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Images taken during various projects of the Humanities across Borders programme (all rights reserved).

Left: Learning about film making. Photo taken during the project 'Living with and in the Forest in Northern Thailand', Center for Ethnic Studies and Development (CESD), Chiang Mai University.

Middle: Artisan Kamlabai Banskar stitches a basket (Ayodhya Basti, Pipariya, 2017, from CCK archives). Photo taken during the project 'From Forest to Town', Centre for Community Knowledge, Ambedkar University Delhi.

Below: Forox-caaya vendor in Senegal. Photo taken by Bruno Diomaye Faye during the project 'Atelier Populaire: Building New Knowledge and Practices on Street Food in Saint-Louis, Senegal', Gaston Berger University, Saint-Louis.



With gratitude, astonishment and great pride

Philippe Peycam

In the midst of the gloom of the current period, some sparks of hope appeared at IIAS. One of the brightest was the Institute being awarded a third grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York to support the consolidation and sustainability of our flagship pedagogical programme 'Humanities Across Borders' (HaB). In its second phase, the programme and its 18 partners in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas, will move from the experimental to the institutional level of intervention in higher education. Whereas initially HaB concentrated on building a network of individual partners involved in testing with out-of-classroom and community embedded experiential pedagogies, HaB 2.0 aims to mobilise educational institutions into a new pattern of South-South-North collaboration, thereafter formalising the programme's place-based methodologies to real-world societal and ecological concerns.

Three institutional innovations are envisioned for HaB 2.0:

- i) a global consortium with its commitment to public humanist values in education;
- ii) a foundational curricular platform in 'Humanities across Borders' co-created and co-taught across the consortium's geographies;
- iii) an interactive education digital platform to operate as HaB's pedagogical resources repository, made widely accessible through libraries.

In this way we hope to build a model of locally rooted, globally conscious, higher education that until now was an aspirational ideal for many universities attempting to achieve educational justice goals. By disseminating the programme's humanistic approach to teaching and learning through a website, publications, conferences, and other pedagogical events, we hope to encourage other institutions to join our efforts. I take this opportunity, on behalf of IIAS and its partners, to express our sincere gratitude to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for holding on to its visionary approach by supporting HaB and its efforts to re-enchant scholarship through civic engagement.

The other ray of light that appeared recently was the surprising response to our first call for abstract submissions for ICAS 12 in Kyoto in August next year. We received 1200 submissions, amounting to about 2,000 potential participants! Because of the ongoing uncertainties presented by the pandemic, we had not dared to hope for this result. We were astonished, and indeed emboldened, by the high number and quality of the submissions, a number which even exceeded that of ICAS 11 at the same time of the event's preparation. This number demonstrates two things: the burning desire of a large number of people to resume proper intellectual interactions, hopefully in person, but also through online devices; and the continuing success of ICAS's biennial events as a unique and necessary space for meaningful academic and civic exchanges.

It is interesting to notice that the number of submissions remain evenly distributed geographically, with a strong proportion of people intent on participating in person, and also, thanks to the prospect of delivering online participation, contributions from groups or regions that would otherwise have been left out. Having submissions framed around broad thematic inter-disciplinary headers was probably another reason for the eagerness of participants to engage with one another. This ICAS feature facilitates comparative discussions and helps to avoid narrow disciplinary or geographic 'silo' discussions. The model of ICAS events as an open, mutualised space for collaboration between people and organisations may also explain this continuing appeal. In addition, the amalgamation of the ICAS conferences with their local communal environments serves a vital function which I doubt insulated (online) meetings can easily substitute. In fact, Kyoto and its eco-human system may be too precious a place for a conference to be contemplated as just a virtual event (ICAS Secretary, Paul van der Velde, also gives a brief ICAS 12 update on p.52 of this issue).

I wouldn't want to be over-optimistic, because the pandemic is still with us and the general economic and political prospects are bleak, but it is important to recognise that, perhaps even more during these confusing times, one must strive to sustain more inclusive engagements and collaborations. IIAS is proud to continue to serve these objectives.

Philippe Peycam, Director IIAS