

Annual report

2023-2024

**Danish Institute
for Advanced Study**

October 2024, version 4.0

Danish Institute for Advanced Study

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Director's note

Welcome to this annual report and overview of the ambitions, priorities, and challenges of the Danish Institute for Advanced Study.

DIAS, you will see, is on the move. We have clear and distinct ambitions gathered under the headline "DIAS 3.0" —obviously a reference to past phases in DIAS's institutional development, and to what comes next. The key guidepost of DIAS 3.0 is research excellence. The bottom line is that whatever DIAS does in terms of partnerships, networks, communications, or interdisciplinary work, all of which is important, it must add to our research excellence.

An IAS is a mark of excellence, and so it must be for the Danish IAS. If this sounds obvious, it is nonetheless not straightforward to put into practice. In this annual report, we report not merely numbers of things that have happened in the past year, be they publications, citations, conferences, or media activity. We instead emphasise our conceptual foundation and strategy and then also key "decision points" we have arrived at.

The DIAS community is composed of highly talented Chairs and Fellows with whom it is a pleasure to work. When I observe this level of talent, I have no doubt we can grow even stronger and even more advanced, especially if we are open to fresh and creative thinking. If bright ideas form as you read this report, please send them our way. Your ideas might just be the ones that make the difference.

Sten Rynning,
Director of DIAS





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DIAS management and strategy





Sten Rynning takes the helm at DIAS

In the summer of 2023, SDU's rector, Jens Ringsmose, appointed Professor of Political Science Sten Rynning as the new director of the Danish Institute for Advanced Study. Sten Rynning replaced Marianne Holmer, who had served as DIAS's Director since 2019. Rynning brings with him great ambitions and a vision of DIAS as a vibrant intellectual landscape: a place for the best and brightest researchers to be curious, to be playful, and to reach for the stars in terms of excellence.

Sten Rynning assumed leadership on 1st August 2023.

”



Jens Ringsmose
Rector of SDU

Sten Rynning has precisely the skills and vision, both as a researcher and university manager, to lead SDU's beacon for excellent research and collaboration across disciplines. I am confident that with Sten at the helm, we will be able to expand and intensify DIAS's initiatives and further promote all of SDU's world-class research output.

At the same time, I would like to thank Marianne Holmer for her outstanding work. Her efforts have been crucial to the development of DIAS, and I am grateful that she has directed such an important and strategic part of our organisation while also serving as Dean of the Faculty of Science.

”



Marianne Holmer
Former DIAS Director

I'm very proud of the work I've done at DIAS and the new initiatives I have launched. It has been a fantastic experience to collaborate with researchers from across the University, recruit talented researchers to SDU, and bridge the gap between different disciplines.

At the same time, I have realised that being director while also serving as Dean of the Faculty of Science does not provide DIAS with the attention it deserves. I am therefore pleased with both the choice of Sten Rynning and the new structure of the position, which allows more time for developing DIAS.

About Sten Rynning

Sten Rynning (b. 1967) is a Professor of War Studies at SDU. He served as interim Dean of the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences from November 2021 to May 2022, and as Vice Dean for Research from June 2019 to August 2022.



Rynning founded SDU's Center for War Studies in 2011 and headed it until 2019. He served on the official Norwegian Afghanistan Commission (2015-2016) and advised the commission of inquiry into Denmark's war participation in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq (2017-2019), as well as Ambassador Peter Taksøe-Jensen's official review of Danish Foreign Policy (2015-2016). He was a visiting fellow at NATO's Defence College (NDC) in Rome in Spring 2012, and has since regularly lectured at the NDC Senior Course, as well as at the NDC Generals, Flag Officers, and Ambassadors course.

Sten Rynning currently serves on the board of the Danish Institute for International Studies and the editorial boards of the European Journal of International Security, International Affairs, the Journal of Strategic Studies, the Journal of Transatlantic Studies, and the Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies. In 2021, he was made a Knight of the Order of Dannebrog.



I look forward to creating an environment of immersion, collaboration, and academic excellence.

DIAS must create the framework for a new generation of excellent thinkers, and DIAS must be a voice in the debate on the fundamental conditions of basic research.

- Sten Rynning, new DIAS Director

DIAS 3.0

DIAS 3.0 envisions a DIAS fully and openly integrated into SDU, and a DIAS that is strongly networked into national and international environments.

DIAS 3.0 envisions DIAS as a place for researchers to dream big and pursue the ideas of a lifetime. It aims for DIAS to become one of the strongest and most notable university-based IAS'es. DIAS should be coveted by world-class scholars, both early-career and distinguished, thereby adding significant value to the University of Southern Denmark.

Playful excellence

During the past year, DIAS has made significant organisational and strategic advancements. DIAS 3.0 is a vision for taking DIAS one step further by putting excellence front and centre. This excellence is already present in the DIAS community, shaped by novel perspectives, a vibrant environment, and a sense of playfulness that arises when powerhouse scholars from across disciplines join forces. The notion of playful excellence encapsulates DIAS 3.0.

To successfully integrate its new strategy, DIAS must ensure that a triad of prerequisites are met: it must establish and maintain a solid organisational foundation and identity, emphasise and nurture its elite scholars, and foster strong collaboration

with the rest of SDU. DIAS must be an accessible platform for the university's excellent research environments, harnessing the power it holds.

Freedom and engagement

In pursuing playful excellence, DIAS 3.0 commits to removing obstacles that hinder groundbreaking ideas from coming to fruition. DIAS must provide its researchers with the liberty to think and act beyond regulations and conventions. Interdisciplinarity is fascinating and often necessary, but DIAS should nourish and pursue interdisciplinarity only to the extent it reinforces our research excellence.

DIAS 3.0 is also informed by an aim for greater cohesion between its activities. Therefore, the DIAS management and community have together outlined strong, yet flexible conceptual frameworks for all activities in the DIAS building. The pillars of DIAS 3.0 enable various modes of engagement within the DIAS community, at SDU, and beyond, and the DIAS organisation will facilitate growth.

The vision

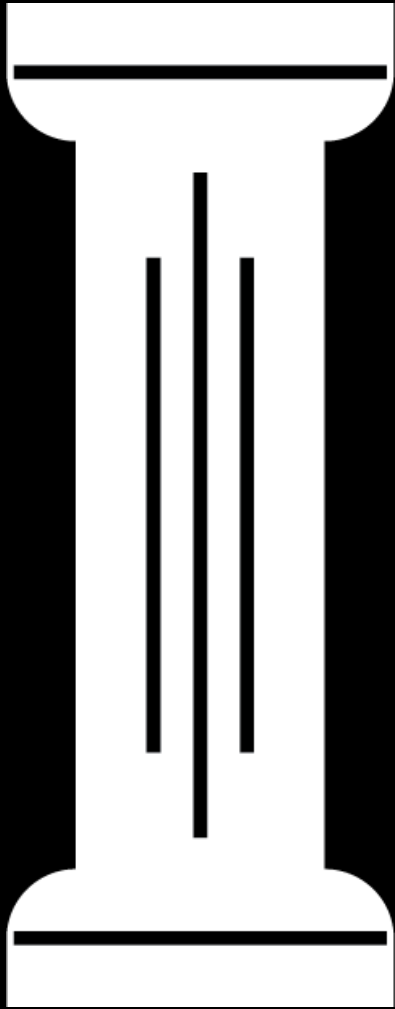
DIAS must be a vibrant and independent intellectual landscape at the University of Southern Denmark, dedicated to curiosity-driven, unexpected, and playful research excellence.

Three core ambitions accompany this vision:

1. DIAS must recruit and nurture world-class young research fellows from all disciplines who can enrich both DIAS and SDU. These fellows should be hired through the highest level of international competition, with DIAS and SDU offering excellent research and career opportunities in return.
2. DIAS must attract distinguished senior SDU researchers from all disciplines to serve as DIAS Chairs. DIAS should facilitate cutting-edge collaboration among these engaged and dedicated Chairs, as well as between Chairs, Fellows, and visitors.
3. DIAS must enhance society's understanding of the promises and limitations of research, bringing the unique expertise of the DIAS community to bear on societal debates.

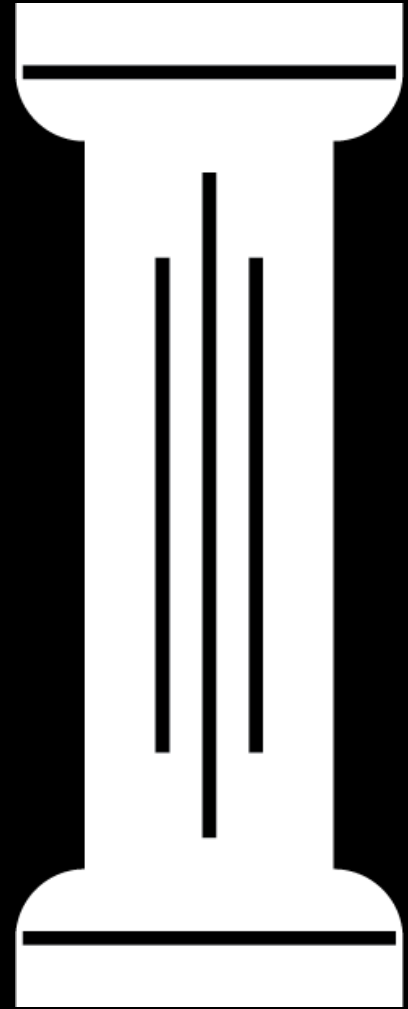
In pursuit of this vision and its associated ambitions, DIAS will uphold the highest possible standards of excellence.

Pillars of



Society of Fellows

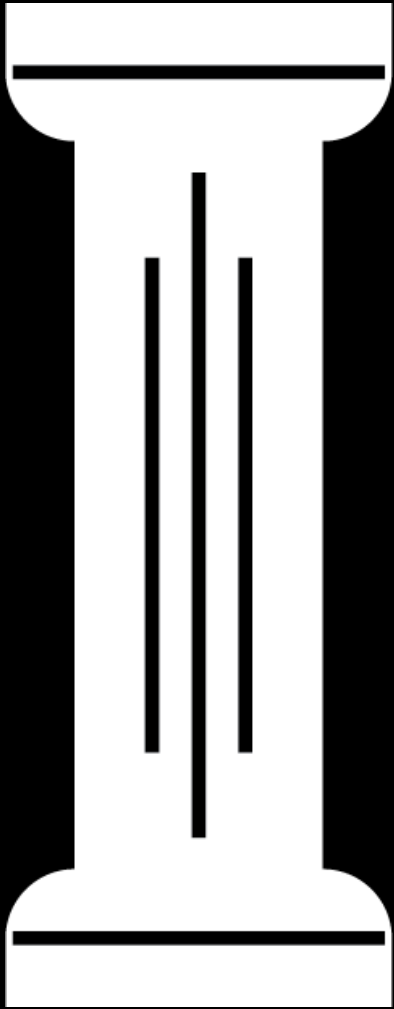
A community and a space to foster collaboration and career development by Fellows for Fellows at DIAS.



Wicked Problems

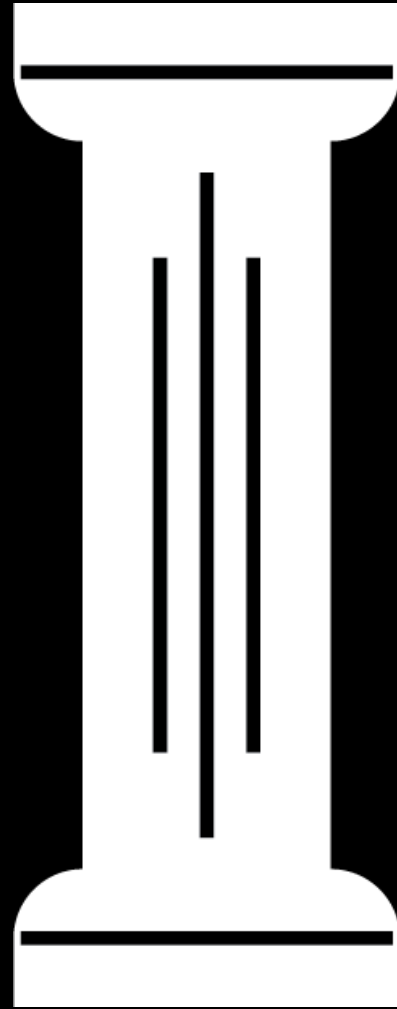
Expert scholars across disciplines address and explore some of society's most intricate challenges.

DIAS 3.0



Blue Sky Mentoring

Mentoring and leadership training by DIAS Chairs and SDU leaders for SDU's best and brightest young researchers.



DIAS Engagement

Events, partnerships, and contributions to public affairs and debates to establish DIAS as a presence in society.

With 25 new Fellow positions, DIAS prepares to push beyond the frontier of knowledge

In collaboration with SDU's Executive Board, DIAS director Sten Rynning has unveiled a pioneering tenure track initiative to attract world-class early-career researchers to SDU.

Regarded as critical for DIAS's ability to compete on the international stage, the tenure track initiative is a strategic effort to attract the best and brightest early-career researchers to SDU and to continuously invest in their career trajectory and potential.

Starting in 2024, there will be annual calls for the next five years, with the intention to recruit at least five Fellows each year. For each call, the faculties within the University of Southern Denmark will introduce specific themes to guide and focus the applications.

Each new Fellow will be appointed to a department at SDU relevant to their research area and will concurrently hold a position as a DIAS Fellow, pursuing research within the DIAS community.



DIAS Fellow recruitment 2024

Field of study	Number of applicants
Public Health/Psychology (Faculty of Health Sciences)	48
Translational Biomedicine or Translational Pharmacology (Faculty of Health Sciences)	36
Quantum Mathematics (Faculty of Science)	63
Faculty of Humanities	77
Faculty of Engineering	36
Faculty of Business and Social Sciences	20

DIAS and SDU launch prestigious professorships for academia's rising stars

In the summer of 2024, in a strategic move to enhance academic excellence, SDU's Executive Board approved a proposal with major implications for the Danish Institute for Advanced Study: to offer DIAS Professorships—fully tenured and of infinite duration. With this initiative, SDU and DIAS aim to recruit outstanding and ambitious professors who, through a DIAS professorship, are expected to leave a distinct mark of excellence at SDU. The position of DIAS Professor requires significant engagement and presence in DIAS, where DIAS in return will offer a hospitable home to big thinking.

Each of SDU's five faculties will advertise two DIAS Professorships to be announced by the end of 2024. By the end of 2025, SDU anticipates having employed all its ten DIAS Professors.

The DIAS professorship initiative supports the University of Southern Denmark's strategy to recruit top-level international talents and to develop outstanding environments. It aligns perfectly with DIAS's ethos of excellence.

DIAS joins the Rector's Office at SDU

In June 2024, DIAS embarked on an exciting new journey by transitioning to a new organisational home at the University of Southern Denmark.

This strategic move from the Faculty of Natural Science to the Rector's Office underscores DIAS's pivotal role as a beacon of research excellence across all SDU faculties.

With this change, the head of the Rector's Office will now oversee DIAS administration, while the DIAS Director will continue to manage daily operations and report directly to SDU's Rector on strategic and policy matters.

At DIAS, we are profoundly grateful for the exceptional support from the Faculty of Natural Science and eagerly anticipate even closer collaboration with the Rector's Office.

DIAS decision points





1. Bringing life to DIAS

Balancing community and freedom

2. Reaching for the stars

Cultivating talent and leadership

3. DIAS networking

Guests and visitors as a core business?

4. DIAS decision making

Expanding in impact, not in size

1

Bringing life to DIAS Balancing community and freedom

The challenge and the decision to be made

To foster a strong community and leverage the expertise within it, DIAS must host activities and inspire conversations.

The question is how DIAS can best foster a culture of engagement.

Fellows and Chairs are not employed by DIAS, and they have precious little time. They expect to benefit from an intellectually stimulating DIAS community, but they also expect the freedom to pursue their own agendas.

DIAS management can organise and incentivise, but ultimately, the conversation must be anchored in the community of Fellows and Chairs.

DIAS has a small operating budget and a small secretariat. How can these resources best be put to use to serve both the community and the individual desire for freedom?

Learning from others

- How can DIAS balance seed funding and planned activities?
 - Seed funding is a bottom-up measure granting affiliates the freedom to choose.
 - Planned activities may be needed to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be seen and heard and to ensure that when people step into the building, something is going on.
 - Should DIAS primarily emphasise one or the other?
- Should DIAS consider organising its community into schools or sections?
 - Such schools or sections could ensure activities, but they may also become barriers to the free and spontaneous interaction across disciplines.

2

Reaching for the stars Cultivating talent and leadership

The challenge and the decision to be made

DIAS is a core asset to SDU, strengthening the university's ability to recruit and promote research talents at all levels. DIAS aims to do even more by establishing a Blue Sky initiative that enhances its ability to identify and mentor talent for the benefit of the entire university.

The question is whether DIAS should be restricted in its approach or broaden it to focus on leadership development in addition to research talent.

A conventional research talent approach would involve working with the research competences of talents to secure high-level publications or prominent grants. A leadership programme, on the other hand, would emphasise broader competences, such as understanding SDU and its competitive environment, and train talents to excel not only in research but also in organisational development.

DIAS's competitive advantage is its access to high-level professors. DIAS mentoring is always by and for researchers and research leaders. Therefore, there is a limit to how large a Blue Sky programme DIAS can initiate. Such a programme will always depend on the ability of Chairs to invest in it. DIAS will never set up a Blue Sky initiative that primarily relies on research support staff.

Learning from others

- Considering that DIAS relies on a labour of love, should DIAS go narrow in order not to place too great a demand on Chairs? Should DIAS build its Blue Sky initiative on its Fellow mentoring, offering just a few additional spots for non-DIAS SDU research talents?
- Or should DIAS go big, launching a leadership programme involving both DIAS Fellows and SDU research talents, in total around 30 people, and running multiple annual workshops and training activities to help SDU reach for the stars?
- At question is DIAS's ability to focus either primarily on its own DIAS community or to up its game as a university-based IAS.
- Which path would best serve the DIAS-SDU constellation, how do we best resource our ambition, and what do other institutional experiences suggest?

3

DIAS networking Guests and visitors as a core business?

The challenge and the decision to be made

DIAS aims to establish and expand programmes that bring guests and fellows from SDU and beyond into its building and activities. Guests should always enter a building where there is a community and activities into which they can be integrated. However, DIAS has limited resources and needs to prioritise.

Given the state of affairs at DIAS, the question is whether DIAS should continue to primarily build its in-house community, holding off financial and organisational investments in external partnerships. Conversely, should DIAS invest in external partnerships as an engine of community growth?

Historically, DIAS has not had tailored visiting or fellowship programmes for guests and has had no policy for supporting visitors. DIAS guests have been brought in ad-hoc and as a result of spontaneous initiatives by individual Chairs.

In 2024, the DIAS Society of Fellows launched a Visiting Fellow Programme for young researchers at SDU, and DIAS 3.0 also entails an ambition to fund fellowships for non-SDU researchers.

Learning from others

- For an institution like DIAS, are visiting fellows a 'need to have' or merely a 'nice to have'?
- Is there a distinct benefit to DIAS from running its own fellowship programme for non-SDU researchers, considering its limited means and ambition to build a stronger community?
- Would it make better sense to limit the fellowship ambition, integrating our limited funds for fellowships into the seed funding we make available for Chairs?

4

DIAS decision making Expanding in impact, not in size

The challenge and the decision to be made

As a university-based IAS, DIAS must deliver on both its own strategy and the broader strategy of SDU. DIAS 3.0 is designed to fulfil the ambitions inherent in SDU while also building a strong DIAS community. The question is whether DIAS is properly set up to deliver on both strategies—if DIAS is fit for purpose.

DIAS has a core staff consisting of a Director and a secretariat of two full-time employees—a Communications Officer and a Specialist Consultant—as well as a part-time Secretary and two Student Assistants. DIAS has a Management Board, which meets monthly, consisting of the Director, a Chair from each faculty, and one Fellow. The DIAS Director has regular bilateral meetings with SDU's Rector and, when appropriate, appears before the Executive Board of the university to discuss DIAS-related matters.

With the 2024 move to the Rector's Office at SDU, DIAS has found the right organisational home for its university-wide excellence ambitions. The question is how a small and agile university-wide unit such as DIAS can best connect to the much larger organisation and at the same time resource in-house development.

Learning from others

- How do similar small and central units—and not necessarily IASes—effectively connect to a wider organisation to coordinate and serve collective goals, in DIAS's case not least the recruitment of new people (DIAS Fellows are hired by departments and then affiliated with DIAS)? What type of interface would best allow for continuous and smooth policy practice?
- Should the DIAS Management Board be more representative of faculty-wide interests and points of view? Keeping in mind the need to connect smoothly to the faculties, DIAS could ask the Chairs of each faculty to set up a format whereby they can regularly meet with their Dean and organise their representation on the board.
- Should the DIAS Management Board inversely be more attuned to in-house development? DIAS could transform the pillars of DIAS 3.0 into DIAS 'schools' and ask the (rotating) heads of these schools to sit on the management board.





DIAS community

and activities

DIAS welcomes seven outstanding SDU professors as new Chairs

Between January 2023 and June 2024, DIAS inducted a total of nine new Chairs into its community, three of whom were former DIAS Senior Fellows. This number has since been reduced to seven, as one appointee has been promoted to DIAS Director and another has stepped down to become a DIAS Alumnus. For clarity, these two are not included in this overview.

Kathrin Maurer

Chair of Humanities

Department of Language and Culture

Dr. Phil. Kathrin Maurer is a Professor of Humanities and Technologies and leads the Center for Humanities and Technologies at SDU.

Maurer's research focuses on the intersection of technology and the humanities, exploring how technology influences art, media, and everyday life through historical, critical, and aesthetic lenses.





Pieter Vanhuyse

Chair of Business and Social Sciences

Department of Political Science and Public Management

Pieter Vanhuyse, PhD (LSE), is a Full Professor of Politics and Public Policy at SDU's Department of Political Science and Public Management and the Danish Centre for Welfare Studies.

Vanhuyse's research spans comparative politics and political economy, focusing on topics such as public policies, welfare states, political demography, and intergenerational justice.



Sune Vork Steffensen

Chair of Humanities

Department of Language and Culture

Ph.D. Sune Vork Steffensen is a Professor of Language, Interaction, and Cognition at SDU and the Director of the Centre for Human Interactivity. He is also the Editor-in-Chief of the journal Language Sciences.

Steffensen's research focuses on the intersection of language and cognition in complex social and dialogical systems, drawing on ecological, dialogical, and distributed approaches.

New DIAS Chairs

Gregory Clark

Chair of Business and Social Sciences

Department of Economics

Gregory Clark is a Full Professor of Economics at SDU's Historical Economics and Development Group (HEDG), a Distinguished Professor of Economics at UC Davis, and a Visiting Professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

His move to SDU is driven by the goal of applying innovative techniques to the human capital of the Nordic countries database.



Nina Bonderup Dohn

Chair of Humanities

Department for Design, Media and Educational Science

Nina Bonderup Dohn is a Full Professor of Learning and ICT at SDU's Department of Design and Communication. She heads the Center for Learning Computational Thinking, which involves researchers from the Humanities, Science, and Engineering faculties.

Dohn's research field bridges between epistemology, learning theory, and cognitive theory.





Norbert Krüger

Chair of Engineering

The Maersk Mc-Kinney Moller Institute

Norbert Krüger, a Full Professor at the Faculty of Engineering at SDU since 2006, has an interdisciplinary research and teaching profile spanning five universities in three countries. Since 2012, he has supported the development of the Welfare Robotics Group at SDU Robotics.

Krüger's research focuses on industrial robotics, machine learning, and human-robot interaction.



Vijay Tiwari

Chair of Health Sciences

Department of Molecular Medicine

Vijay Tiwari, Dr. med., is a Full Professor of Neurobiology at the Department of Molecular Medicine, Faculty of Health, SDU. Previously at Queen's University, UK, his education and research span six countries.

Tiwari's multidisciplinary research explores the interplay between genetic and epigenetic information in cell identity and disease.

DIAS welcomes two new members to its esteemed Advisory Board

The DIAS Advisory Board was established in 2020 with representation from national and international professors. Its esteemed members provide guidance and recommendations to support the vision and mission of the Danish Institute for Advanced Study.



Marie-Louise Bech Nosch

Entered the DIAS Advisory Board in 2023

Marie-Louise Bech Nosch is a historian specialising in ancient Greek history and is a Professor of History at the Saxo Institute, Copenhagen University. She earned her Ph.D. from Universität Salzburg, Austria. Her research focuses on Aegean epigraphy and Mycenaean textile production.

In 2009, Nosch received the Ministry of Science and Technology's Elite Research Prize and she was awarded the prestigious Anneliese Meier Research Prize by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in 2013. She received the Gad Rausing Prize in 2022.



Barbara Caputo

Entered the DIAS Advisory Board in 2024

Barbara Caputo is a computer scientist specialising in robotics and artificial intelligence. She wears many hats at Politecnico di Torino: Full Professor, Head of the VANDAL Laboratory, Rector's Advisor on Artificial Intelligence, and Director of the Hub AI@PoliTo. Caputo is also a board member and co-founder of the ELLIS society and has been among the 100 esperte for Italy, a database of prestigious female scholars, since 2016.

In 2021, Caputo became an honorary doctor at SDU's Faculty of Engineering for her work in artificial intelligence and robotics.

Current members

David Nirenberg

Director and Leon Levy Professor at the Institute for Advanced Study

Henrik Tvarnø

Cand.phil. in History and Former Director for the A.P. Møller Foundation (A.P. Møller og Hustru Chastine Mc-Kinney Møllers Fond til almene Formaal)

Jean-Pierre Bourguignon

Nicolaas Kuiper honorary professor at IHES

Peter Baldwin

Professor of History at UCLA and Global Distinguished Professor at NYU, Chair of the Board of the Center for Jewish History, and a member of the Board of Trustees of the New York Public Library

Marie-Louise Bech Nosch

Professor of History at the Saxo Institute, Copenhagen University

Tobias Ekholm

Eisenbud Professor at Mathematical Sciences Research Institute, Berkeley, California, and Director at Insitut Mittag-Leffler, Sweden

Barbara Caputo

Professor at Politecnico di Torino, Head of the VANDAL Laboratory, Director of AI@PoliTo, and Board Member of ELLIS



Emerging DIAS 3.0

Wicked Problems, Blue Sky Mentoring, Society of Fellows, and DIAS Engagement are the result of ongoing collaboration between DIAS management, Fellows, and Chairs.

These four pillars, forming the core of DIAS 3.0, are meticulously designed to promote the playful and curiosity-driven collaboration between researchers from a wide array of disciplines, both within DIAS and beyond. The pillars are designed to appeal to the variety of research approaches and mindsets of the DIAS community. They are meant to evolve with the composition and interests of the community.

The broad conceptual framework for DIAS 3.0 was established between September 2023 and June 2024. It has been endorsed by SDU's Rector and the university's Executive Board.

Wicked Problems

Purpose: to advance collaboration between Chairs and with Fellows, and to foster new knowledge

Wicked Problems delves into some of the most complex and far-reaching challenges that societies across the world face. The initiative is driven by DIAS researchers across disciplines, whose combined expertise fosters deeper understandings of issues that do not have any clear solutions and that call for interdisciplinary approaches. The goal of Wicked Problems is not to offer simple solutions but to provide world-class scholars with a space to explore, collaborate, and find inspiration.

Wicked Problems will operate in three distinct phases:

- **Phase 0 (2024):** A preparatory phase to develop and refine project ideas.
 - **Phase 1 (2024-2025):** An exploratory phase to assess the feasibility of proposed problems, supported by seed funding allocated to selected projects based on their projected expenses.
 - **Phase 2 (2025-2026):** An assessment, selection, and implementation phase, where projects with significant research potential will advance.
-

Blue Sky Mentoring

Purpose: to nurture and mentor future research leaders peer-to-peer

Blue Sky Mentoring is a visionary programme designed to nurture the dreams and aspirations of SDU's best and brightest minds. At its core, the programme will offer personalised mentoring led by esteemed DIAS Chairs, ensuring guidance and support tailored to each young scholar's ambitions and strengths. It will welcome applications from ambitious dreamers across SDU, inviting a diverse range of perspectives and ideas. A limited number of participants will be selected to ensure focused and impactful mentoring, and DIAS aims to host termly workshops under the Blue Sky umbrella, fostering a collaborative and inspiring environment.

Blue Sky Mentoring is not just about achieving research goals but about cultivating the mindsets and personalities of future research leaders. These leaders will be equipped to push the boundaries of knowledge and contribute to building vibrant, innovative communities at SDU.

Society of Fellows

Purpose: to stimulate research activity, networking, and leadership opportunities among Fellows

The Society of Fellows is a self-governing community for DIAS's young talents. It strives to enhance a shared sense of interconnectedness and provide an organisational home base for all DIAS Fellows, both experienced and new. The Society of Fellows facilitates peer learning in weekly seminars that explore topics and host activities pertinent to the world-class researchers of tomorrow. It receives funding from DIAS's core budget for academic and social activities.

The Society of Fellows is also an apt path for including the broader community of excellent early-career researchers at SDU. From Autumn 2024, it will offer a Visiting Fellow Programme providing limited-term membership to a select group of outstanding young scholars from across the university's five faculties.

The Society of Fellows operates with a rotating presidency with up to three seats. These are currently occupied by Anthony Fernandez (Fellow of Health Science), Bryan Yazell (Senior Fellow of Humanities), and Karl Attard (Senior Fellow of Science).

DIAS Engagement

Purpose: to bring DIAS's research into society and stimulate interest in and support for our mission

DIAS Engagement encapsulates DIAS's strategic efforts to enhance its visibility and impact in society and to establish a distinct and recognisable brand. Core activities in this pillar include partnerships with relevant cultural institutions, a 'Community of the Curious' at SDU centred on literature and film, and yearly events focusing on conditions and trends in basic research. This will help DIAS amplify its voice and reach broader audiences.

A main priority in DIAS Engagement's initial phase is a partnership with Word Festival. Word Festival is a yearly event in Odense that hosts lectures, talks, and debates on culture, knowledge, and society. It attracts both national and international audiences. DIAS will contribute to the festival and host pre-events throughout the rest of the year. All DIAS x Word Festival activities will involve a wide range of excellent scholars with distinct points of view, mainly from or affiliated with SDU.



Faces of excellence

Research excellence takes many forms and each outstanding researcher seeks inspiration and challenges in their own unique way.

DIAS strives to foster a nourishing environment that encourages playfulness and enables outstanding scholars to achieve excellence.

Excellent researchers is what makes DIAS excellent. But what do our Fellows and Chairs gain from DIAS in return?

Four members of the DIAS community share their thoughts.



Angela Chang

Senior Fellow of Health Sciences

At DIAS, you will find many ambitious people in one place. This inspires me to be more ambitious and think even bigger. I also appreciate the open atmosphere and the comfort in being controversial; the friendly debates and challenges to dogmas have been so refreshing. I'm not afraid to test new ideas with the DIAS community, even if they may seem controversial.

I recently witnessed interviews with potential DIAS Fellows and saw candidates who brought novel perspectives and really challenged conventions in academia. This was interesting and provocative. The fact that the DIAS Chairs present were interested in and enthusiastic about candidates with unconventional and bold approaches, rather than just playing it safe, made me very happy.

Donald Canfield

Chair of Science

I love being part of DIAS and do my best thinking in my office there. It has a lovely view, the nearby coffee machine is superior, and I enjoy my random encounters with other DIAS associates. Within DIAS, I have access to some of the most creative and interesting minds at SDU. My DIAS colleagues are excellent at sharing ideas and pushing my intellectual boundaries into areas I never would have expected, and I am always learning. I also really gain from the DIAS lectures and try to attend them all to learn something new. Sometimes I'm truly inspired in ways that both challenge and shape my own thinking.

The DIAS Fellows are also an inspiration. I love to feel and witness their enthusiasm, as well as their zeal for interdisciplinary thinking. I appreciate my first-hand view of both the challenges and opportunities that young academics face.



Pieter Vanhuysse

Chair of Business and Social Sciences

A main benefit for me is the ability to converse weekly with driven, academically excellent researchers from different fields than mine. The friendly spirit of DIAS has further enabled this, combining with an embrace of excellence in academic pursuits.

Another benefit is the lecture series featuring top scholars from around the world. Specifically, I appreciate the opportunity, as a political scientist, to collaborate with historians and economists to bring world-class scholars on capitalism to speak at DIAS in the context of our past 'History of Capitalism' series.

The communication and dissemination efforts of DIAS are also a welcome forum for spreading research results.



Norbert Krüger

Chair of Engineering

I think that DIAS is how a university should be: gaining deep insights into different subjects from top scientists to link fields and overcome silo thinking. Only such an approach will allow us to address the big problems in science and society.

At DIAS, it is allowed – maybe even required – to think BIG. Taking the risk to outline an overarching idea or describe a 'wicked problem' and the steps that might be required to address it.

We have far too many papers with epsilon progress along the narrow aisles suggested by mainstream thinking. At DIAS, one can breathe.



Contact DIAS

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