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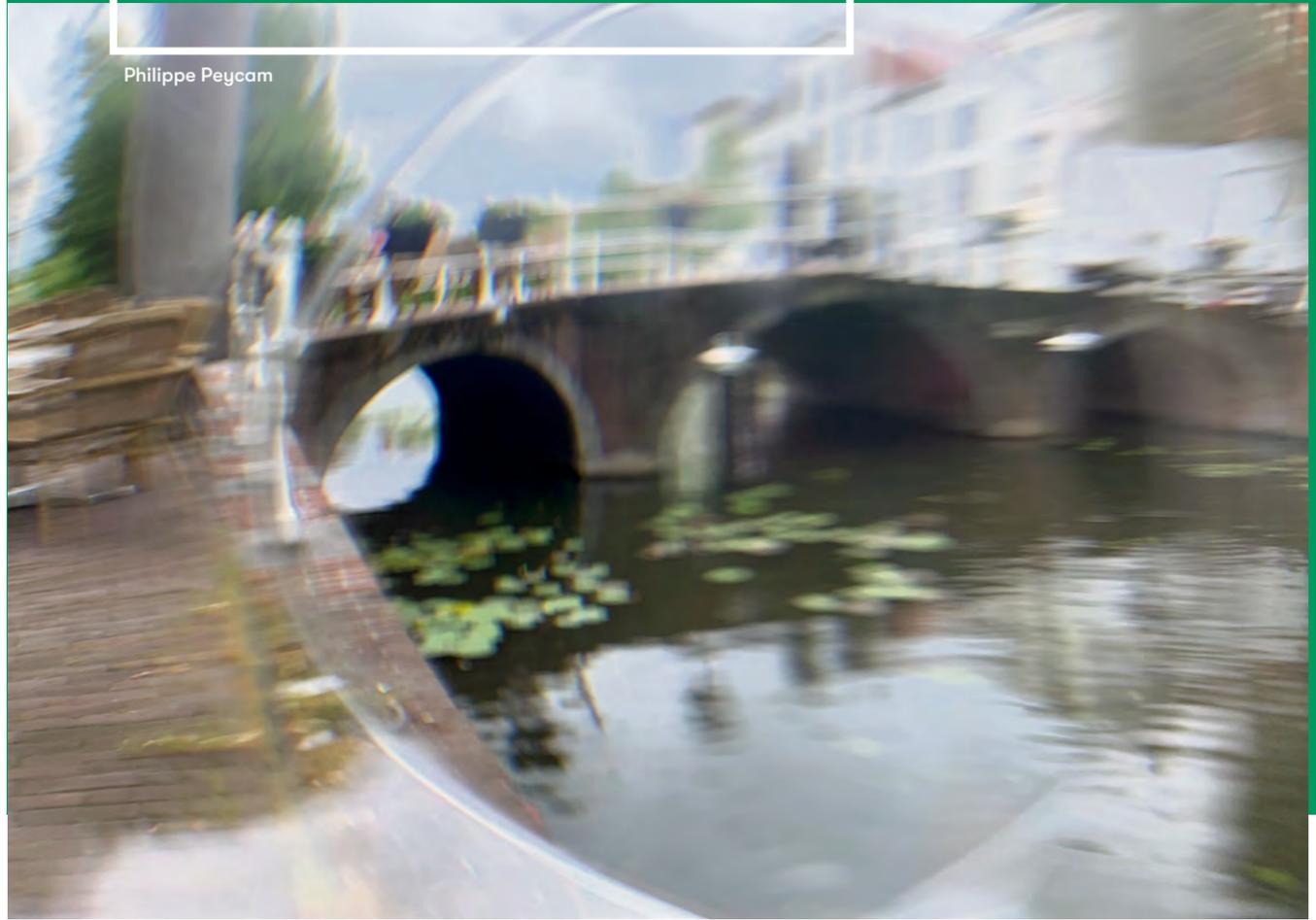
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IIAS as a Bridge

Philippe Peycam



The increased polarization of the world – as seen in the growing competition between China and the USA and their respective spheres of influence, now augmented by the appalling Russia-Ukraine conflict and the noticeable trend towards disengagement vis-à-vis the West/“North” among many countries of the Global South – paradoxically offers a Europe-based international academic organization like IAS a unique opportunity to make an enhanced meaningful contribution to global, inter-regional, and inter-cultural dialogue.

In fact, we see a clear opening for IAS and its close partners to reinforce its position as a substantial “bridge,” facilitating academic, scientific, and intellectual cooperation between Asia, Africa, the Americas, the Middle East, and Europe whilst seeking to engage more closely with academic and non-academic communities at local, situated levels.

This can be achieved by mobilizing institutions and individuals as partners from the five world regions. IAS and

its host institution, Leiden University, are actually well placed to take a multifaceted approach that can support targeted projects in humanistic scholarship, all done in collaboration with partners and communities in those regions. This must be done in an inclusive, non-hegemonic, collaborative fashion, one built on long-term commitment and trust.

IIAS, in particular, represents one of the world’s largest global platforms on scholarship pertaining to Asia. This is notably reflected in *The Newsletter*, its Fellowship Program, and the International Convention for Asia Scholars (ICAS) initiative. These well-known international academic “services” have been reinforced by substantively innovative network-based projects: the unique local-global experiential civic-pedagogical initiative *Humanities Across Borders* (HAB), with its consortium of 20 university-public education “ecosystems”; *Africa-Asia, A New Axis of Knowledge* (A-A), the first Africa-based inclusive network of its kind; the Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network

(SEANNET), together with Singapore University of Social Sciences, which links urban communities and universities as collaborative clusters in the Southeast Asian sub-region.

The combination of these initiatives, among others, all built over the long term, have established IAS as a recognized, reliable, respectful partner. In this capacity, we continue to facilitate global-local South-South-North collaborations for many scholars, social actors and institutions in different parts of the world. That it emanates from a “Northern” geographic and societal context makes its role all the more meaningful, particularly in these times of mistrust and fragmentation, of competition and abuse. These efforts are built on long-cultivated inter-personal relationships. They may not just be appreciated for their inherent worthiness but for the potential they hold to be further mobilized and sustained, hopefully with Leiden University’s support and that of our other key partners.

Philippe Peycam, Director IAS



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