

Minutes of the UBIAS Virtual Business Meeting

October 13, 13:30-14:40 (UTC)

Participants

- Network members

Hanne Appelqvist

Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, University of Helsinki, Finland

Clarissa Ball

Institute of Advanced Studies, The University of Western Australia, Australia

Olivier Bouin

French Network of Institutes for Advanced Study

Jaigyoung Choe

Korea Institute for Advanced Study, Republic of Korea

Sue Gilligan

The Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom

Yitzhak Hen

Israel Institute for Advanced Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

Risto Heiskala

Tampere University Institute for Advanced Social Research, Tampere University, Finland

Daniela Kromrey

Zukunftskolleg, University of Konstanz, Germany

Anda Lohan

Zukunftskolleg, University of Konstanz, Germany

Guilherme Ary Plonski

Institute of Advanced Studies, University of São Paulo, Brazil

Yoshiyuki Suto

Institute for Advanced Research, Nagoya University, Japan

Véronique Zanetti

Center for Interdisciplinary Research, Bielefeld University, Germany

- Note taker (via audio file of the recorded meeting, heard on October 20)

Richard Meckien

Institute of Advanced Studies, University of São Paulo, Brazil

Agenda

1. New members
2. Statutes
3. Other issues

Context

After the candidates for new members of the network have given their presentations, coordinator Guilherme Ary Plonski cordially says goodbye to them and waits until only UBIAS members are connected. In the first item on the agenda, the meeting will address the deliberation regarding the following institutes and their respective representatives:

Patricia Maguire

UCD Institute for Discovery (UCDID) | University College Dublin

Martin Cloonan

Turku Institute for Advanced Studies (TIAS) | University of Turku

Antonio Álvarez-Ossorio

Madrid Institute for Advanced Study (MIAS) | Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

Bongani Ngqulunga

Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Study (JIAS) | University of Johannesburg

Esteban Damián Avendaño Soto

University Environment of Advanced Studies (UCREA) | University of Costa Rica

Sarah Corona / Olaf Kaltmeier

Maria Sibylla Merian Center for Advanced Latin American Studies (CALAS)

Gordon Crawford

Maria Sibylla Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa (MIASA)

The meeting

Mr. Plonski announces the first topic on the agenda, concerning the deliberation of the presentations. He reinforces the four criteria that must be observed by the voters. Institutes should offer a substantially competitive fellowship programme that provides fellowships to international scholars, be affiliated with an internationally respected, research-active university, fulfill a function for their university as a whole (as judged by their mission, organizational, and leadership structure), and offer programmes that foster interdisciplinarity.

He explains that eight candidacies have been divided among members of the Steering Committee for appraisal. Seven of them have been recommended for presentation. Mr. Plonski asks the members of the Steering Committee to shortly comment on their evaluation.

Ms. Véronique Zanetti considers that the **Maria Sibylla Merian Center for Advanced Latin American Studies** offers substantially competitive fellowship for international scholars and is closely affiliated to the University of Guadalajara, which are some of the criteria the network is

looking for. It operates not only in close cooperation with the local university but also with German institutions. It works especially with collaborative research formats. All of them are interdisciplinary, with a stronger focus on the humanities and social sciences. The **Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Study** is also recommended to integrate UBIAS. It is a new institute with a very impressive development in five years, including exponential increase in the number of applications in its various fellowship programmes.

Mr. Yitzhak Hen considers the **Madrid Institute for Advanced Study** fully able to integrate the network, pointing out that they elegantly meet all the four criteria. It is an impressive institute, especially considering that they are also very young. It is highlighted that the institute stood out from the other candidate institutes, both in size of their facilities and regarding the amount of their budget.

Mr. Bernd Kortmann refers to the **Turku Institute for Advanced Studies** as also meeting all the set criteria. The only thing that he could ponder, but not from a UBIAS perspective, is the selection process of fellows, because theirs is anything but independent. It is actually decided by the university, by the deans and vice deans, who have a pre-selection. Then those pre-selected go to international reviewers and the outcome of this is selected again by the deans and vice deans. But anyway, there is no reason to think that the institute at Turku would not be a valuable addition to UBIAS. Mr. Olivier Bouin comments that the usual selection processes are indeed done the other way around, with a final selection by the institutes. The fact that this specific institute makes it differently could be seen as a little bit problematic, but he thinks that the network could therefore write a recommendation. He agrees, however, that UBIAS should accept this very consistent institute. Ms. Hanne Appelqvist asks about the institute of Turku not having their own premises yet, in spite of realizing that this is not a formal requirement for membership. Mr. Kortmann reads from his report: "One additional problem is that all fellows at TIAS are distributed across the five faculties." Then, he reads from the Institute's application: "Fellows meet together at TIAS meetings every two to three weeks and are in regular contact and the interim. A series of social events also takes place and helps to sustain the TIAS." Mr. Kortmann adds that he knows several institutes for advanced studies where this is exactly the situation and they are perfect UBIAS members. Mr. Bouin agrees. Mr. Plonski suggests the issue to be discussed in Marseille, at the next directors' conference. The network should begin a conversation on the "power of place," which would include all the efforts to overcome 2020 under remote conditions.

Mr. Risto Heiskala comments that it is a good thing that UBIAS does not have the requirement for members to have their own premises. He suggests that the network could make a recommendation to the new institutes that they should work towards getting their own premises, because that could help them. Ms. Appelqvist agrees, highlighting that this was actually the reason why she brought the topic up, because she knows Mr. Martin Cloonan is working in order to establish premises for TIAS. Ms. Anda Lohan raises the mentorship role that UBIAS can play towards the young institutes (referring to the **University Environment of Advanced Studies at the University of Costa Rica**), even being politically important. Having come from Romania, she knows how important it is to have such institutes for advanced study

in politically endangered areas of the world. She also points out that, having been in an observing position in the network, she wonders to what extent it is necessary to talk about bias when it comes to making decisions. Many of the network members are more or less connected with some of the applicants. What can be said about the fairness of the selection process? It should not be understood as a critique, but perhaps something the network could reflect on when welcoming new applications, since people are all interconnected.

Ms. Clarissa Ball remembers that the **UCD Institute for Discovery** was awarded guest membership in 2016 and attended the meeting in Birmingham. She thinks they are a very strong candidate for UBIAS membership, clearly meeting all of the criteria and having three very strong fellowship schemes at their top university. She fully supports and recommends the UCD to get accepted.

Mr. Plonski starts his comment about the **Maria Sibylla Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa** reinforcing that it has been conceived under a model that Ms. Britta Padberg describes in her [article](#), as new institutes are coming out of cooperation. He believes that, despite also being a very young institute, they fulfill the criteria. In the case of UCREA, he begins with a “disclaimer,” having been part of the academic board of the institute for some time, but not when evaluating their application. UCREA has been created without a physical space by a decision of the local university to bring interdisciplinarity to them. The University of Costa Rica is mainly strong in health and biological science. The idea was to get a more balanced approach of biological sciences and the humanities. Another young institute, it gets consistent support from the administration, and some support from Bielefeld University's Center for Interdisciplinary Research (ZiF) and the Institute of Advanced Studies at the University of São Paulo (IEA). UCREA is already transforming the university by means of projects. They know quite well that fellowship programmes are flagship endeavours of UBIAS. They were committed to a firm program with resources which should have begun this year. However, as it was mentioned by Mr. Esteban Soto, it could not come out because of the COVID-19 pandemics.

Mr. Hen asks to raise an episode that happened *circa* two years ago, related to the third phase of the Intercontinental Academia edition on human rights (ICA 2). The previous director of the JIAS had asked Israeli participants to sign a document with a political declaration. [Note: This requirement was timely and unanimously condemned by UBIAS' Steering Committee and rejected by the President of the University of Johannesburg. All fellows participated in equal conditions]. Thus, Mr. Hen suggests that, if their acceptance is voted, a note should be sent to recall the regrettable episode and to express that it should not happen again, as it runs against the statutes and basic beliefs of the network. Ms. Zanetti agrees and very much hopes that Mr. Bongani Ngqulunga is going in another direction. Mr. Bouin adds that UBIAS exists to promote dialogue across intellectual traditions and disciplines.

On UCREA, Mr. Bouin adds that it is very difficult to find information on them, even if you try to run a Google search to figure out and learn a little bit about their work.

Mr. Plonski agrees with Mr. Hen, thanking for the reminder and accepting the idea that a statement shall be done. The text of the statutes should also include one or two lines on openness and non discrimination. Mr. Plonski then addresses Mr. Bouin's words about the UCREA, remembering that there are two statuses at UBIAS: full membership and guest membership, the latter of which refers to the institutes whose interest is recognized but are considered not yet able to fully join the network. As guest members, if so decided, UCREA will be given another chance to submit a candidacy. Mr. Plonski understands the ponderations about the Institute not fitting the conditions at this moment. Ms. Ball and Ms. Zanetti agree.

Ms. Daniela Kromrey brings up that many of the meeting participants have already left and that other members are not represented online. As only a small group of people are still participating and considering that UBIAS gathers more than 40 Institutes, she wonders if there should be a quorum to make these kinds of decisions. It does not seem fair, according to her, that only a handful of people are deciding on the "fate" of the candidates. Ms. Kromrey adds that, of course, this would not be an issue for the current decision process, but maybe something to rethink for the future. Regarding the UCDID, although she does not have the same concerns as with UCREA, she thinks that they are at the very beginning as well. She hardly could see that they had more than a two-month fellowship for 20 people. So they seem like just starting to develop, having strict conditions, and no fully-fledged fellowship programme. Mr. Plonski believes that including a quorum for decision-making in the statutes would be welcome.

With regard to "sleeping" members, Mr. Plonski recognizes that there are several institutes that have not appeared in some time. He says that Ms. Ball intends to raise the information about the institute's activeness. Ms. Ball starts to address the statute-related issues that the group should consider. There are a number of members that have not participated at all within UBIAS for a very extended period of time. At least five institutes have had no contact with the network for the last five, six, maybe seven years. The network needs to think about what is going to be done with those institutes.

The second point is about membership of the steering committee, which consists of five to nine members, including the coordinator and the two deputy directors. At each directors' meeting a steering committee is elected to act through to the following meeting, which takes place every two years. The statutes are unclear about whether it is the individual that is the member of the steering committee or if it is the institute. Ms. Ball's thoughts are that if it is the institute that is the member of the steering committee, rather than the individual, it means that the steering committee will always consist of the same institutes over time. The other issue concerns steering committee members that leave their position at the institute and if there should be an automatic replacement considering the new people at the institute. It has become a little bit more pressing in 2020 because the time between the directors' meetings has been extended beyond the usual two-year period.

For Mr. Kortmann it seems clear that UBIAS should reduce the number of members and that with regard to the steering committee representation his memory is that it has always been said that it should be the individual, but if it does not seem clear then perhaps the statutes

should simply be spelled out more clearly. Ms. Ball agrees. Mr. Kortmann remembers that many institutes are members of UBIAS just because they were present at the very first meeting in 2010 in Freiburg. They have not reacted ever since. Ms. Ball suggests that a statement about the expectations of participation and activity should be included in the statute. Ms. Zanetti and Mr. Heiskala speak in favour of the institutes being members of the steering committee, namely their sitting directors. Mr. Hen thinks that there should be a combination of both institute and personal election. Ms. Kromrey agrees: the network votes for directors (people) during the meeting, meaning that the choices are personal. But there should be a replacement option. If the 2020 situation is considered and extended to an even more critical one, maybe at one point of meetings getting further and further apart the committee will not be able to operate anymore if there is no openness for replacements, because then it is just two or three members left in the steering committee with all the workload on their shoulders. Ms. Ball and Mr. Plonski agree. Ms. Ball will make a list to check on the members' activeness and both her and Mr. Plonski will present a new text suggestion for the statutes at the next directors' conference in Marseille.

Ms. Ball mentions the possibility of charging an annual UBIAS membership fee and how much it would cost. Mr. Plonski gives two reasons for this: 1) the coverage of basic costs, such as the payment for the company that manages the network's website; 2) the creation of a small budget, perhaps to try something innovative like an integrated fellowship programme. This might also be helpful in specific cases. He exemplifies the situation of a researcher in Venezuela needing to fly to Paris, which would be barely impossible due to the local state of disarray. So the same budget could also promote some equality of opportunities. Ms. Ball agrees with the exposed possibilities, reinforcing that the budget could give a little bit of leverage to institutions seeking some additional funding for diverse reasons. The issue will be discussed again in Marseille.

Mr. Plonski thanks all of the remaining participants and declares the meeting finished.