



“FRIAS – THE FIRST FIVE YEARS”: In this edition, we will take stock of the work carried out at the institute so far, and reflect on the path travelled by the four schools, which shaped the college from its very beginning but whose journey is now coming to an end. We feel that it has been a story of success. We will, needless to say, talk about the returns made by the institute, which was first and foremost a working college, and one with a high output at that. However, FRIAS also deserves some personal reminiscences, since a couple of succinct anecdotes may in the end be just as capable of doing justice to the college’s spirit as the facts and figures contained in the following reports.

The freezing cold winter of 2007/2008 remains deeply imprinted on our minds, as the time in which eight professors wrapped up in thick overcoats came together in a recently vacated building in Albertstraße, which still carried with it the whiff of the Old Pathology Institute, to translate – virtually in a *creatio ex nihilo* – the daring idea of a Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies into reality. The empty room in which this occurred was soon to become FRIAS’s large seminar room, reverberating with intellectual energy and bringing together the most renowned thinkers from the scientific community, thus setting the scene for the liveliest and most intense discussions, *suaviter in modo, fortiter in re*. The frost-bitten octet from the winter of 2008 grew together to become the FRIAS Board of Directors, which, despite marked differences in personality and intellectual attitude, worked together with passion and sober objectivity to make the college a success – standing together to the last in a spirit of exemplary teamwork.

We treasure many fond memories of our early visits to Princeton, Palo Alto and Berkeley, and later Harvard’s Radcliffe Institute, Uppsala, Wasenaar, Cambridge, the National Humanities Center and the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, the main centres of IAS culture; the warm welcome, generosity and helpfulness we encountered in all of these places was truly astonishing! We will never forget how, during a walk across the campus on Einstein Drive, Peter Goddard, then director of the IAS at Princeton, spontaneously offered to deliver our inauguration speech – a promise he was to fulfil on 8th May 2008, when he gave his memorable speech “There are no excuses in Paradise” at the Assembly Hall of the Albert Ludwig University.

The commitment of our small yet strong team was truly inspiring, as they never missed the point. Heike Meier, who, during her job interview sang the praises of the beauty of the vase on my desk first in English, then in French and finally in Swedish to illustrate her all-round enthusiasm for languages, became the heart and soul of the LiLi School. This is just one of many stories that deserve telling. We were incredibly lucky with the staff employed in all of our schools as well as in our central administrative department, and we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to each and every one of them.

How proud we were when, one year on from founding the college, we were finally able to present its perfectly equipped building to the international Advisory Committee, which consisted of experts with a sense of the essential, only to be met by a dry comment: “Very nice – but where’s the espresso machine?!” Well, this was an oversight easily remedied, and the machine, strategically positioned in the fellow’s lounge, became a social magnet and energizer for the entire institute.

I am nothing but grateful when I remember how Senator Horst Weitzmann sent us his friend, the artist Werner Schmidt, whom we jok-


ingly referred to as the “senator’s curator”. He dropped names that made us dizzy: HAP Grieshaber and Willem de Kooning, Hans Baschang and Dieter Krieg, Walter Stöhrer and Horst Antes – soon after their paintings adorned our walls and transformed the austere rationality of our sober, Bauhaus-style building into a haven of creative inspiration. I also hold fond memories of a large gravel square high above the town of Ettlingen, where Professor Werner Pokorny’s enormous steel sculptures lay like recently landed extraterrestrials. The artist was so generous as to allow us to choose a sculpture, “Haus/Haus V”, which has since been on loan to us and stood on the lawn outside the building on Albertstraße. A perfect match with the glorious magnolia, it soon became a charismatic emblem of FRIAS, its dynamism and its aspirations. We would be delighted if a way could be found to secure the piece for the university on a permanent basis.

Another unforgettable moment was when Uwe Tellkamp, a recent winner of the German Book Prize (Deutscher Buchpreis), agreed to read from his novel “The Tower”. However, upon seeing our amphitheatre, which reminded him of the dissecting rooms from his time at medical school, he forgot all about reading from his book and started to tell stories, talking about unwritten episodes of his novel, improvising, circling the lecture hall’s table and rostrum like a shaman, eyes glued to the terrazzo floor, pacing and narrating, spinning a yarn and following it with his feet: the pinnacle of creativity!

There were some moments of bitter disappointment, too. Like when, in April 2010, just one day before a large conference of University-Based Institutes for Advanced Study (UBIAS), to which participants from all over the world had been invited to Freiburg, we had to cancel the event via a mass email because Eyjafjallajökull, the spluttering volcano in far-away Iceland (a completely IAS-free zone), had turned our plans to dust. We were gratefully relieved when six months later each and every one of the 32 institutes honoured us with their presence at a memorable meeting, which became the launch party for the global UBIAS network. The network has thrived ever since, and FRIAS has had a voice and enjoyed recognition and respect at its meetings in Shanghai, New Delhi, Jerusalem and Vancouver.

No one will ever forget how, after the shock of June 15th, 2012, our 6/15, countless messages of support reached us from fellows and alumni, colleagues and friends from all over the world. They all agreed that they could not understand the decision made by the German Council of Science and Humanities (Wissenschaftsrat) because the judgement simply did not match their experiences at the institute. And they also wished FRIAS a prosperous future beyond the paradoxes and imponderable ups and downs of the Excellence Initiative.

These are wishes which we gratefully endorse. It has been a privilege to be part of the *experimentum friasianum* and to enjoy the opportunity to help shape the college during its early years. We would like to wish our successors the best of luck with continuing the institute’s success!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Werner Frick', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Werner Frick,
Sprecher des FRIAS-Direktoriums