

AIAS – the way ahead 2005-2008

Jelle Visser, scientific director

Amsterdam, 22 June 2004

In this brief supplement to the Self-Evaluation Report 2000-2004, I intend to be more explicitly evaluating and to outline my view of the future of AIAS. Where do we want to go from here? Which are the key tasks and issues of research and teaching in the next period? Before answering these questions, it is necessary to have a clear picture of where we stand. I begin with comparing the recommendations of the 2000 evaluation panel with what has been achieved (Chart 1). Next, I employ a conventional SWOT analysis. Finally, I shall draw some conclusions regarding the future

Evaluation of AIAS against the recommendations of 2000

Chart 1: Evaluation

Recommendations 2000	Results in mid-2004
1. invest in triad of economics, law and sociology (labour relations, political economy)	Several funded large-scale research projects*: -- <i>DUCADAM</i> , NWO: eco/soc/law -- <i>Marginalisation</i> , FP5: eco/soc -- <i>EPICURUS</i> , FP5: eco/psy -- <i>CHANGEQUAL</i> , FP5: eco/soc -- <i>Flexicurity</i> , <i>TWA's</i> , FP5/NWO: law/soc -- <i>DEMPATEM</i> , FP5: eco, soc -- <i>Governance as Learning</i> , NWO: pol/eco/soc/psy -- <i>NewGov</i> , FP6: pol/eco/soc/law -- <i>LoWER-2/3</i> , FP5/6: eco/soc -- <i>WOLIWEB</i> FP6: eco/soc -- <i>EQUALSOC</i> FP6: eco/soc/pol Several multidisciplinary publications (see in text below)**
2. strengthen the comparative character of research rather than focus on the Dutch case	Of the 75 projects that were undertaken, finished or started between 2000 and (mid) 2004, half (37) were 'A' projects, meaning that it involved cross-national research including the Netherlands but also one or more other countries or international organisations*
3. increase visibility by publishing in high-ranking journals and publications	The journals in which AIAS staff published include**: <i>Economic J.</i> ; <i>Eur. Econ. Rev.</i> ; <i>J. of Econ. Behavior and Organization</i> ; <i>J. of Econ. Inequality</i> ; <i>Public Choice</i> ; <i>Empirical Economics</i> ; <i>J. of Population Economics</i> ; <i>Empirica</i> ; <i>Applied Economics</i> ; <i>Rev. of Income and Wealth</i> ; <i>Economie internationale</i> ; <i>Socio-Economic Rev.</i> ; <i>European J. of Political Research</i> ; <i>J. of Eur. Public Policy</i> ; <i>J. of Eur. Social Policy</i> ; <i>West European Politics</i> ; <i>J. of Family Issues</i> ; <i>Feminist Economics</i> ; <i>British J. of Industrial Relations</i> ; <i>Eur. J. of Industrial Relations</i> ; <i>Industrielle Beziehungen</i> ; <i>Sociologie du Travail</i> ; <i>Stato e Mercato</i> ; <i>Economic and Industrial Democracy</i> ; <i>Acta Sociologica</i> ; <i>Eur. Sociological Rev.</i> ; <i>Eur. J. of Sociology/Archives europeennes du sociologie</i> ; <i>British J. of Sociology</i> ; <i>Sociology of Education</i> ; <i>Netherlands' J. Social Sciences</i> , and Dutch-language journals like <i>Tijdschrift voor Arbeidsvraagstukken</i> ; <i>Beleid en Maatschappij</i> ; <i>Mens en Maatschappij</i> ; <i>Tijdschrift voor Sociale Wetenschappen</i> ; <i>Tijdschrift voor Openbaar Bestuur</i> ; <i>Nederlands Juristenblad</i> ; <i>Economisch-Statistische Berichten</i>
4. develop a PhD programme	The number of PhD students was expanded from 1 (part-time) to the current number of 15, of whom 9 are funded. The first will defend their theses in 2004, followed by two more in 2005. In cooperation with the ASSR Graduate School AIAS developed a PhD course on Advanced Labour Studies, and also organised a PhD Summer School in cooperation with the ECSR

* see Selfevaluation Report Appendix 3; ** see Selfevaluation Report Appendix 2

My roundabout conclusion is that AIAS accomplished what was recommended. In addition we have been very successful in attracting funding from a variety of sources and we have undertaken various new and promising activities in education. The recent high assessment and evaluation score for the EQUALSOC Network of Excellence under the FP6 programme and the decision by the Russell Sage Foundation to finance a large international comparative project on firms, work organisation and low wage occupations, is further proof that multi-disciplinary cooperation and multi-methods research at different levels of analysis count as important assets in the international market of research.

A SWOT analysis of AIAS

Now turning to my SWOT-analysis, I believe that the **strength** of AIAS lies in its topical focus, its name, location, reputation and connectedness. *Labour* is a central life issue and attracts a host of practical, political and scientific questions. These questions are not going away and have become the subject of several major disciplines in the social sciences: economics, law, sociology, psychology, medical sciences (occupational health), history and comparative political science. The near semblance in name between AIAS and AJAX is accidental as well as propitious: it says ‘Amsterdam’, ‘advanced’, ‘agile’ and ‘able’, with a good deal of youthful audacity. *Amsterdam* is an excellent place for international meetings as we found out in organising PhD Summer Schools and one-day meetings of international scholars preparing our EU research bids and new projects. Our premises are brilliantly situated in between the faculties that we want to serve. *Advanced* signals our ambition and capacity to attract the cooperation from highly reputed scholars and centres of learning. *Agility* and *ability* have been demonstrated in successfully organising large-scale international research programmes and EU research bids with a very small but internationally well-known research staff and skilled management with experience in Brussels. Based on its reputation, AIAS is extremely well *connected*, within the University and its departments, with the key policy and research centres in the Netherlands, the three most important international organisations (EU, ILO and OECD) in this field and the major research institutions and universities in Europe as well as some in the USA.

AIAS’ **weaknesses**, on the other hand, are its fragility, the danger of fragmentation of research and insufficient attention to cumulative work and scholarly publications, and its dependence on the politics and policies of the University and its faculty structure. AIAS is run by a very small staff, both in scientific and managerial terms, and agility does have its price in *fragility* – with too many different demands placed on the management capacity and intellectual leadership of the Institute, given the very small amount of time

assigned to these tasks. An Institute run on the basis of *temporary staff*, although desirable from the viewpoint of youthful audacity, innovation and ‘changing places’ of staff from elsewhere inside or outside the University, has also its costs, both in managerial and scientific terms. One danger is that research will be based on *opportunism* and expediency rather than cumulative work, with a tendency to seek financial support for temporary appointed junior staff. Although AIAS staff has published in the major international journals in sociology, economics, and labour relations, and has contributed to key publications on Dutch labour law, more can be achieved if there would be more and richer involvement from senior staff from the participating faculties. The fact that AIAS operates in an academic environment is surely part of its strength, but it also involves uncertainty and dependence, given the nature of the way universities are organised and financed.

The **opportunities** for a multidisciplinary Institute like AIAS are *international*, both in research and education. The European area for research, with its framework programmes, is one important opportunity for advanced research, connecting major centres of excellence and reputed scholars. Given the *interdisciplinary* nature of the research calls and funding programmes of the major research foundations, the multi-disciplinary AIAS structure creates an advantage that would be lost if research bids had to be organised on an ‘ad hoc’ basis by staff from different faculties. An important opportunity – and target – for the years ahead is to develop AIAS’ capacity to become a major Dutch and European *repository for data*, combining micro-census and organisational data in the area of industrial relations, labour markets and employment research. The combination with *international exchange programmes* and targeted courses for master and PhD students, as envisaged by European Network of Labour Studies and the EQUALSOC Network of Excellence in which we participate, is another opportunity not to be missed.

The **threats**, finally, lie in a disconnection between a multidisciplinary Institute like AIAS and the constituent Faculties, and too little incentives and means for fundamental cross-disciplinary research. The major threat to AIAS would be if key staff members in the different faculties lost their *interest* in and *enthusiasm* for working on joint problems and programmes with colleagues in other disciplines. Conscious of this danger and deliberately positioning AIAS as a networking institute, with *double appointments* from Faculty and Institute, and combined PhD training with the disciplinary graduate schools, we seek to avoid the trap in which so many multi-disciplinary efforts have ended. Creating *added value* for the constituent Faculties in terms of research projects, networks-of-excellence, exchange programmes for students and multi-disciplinary teaching programmes, which would not exist but for our organising efforts, international connections and reputation, is how we face up to this threat. As has been highlighted by

the Netherlands' Advisory Council for Science and Technology, the new structure for *financing research*, with matching from the Universities, may constitute another threat to fundamental and long-term research programmes.

Having summarised the strong and weak points of AIAS, its opportunities and threats, my conclusion from this SWOT analysis is that AIAS is in an excellent position to move ahead and that no major changes in the principles of strategy, organisation and finance are necessary or desirable. We feel that the AIAS' *mission* has given strong guidance to the activities that have actually taking place and that there is no reason for change. The Institute wants to be active in all three areas: research (both academic and policy-oriented), teaching (graduate and postgraduate), societal debate and dissemination of knowledge.

Multi-disciplinarity

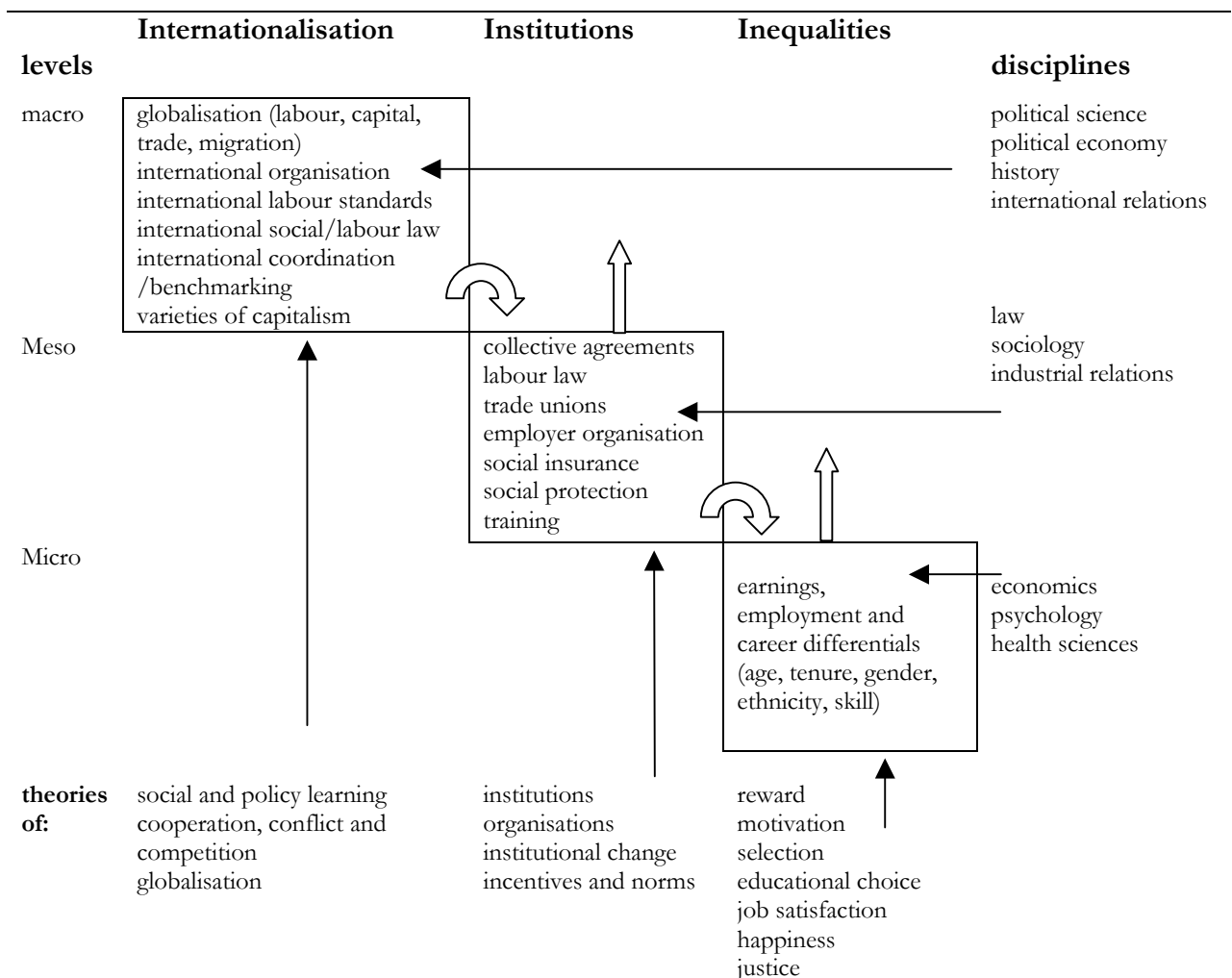
Both in research and education there is a strong pay-off of multi-disciplinary co-operation. In research, this is evident in the successes in attracting national and international funding, but also in a number of first-class publications in which questions, perspectives and methods from different disciplines are being combined. I mention, among others, Bernard van Praag & Ada Ferrer-i-Carbonell, *Happiness Quantified: A satisfaction calculus approach*, Oxford University Press, 2004 (economics and psychology); Lars Calmfors, Alison Booth, Michael Burda, Daniele Checchi, Robin Naylor, and Jelle Visser, 'The Future of Collective Bargaining', in T. Boeri, A. Brugiavini, L. Calmfors (Eds.) *The Role of the Unions in the Twenty-First Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, 1-156. (economics and sociology); Marc van der Meer, Jelle Visser, Ton Wilthagen, and Paul F. van der Heijden, *Weg van het overleg? Twintig jaar na Wassenaar: naar nieuwe verhoudingen in het Nederlandse model*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003 (political economy, sociology, law); Jelle Visser (ed.) *Industrial Relations in Europe*, Luxembourg: Official Publication of the Commission of the European Communities, forthcoming, with chapters on comparative industrial relations, European social policy and law, corporate governance, quality of life, and transition economies, as well as various journal publications on skills, education and training (Hartog, Van de Werfhorst, economics and sociology), work and family, part-time work and legal reform (Tijdens, Verhulp, Visser, Wilthagen; economics, sociology and law).

Strengthening the research programme

In research, following the expansion of long-term and PhD research, with the successful funding bids in the Sixth Framework programme and from the Netherlands'

Organisation for Scientific Research, it must now be our priority to consolidate and strengthen both our management and scientific programme. The new *Labour In³* structure – with a programme for Internationalisation, Institutions and Inequalities – provides an adequate organising framework with sufficient scope for theoretical and empirical work from various disciplines. Chart 2 outlines how the three programmes relate to one another, how they require theoretical work as well as empirical investigations, and how they mobilise questions asked in the different disciplines and at different levels of analysis.

Chart 2: The *Labour In³* programme of AIAS



Investing in international cooperation

Rapid changes in the field of labour – both in the market for research and in that of academic teaching – require that our programmes and portfolios are constantly renewed. In teaching, in addition to a Minor in cooperation with the Faculty of Social and

Behavioural Sciences and a HRM-Master programme in cooperation with the Amsterdam graduate Business School, AIAS has invested in strengthening its international programmes, connecting with the major network in Europe. It is precisely the *international* – and not just European – *profile* that AIAS has been developing in the past four years and wants to develop further in the years ahead. The enhanced cooperation with first-class departments and centres in Europe and the USA is part of this strategy. In this connection our successful involvement and investment in large scale programmes, funded by international private foundations and by the EU 5th and 6th framework programmes, with additional funding by highly regarded US institutions like the Russell Sage Foundation, is extremely important – since it is the basis for

- a) the attraction of foreign staff and PhD and master students;
- b) fellowships and exchange programmes with leading centres elsewhere;
- c) international and comparative research programmes and publications, as well as international network-based teaching programmes;
- d) strengthening the institutes' profile of Europe's leading centre on statistics in trade unions and comparative labour relations, on low wage labour markets and the related issue of gendered wage and career structures; and
- e) moving to the frontier of international research on the governance and reform of labour markets and social policy, and on skills, services and wages, also in close connection with international organisations such as the ILO, the OECD and the EU.

Investing in quality

In the next phase (2005-2008) there is scope for further investment in *quality*, with stronger intellectual and programmatic leadership in each of the three programmes and with systematic attention to the role and activities of disciplines in addressing and solving key research questions. To this end we will intensify our relationship with the supporting departments and research institutions by means of a *programme of co-chairs*, preferably one (part-time) co-chair for each of the three programmes, based on a (four-year) appointment of leading international scholars. Having expended our PhD programme only in recent years (from 2002), we expect our first thesis defence later this year, followed by 2 more next year. By the end of 2008, AIAS should have supported twelve completed PhD theses. In addition to the PhD programme, it is also our ambition for the next period to develop international Master programmes and PhD courses of international reputation in cooperation with other high-ranking centres of learning and research. The successful applications under the sixth framework programme, in particular the Network of Excellence (*EQUALSOC*), the Integrated Project (*New Modes of*

Governance) in combination with the NWO-funded *Governance as Learning* programme, and the two targeted European networks (*LoWER3* and *WOLIWEB*) provide excellent preconditions for this development.