



The inaugural meeting of the UBIAS network took place in Freiburg in autumn 2010. Now, almost exactly four years later, the city is again playing host to another small meeting of members from this network: in late September, colleagues from São Paulo and Nagoya convened here at the Institute for a three-day workshop. The aim of the event was to make preparations for an ambitious UBIAS project, the Intercontinental Academia (*intercontinental-academia.ubias.net*). Here, two interrelated 14-day workshops, one held at each partner institute, will provide an interdisciplinary forum for outstanding junior researchers to work on the topic of time. This is a type of collaboration that is extremely challenging. The academic cultures of the participating countries are highly diverse; and so, too, are their approaches to natural sciences, humanities and social sciences. But it is precisely this that provided the motivation for the project: all those involved wish to unite academic communities that have previously remained separate, they want to confront the participants with an ambitious working project, but they will also provide sufficient time for different perspectives to become the subject of discussion. If this ambitious project proves successful, it will have created a very unique, temporary *research community*.

The task of the UBIAS network is to bring together different partner institutes and to develop the trust that will serve as a basis for such projects. Biennial network meetings therefore provide opportunities to establish the necessary bilateral contacts. The next meeting will take place at the end of November 2014 in the Taiwanese capital, Taipei. It is of particularly great importance to our hosts at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, National Taiwan University, that we should gain a multidimensional picture of the continent's social dynamics as well as the academic analysis of these developments.

The scientific study of Southeast Asia, a part of the Asian continent that is sometimes rather marginalised in media reporting, is the subject of a new FRIAS research focus this academic year. The other FRIAS research focus is investigating the processes of quantum physics in photosynthesis. The scientists involved in this project hope that gaining a better understanding of the reasons why plants are so efficient at converting light into energy will provide insights that can be translated to improvements in photovoltaic technology. Work is now set to begin on both new research foci and will shape the activities at FRIAS over the coming weeks and months. Although the one-year funding period is short, we are optimistic that these grants will provide crucial impetus for the development of these research fields. A summary of the two research foci can be found on pages 5–8.

*Supporting research communities* – the title of this edition of the FRIAS-news – is a fitting description of the task that FRIAS, like other institutes for advanced studies, sets itself. Irrespective of whether the research foci, the joint research groups with our partner institute in Strasbourg, USIAS, or the new alumni programme are concerned, the primary aim is always to create a basis for long-term collaboration by providing time for discussions and exchanging ideas.

Just how such groups are able to provide long-term inspiration is exemplified by the LingNet Europe network founded at FRIAS during summer 2009, the primary goal of which is to support the mobility of young researchers and to build joint research structures in the field of multilingualism on the one hand, and language variation, language change and language contact on the other. This consortium, which was originally composed of eight university-based linguistics research centres (including affiliated graduate schools), was expanded by three further, highly renowned research centres in June 2014 at the second meeting of centre directors, which again took place at FRIAS. As a result, partner institutes from eight European countries are now represented under the umbrella of LingNet Europe (from Belgium, Germany, Finland, Great Britain, Italy, Norway, Switzerland and Spain).

The last cohort of Junior Fellows also took advantage of the opportunities offered by the Institute in a variety of ways, for example through guest invitations or by hosting their own workshops. This is illustrated in the portraits of Maria Asplund (p. 12) and Peter Itzen (p. 10) found in this edition. A new addition to FRIAS-News is the 'Alumni' section, where we look at the progress of former fellows following their stay in Freiburg. In this edition, we speak to Michael Thorwart, a former Junior Fellow of the FRIAS School of Soft Matter Research (p. 9).

The summer semester saw the inception of a new lecture series open to the entire university community and directed at students in particular: the FRIAS Lunch Lectures (for more information see p. 19). Fellows were asked to give an overview of their current research topic to mixed audiences in 40 minute lectures. The events were a resounding success and – we hope – conveyed to students in an informal way that they are welcome in the wider academic community, and the FRIAS directors and FRIAS Fellows alike wish to engage them in discussion.

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*(Managing Director)*