

IIAS Fellowship Programme

In the Spotlight

The International Institute for Asian Studies annually hosts a large number of visiting researchers (research fellows) who come to Leiden to work on their own individual research project. In addition, IIAS also facilitates the teaching and research by various professorial fellows as part of agreements with Dutch universities, foreign ministries and funding organisations. Meet our fellows at www.iias.asia/fellows



Mohammad Tareq Hasan

IIAS Research Cluster: Global Asia
1 April 2021 – 31 Jan 2022

Home Institute: Department of Anthropology,
University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

An open time at IIAS

My fellowship at the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) started amid the COVID-19 pandemic. But fortunately, many preventive measures have been gradually lifted since I arrived in Leiden. In a way, this allowed me to settle into the new rhythm, and my life in Leiden started at a comfortable pace.

At IIAS, I am primarily writing a monograph that ethnographically explores an expanding neoliberal context in Bangladesh, where a rapidly growing Ready-made Garment (RMG) sector and an expansion of industrial work opportunities combined to produce a shift in

the labour regime from subsistence to wages. The monograph that I am preparing presents a situation where corporate international trade agreements, a new neoliberal state regime, and a growing textile market have enabled establishing a new class of Muslim female workers in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Based on over 15 months of ethnographic fieldwork in a garment factory and among the garment workers of Dhaka, this monograph sets out to represent *why people in this system do the things they do*, imagining the industrial scene in Dhaka as a total system and analysing how this was historically constituted, transformed,

maintained, and reproduced over time.

Leiden University's incredibly vast library resources are a treasure in this writing process. I have found a few ethnographies on pre- and post-independent Bangladesh that I did not find in original prints in Dhaka. In addition, the Fellowship allows me to interact with people from diverse academic backgrounds through seminars, presentations/discussions, and writing groups. Contacts with other current and ex-fellows of IIAS have enriched my social and intellectual experience in the Netherlands. Adding to this further, the most welcoming IIAS staff have made my stay in Leiden a bit easier in every possible way.

In addition to the academic opportunities, experiencing Dutch culture and nature is a value in itself. On the weekends, weather permitting, I travel to other cities, which is a rewarding cultural experience. While the pandemic restricted movement across Europe to some extent in 2021, such restrictions left me with an opportunity to explore the Netherlands a bit more. Nonetheless, I plan to visit some other European cities and take advantage of the Schengen Area in the coming months.

Like the other Dutch cities, Leiden is great to walk through or to explore by bike. Walking through the parks and by the canal every day refreshes my tired mind. A walk through Haarlemmerstraat, bookstores in Breestraat, and the many stalls at Leiden's Street Market along the canal have been incredible. A *stroopwafel* (Dutch syrup waffle) from the stalls is a treat and gives a little more energy to walk a bit longer. In the evenings, Plantsoen, a city park along the canal, is the place where I can get some quiet time.

It has been a unique opportunity for me to be here at IIAS. I can term this Fellowship period as an 'open time' – nothing is expected of me other than doing what pleases me academically. IIAS is an ideal institution to host post-PhD scholars as it provides time and resources for publishing and building a career in academia. Having all the support, but nothing that can distract me from writing, has made my stay at IIAS an incredible experience. Overall, the IIAS Fellowship has offered a quiet time and stimulating intellectual environment to explore new ideas that will guide my entire academic journey in the future.



Rafael Abrão

IIAS Research Cluster: Global Asia
1 Sept 2020 – 30 Aug 2022

Home Institute: Federal University of ABC
(UFABC), São Paulo, Brazil

The Belt and Road Initiative: challenges and opportunities to Latin America

It was a perfect moment to arrive in the Netherlands in September 2021. Considering that almost all Covid restrictions were gone, I was able to enjoy the end of the summer. I was born and raised in Brazil, and this is my first time

working abroad and experiencing a new culture. Leiden is a lovely place, and I quickly fell in love with the city's historic centre and lifestyle. I have also explored local culture, visiting other cities such as Utrecht, Nieuwegein, Amsterdam, The Hague, and Rotterdam.

It feels like I'm taking a big step in my career. Having the opportunity to conduct my research in a diverse work environment such

as IIAS is, of course, the most valuable point in this first international experience that I am having. If you wonder what brought an Afro-Latino Brazilian researcher to Asian Studies, it is pretty straightforward. The geopolitical interactions between Asia and Latin America are usually underestimated, which caught my attention in the first place. Most Asia researchers tend to look to other regions, thereby neglecting the relevance of China to Latin America and Latin America to China. My research at IIAS aims to partially cover this gap, at least where it concerns China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI is an effort to consolidate China's influence in Asia, Africa, Europe, and, more recently, also Latin America. China has advanced its presence in the region through investments, financing, and expanding its companies' activities. Since 2018, Latin American countries have been officially invited to join the initiative, and

Chinese officials have labelled the region as a natural extension of the BRI. My project looks at the challenges and opportunities of the BRI to Latin America under the guidance of Prof. Mehdi Parvizi Amineh, who is the coordinator of one of the BRI projects at IIAS.

Here, in Leiden, I have the chance to discuss and widen my perspectives by interacting with other researchers and discovering a wide range of new sources. I plan to use the IIAS and Leiden University facilities, including the Asian Studies collection at the library, to expand my knowledge of China. Getting in touch with other investigators based in the Netherlands is also part of the plan— not only from Asian Studies but also from the Department of Latin American Studies at Leiden University and other institutions. During my stay, I hope to contribute to the academic and cultural environment of IIAS by adding a Latin American flavour.

IIAS Fellowship Possibilities and Requirements



Apply for an IIAS fellowship

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden, the Netherlands, invites outstanding researchers to apply for an IIAS fellowship to work on a relevant piece of research in the social sciences and humanities.



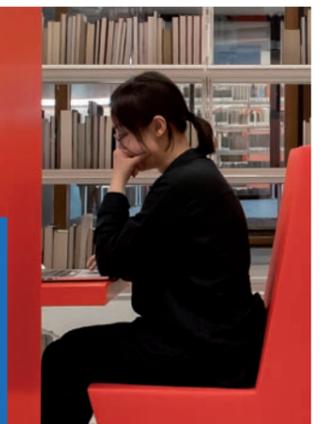
Combine your IIAS fellowship with two extra months of research in Paris

When applying for an IIAS Fellowship, you have the option of simultaneously submitting an application for an additional two months of research at the Collège d'études mondiales of the Fondation Maison des sciences de l'homme (CEM-FMSH), in Paris, France, immediately after your stay in Leiden.



Apply for a Gonda fellowship

For promising young Indologists at the post-doctorate level it is possible to apply for funding with the J. Gonda Foundation of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) to spend three to six months doing research at IIAS.



Information and application forms: www.iias.asia/fellowships