclusion. Towards the diversification of our cohorts, we made several interventions that are presented in Chapter 6 on Key Achievements.

5. Implementation

5.3 EFFICIENCY OF SELECTION

In the years under evaluation, the numbers of applications in the annual NIAS Open Call grew into such a workload that measures had to be taken. What, then, does the selection trajectory entail? Applications come in, are checked for formal eligibility, reviewed, and assessed by a jury composed of the four members of the NIAS Scientific Board (WeCo) plus three extra non-European jurors, together making up the [NIAS Academic Advisory Board \(AAB\)](#). They deliver their advice to the NIAS Director, who composes the cohorts. In particular, it is the reviewing that causes increasing challenges, as more and more prospective reviewers turn down our request - a reality seen beyond NIAS as well. Please find below an overview of the growing numbers:

| Open Call of | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|--------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Applications | 134 | 137 | 242 | 202 | 211 | 276 |
| Early Exits | | | | | | 99 |
| Reviewed | 132 | 136 | 239 | 192 | 202 | 167 |

To release pressure, we set out to structurally involve alums and current fellows in the reviewing process - linking back to the 2017 SEP committee’s advice (attached). We included the delivery of two reviews in the requirements fellows must adhere to.

Furthermore, we developed a pilot that we first ran in 2024 and will repeat in 2025, and by which we inserted an early exit phase into the selection trajectory. We formed a staff committee of persons not involved in any other step of the selection process. They assessed the responses of applicants to a new question in the application form, about the intentions and expectations that a prospective fellow has for the community of research. We consider this issue fitting NIAS’s explicit positioning as a place for individual as well as collective learning. The pilot was coordinated with the Scientific Board and inspired by the practices of other NetIAS member institutes. It reduced the number of applications to be reviewed by 36 per cent, a number congruent with experiences elsewhere.

In 2025, we will run a second pilot, parallel to the early exits trial, in which the number of applications taken into consideration will be capped: only the first 215 applications will be admitted to the selection procedures. Again, this pilot was coordinated with the Scientific Board that agreed to include only the candidates from the Netherlands or from countries with academic infrastructure and living standards similar to those of the Netherlands. Candidates from other regions will not be part of this pilot.

5.4 PUBLICS AND EVENTS

When we scrutinised the effectiveness of our work to realise our goals, the public events programme caught our eye. Our relocation to Amsterdam was to hold great promises for substantiating a public engagement by the NIAS fellows (see also the 2017 SEP committee’s advice). To make it happen, NIAS embarked on a backbone programme of monthly live events, in collaboration with partners such as SPUI 25. Further events were taken on, partly in multi-annum partnership. Please refer to the frame presenting the 2023-2024 curriculum of events, and consider it a pars pro toto for the total evaluation period. It should be noted that the NIAS-Lorentz workshops mentioned above, are not in this overview; they are selected by the NIAS-Lorentz Board and produced by the Lorentz Center.

5. Implementation

5.4 PUBLICS AND EVENTS

2023–2024 Events Programme

| Title and involved NIAS fellows, staff and guests | Series | Venue |
|---|---|---------------------|
| Religion, the Radical Right and How to Respond: Analysing for Alternatives | NIAS Summer School & Expert Workshop | NIAS |
| Egor Isaev, Polina Milushkova & Jegor Skovoroda: Framing Russia | NIAS Talk (with film screening) | De Balie |
| Debra Minkoff, Jeroen Slot, Floris Vermeulen: Planning for the future | NIAS Talk | SPUI25 |
| NIAS Theme Group on Connecting Urban Inequality to the Built Environment | Conference | KNAW |
| NIAS Theme Group on Re-imagining Security Labour | Room to Explore | NIAS podcast |
| NIAS Theme Group on Re-imagining Security Labour | NIAS Expert Workshop | NIAS |
| Rouzbeh Akbari & Matthew Wilson: On Informal Maritime Labour in the Strait of Hormuz | NIAS Talk (with film screening) | NIAS |
| Maria Koinova, Ayşenur Korkmaz Wafa al-Attas, & MOHA project: Diasporas and the Quest for Justice | Public Symposium | NIAS |
| Jan Willem Duyvendak & Aysenur Korkmaz: Nativisms | Fellows Book Club | NIAS Fellows House |
| Hanneke Stuit: Domestic Colonisation | NIAS Expert Workshop | NIAS |
| Luisa T. Schneider and Ed Schwarzschild: What is Freedom Without a Place for Yourself? | NIAS Talk (with music) @ Vrijheidsmaaltijd | Waalse Kerk |
| Jan Willem Duyvendak & Amin Ghaziani: How the Closing of Gay Bars Sparked a Revolution | Fellows' Book Club | Fellows House |
| Haroon Ali, Jan Willem Duyvendak & Amin Ghaziani: How the Closing of Gay Bars Sparked a Revolution (Amsterdam edition) | NIAS Talk | SPUI25 |
| Bert Bakker, Eveline Crone, Merlijn Olnon, Maartje Raijmakers & Gijs Schumacher: Towards A New Theory Of Emerging Curiosity | NIAS-Lorentz Talk | SPUI25 |
| NIAS Theme Group on Re-imagining Security Labour | Fellows Book Club | NIAS Fellows House |
| Costică Brădă an, Merlijn Olnon & Miriam Rasch: Listening Exercises | NIAS Talk | SPUI25 |
| Jan Willem Duyvendak, Jessica Feldman & Ayşenur Korkmaz: What is Antisemitism? | NIAS Talk | SPUI25 |
| Johan Heilbron & Nico Wilterdink: Long-Term Processes in Human History - Central Questions and Contemporary Perspectives | Public Symposium | NIAS |
| Tarik Abou-Chadi & Markus Wagner: The Dutch Elections According to Sociologists | NIAS Talk @ Night of Sociology | Arminius, Rotterdam |
| Payal Arora, Stefaniua Milan & Manuela Ciotti: From #BlackLivesMatter to #DalitLivesMatter | NIAS Talk | SPUI25 |
| NIAS Theme Group on the Future of Progressive politics: Voting in Turbulent Times | NIAS Talk | SPUI25 |
| Belonging and Mobility (see Case Study 2) | NIAS Conference | Pakhuis de Zwijger |
| Academic Freedoms: What is at Stake (see Case Study 3) | NIAS Opening of the Academic Year 2023-2024 | Waalse Kerk |

5. Implementation

5.4 PUBLICS AND EVENTS

This events programme was supported by six essays and interviews in De Nederlandse Boekengids (the Dutch review of books, NIAS's media partner) and attracted growing press interest. Producing public events, however, is no sinecure. From the end of the COVID pandemic, when programming was low, the Programming and Profiling sub-team warned that we were biting off much more than we could chew. There had to be ways that were both more effective and more efficient. Their questions set in motion an assessment of our key publics (and stakeholders), and of the activities undertaken to reach them. Supported by the new communications staff, we broke down the 'general audience' that we had been targeting so far, and recognised:

- Academics all over the world. They are applicants to our fellowships; fellows at NIAS; alums; and the public of flagship events like the NIAS Openings of the Academic Year, and, inside the institute, for example, the weekly seminars (see Case Study 1). NB: 'academic publics' include artists and journalists;
- Policymakers, politicians, and institute governors. They are a strategic public for our message concerning trends and developments in academia and academic landscapes, and served by, among others, the Year Openings as well as statements on academic freedoms. This group includes the KNAW that has indicated (in 2024) the wish that NIAS involves itself in their role of adviser of the field and the government;
- Partners and donors. Key funder is the Royal Academy, channelling to us (non-earmarked) funds of the Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Other partners are those co-sponsoring fellowships and projects, and the donors of the newly set-up and promising Solidarity Fund, by which needs of current fellows are met with funds from peers.

It was concluded that Amsterdam venues and live events were insufficient to reach these countrywide and global groups, who, as far as they are based in Amsterdam, also have a very dense cultural programme to choose from. NIAS wishes to add value, instead of diluting it by competing. As per 2024, we decided to focus on only two flagship events per year, next to more sustainable productions such as books, articles in partner-media, and our new podcast series 'Room to Explore'.

Our current understanding of our public role centres around the notion of science communication, encompassing both the articulation of academic values and realities – such as freedoms – and the knowledge production that arises when these values are upheld. To illustrate the latter, we profile the output of our fellows and thereby prioritise collective results over individual outcomes. To enhance our publicity efforts, our communications sub-team includes a former journalist with a broad media network.

Work on Belonging

In recent years, NIAS organised several scholarly activities centred on the theme of ‘Belonging’ – a fitting focus in a world where so many are uprooted and so many feel estranged and displaced. The multi-annum series of events entailed two conferences, targeting and reaching academic audiences: the first, held entirely online due to COVID-19, took place from 9 to 11 June 2021; the second, a hybrid event hosted at Pakhuis de Zwijger, Amsterdam, from 18 to 20 October 2023. Both events featured keynote speeches, art presentations, and parallel sessions, each attracting around 150 scholars from across the globe. [The 2023 conference](#) was divided into five thematic ‘spheres’, each curated by an internationally renowned scholar.

In the spring of 2023, NIAS dedicated the annual NIAS symposium to the topic ‘Immigrants Welcome? How to Understand Differences in Welcoming Cultures Regarding Various Groups of Immigrants in European Countries and in the US’, with various contributors from both sides of the Atlantic and interest from stakeholders. In addition, the annual international NIAS Summer Schools dealt with related issues. The most recent, held from 15 to 24 August 2024, explored [‘Religion, the Radical Right, and How to Respond’](#). With eighteen participants and ten renowned teacher-mentors, we considered it a great success.

Additionally, several fellow-initiated reading groups delved into topics related to (non)Belonging. From 2019–2020, one group focused on the concepts of ‘home’ and ‘homeland’ in Israel/Palestine, bringing together scholars from various backgrounds. This collaboration will culminate in a publication titled ‘How to Share a Homeland?’, scheduled for release in 2025, by Amsterdam University Press (AUP). In the 2025–2026 academic year, NIAS will host a theme group of fellows focusing on ‘Ecologies of Belonging’, led by Timothy Stacey. One last event is planned for spring 2026. It will be on ‘Academic Belonging’.

Although these activities have been highly successful in fostering interdisciplinary and international scholarship on the theme of ‘Belonging’ – an issue previously fragmented across academic and artistic disciplines – NIAS will stop organising such thematic events. This is due to the institute’s new and exclusive focus on meta-themes such as ‘academic freedoms.’ NIAS has identified such themes to fit an institute for advanced study and its liquid community of research fellows. They share a stake in meta-themes, whereas the discussion of specific research topics, such as ‘Belonging’, however inter- or transdisciplinary their approach, is conducted between those who intensively study them. An example of what

meta-theme-oriented programming looks like, can be found in Case Study 3.

The Summer Schools have been equally successful, but they too will be discontinued. This is partly because their thematic focus, too, is not aligned with NIAS’s meta-thematic priorities. But partly also because they, just like the conferences, have placed significant demands on the team and on the financial resources – despite their revenues. Into the future, and as long as our funds force us to make deep cuts in our realisation – thematic topics will find a place in the smaller-scale NIAS expert workshops, and in focused events organised in partnership with, among others, the Lorentz Center. (See Chapter 7 on the tightness of our current budget.) ●



5. Implementation

5.5 GOVERNANCE ISSUES

The 2017 relocation to Amsterdam did not only entail a move to the Oost-Indisch Huis. It also brought about new ways of working. NIAS was no longer the sole user of its premises but shared the new office building with the newly established alliance between three KNAW institutes in the Humanities. The Meertens Institute, the ING Huygens Institute and the International Institute for Social History had joined forces under the common denominator of de KNAW Humanities Cluster (HuC) and had established a Shared Service Centre (SSC) to realise integrated and stronger secondary processes. HuC became the primary user of the NIAS venue, as it is part of a larger HuC campus. This, as well as the decision that was made for NIAS to contract the HuC SSC for its secondary processes, while itself not having taken the decision to become part of HuC, produced a governance labyrinth.

As an effect of the contract with the HuC SSC, the SSC Director took on a role as NIAS Manager of Operations. The SSC Director also became an advising member of the NIAS Management Team. This arrangement challenged the integral responsibility of the NIAS Director for the institute, and his accountability to the Directorate of the KNAW, as the SSC Director is accountable to this Directorate as well. Meanwhile, NIAS itself had hired its own operational officer, the Institute Manager, who also is a member of the NIAS Management Team and Directorate (and within the latter accountable to the institute's Director). All of this is why, since the contract had to be renewed in 2023, the two parties have embarked on revising the relation that was insufficiently defined in 2017.

In the spring of 2023, NIAS created an organisational chart, making explicit its actual position within the Royal Academy. This is the chart already presented in paragraph 5.1. One goal was to establish a shared understanding of the relations between NIAS staff and colleagues from the HuC SSC. The agreed perspective is that the NIAS Director holds sole responsibility and accountability for the institute, with the NIAS Institute Manager serving as chief operational officer. Support

staff from the HuC SSC are hired by the institute, i.c. the Directorate, for expert advice and support on finances, HR and facility management. By Spring 2024, efforts began to translate this structure into formal financial mandates for the institute, thus enhancing financial management and autonomy at the institute itself.

Governance changes within the Royal Academy helped clarify our relationship with the HuC SSC. Although at a higher level, the KNAW governance structure used to suffer from the same lack of clarity or dual accountability as experienced with HuC SSC. In the case of the Royal Academy, it was unclear what exactly the decision-making capacity of the 'Bureau' was. In 2023, the KNAW Directorate initiated a shift towards a more centralised Royal Academy, which faced opposition from many of the institutes. They expressed concern that this does not only place immediate pressure of insecurity on staff but would also undermine the authority of institute Directors. Unlike the central Directorate, they are uniquely positioned to oversee the specific needs and interests of their respective fields. Given that research is the core mission, we also believed that the distinct and respected identities of each institute should be preserved. To achieve this, Directors should be empowered, within clear centrally defined boundaries, to shape their own strategies and objectives.

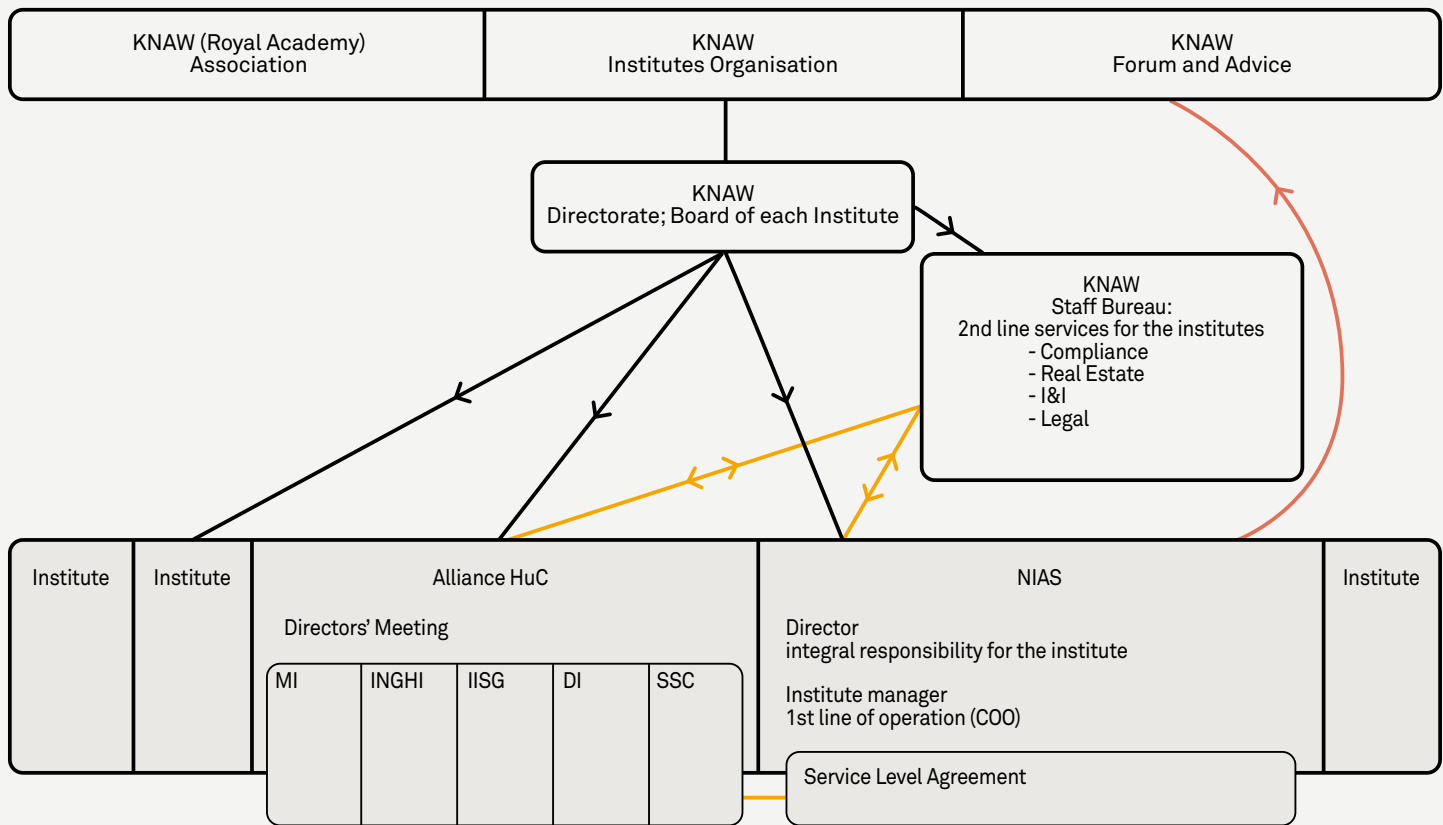
In the autumn of 2023, an interim Directorate at the Royal Academy changed direction, launching a co-creative project to define the desired structure, hierarchies and relations within the organisation. The resulting organisational structure closely aligns with NIAS's preferred realities of decision-making and accountability. To ensure agreement, NIAS produced a second, zoomed-out organisational chart. During the Spring 2024 institutional performance review, NIAS's interpretation was confirmed, and its understanding of its position within the Academy became much clearer. ●

5. Implementation

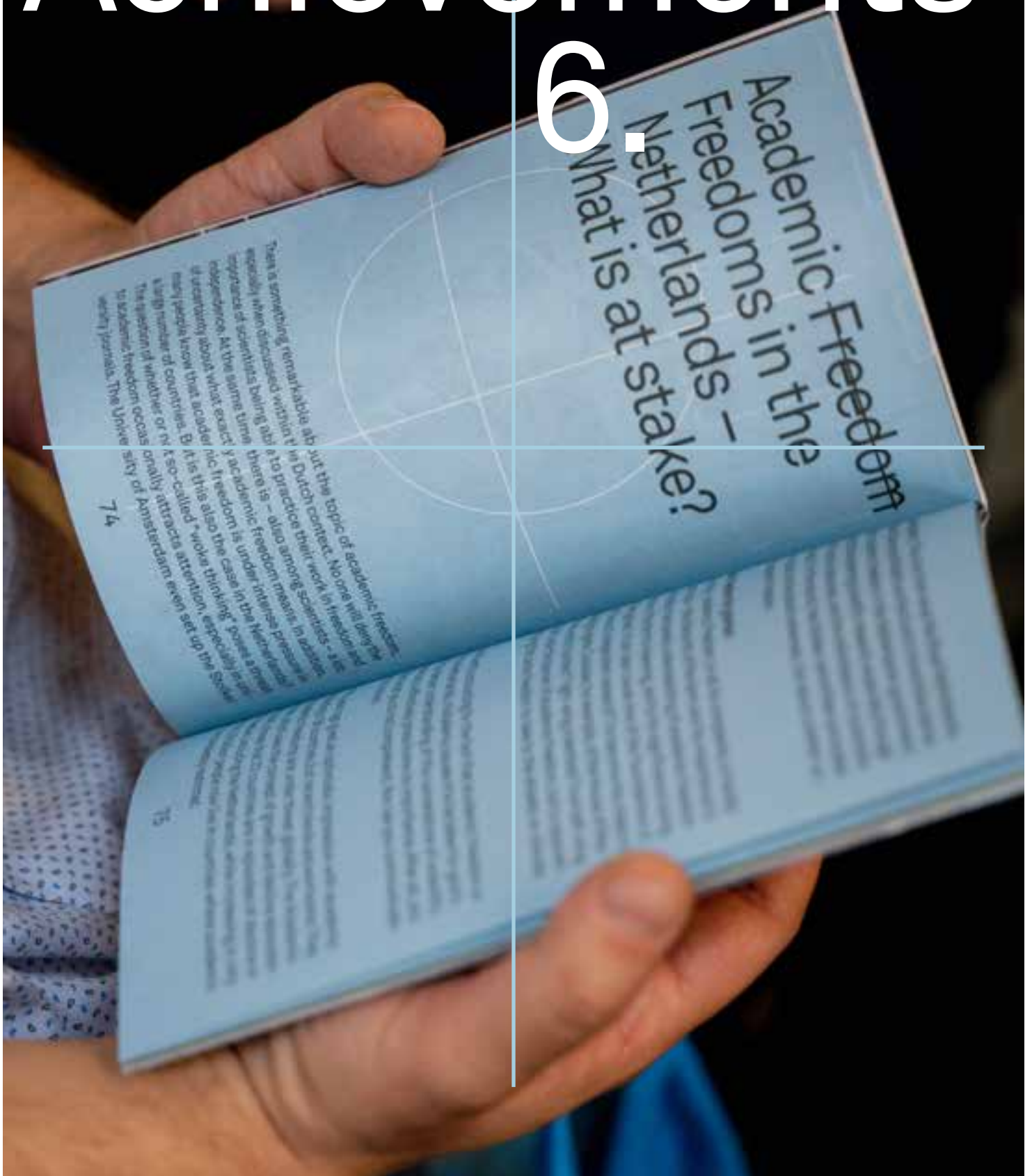
5.5 GOVERNANCE ISSUES

NIAS organisational chart - February 2024

Q: How does the integral responsibility of the NIAS Director relate to the NIAS servicing by the HuC shared service centre?



Key Achievements 6.



6. Key Achievements

NIAS has achieved much in recent years, and we take particular pride in the reflective processes among our staff, which have yielded valuable insights and set a new course, even if the results are still hard to measure. However, our greatest accomplishments stem from the contributions of our fellows. In line with the ethos of an institute for advanced study, their work is not regarded as our direct output. For an overview of their work, we invite you to visit Written@NIAS on our website, where publications sent to us by alums are listed. This list is, however, incomplete. Early 2024, we therefore initiated a project to pro-actively expand this list by resuming a practice of tracking works published within ten years after a fellowship that acknowledge NIAS's support, which had not travelled to Amsterdam with NIAS.

In this chapter, we highlight NIAS's key achievements, that is those accomplished by our staff (naturally in cooperation with fellows). On the following pages we present our work on academic freedoms, diversification of the fellows' cohorts, cross-pollination and the development of partnership. In addition to the case studies on the NIAS community curriculum and on our work on the theme of 'Belonging' that were already presented in chapters 1 and 5.4, in this chapter we present three more case studies, namely one centring around the first publication in the NIAS Book Series, one on the Safe Haven Fellowship Programme, and one on artistic research.

6.1 PROMOTING ACADEMIC FREEDOMS

Many fellows state in their exit reviews that NIAS offers a climate where academic freedom is guaranteed in optima forma. From the exit evaluation forms and interviews, NIAS comes forward as a place where fellows are relatively free from external constraints and competition (negative academic freedom), and where they are given the time and space to set their own research agenda (positive academic freedom). We are proud that we live up to expectations - of the fellows and of ourselves. For NIAS perceives academic freedoms as its core business.

In the period under evaluation, we sought to better understand academic freedoms, and dedicated the 2021, 2023 and 2024 NIAS Openings of the Academic Year to this theme. We also set up the Safe Haven Fellowship Programme in response to the Russian invasion into Ukraine, and, in response to the war in Gaza, extended its scope to include all scholars at risk from conflict, exclusion and hardship. We furthermore issued a number of statements on our academic-freedom-inspired position. The first was published on 20 October 2023, and reads (excerpt): 'To secure such a safe space for our community of fellows, NIAS refrains from any public response to conflict, injustice, or disaster as such. We will, however, speak out publicly if they are directed against or directly affect the academic mission we stand for.'

In the case studies 'Academic Freedoms: What is at Stake' and 'The Safe Haven Fellowship Programme' we illustrate aspects of our work and results on academic freedoms. Here, we add that we have established the core value of NIAS for 2025-2029 to be 'committed to academic freedoms', and the mission to entail the trio of providing these freedoms (namely to our fellows), studying them (with fellows and faculty; on the latter, see Chapter 7), and advocating them. Our advocacy will be given form in our science communication strategy, that integrates awareness-raising of the urgency of academic freedoms with the news of the insights that result from these freedoms.

Academic Freedoms: What is at Stake?

The book [‘Academische vrijheden in Nederland: wat staat er op het spel?’](#) (Academic freedoms in the Netherlands: What is at stake?) was presented at the eponymous Opening of the Academic Year 2023-2024. It was the first volume in the NIAS Book Series at AUP and marked a key step in our conceptualisation of and advocacy for academic freedom. The plural in the title was deliberately chosen, as was the reference to a national context. The book provides an overview of the many aspects of academic freedom and its threats, and intends to invite discussion. Broken down into seven themes, from co-operation with ‘authoritarian countries’ and business to the role of science in social media and the culture clash around all things ‘woke’. On each theme, two authors shed their light, less or more polemically, followed by a concluding commentary by a third. With the book, NIAS aimed to increase understanding of academic freedoms, and it succeeded, thanks in part to its post-publication approach.

Among the invited speakers at the NIAS Opening of the Academic Year were many contributors to the book. The programme included lectures by NIAS Director Jan Willem Duyvendak, philosopher of science Lukas M. Verburgt and former Minister of Education, Culture and Science Jet Bussemaker on the concept of academic freedoms in the plural; Marion Koopmans (professor of Health Virology, Erasmus Medical Centre and leading member of the Dutch Outbreak Management Team) on the role of social media; journalist and NIAS alum Saar Slegers on academic freedom in authoritarian countries; and Tetiana Gardashuk (Safe Haven Fellow at NIAS, and affiliated to the University of Kyiv) on academic freedom under arms. We successfully engaged several journalists to attend the opening. Shortly afterwards, the book garnered a [positive review in the reputable daily newspaper NRC](#).

Later in that academic year, the book’s entire introduction was translated into English and distributed to all fellows in preparation for round table debates about their individual experiences of restrictions on academic freedoms. These conversations, which took place during a retreat in the second semester, allowed all participants to gain understanding of the multifaceted nature of the concept of academic freedoms, and to take part in the discussions. During end-of-semester evaluations, many fellows described this part of the retreat as useful and deserving a follow-up.

One year after publication, the introduction to the book was condensed, supplemented with current developments, and made accessible for the general public to be included in our [2024-2025 fellows booklet](#). The booklet was offered to an audience of 242 at the NIAS Opening of the Academic Year 2024-2025. Titled ‘Academic Freedoms: What is at Stake? (And Who Cares?)’, this follow-up event posited that academia should be considered as the fifth power, took stock of internal and

external threats to academic freedoms, and asked whether and how academia and other pillars of civil society and democracy might form broad alliances to protect one another. The keynote was delivered by former Central European University President, historian and politician Michael Ignatieff, with further talks by Jan Willem Duyvendak and publicist and associate professor of law NIAS-alum Tamar de Waal, and two panel discussions (with alums Miriyam Aouragh and Gulnaz Sibgatullina, and with journalists Marijn Kruk (NIAS-alum) and Yvonne Zonderop). A video compilation is in the making. The address and talks will be published in The Dutch Review of Books (readership 150,000+) in November 2024.

Michael Ignatieff’s keynote was intended to provide further depth on how science can resist growing political interference and whether alliances with other pillars of democracy are desirable and possible. The booklet was also distributed to journalists and debate centres in the hope that the subject of academic freedoms will capture the imagination there too. Although the content of Ignatieff’s message was not entirely in line with the book’s conclusions that academic freedoms mainly have to contend with political interference and commercial influences, it was good to see that – inspired by the NIAS Opening of the Academic Year 2024-2025 – the subject of academic freedoms was back on the agenda. All national quality newspapers covered our opening, and the esteemed weekly discussion programme on Dutch television, Buitenhof decided to interview our keynote speaker as did debate centres De Balie in Amsterdam and Tivoli in Utrecht.

‘Academische vrijheden in Nederland’ was the first volume in the bi-lingual NIAS Book Series ‘Pasts, Presents, and Futures of Academia’ with AUP. The series, edited by NIAS’s senior academic staff and peer reviewed by a diverse group of NIAS alums, is intended to reflect on challenges to the academic freedoms of specific modes of research, disciplines, and epistemologies, in the process (inadvertently, perhaps) privileging certain forms of those over others. In 2025 we expect to publish the second title, which results from the 2022-2023 NIAS Fellowship project of Annelies Moors On Ethical Research and Informed Consent in Anthropology. Her research represents the very meta-thematic interest that NIAS shares, in this case focused on topical issues of research ethics.

Please note that [‘Fifty Years of Academic Freedom. The Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study’](#), published to mark the institute’s fiftieth birthday in 2021, and launched at that year’s NIAS Opening of the Academic Year, kicked-off our intensifying engagement with academic freedoms. ●

6. Key Achievements

6.2 DIVERSIFICATION OF THE FELLOWS COHORTS

There has historically been a lack of representation from non-'Western' regions at NIAS. However, important progress was made during the evaluation period. In the 2020-2021 cohort, there were seven fellows from the Global South, and 47 from the Global North - the first therefore representing fifteen per cent. By 2023-2024, the composition shifted to include 37 from the Global North, 7 of from the Global South, two of mixed affiliation, and four from countries affected by the war in Ukraine - the latter groups' representation thus growing to 26 per cent. The 2024-2025 cohort even meets our current target of a balance of one-third of fellows affiliated with Dutch institutes or based in the Netherlands, one-third with EU-affiliations or bases and with those in countries with EU-comparable academic infrastructures, and one-third affiliated and based outside any of the given countries.

To foster this diversity, we implemented changes in our sourcing, application and selection processes. In 2022, we commissioned a study (unpublished) to identify barriers preventing Global South candidates from applying and to propose corrective measures. The analysis revealed that approximately 75 per cent of all applications came from researchers with northern nationalities or affiliations. Around 80 per cent of the Global South applications did not make it to an invitation, due to being classified as 'non-eligible' or considered of insufficient quality by the reviewers.

Following up on the reporter's advice, NIAS established an online information desk where prospective applicants could turn to for advice on the written and unwritten rules underpinning the applications. The desk, however, did not yet reach the target audiences. We also started to team up with institutions and individuals in the Global South. In 2024, a collaboration with Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS), a member of SIAS, effectuated the Iso Lomso Fellowship, where fellows spend one semester at STIAS and another at NIAS. The Safe Haven Fellowship Programme further diversified the fellows cohorts. In recent years, we also

started to reach out to individuals in the Global South, alums and other, requesting that they distribute the NIAS calls in their networks.

As alums and fellows from the Global South play an important role in getting ourselves known in the GS, we hope to have set in motion a development towards solid balance in the NIAS topography of affiliations. We have also started to involve them (and other fellows and alums) in the reviewing of applications, this way also seeking to mitigate the growing challenges of finding external reviewers, and that of the need to 'select in context'. In addition, scholars from the Global South have become part of the NIAS Scientific and Academic Advisory Boards.

The above-given account does not reflect on further markers of diversity. We did not go into them; may it suffice to note that gender balance at NIAS is solid, and the opening up to earlier-career fellows has been made part of the 2025-2029 strategy plan.

The Safe Haven Fellowship Programme

In response to the escalation of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in early spring 2022, NIAS established the [Safe Haven Fellowship Programme](#). Initially designed for Ukrainian and dissident Russian and Belarusian researchers, it benefited from special government funding. This funding, however, expired after the first year. Despite this set-back, NIAS continued the Safe Haven Fellowship. In association with organisations such as UAF and the US branch of Scholars at Risk, the institute had long been engaged with scholars at risk. However, these partnerships faced challenges, including difficulties in finding candidates matching our requirements, and were discontinued. The Safe Haven Fellowship Programme is NIAS's own initiative.

To date, NIAS has offered sixteen scholars, authors, visual artists, and journalists a Safe Haven Fellowship, each for one semester. The programme grants them a much-needed respite, a return to normalcy and the chance to continue their work in safety. With the ongoing global conflicts in mind and based on the positive experiences of our Safe Haven Fellows, NIAS expanded the Safe Haven Fellowships in 2024 to welcoming all scholars at risk. In March 2024, we issued an additional call for applications to support researchers affected by the war in Gaza. With most higher education institutions in Gaza either severely damaged or destroyed, the academic landscape there has been decimated for generations. But the war has fall-out effects far beyond the Gaza Strip. The call was widely shared, providing a glimmer of hope during a time of desperation. Out of nearly thirty applicants, two journalists from Gaza were selected as Safe Haven Fellows for the academic year 2024-2025.

The expansion of the Safe Haven Fellowship Programme, and particularly the inclusion of fellows affected by the war in Gaza, has garnered significant media attention. One such fellow, Gazan journalist Amal Helles, arrived in Amsterdam in September 2024 with her two children,

while her husband, also a journalist, remained in Gaza. Amal is currently taking the time to adjust, and immerse herself in her research before addressing the interview requests we have received on her behalf.

For Safe Haven Fellows, getting into the rhythm of 'normal life' may be challenging. NIAS has resilience coaching on offer for all fellows, including those who came to seek refuge. Beyond finding back their concentration, it is essential for these scholars to build new networks, as returning to their former academic institutions is often no longer possible. To aid in this, NIAS organises a networking event each semester, inviting key figures who can help integrate the fellows into academic and professional communities in the Netherlands and across Europe, helping them forge new paths forward. ●



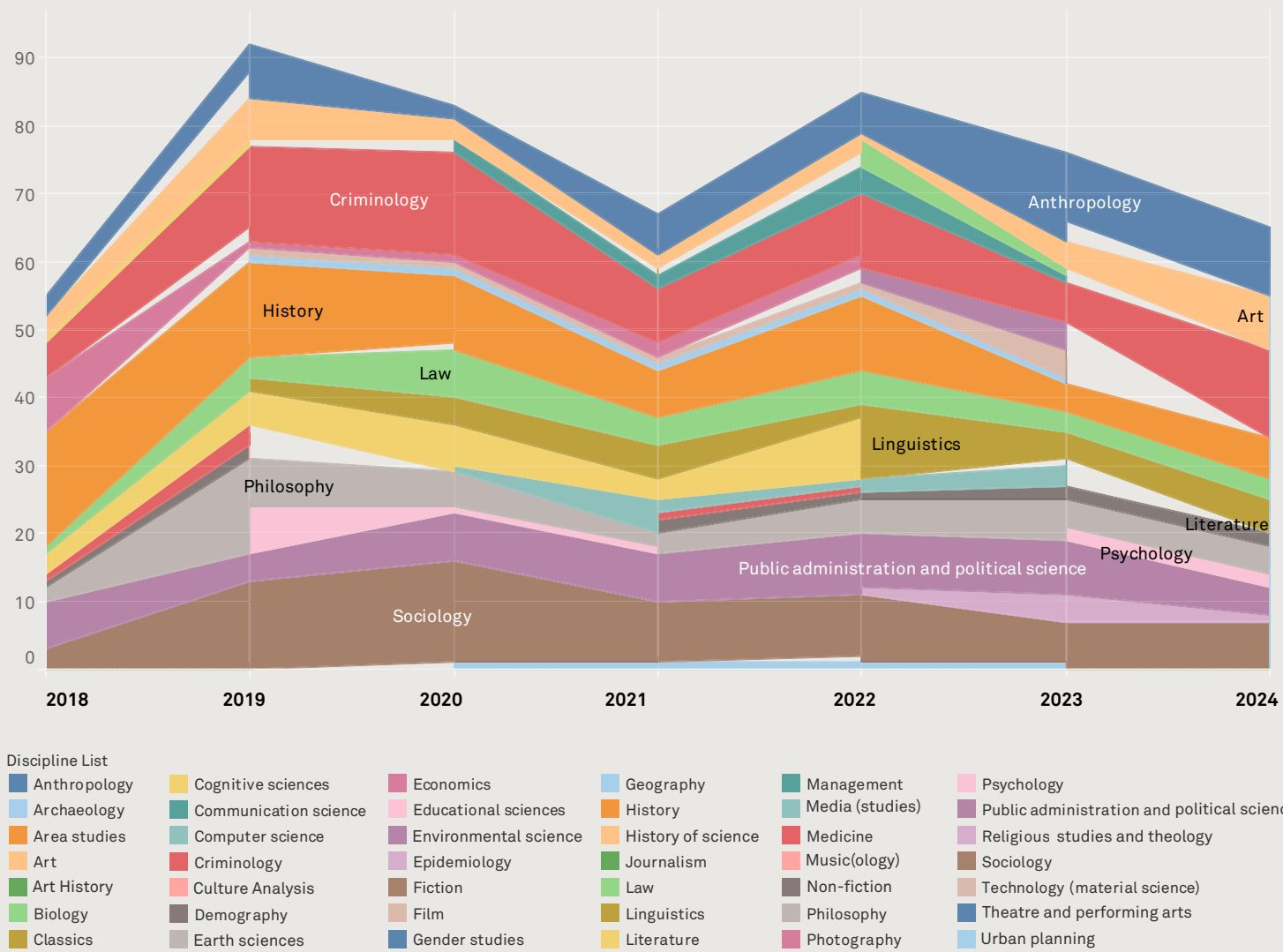
6. Key Achievements

6.3 FACETS OF CROSS-POLLINATION

The graph on this page shows the disciplinary diversity at NIAS in the evaluation period. It includes fellows from the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), as well as from economics, law and the life and natural sciences. Those not from the HSS, were largely invited in partnership (see below, Chapter 6.5), such as with The Willem F. Duisenberg Fellowship Foundation, the Institute Gak, the Golestan Foundation, the L’Oréal-UNESCO Fellowship for Women in Science, and the Lorentz Center. In addition, together with the Royal

Academy of Arts, the Netherlands Foundation for Literature and the FBJP (fund for special journalistic projects), NIAS also included artist-researchers and journalist-researchers into the mix. Please refer to the box on the next page presenting fellows from beyond the Social Sciences and Humanities. All NIAS fellows testify, in their exit forms and interviews, that the disciplinary scope at the institute generates exactly what they, and we, had hoped for: unexpected questions and ditto shifts in the direction of individual projects.

2018-2024 Disciplinary Diversity at NIAS



6. Key Achievements

6.3 FACETS OF CROSS-POLLINATION

In the 2025-2029 strategy plan, NIAS envisages to further widen its disciplinary reach. Towards that, we are thinking of including civil servant-researchers, policymaker-researchers, and industry-based-researchers.

2018-2024 Fellows from beyond the Social Sciences and Humanities

Aleid Truijens, writer-fellow, 2020-2021
Aimee van Wynsberghe, L'Oréal-UNESCO Women in Science Fellow, Ethics of Technology, 2019-2020
Ana María Gómez López, artist-fellow, 2018-2019
Andréanne Béguin, Nouveau Grand Tour Fellow, curator, 2023-2024
Anne Rios, L'Oréal-UNESCO Women in Science Fellow, Pediatric Oncology, 2021-2020
Bas Jacobs, Willem F. Duisenberg Fellow, Economics and Public Finance, 2018-2019
Betty Tijms, L'Oréal-UNESCO Women in Science Fellow, Neurology, 2022-2023
Dato Turashvili, writer-fellow, 2019-2020
Dmytro Fedchyshyn, Safe Haven Fellow, Land / Agricultural / Environmental Law, 2023-2024
Egor Isaev, Safe Haven Fellow, filmmaker, 2023-2024
Eveline Crone, Distinguished NIAS-Lorentz Fellow, Neurocognitive Developmental Psychology, 2023-2024
Eus van Someren, Golestan Fellow, Neuroscience, 2018-2019
Fleur van der Bij, journalist-fellow, 2021-2022
Ghayath Almadhoun, writer-fellow, 2018-2019
Hagar Peeters, writer-fellow, 2019-2020
Hal Caswell, Golestan Fellow, Mathematical Demography and Ecology, 2019-2020
Hélène Gelèns, artist-fellow, 2018-2019
Inge Meijer, artist-fellow, 2022-2023
Iris van Rooij, Golestan Fellow, Computational Cognitive Science, 2020-2021
Iris Sommer, Golestan Fellow, Psychiatry, 2022-2023
Jaap Tielbeke, journalist-fellow, 2019-2020
Jennifer Makumbi, writer-fellow, 2023-2024
Jorien Treur, L'Oréal-UNESCO Women in Science Fellow, Psychiatry, 2021-2022
Joscha Steffens, artist-fellow, 2019-2020
Kasper van Laarhoven, journalist-fellow, 2023-2024
Liesbeth van Vliet, L'Oréal-UNESCO Women in Science Fellow, Health Sciences, 2019-2020
Lisa Becking, Biology, L'Oréal-UNESCO Women in Science Fellow, 2020-2021
Luc Coffeng, Golestan Fellow, Epidemiology and Mathematical Modelling, 2021-2022
Lynn Berger, journalist-fellow, 2021-2022
Lucie Nezri, Nouveau Grand Tour Fellow, composer, 2023-2024
Marijn Kruk, journalist-fellow, 2019-2020
Marjon de Vos, L'Oréal-UNESCO Women in Science Fellow, Microbial Ecology and Evolution, 2022-2023
Mark Lievisse Adriaanse, journalist-fellow, 2022-2023
Matthew C. Wilson, artist-fellow, 2023-2024
Micha Hamel, artist-fellow, 2022-2023
Michael Tedja, writer-fellow, 2022-2023
Miriam Rasch, writer-fellow, 2023-2024
Niels Mathijssen, journalist-fellow, 2022-2023
Oscar Santillán, artist-fellow, 2020-2021
Robert Glas, artist-fellow, 2019-2020
Ricardo Domeneck, artist-fellow, 2021-2020
Tommy Wieringa, writer-fellow, 2021-2022
Saar Slegers, journalist-fellow, 2020-2021
Sanne de Boer, journalist-fellow, 2023-2024
Sarah Venema, journalist-fellow, 2018-2019
Sonja Swanson, L'Oréal-UNESCO Women in Science Fellow, Epidemiology, 2018-2019

Artistic Research

Since 1999, NIAS has embraced artist-researchers within its community, beginning a partnership with the Dutch Foundation for Literature to welcome writers. From 2014, NIAS included visual artists, thanks to a collaboration with the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts. During the evaluation period NIAS hosted seven visual artists and eleven writers. The most recent cohorts also included artists invited in the context of the Safe Haven Programme and the Nouveau Grand Tour, which is co-funded by the Institut français. As a NetIAS colleague noted, 'IASses are to be avant-garde, 'biodiverse' academic ecosystems. Let's experiment, yet again.' This underscores NIAS's commitment to fostering 'shared radical empiricism'.

Among the direct results of the 2018-2024 artist-fellowships are exhibitions and books, such as 'Luisteroefeningen' by Miriam Rasch (2024), 'The MOMA Plant Collection' by Inge Meijer (2024), 'Nirwana' by Tommy Wieringa (2023), and '100xLucebert/Michael Tedja' in Stedelijk Museum Alkmaar (2023). Also in 2023, Tedja received the Prix de Rome.

Including artists from diverse fields into its vibrant community, NIAS seeks to embrace the concept of artistic research within its framework of cross-pollination. The institute recognises artistic research as an essential part of academia, along with scientific scholarship. This perspective aligns with the Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research (2020), which builds upon the Bologna Declaration of 1999. However, we also acknowledge the critiques surrounding the Vienna Declaration and the ongoing discussions regarding the definition and implications of artistic research. Throughout the evaluation period, NIAS did not assume a leading role in these debates, instead choosing to listen and learn. In 2023, we took a step forward by joining the new NetIAS Working Group on Arts and Sciences, furthering our engagement in this important discourse.

In practice, artists selected in collaboration with the Royal Academy of Arts and the Netherlands Foundation for Literature either research artistic practices, like Inge Meijer, or they do research towards making works of art, so-called 'art research'. An example of the latter is the fellowship of Michael Tedja. NIAS lacks studios for actually producing visual art. This means that artist-researchers cannot do research *by way of making* visual art, which is often understood as 'artistic research' per se. Nonetheless, if an art form is suitable for an office environment, NIAS encourages art production, exemplified by a composer who created music during her fellowship.

The NetIAS Working Group, led by Iméra in Marseille, gathers colleagues from various European institutes for advanced

study to discuss the role of artistic research. NIAS is eager to explore what artistic research can be and how it can enrich its community, noting that artists bring in surprising perspectives, serve as valuable cross-pollinators, and foster positive dynamics within the fellows community. However, the Working Group has warned that 'we need to make sure that they are not only entertaining colleagues'. To ensure that artists can indeed contribute meaningfully, the Group aims to design strategies for experimentation and policymaking. Keen for guidelines on the types of projects that are likely to thrive at the institute, NIAS looks forward to implementing these results from 2025. From 2024-2025, artist-researchers are involved in establishing NIAS policies regarding their role and the concept of artistic research. Among them is Dirk Vis, the current artist-fellow. ●

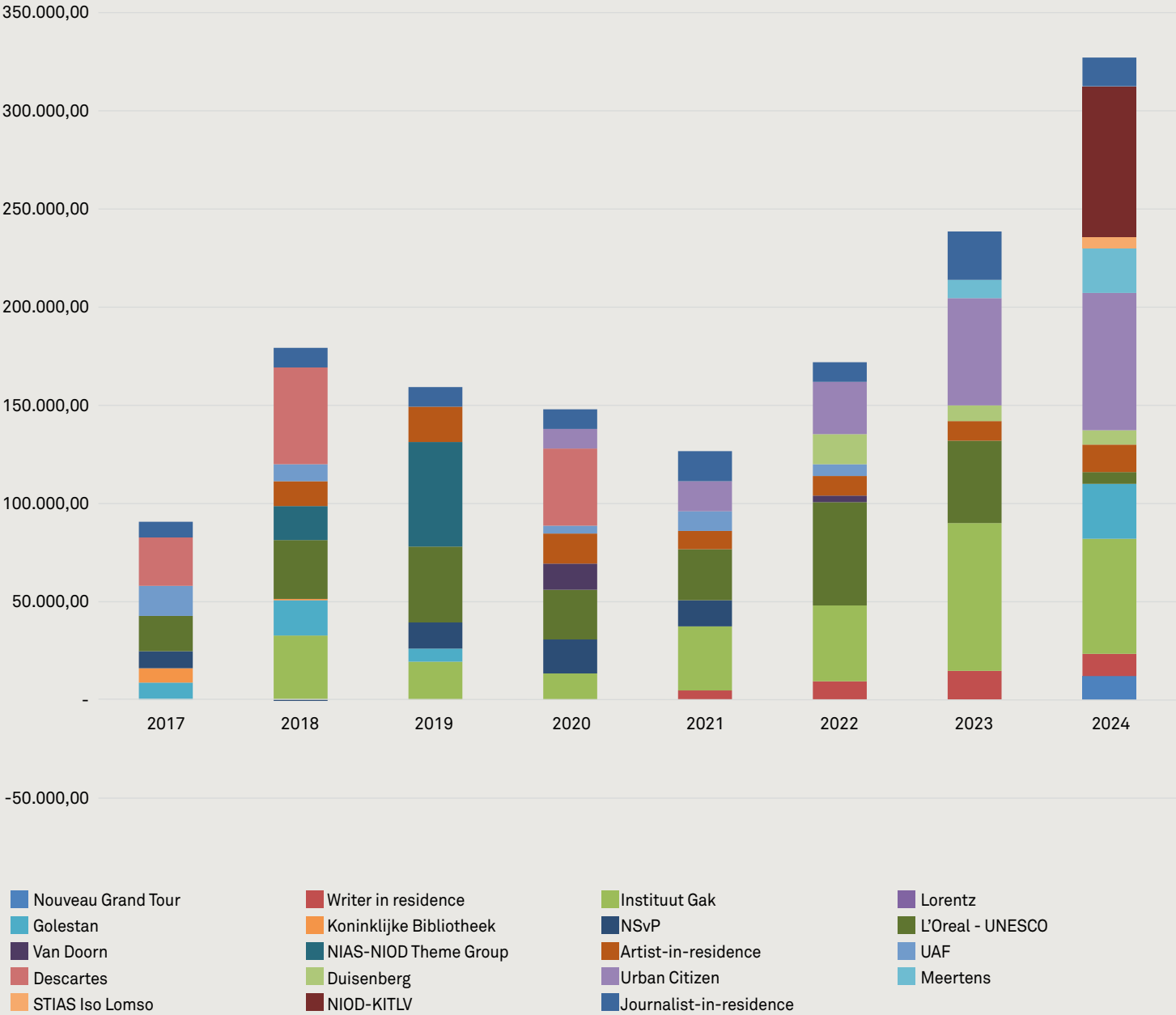
6. Key Achievements

6.4 PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Partnership plays a crucial role in fuelling the research carried out at NIAS. We have therefore actively expanded our network of partners that co-fund fellowships, driving a marked increase in financial contributions. NIAS today boasts thirteen multi-year partnerships involving sixteen individual partners. Until 2023, these partners contributed up to ten per cent of the institute’s total income, increasing to fifteen per cent in 2024. Let it be noted that such percentages are sufficient to overcome contracts ending.

The graph below illustrates the steady growth, with a dip during the COVID years - when fewer fellows led to fewer funds. Each partner commits to supporting 5 to 20 research months per year, translating into one one-semester fellowship up to two full-year fellowships.

Partnerships: financial results



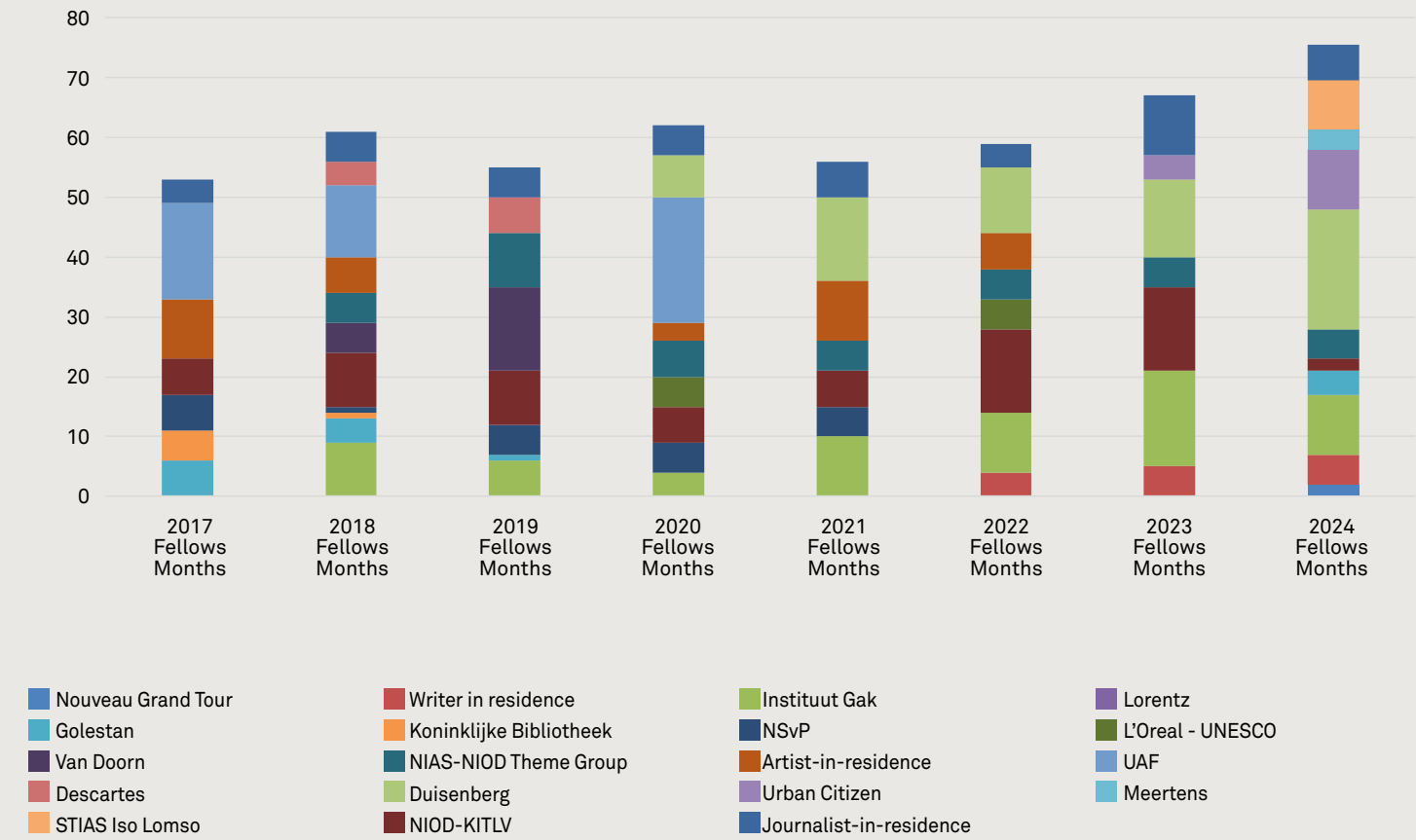
6. Key Achievements

6.4 PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The next graph illustrates that, while financial output of partnerships has surged by a factor of 3.8, the growth in partnered research months - representing the total number of co-funded months for fellowships - has increased by a factor of only 1.4. This discrepancy shows that NIAS has successfully increased income per research month. This is a trend we aim to sustain, as it implies and guarantees strong mutual commitment. Let us zoom out now. Until 2023, NIAS's partnership

strategy allowed for a maximum of 50 per cent of our fellowships to be co-funded. This was due to the fact that our partners predominantly support researchers working on specific themes, which is not compliant with the basic blue-sky value of NIAS. Reaching this percentage (in fellowship months, but not in funds), we thus encountered an unwanted funding paradox: the more partners we engaged the more dilut-

Partnerships: research months



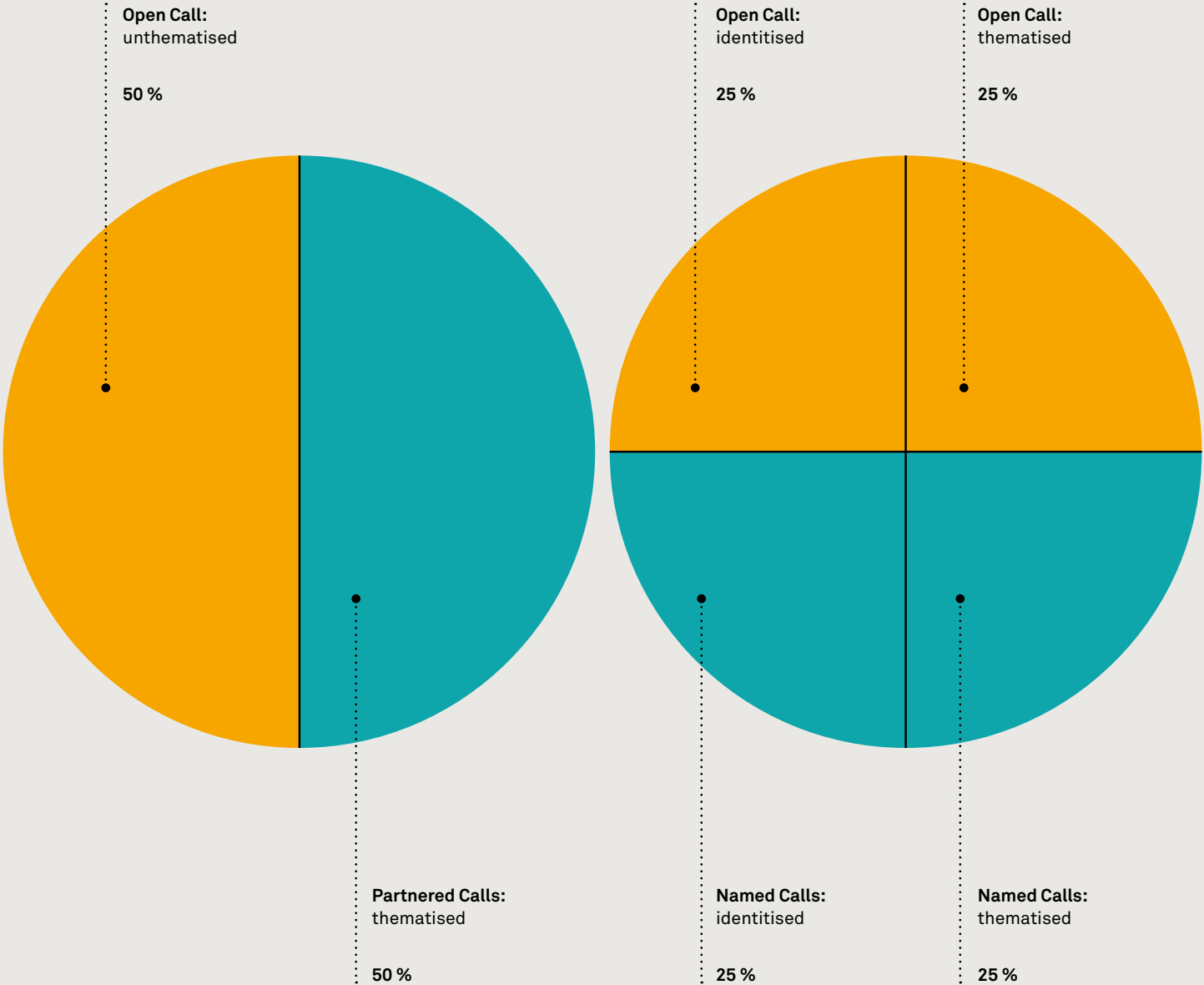
6. Key Achievements

6.4 PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

ed the blue-sky DNA of our institute for advanced study became. This highlights the delicate balance we must maintain to preserve our core mission when inviting partnerships. Please, now refer to the following graph, showing the 50-50 distribution of fellowship months until 2023 and the targeted redistribution from 2023:

In 2023, NIAS reoriented its partnership strategy to diversify funding sources and objectives while preserving its blue-sky ethos. Towards this, we revisited our Open Call and analysed that, historically, it always invited ‘identitised’ rather than ‘thematised’ applications. In other words, NIAS is familiar with defining an eligible

Partnerships: strategy shift



6. Key Achievements

identity of an applicant, instead of an eligible subject of an application. In the Open Call, for example, an applicant themselves always needed to meet certain criteria, but the theme of their research was not one of them. They needed to be three years beyond their PhD, for example. The second circle diagram outlines the types of partnerships NIAS recently defined, with the two types on the right of it representing a maximum of 50 per cent of our funding mix, while the two on the left account for a minimum of 50 per cent.

The roles and goals of partnerships in the updated strategy are as follows; walking the circle clockwise and starting from the upper left piece:

- The Royal Academy: a key partner, the Royal Academy brings in the funds for blue-sky fellowships selected in the Open Call. The ‘identity’ of grantees is that they are researchers at least three years post-PhD and engaged in or at the intersection of the social sciences, humanities, arts, or journalism. NIAS aims to strengthen the Royal Academy’s dedication;
- Private parties: those contributing between 30 and 70 per cent of integral fellowship costs are envisaged to be increasingly served by the Open Call. Previously, these partners had their own calls, which NIAS cannot sustain for the funding they provide. The goal is to renegotiate these arrangements to allow for selecting Open Call applicants that align with their thematic interests, or to raise the contract value to ‘high contribution’;
- High-contribution partners cover 75 to 100 per cent of integral fellowship costs and are offered their own, named and thematic calls, as well as juries. The latter include in their selection procedures the NIAS selection criteria. NIAS is focused on maintaining their support as well as on exploring more project-based collaborations, such as currently with two other KNAW institutes, NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, and Royal Netherlands

Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV);

- Diverse external partnerships: NIAS is actively working to expand its network of external partners who pledge 75 per cent or more of fellowship costs without specifying a subject. While private co-funders may not naturally prioritise blue-sky research, NIAS is developing fundable fellow identities, such as fellows at risk, female fellows, or fellows from certain parts of the world. ●



7.

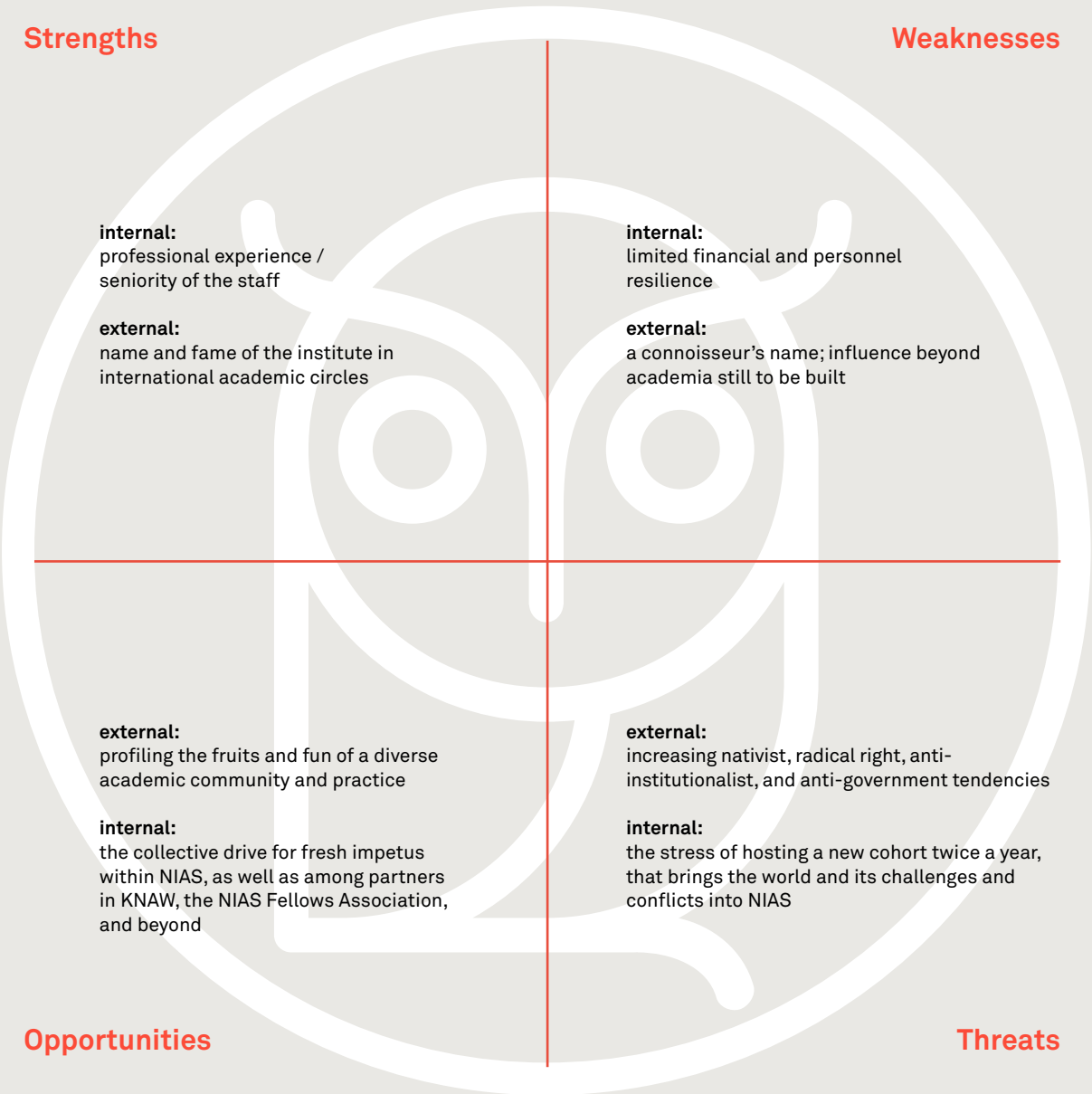
SWOT and the Next Multi-Annum Plan

7. SWOT and the Next Multi-Annum Plan

7.1 SWOT

Where do we stand now? Mid 2024, NIAS analysed its vital strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). Please find them listed in this matrix:

2024 SWOT analysis NIAS



7. SWOT and the Next Multi-Annum Plan

7.2 THE 2025-2029 STRATEGY PLAN: SUMMARY

Based on the vision and mission given in Chapter 4, and on the SWOT analysis given above, NIAS will, in the planning period 2025-2029, work on:

1. Updating its owl function. For over half a century, NIAS's owl has been symbolising advanced study. NIAS will continue to realise added value to Dutch and worldwide academia by focusing on diversification of and cross-pollination within its community.
2. Expanding its canary function. The canary symbolises early warning of danger, with reference to the canary in a coalmine proverb. Diverging from this saying, however, our canary is not caged. NIAS will study the histories, topicalities, theories and practices of academic freedoms, and use the outcomes to actively defend them.

To realise these two main goals, we also aim for:

3. Building solid resilience. NIAS continues to work hard on ensuring human and financial health. The staff capacity will be even more strengthened, and their wellbeing taken good care of. The financial position will be bolstered by making painful cuts and investing in fundraising.

7.3 THE NIAS 2025-2029 STRATEGY PLAN: EXCERPTS

For a better understanding of the summary, please find below a set of excerpts from the Strategy Plan.

1. With reference to the owl function:

On Diversification

- We will realise diversification of the fellows cohorts along four lines: gender, age, topography of affiliation, and academic discipline (including non-scholarly, or non-scientific disciplines). These are the more ethical markers we could define; gender and age are asked when entering NIAS, and so are current home institution or base, and discipline.
- On gender: so far, very few non-binary people applied for a stay at NIAS. We will explore the impact of more inclusive communication, not only with regards to non-binary identification, but also with regards to other action lines of inclusion.
- On women: NIAS has a good male-female balance among its fellows and applicants. But evaluations reveal that, with a two-year selection period and a success rate of less than ten per cent in the Open Call, almost only women decline a fellowship, and such because of care-related responsibilities. That is why NIAS will develop childcare opportunities for fellows in the coming years. The minimum requirement is sufficient accommodation where fellows can live with au pairs or family members.
- On age: we will focus on age diversity, for we know from pilot experience that talented young people contribute to the debate with established fellows as much as vice versa. We will develop new thresholds for admission: how can someone with less than three years post-promotion prove their eligibility?

7. SWOT and the Next Multi-Annum Plan

- On topography of affiliation or base: NIAS will continue the work on accessibility and inclusiveness in its selection procedure. We will build cohorts consisting of three equal shares: fellows with a Dutch affiliation or base; fellows affiliated or based in an EU country or another country with comparable academic infrastructure; and fellows affiliated or based in non-EU countries with non-EU-comparable infrastructure, also beyond Europe.
- On discipline: we will sustain the diversity of scholarly disciplines, keep enhancing their balance, and promote the practice of including scholars from beyond the humanities and social sciences.
- We will also formulate how artists, journalists and other professionals can prove that they are sufficiently 'advanced'. We understand NIAS not only as a space for scientific researchers to push boundaries, but also as one where the very boundaries of the notion of academia are pushed, and the practice of advanced research includes researchers from beyond the scientific arena.

On Cross-pollination

- NIAS will focus on its working community becoming ever more inspirational, and towards this also on the quality and inclusiveness of the living community.
- On the working community: the NIAS office building needs improvement to help fellows get to know their peers fairly quickly and meet them often. Informal meeting and seating areas are desperately needed. NIAS will invest in creating these. One cannot plan serendipity, but we need to increase its chances.
- We will also seek to make funds available to meet the rightful expectation of many fellows of more generous opening hours of the office building.
- We will keep updating, hands-on, the Guideline for acting in cases of socially and academically unwelcome behaviour, as well as our Code of Conduct.

- On the living community: the NIAS Fellows House accommodates twelve fellows. Our family apartments are located too far from this house to make their users become part of the living community in the Fellows House. They are also too far from each other to become a second living community. A second living community, however, becomes all the more urgent in light of the aim of cohorts in which Global South fellows represent one third of the total group. We will start exploring the possibilities of a second fellows house in the outskirts of the city, on the condition that the commute is easy and efficient.
- We will continue to hands-on develop inclusive policies for the use of our facilities and amenities, such as accepting high gas bills for heating in studios where fellows live who are not used to the local winters.

2. With reference to the canary function:

On the exploration of academic freedoms

- NIAS will initiate a (semi-)permanent research group, or faculty, on academic freedoms, with the aim of back-boning the NIAS message on these freedoms. We will also explore this meta-theme in the broadest possible sense with the temporary researchers, the fellows. The research results will be published and publicised. As requested by KNAW, they will also strengthen the Royal Academy's Forum function.

On the defense of academic freedoms

- We will thematise academic freedoms and their urgency in our science communication, which is partly tailored to strategic audiences in governance, policymaking and politics. Part of the communication effort will remain the making of public statements in response to attacks on and infringements of academic infrastructure and freedoms.

7. SWOT and the Next Multi-Annum Plan

- NIAS will substantiate its statements by actions. We will explicitly target researchers affected by the attacks and infringements in our statements, with information on the continuous call for the Safe Haven Fellowships.

3. With reference to operational resilience:

On people

- The focus will remain on general staff competence and resilience. After the seniority shift that was made from 2023, quantitative strengthening is urgent in order to free up, among others, fundraising capacity.
- Facility staff are crucial for the success of NIAS. They focus on servicing the fellows, such as by helping with their immigration and their getting-around in Amsterdam. They also service their research and their community. Currently, the quality of our service relies on the drive of staff members; they are reachable 24/7 year round. We will have to urgently invest in additional capacity, next to efficiency.
- We will stay on top of staff wellbeing. NIAS understands this primarily as a leadership responsibility.
- To support the permanent staff, we will free up funds to add temporary capacity in busy periods, such as for addressing reviewers of applications, and the production of flagship events.

On finances

- NIAS will work to rebuild its capital. The target is KNAW's minimum compliance: ten per cent. To this end, first of all, the current operating deficit must be overcome. This was felt throughout the post-relocation years but became visible from the 2023 figures.
- There are no options for saving in the operation accounts; all cuts will cut to the bone. Nevertheless,

we will size down from 300 to 240 fellow months per year. As to not lose our position in the field, we will do so, however, only for the new planning period, and within this period only as long as financially necessary.

- The net effect of these measures will be, in absolute numbers, erased by long-due repairs: the stipends for fellows have not been indexed for years. They are no longer adequate, particularly for fellows whose salaries do not continue during their fellowships. They are often from the Global South, early in their academic careers, or independently working as artists or journalists.
- NIAS will work to raise additional funds. We will invest in existing partnerships and in acquisitioning new ones. We will also work to develop other types of funding, including different forms of donation. Alums will be addressed to donate (for fellowships), as well as current fellows (for peers).

Our 2025-2029 financial plan is based on a realistic cost budget. Should our ambitious fundraising aims prove feasible, the current lump sum is still insufficient to cover the costs. All NIAS staff go for a future-proof institute that remains operational at the forefront of the global advanced study field. We have therefore undertaken benchmarks with other institutes for advanced study that are part of the SIAS and NetIAS networks. The Berlin-based Wissenschaftskolleg is a member of both; we have compared numbers and practices during two intensive days in Berlin in July 2024. Also based on the results:

- We will keep making our request for topping up the annual lump sum of 3M euros (2025) that KNAW makes available to NIAS, by 400,000 euros. ●

A photograph of a woman with curly hair and glasses, wearing a red tracksuit, speaking into a microphone. She is gesturing with her left hand. In the background, another woman with long brown hair, wearing a blue shirt and a name tag, is listening. The setting appears to be a conference or meeting room with wooden paneling.

8.

Addressing the Recommendations of 2017 SEP Committee

8. Addressing the Recommendations of 2017 SEP Committee

With reference to the chapters above, NIAS now reflects on its implementation (or not) of the recommendations of the previous SEP committee.

NIAS changed its selection procedures in various ways. We established an Academic Advisory Board that started out as the jury of the candidates in the Open Call and that is composed of the members of the Scientific Board (WeCo) and three additional members from various parts of the world. We also recruited more reviewers from the Global South, while the number of reviewers who are well-informed of the proceedings and ambitions at NIAS, i.e. NIAS alums and the so-called current fellows, significantly increased.

The role of the WeCo was bolstered; Halleh Ghorashi, installed as Chair in 2023, continued on this trajectory. The Board came to give advice - both solicited and unsolicited - on more and more aspects of NIAS policies and strategies. Most importantly, the WeCo members, in their capacity of AAB members, now play a very important role in the selection of fellows. With reference to this experience, the WeCo has adopted, in its Autumn 2024 meeting, a next step. The full AAB will gradually take up a role beyond the open competition and become involved in the selection of fellows in partnered calls and the upcoming continuous Safe Haven call as well.

For its national role, NIAS capitalised on it being part of the KNAW. We contributed, and will continue to contribute, to the 'Forum role' of the KNAW. This is the role of advisor of the government and the research field in all academic matters - a role of increasing urgency in the context of the 'politicisation of science'. The Royal Academy appreciates NIAS actively giving form to an emphasis on studying and protecting academic freedoms, next to providing them to its fellows - and in this way practicing what the KNAW stands for, just like NIAS itself. The Safe Haven Fellowship Programme is a concrete example. Another contribution to the KNAW targets entails our grounded insights into the dynamics of highly diverse research communities. Emphasising blue-sky and slow science is yet another aspect illustrating our national role: whereas universities are struggling to keep their autonomy and to counter the 'fast science' trends, NIAS shows that another type of academia is possible. NIAS did not face budget cuts in addition to those accompanying the relocation. The financial position during the

years under evaluation, however, turned out to be too vulnerable. We did take up the suggestion of the evaluation committee to attract additional funding, and indeed, contributions by partners increased significantly. As for the committee's suggestion of involving universities and faculties in our funding mix, we did not follow up on that. As a national institute, we do not want university 'membership' translating into expectations that NIAS cannot meet without negatively affecting its crucial autonomy. Being perceived as a 'university-based' institute for advanced study would negatively impact NIAS's position in the forefront of the global advanced study scene, our role in NetIAS and membership of SIAS.

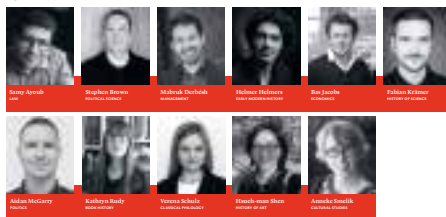
Recently, however, we found ourselves ready to make one exception. We received interest from Dutch universities for our Safe Haven Fellowship Programme, as it allows universities to meet public and student demands for action in response to the impact of war and other disasters on academic life. NIAS started this programme because we 'just had to', and certainly not because we could afford it. Any help to sustain it is therefore very welcome, as long as, in this case, partnering universities fully comply with the independent procedures and policies that NIAS applies.

The NIAS Fellows Association (NFA) continued to organise the annual Uhlenbeck Lecture; NIAS continued to offer support. With sufficient staff capacity realised by mid-2024, the institute, in consultation with the NFA Board, drew up a multi-annum NFA plan, that was adopted in the members' meeting preceding the 2024 Uhlenbeck Lecture. The plan includes regional and thematic committees, the increase of membership and of membership fees, as well as a solidarity strategy by which fees are paid by peers for those interested in membership but unable to afford it. Ultimately, the NFA will seek to fund an NFA Blue-sky Fellowship at NIAS. The implementation of the plan will be led by the new Chair elected in 2024, Ayşenur Korkmaz.

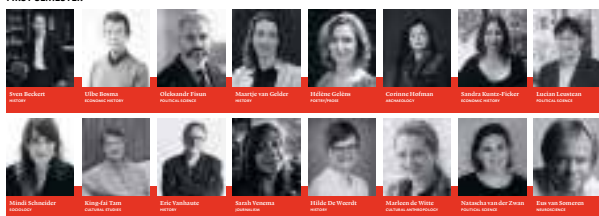
As for the recommendation to embark on a concerted lobby effort, NIAS is in full swing of positioning itself in the eye of strategic publics by activating press and implementing an advocacy policy for academic freedoms. A highly professional communications staff and the presence of experienced strategic competencies in the NIAS team were crucial preparatory steps. ●

Fellows 2018/19

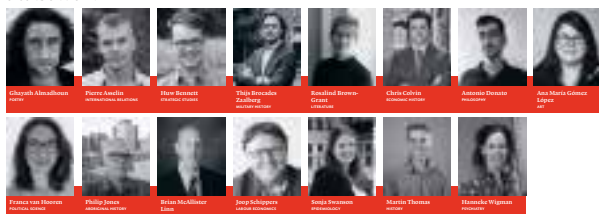
FULL YEAR



FIRST SEMESTER

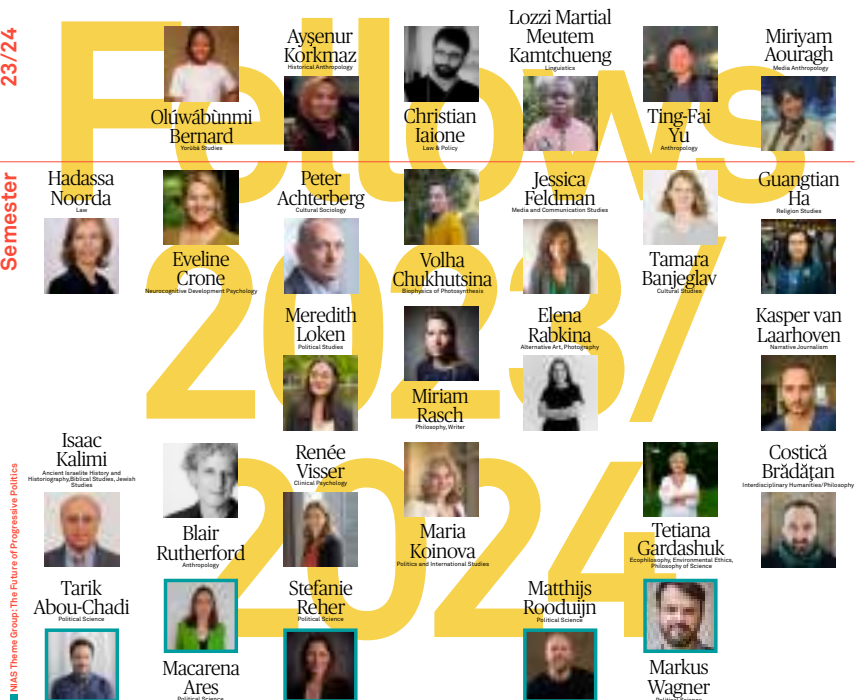


SECOND SEMESTER



Full Year 23/24

First Semester



Second Semester

NIAS Theme Group: The Future of Progressive Politics
NIAS Theme Group: Re-imagining Security Labor
NIAS-Lorentz Theme Group: Connecting Urban Inequality to the Built Environment

A large audience of people is seated in a hall, likely attending a conference or seminar. The image is divided into four quadrants by a white crosshair. The audience members are diverse in age and appearance, and many are looking towards the front of the room. Some are taking notes, while others are resting their chin on their hand. The background shows ornate architectural details of the hall.

9.

Summary

9. Summary

NIAS summarises the academic years 2018-2019 through 2023-2024 by three words: restoration, recalibration, and impetus.

The ‘restoration’ entailed the innovation of the staff that had suffered from the relocation of the institute from Wassenaar to Amsterdam as well as from the accompanying and major budget cuts, the new and unclear governance structure and, on top of it all, the COVID pandemic. The team now includes more diversity and more seniority and is up to the task of sustaining the leading position that NIAS has in its field. The staff members are actively participating in the leading global and European networks of institutes for advanced study, SIAS and NetIAS. They have embarked on restoring the budget and redesigning the selection procedures to allow for more diversity. To promote the NIAS interpretation of ‘open science’, they also developed new partnerships and retightened the contacts with existing partners, drew up an up-to-date programme of science communication and an advocacy policy for academic freedoms, and refreshed the institute’s look and feel to match and radiate the new energy.

‘Recalibration’ indeed fits this intensive process of place-making and self-reinvention in Amsterdam as well. But it primarily refers to our academic performance that entailed a reorientation on the core values and strategies of an institute for advanced study. From the beginning, they have been blue-sky research, slow science, internationalisation and interdisciplinarity. In the contexts of today’s academia, we developed them into academic freedoms, diversity, and cross-pollination. We thereby envisage the original notion of interdisciplinarity to also shift towards that of epistemic justice. At NIAS, we already include artist- and journalist-researchers and are working to theorise their role and that of further professional, non-scholarly researchers in our community. As for academic freedoms, they were appointed core to the mission of the institute: ‘committed to academic freedoms’ is the leading motto of the 2025-2029 NIAS strategy. Talking about our future: we see that our current budget is structurally short to sustain a leading institute for advanced study.

Finally: we look at fresh ‘impetus’. As per 2018, a new Director arrived at NIAS. He had to say goodbye to many staff members, but found new staff who have, by now, developed into a driven team. The members are supported by strong and diverse Scientific and Academic Advisory Boards, and work together with an inspired NIAS alums association. The developments and achievements accounted for in this self-evaluation would not have been possible without the expertise and momentum they all brought to NIAS. We all feel that the 2018-2024 period has shown that NIAS is and can only be what people make of it together – partners, advisors, alums, fellows, and staff alike. ●



Colophon

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in the Humanities
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