

NEWSLETTER

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CONTENTS

Foreword

Page 2

Unforgettable moments as the Director of DAAD Regional Office Jakarta

Page 3

Get to know the new DAAD Research Ambassadors

Page 5

Advertisement by German Universities

- International Graduate Center (IGC) - HS Bremen
- Jacobs University

Page 12

Advertisement by German Universities

- TUM Campus Heilbronn
- HTW Berlin

Page 14

A Story from Berlin by Amalia Sitti Khayyira

Page 15

Scholarship Now Open

Page 18

Advertisement by German Universities

- University of Bayreuth.
- ESB Business School at Reutlingen University

Page 18



Foreword

Dear readers,

Despite the ongoing pandemic, there have been many activities to look back on and many plans to look forward to in 2022. In this new edition of our newsletter, we would like to present some “highlights” to you. We hope you enjoy the information!

In September, the Falling Walls Labs in Jakarta and Singapore took place, and the winners were invited to the worldwide Falling Walls Lab competition in Berlin. Please read how our winner of FWL Indonesia experienced her stay at the Berlin Lab.

Many of our DAAD alumni obtained their Master’s or doctorate degrees from a German university and are now working at an Indonesian university from Sumatra to Papua. Who could be a better “Ambassador” to inform the Indonesian people about the German research system and study or research possibilities in Germany? In our interviews, you will get to know more about our “DAAD Research Ambassadors”. Who knows, maybe you will become a Research Ambassador in the future!

I hope you enjoy the interviews and other information in this edition of our newsletter. Any comments, remarks, and suggestions are, as always, welcome!

I would like to close this foreword with a personal message: After four years in our DAAD Office Jakarta I will be leaving Jakarta within the next few days as it is time for my retirement. I spent four exciting and unforgettable years here, which will forever remain in my heart. And I am deeply impressed by the many wonderful people I met here, whether at universities or research centers, in our office, or social gatherings such as our “DAAD Alumni meetings”. I would like to thank all of you, dear alumni and friends of the DAAD, with whom I met personally or otherwise communicated, for your kindness, understanding, helpfulness, and of course for the wonderful cooperation during my time in the DAAD Office. I would particularly like to thank the many university professors, scientists, and off-campus partners for participating in our seminars and conferences as speakers, selection interviews as assessors, and day-to-day communication as partners! This also includes our friends and partners at the German Embassy and German partner organisations, at Kemendikbud and other ministries, at the rectorates and international offices of universities all over the country. I was happy to see that the academic cooperation between Germany and Indonesia is flourishing, and I sincerely hope that it will grow even stronger in the future. All the best to you all, thank you, and “Auf Wiedersehen”

Thomas Zettler

UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS AS THE DIRECTOR OF DAAD REGIONAL OFFICE JAKARTA



Every beginning must come to an end, and in the beginning of 2022 the team of DAAD Regional Office Jakarta must say good-bye to our beloved Director, Mr. Thomas Zettler, which has been the Director of DAAD Regional Office Jakarta since 2018. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has also made the time seems running so fast, however during almost 4 years in Indonesia we believe that there are a lot of memories that Pak Thomas, as we all address him, wanted to share with all of us. Therefore, in this edition, we conducted an interview with Mr. Thomas Zettler to ask him about the most unforgettable experience during his time in Indonesia.

What surprised you most in your everyday life when you arrived in Indonesia?

I had been to Indonesia several times before, so the country and the city of Jakarta were not completely unfamiliar to me. However, having lived in Bonn—a city of 300.000 people—for many years, living in a megacity such as Jakarta was something I had to adapt to! One of the first words I learned was “macet”. I’ve then become accustomed to planning meetings and possible places to meet very thoroughly, always thinking about the possibility of “macet” on the way. But after a while, I understood that Jakarta has many good sides too. Above all, I was always surprised by the friendliness and helpfulness of its people. Wherever I met people, be it on the street, in a “Bluebird” taxi, “Gojek” ride, or at a museum, you can almost immediately talk with them about each other’s life, family, and personal history. I was also very impressed by the “Javanese politeness” that can be found anywhere (not just by talking to Javanese people, by the way...). After a while, Jakarta seemed quite like a home to me and to my wife, too.

And during your work?

From my first day of work at our DAAD office in Jakarta, I quickly realized that I was lucky to join such an experienced, competent, and pleasant team. Everything was well organized and each colleague worked autonomously while still maintaining good communication with the other team members. Each step was well planned and organized, and there was an atmosphere of creativity that I really liked. This made it very easy for me to adapt to new tasks and situations that arose during those first weeks and months.

Secondly, I was really surprised to see the number of Indonesians with strong ties to German universities and partners. Many of them spent several years in Germany, studying and completing their doctorate studies or doing other research work. The total number of Indonesians who have studied and conducted research or participated in internship programs in Germany exceeds 30.000, and they are funded by various financing schemes or with their own funds. The DAAD alone counts no fewer than 3.100 “DAAD Alumni”—Indonesians who have spent extended periods in Germany through DAAD scholarships. During my stay, whenever I visited Indonesian universities, I always met “German Alumni” or “DAAD Alumni”, many of them now working as university teachers and professors. Of course, many “Deutschland-Alumni” are working in the industry as well as in the government.

UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS AS THE DIRECTOR OF DAAD REGIONAL OFFICE JAKARTA

But science is not a one-way street. During my time in Jakarta, I also met many German students, scientists, and university representatives who came to Indonesia to study and conduct research or do an internship. Some universities, such as Göttingen and IPB, Duisburg-Essen and UI, or UGM and RWTH Aachen, often look back on long-term partnerships that have lasted decades. Therefore, the DAAD office receives many visits from German professors who are visiting their Indonesian university partners. At least this was the situation before COVID-19 and hopefully, it will be the same again soon.

Last but not least, I was impressed by the network of partners and friends I suddenly found myself to be a part of. Our partnership with Kemendikbud looks back on more than 30 years of cooperation, and I can say it is not a partnership that only exists on paper, as we are always striving to deepen our cooperation and to design new activities together. We also have a strong partnership with the German Embassy in Jakarta (and in Singapore, as our office is in charge of DAAD activities over there as well) who provided us with valuable assistance in our many activities. We are also thankful for the always-excellent communication that has been established between the DAAD and the Embassy. Some of our longtime German partners include Goethe-Institut Jakarta and Studienkolleg Indonesia. We also have special ties to some of the Indonesian provinces such as Aceh. Our Aceh-DAAD joint scholarship programme has been running for 12 years now. On the international level, we have worked closely with our sister organisations Nuffic-Neso (Netherlands), Campus France, British Council (and ENQA in Brussels), and cooperated with the science attachés of various Embassies in Jakarta.

However, as I mentioned earlier, my experience with our Indonesian university partners and friends, from Jakarta to Aceh, from Bogor to Jayapura, was a particularly impressive one. I often visited universities both within and outside of Java, received guests from different universities at our DAAD office, or met partners during events. And from these experiences, I recognized that internationality and cooperation in education and science are not empty words but are instead terms that comprise a certain openness as well as a curiosity towards new things. There is a big community of students, university teachers, and people from the world of economy and governments who have experienced these feelings and share their values and approach—regardless of whether they come from Indonesia, Germany, or any other country.

Will your life still be connected to Indonesia in any way in the future?

As the Japanese scientist and writer Mori Ōgai, who had spent several years in Berlin, put it in 1890: “For sure I, the person who returns to the East now, am not the same person anymore who travelled by the sea towards the West some years ago.” After spending these four years in Indonesia I feel that both my wife and I share this sentiment. Our time in Indonesia will, for sure, always stay with us. And our ties with Indonesia will certainly remain and hopefully develop even further.

Do you have any plans for the near future?

There is a wonderful aspect of retirement—you don't have to plan too much for the weeks and months ahead. Until now, I haven't spent much time thinking about what comes next. But, of course, the next weeks will be quite busy anyway. First of all, we will have a lot of work to do in our house in Bonn after we move in again. Then we will have the pleasure of meeting our friends and relatives, many of whom we have not seen in a long time. I'd also be happy to have more time for my favorite hobby: music. I used to play the keyboard in our DAAD band in Bonn and will be happy to be in a band again. And, if there is no more global virus around, Jakarta may see us again as tourists next year or the year after.



Photo: DAAD AS Jakarta

GET TO KNOW THE NEW DAAD RESEARCH AMBASSADORS



Germany is well known for its large investments in research and development. According to data from Destatis (2019), spending in the R&D sector exceeded 110 billion euros in 2019 alone. This is just one of the reasons why the German research landscape attracts so many researchers from Germany and other countries around the world.

The country's high research and development budget is also supported by more than 1.000 public and publicly funded institutions for science and R&D—in which many are open for anyone to participate. You also have the opportunity to meet more than 434.000 researchers from different fields and research institutions in Germany. As a result, the research environment in Germany has grown further than ever before.

To further promote Germany as a research destination, DAAD Regional Office Jakarta has appointed several researchers to become our Research Ambassadors beginning in 2019. The Research Ambassadors are senior academics and scientists who have a long-standing relationship with Germany. As DAAD alumni, they have studied or researched in Germany and are familiar with the German higher education system through their own experience.

After 2 years, we have grown the network extensively and currently have 6 new Research Ambassadors to promote research in Germany. This time, we engaged researchers from both the western and eastern parts of Indonesia to further promote research in Germany. Our new Research Ambassadors are:

- Prof. Dr. Faizal Arya Samman from Hasanuddin University, Makassar
- Prof. Dr. Heri Kuswanto from Sepuluh Nopember Institute of Technology, Surabaya
- Prof. Dr. Iwan Rudiarto from Diponegoro University, Semarang
- Dr. Margaretha Z. Pangau-Adam from Cenderawasih University, Jayapura
- Dr. rer. medic. Muhammad Ichwan from the University of Sumatera Utara, Medan
- Dr.-Ing. Rudi Kurniawan from Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh

We recently interviewed our new Research Ambassadors to learn more about their expertise, research, and activities during their time in Germany. Let's get acquainted with our new Research Ambassadors.

Interview with Prof. Dr. Faizal Arya Samman



Photo: Prof. Dr. Faizal Arya Samman

Can you introduce yourself and give a little bit of information about your area of expertise? (For example: what are your current academic activities, research topics, ongoing projects, etc.?)

My name is Faizal Arya Samman. I am a faculty member of the Department of Electrical Engineering at Hasanuddin University in Makassar. I lived in Germany from 2002 to 2010, where I completed my doctoral studies at Technische Universität Darmstadt which was funded by a DAAD Scholarship. My research interests lie in the fields of electronic systems design, digital computer architecture, and systems-on-chip. I am currently working on an ongoing research project that focuses on power electronics applications for renewable energy systems and electric vehicles.

What do you think speaks about Germany as a research destination?

Germany is a land of ideas with a long history of scientific tradition and innovation. Its pharmaceutical, chemical, electronic, and automotive industries have produced so many high-quality products and as a result, attracted students from all around the world to come and study.

Germany boasts excellent funding support for science and innovation that is provided not only by the government but also by various industries within the country. Although not directly related, German universities are also free of tuition fees—which adds another impressive reason to study and research in Germany.

What was your most unforgettable research experience in Germany?

Almost all of my research experiences have been memorable, but one that stayed a lot on my mind was when I was doing my research at Fraunhofer Institute for Structural Durability and System Reliability, conducting research collaboration with Technische Universität Darmstadt as well as other higher educational institutes and industries.

Do you have any recommendations on how to find supervisors or research partners in Germany?

Before finding a supervisor or a research partner, make sure that they are qualified and experienced in the field that you have chosen, and have provided a plan for the research project. It also helps if you already have a great research proposal ready.

Finding or approaching German research partners is no easy task. But it is a reflection on the qualifications that one should have. Stay optimistic and keep trying. As long as our research interests are in line with the German professors', then there is always room for discussion to establish research connections.

Finally, do you have any advice for people who are looking to conduct research in Germany?

Prepare a good research proposal. Ensure that the research objective is clear and challenging. Research goals should be driven to find a novel idea or breakthrough in science and technology.

When you begin your research, you need a strong determination to reach your goals according to the schedule that has been set. You need to be active, follow proper schedules, and be disciplined. Remember to improve on your qualifications and learn something new during the research period. If you have a new idea, feel free to discuss it as it may give you a better understanding of things.

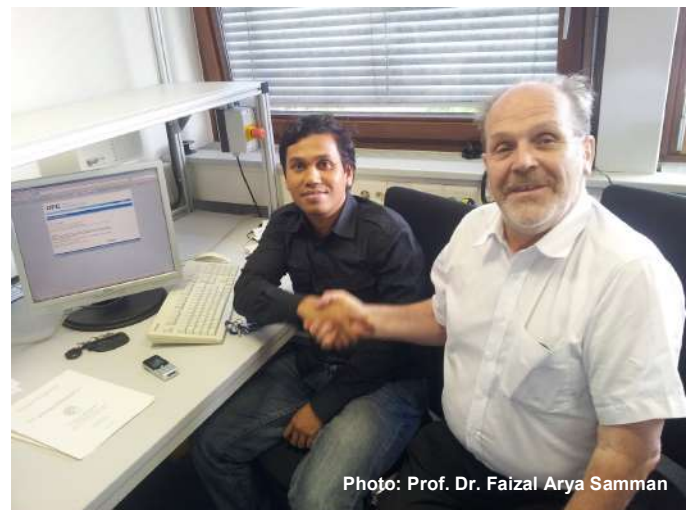


Photo: Prof. Dr. Faizal Arya Samman

Interview with Prof. Dr. Heri Kuswanto



Photo: Prof. Dr. Heri Kuswanto

Can you introduce yourself and give a little bit of information about your area of expertise? (For example: what are your current academic activities, research topics, ongoing projects, etc.?)

My name is Heri Kuswanto, a Professor in Computational Statistics at the Department of Statistics, Sepuluh Nopember Institute of Technology (ITS). I am also an active researcher at the Centre for Disaster Mitigation and Climate Change at ITS. I have been focusing my research on weather and climate modeling, machine learning as well as econometrics forecasting. I am currently working on investigating the impact of Solar Radiation Management on hydro-climatic extremes in South-east Asia, especially in Indonesia. The project is funded by The World Academy of Science (TWAS) and UNESCO through The Developing Country Impacts Modelling Analysis for SRM (DECIMALS) project. Since 2020, I have been appointed as the Director of Postgraduate Program and Academic Development at ITS. I am also an elected member of the Indonesian Young Science Academy (ALMI) 2021.

What do you think speaks about Germany as a research destination?

I would say that Germany is a perfect place for conducting research. German institutions provide complete materials (literature, equipment, etc.) that we need to carry out perfect research. The academic atmosphere and research environment support us in achieving high-quality research outcomes. What I know so far is that German professors are also very professional, helpful, wise, and possess deep expertise in their fields.

What was your most unforgettable research experience in Germany?

I could never forget the German people's professionalism and the country's excellent working environment. My doctoral supervisor was very professional, kind, and helpful. My friends at the institute were more than just colleagues to me, they were also "a family". They were so nice, and we supported each other. This made my time researching in Germany so much more enjoyable. I also really appreciate the amount of literature available for us to peruse back then. I had access to almost all of the journals that I needed, and it greatly enhanced my research.

Do you have any recommendations on how to find supervisors or research partners in Germany?

Finding a doctoral supervisor and research collaborator is an important step for someone who is looking to conduct research in Germany. There might be several ways to locate a supervisor or research partner in Germany, depending on your situation.

The first case is when you have no previous contact with a German professor. This is exactly what I experienced when I applied for the DAAD Doctoral scholarship.

What I did was the following: I searched on the internet for a list of universities in Germany with institutes (such as the Institut für Statistik) or research centers that match my research field. Once I acquired the list, I visited the web pages of each institute/research center to learn more about the professors' research interests. I sent an email (inquiring about their availability to supervise my doctoral studies) to several professors starting from the one who has the most similar research interest with my research plan. If I haven't received any reply within two weeks (although normally the professor will still send a reply to inform us they could not supervise our study plan), I sent an email to the second professor on my list, and so forth until a professor said he or she was willing to supervise my doctoral study plan. Please make sure that you write an impressive email and portfolio. Note also in your email that the research topic you proposed is subject to further discussion.

Another way is to ask your colleague/senior who has previous contact/research with a German professor, providing you have one. Ask him or her to introduce you to the professor.

When you possess a certain experience in a specific field, then you can join a project and work together with a German professor—whatever your role may be. Of course, if you are in this situation, everything will be easier. You can then send an email directly to the professor to convey your interest to undertake doctoral studies under his or her supervision.

Interview with Prof. Dr. Heri Kuswanto

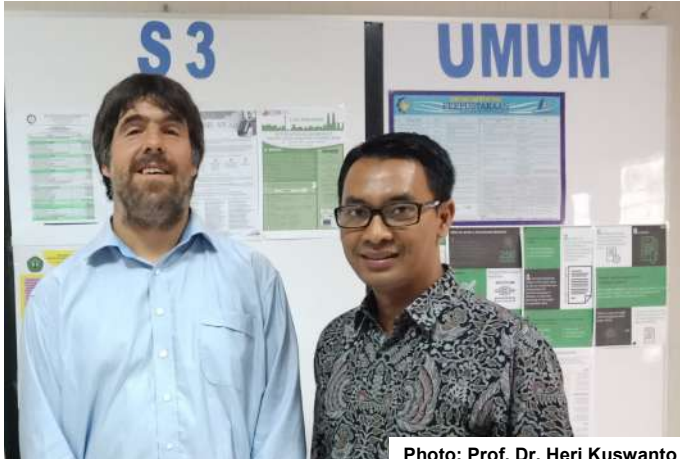


Photo: Prof. Dr. Heri Kuswanto

Finally, do you have any advice for people who are looking to conduct research in Germany?

Keep on the lookout for information on research opportunities in Germany. This information can come from many sources. In our capacity as DAAD research ambassadors, we will also help you disseminate any information that might prove to be useful. Learn basic skills that German research institutions might need such as language proficiency. Never give up—try to motivate yourself in achieving your goals. Once you believe it in your heart, it will come true.

Interview with Prof. Dr. Iwan Rudiarto

Can you introduce yourself and give a little bit of information about your area of expertise? (For example: what are your current academic activities, research topics, ongoing projects, etc.?)

My name is Iwan Rudiarto, a professor at the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia. I obtained my bachelor's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia, in 1998 and received an M. Sc. in Land Management and Land Tenure from Technical University of Munich in 2005 and completed my doctoral studies at the University of Hohenheim in 2010. My areas of expertise are related to rural planning and development, rural resilience, environment, and land management. Currently, I am teaching and supervising students in bachelor, master, and doctorate programs in Urban and Regional Planning at Universitas Diponegoro. I am now actively involved in The Global Centre of Spatial Methods for Urban Sustainability (GCSMUS) as an advanced researcher and representative of Indonesia. GCSMUS is one of 12 Excellence Centres for Exchange and Development (exceed), funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) via the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) with its coordination base at the TU Berlin and connects close to 50 partners across eight world regions. Currently, I am also serving as the President of the Indonesian Planning Schools Association (IPSA), the association that covers all bachelor, master, and doctorate programs in Urban and Regional Planning in Indonesia.



Photo: Prof. Dr. Iwan Rudiarto

Interview with Prof. Dr. Iwan Rudiarto

What do you think speaks about Germany as a research destination?

In my opinion, choosing Germany as a research destination is the right decision as there are nearly 400 higher education institutions ready to accommodate researchers. Supported by a strong academic atmosphere, Germany is a leading country in the European Union that places research-based education with a sufficient allocation of funds for both basic research and applied research from public and private funds.

What was your most unforgettable research experience in Germany?

What I remember the most during my time researching in Germany was my participation in various conferences. The professor, as our research supervisor, always supported doctoral candidates to present their current research (for example, sharing an update or research findings) in various seminars as well as international conferences.

Another thing that I found important is the opportunity to meet colleagues from different nationalities in the university research groups. I believe this is an important key to building networks with other countries. I have been working hard to maintain this network even now after I returned home. I also learned a lot about discipline, I learned how the German people always follow the rules, plans, and punctuality in all aspects of life.

Do you have any recommendations on how to find supervisors or research partners in Germany?

One key to finding a supervisor or research partner in Germany is through networking or the connections that we have. We can build this network during our study or research in Germany, either in the university where we learn and do research or with partners from other universities or institutions. If you haven't begun networking with others, you can use the internet to look for websites as the first source of information in identifying supervisors with the same topic of interest. Also, a supervisor with a high interest or connection to Indonesia will be an advantage. We can obtain this information from their publications and research history.

Finally, do you have any advice for people who are looking to conduct research in Germany?

For those interested in pursuing their research in Germany, my first advice is that they should take a look at the information available on related websites, such as www.daad.de and <https://www.research-in-germany.org/en/>. Other than that, you can contact DAAD Regional Office Jakarta or through us, the DAAD Research Ambassadors. I believe the experience that the Research Ambassadors have will provide you with more insight into studying and researching in Germany.



Photo: Prof. Dr. Iwan Rudiarto

Interview with Dr. Margaretha Z. Pangau-Adam



Photo: Dr. Margaretha Z. Pangau-Adam

Can you introduce yourself and give a little bit of information about your area of expertise? (For example: what are your current academic activities, research topics, ongoing projects, etc.?)

I am Margaretha Pangau-Adam, a senior lecturer and researcher at the Department of Biology, Cenderawasih University, Jayapura, Papua. I received my doctoral degree from the Faculty of Biology of the University of Goettingen in 2003 and continued my postdoctoral studies in Germany from 2011-2014. My research interests include tropical forest management, population ecology and in-situ conservation, wildlife monitoring, and community-based co-management of sustainable use and nature conservation. Currently, I am assisting the regional coordination of the DAAD University partnership program, entitled "Integrating Forest Management with Biodiversity Education in Papuan Universities". Through this program, we try to support, assist, and strengthen local communities in managing their forest areas. I am also working on an ongoing research project, which is focusing on studying population ecology and the distribution range of introduced rusa deer in Papua as well as their impact on forest regeneration and competition with the Papuan native herbivores. In 2019 to 2021, this research project was funded by the GIZ-FORCLIME.

What do you think speaks about Germany as a research destination?

In my opinion, Germany has become one of the world's top destinations for research and studying. The country has a wide-ranging, innovative, and diverse research landscape with a stable framework condition for science and research activities. German universities, higher education institutions, and non-university research centers offer the very best conditions for international researchers with a variety of funding opportunities and scholarships. Germany is currently seen as being more attractive for research scientists as well as students because its education system is free of tuition fees in almost all of its states.

What was your most unforgettable research experience in Germany?

There are many unforgettable experiences. During my time studying in Germany, the main doctoral supervisor, or the so-called Doktorvater, as the name tells, was taking care of his students as if we were his own children. He sought to provide financial support until I completed my doctoral studies as my scholarship had run its course. It was a helping hand that I will forever be grateful for.

Do you have any recommendations on how to find supervisors or research partners in Germany?

Be more active in seeking collaboration possibilities and academic contacts with scientists and professors in Germany. There is sufficient information available online. Usually, there are some centers and international offices at the universities in Germany. Find out the contact person and try to communicate with them. They may provide information and even help you find potential supervisors or research partners. If you already have existing contacts or networks, do not hesitate to communicate and ask them for any support in finding supervisors. Look for information by asking members of the German Alumni Club, your colleagues who are also German alumni as well as DAAD research ambassadors.



Photo: Dr. Margaretha Z. Pangau-Adam

Interview with Dr. Margaretha Z. Pangau-Adam

Finally, do you have any advice for people who are looking to conduct research in Germany?

First, you should have concrete and specific ideas for your research, and it will be better if you already prepared a brief research proposal. Try to find collaborative partners that share your research interest. Write them a short and compact email. The professors in Germany have much work to do and many of them do not have enough time to read a long email. If one scientist or professor rejected your proposal, try again with other scientists/professors. Try and try again, don't give up.



Photo: Dr. Margaretha Z. Pangau-Adam

Interview with Dr. rer. medic. Muhammad Ichwan



Photo: Dr. rer. medic. Muhammad Ichwan

Can you introduce yourself and give a little bit of information about your area of expertise? (For example: what are your current academic activities, research topics, ongoing projects, etc.?)

My name is Muhammad Ichwan. I am currently working as Assistant Professor at the Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics, Faculty of Medicine, the University of Sumatera Utara in Medan. I am also the Program Director of the Biomedical Sciences Master's Program in the same faculty. I finished my doctoral studies at Kempermann's lab at TU Dresden in the field of Neurogenesis and Natural Compounds from plants. I continued studying this field by establishing a research group on neurogenesis and neuroplasticity, which also includes many colleagues with expertise in neurology, neurosurgery, psychiatry histology, and pathology. The research group encompasses subject matters such as in-vitro, animal, and clinical studies. To support animal studies, we are constructing an animal facility in the medical faculty as well as analyzing several disease models such as diabetes, hypertension, aging, stress and depression, and stimulant addiction. We also applied behavioral tests and analyses in rodents such as the Morris Water Maze test, Novel Object Recognition Test, and Forced Swim Test. Our ongoing task is to observe the effect of Channa and Centella Asiatica extracts on cognitive performance and well-being in the elderly. The project also includes community service activities and involves partners from the industry. Additionally, I am currently supervising several master's and doctoral thesis projects with topics related to the role of plant extracts and herbs in neurology and psychiatry disorder in the animal model.



Interview with Dr. rer. medic. Muhammad Ichwan

What do you think speaks about Germany as a research destination?

I absolutely agree with the "Germany – Land of Ideas (Land der Ideen)" motto. I felt free in selecting the academic courses that are necessary for my project or my interests. As I was writing my thesis, I was fortunate enough to have received valuable financial support, supervision, and scientific input, in addition to collaborative and social support from other groups. I looked back and remember that time to be a productive and pleasant one. Besides research excellence, Germany offers a convenient environment for researchers with families. The German people are warm-hearted and they care a lot about their families. They are curious about other foreign cultures and appreciate the differences that we all have. The German government also supports the integration between foreigners and locals by providing affordable cultural and language courses.

What was your most unforgettable research experience in Germany?

I chose the role of apple compounds in neurogenesis as the research topic for my dissertation. I learned a lot about apple cultivation in the Dresden area. I even attended a famous apple exhibition in Dresden to learn more about this subject. Now I can say I know more about apples compared to my German colleagues. I can also talk about apples and their natural compounds confidently in front of other people. What's more, I was dubbed "the Apple Guy" by the guys in the lab! I found this experience to be unforgettable and I definitely would not have had this knowledge in Indonesia. This is my most memorable research experience in Germany.

Do you have any recommendations on how to find supervisors or research partners in Germany?

The best way to find supervisors in Germany is by learning more about their published works. If you find a research article interesting and it matches your research interest, you can then look up through Google to find out more about the research group and its principal investigator. You can easily find their email address in the paper and start corresponding with them. It would be even better for you if the city the institute is in is known as a nice place to live (depending on your preferences). There you can contact the Indonesian students association to acquire more information.

Finally, do you have any advice for people who are looking to conduct research in Germany?

My advice to those looking to research in Germany: Plan your research well. Talk to your mentor (supervisor) and colleagues. Always discuss any progress or obstacles that you have. Don't waste your time by troubleshooting the problem alone. People are willing to help you if you are active in social interactions. Learning the German language is a great advantage for social integration in the laboratory and around the neighborhood. This will make life significantly easier and enjoyable. Don't forget to enjoy life. Germany is much wider and more beautiful than in a picture on your desktop or laboratory desk ;)

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Interview with Dr.-Ing. Rudi Kurniawan

Can you introduce yourself and give a little bit of information about your area of expertise? (For example: what are your current academic activities, research topics, ongoing projects, etc.?)

My name is Rudi Kurniawan, a lecturer at Syiah Kuala University in Banda Aceh. I received my master's degree and doctoral degree in mechatronics—an interdisciplinary field that combines mechanics and electronics—from the University of Duisburg-Essen in Germany. We know that Industrial Revolution 4.0 and mechatronics play an important role in world development today. While studying abroad in Germany, I learned how to apply mechatronics to robotics and built cable robots for logistic applications together with my team. We made our equipment from nothing as well as designed and developed each robot component ourselves. After finishing my studies, I returned and became a lecturer at Syiah Kuala University. I realized that I needed to adapt the knowledge that I gained in Germany to the situation in Indonesia and the needs of its people.

I am currently working on several ongoing research projects. For the first project, my affiliation, Universitas Syiah Kuala, purchased the so called shaking table to simulate an earthquake motion. After that, we create building mockups to simulate how they behave during earthquakes. We have to be proud because the tools that we use are currently only available at Syiah Kuala University in Indonesia, for we are pioneers in tsunami and disaster mitigation research. Indonesia is the only country in the whole of Southeast Asia, besides Singapore, that has this tool.

In my second project, we built a small-scale tensile machine for testing single fibre of banana leaves. As we all know, Indonesia is blessed with many banana trees. In this research, we are attempting to study a single fiber of banana leaves to learn more about its tensile properties. We even assembled a tensile machine by ourselves. This could be a really important step forward for the research and development of natural fibers in Indonesia, a subject that has recently gained popularity among researchers. In the past, we had to go to the city of Kobe in Japan to perform these kinds of experiments. Now that we have the technology, we can do it all here.

I am also conducting a new research project on COVID-19. Recently, we received 3-year funding from a reputable institution. We are currently proposing a new Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning system to bring forth a new isolation room standard, which can hopefully help many COVID-19 patients. Since this is a new study, we have to completely create a control system, collect the data, design the system, etc.

To summarize, I believe that the knowledge I gained while studying in Germany has proven to be very useful here in Indonesia.



What do you think speaks about Germany as a research destination?

Germany is like a second home to me. Everyone knows the motto "Germany – Land of Ideas" and I firmly believe that to be true. In Germany, once you have an idea, you know exactly what you need to do to make it happen. We learn step by step how to achieve that: we design and meet people from the industry, and then meet other people who can help take our ideas further. We learn how to negotiate and follow the process to make it happen. I think that is also why many people in Germany founded their start-ups right after finishing their formal education—because they have what it takes to realize their ideas.



Interview with Dr.-Ing. Rudi Kurniawan

What was your most unforgettable research experience in Germany?

I learned never to give up! I remember I wanted to go back to Indonesia twice because I felt that I could not finish my studies and research in Germany. I even looked for a ticket to go back home. But I calmed myself, went to the university, and talked to my professor and colleagues. They supported me and suggested that I finish my studies before I go home.

What I am trying to say is, when you feel that you want to give up, you have to realize that you are not alone. When you are at your wit's end, you can always talk to your professor and colleagues and they will help you find new motivations that can keep you going.

After I talked to my colleague about an issue that I found in my research, he said, "Okay, so that's the problem". He identified a solution to my problem and solved my predicament in just 10 minutes!

Do you have any recommendations on how to find supervisors or research partners in Germany?

This is a frequently asked question from anyone interested in doing research in Germany. The first thing you can do is send an email to the professor. If you do not receive a reply from the professor, please contact the senior researcher. Another way to contact the professors is through their secretary. You can send your email to his or her secretary.

Last but not least, if you still haven't received any reply, you can call the professor by phone. I think calling the professor is a way to show that you are truly serious about your intentions.

You can also join a conference where the professor is planning to attend. Fortunately, I didn't encounter any difficulty in finding a supervisor during my master's degree in German, but I gave this advice to my friend, and it works!

I believe that there is a standard procedure for communicating with a professor. Still, you have to be creative in finding out other ways of communication in order to get their attention.

Finally, do you have any advice for people who are looking to conduct research in Germany?

They have to define their goals before coming to Germany. Is it for a holiday or study or research? This is very important. In Germany, we are required to be independent, which means we have to first define our goals. We have to identify our goals, what we want to do, know whom we have to contact, and have a very clear research schedule during our time in Germany to get the best result. Otherwise, we would have wasted valuable time there.

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A STORY FROM BERLIN

by Amalia Sitti Khayyira



Photo: Amalia Sitti Khayyira

It was relatively quiet at Soekarno-Hatta International Airport that evening, November 1st, 2021. This is my first time returning to the airport after SARS-Cov-2 hits. The pandemic undoubtedly changed our lives, including limiting our mobility. I was fortunate enough to come to Berlin for the Falling Walls Science Summit 2021 as Indonesia's representative at the Falling Walls Lab pitches. The flight trip to Berlin took about 17 hours, and I had two extra days before the event began on November 5th. During my extended days, I was hosted by two nice Indonesian students studying at TU Berlin, Anindya and Aulia, who kindly introduced me to student life in Berlin. We also had time to explore the main sights of Berlin, such as Fernsehturm Berlin (Berlin TV Tower), Brandenburg Gate, Holocaust Memorial, Museum Island, and Berlin Cathedral.

Friday came as the events prepared for the Falling Walls Lab winners began. That morning, I carried my luggage all the way from East Berlin to my hotel at Berlin Mitte. Once I arrived at the hotel, I was planning to only store my luggage and continue my journey, but surprisingly I met two Falling Walls Lab finalists, Brigitte from South Africa and Mutembei from Kenya. We all arrived at the hotel so early that we decided to go sight-seeing together before going to the Canadian Embassy where the first event was held. I had planned to go to Futurium, an interactive exhibition in the center of Berlin that encourages us to think about what the future will look like. Futurium was filled with many scenes and dioramas about human development and the future. The spontaneous trip with my new friends was fun because we became close to each other very quickly!

Then comes the introduction event where we were first briefed about pitching on stage. The instructor, who was also the emcee for the Falling Walls Lab pitches, was very energetic and made us feel confident. She briefed us about the technicality of pitch day and gave us some tips for optimal performance, such as:

1. Stand with your feet wide, maintaining a more stable posture, and preventing your legs from tripping or wobbling.
2. Warm-up your knees, bounce up and down before your performance to avoid stiff legs and posture.
3. Train your voice to be firmer and less melodic for a more convincing presentation.

What's interesting about Falling Walls is that you can talk freely with peers from all over the world during each break! This first break was our introductory session with each other. I spoke to the Falling Walls Lab winners (or the so-called "lobsters") from Israel, Slovakia, Trinidad & Tobago, and many others.

Later that afternoon we had a virtual hangout session with the Springer Nature team. We discussed not only publications and ethics, but also many other interesting topics about academia in general, such as gender diversity in STEM, the urgency of commercializing research and innovation, and how our academic environment can be made more inclusive. The day ended with a nice dinner in an Arabic restaurant near the hotel with a small group of friends.

The next day, an event by Research in Germany took place at Berlin Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (BBAW). Germany has a huge amount of funding for research and start-ups. This event served to encourage international scientists and start-up founders to conduct their research in Germany. Representatives of several renowned research institutes such as the Max Planck Institute, the Charite Universitatzmedizin, the Leibniz Association, and the Fraunhofer Society, were also present: at the event. That day, we had more free time to prepare for the pitch on Sunday. There was a funny episode where we FWL participants all fought each other to use the iron on the evening before the pitch, which overwhelmed the hotel staff! This "incident" definitely made us closer and more comfortable with each other.

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Photo: Amalia Sitti Khayyira

Finally, the long-awaited day has arrived. The pitch day was on Sunday, November 7th, 2021. Everyone was dressed in nice suits and their best clothes, looking nervous as we gathered to depart to the venue. The event was held at the Radialsystem, a multifunctional art center on the banks of the River Spree, which runs along the East Side Gallery, where the longest remaining section of the Berlin Wall is located. It was the perfect venue for the Falling Wall Science Summit.

The order of the presentation was announced about a week in advance. I was the 63rd presenter out of a total of 75 worldwide participants. This time, the FWL presentation was conducted both online and offline. Some participants were unable to travel to Berlin because of the COVID-19 pandemic, so the committee played their video recordings instead. The advantage of being almost the last among the presenters is that I was able to observe the technicalities and keep track of the progress of each presentation. The downside, however, was that I became more anxious as the sessions went on, and was even unable to digest any food during lunchtime. Thirty minutes before the last session began, we went to prepare and be mic-ed up. I mumbled and timed my scripted pitch over and over again until I was confident that I got all the words and timings right. One of my friends messaged me, "Break a leg!". I thought, "Well, maybe I should break a wall instead!"

There were now two presentations ahead of me. I detached myself from my nervousness, trusted that God would help me give my best performance, and said to myself, "You will nail it just fine and it will take no longer than three minutes!". I could not really recall what I felt when I was coming on to the stage. All I remember was how the stage lighting made me unable to see the audience's expression, which is in my case, a good thing so I could focus on myself and avoid any distraction. Three minutes passed in the blink of an eye and the next thing I knew, I was back sitting in my seat. Floods of congratulation messages followed as all my extended families and friends tuned in to the live stream. Still high on adrenaline, I could not pay attention to the latter presenters and just wanted to pat my own back for doing so well. It was exactly how I dreamt it to be, to be able to present smoothly without having to worry about winning or losing. The three Emerging Talents Breakthrough Winners that were announced definitely made a huge impression not only on the panel of judges but also on all of the audience. I was so proud to be standing on the same stage as them and become a part of the Falling Walls alumni community.

A STORY FROM BERLIN

by Amalia Sitti Khayyira



Photo: Amalia Sitti Khayyira

The day after pitch day, it was time for us to freely enjoy the rest of the activities. The Berlin Science Week offered a wide range of supporting events, not only at the main venue but practically all around the city of Berlin. The Falling Walls Lab winners had the opportunity to visit the Berlin Natural History Museum (Museum für Naturkunde). More than just sightseeing, the directors of the museum guided us to see how research on several relevant topics—such as space debris materials, for example—were conducted and showed us various equipment provided by the museum. They also showed us their ongoing project, which was digitalizing the museum collections. Back at Radialsystem, we were free to join any of the scientific talks held in different rooms. Since my research is related to health science, I was more interested in seeing the symposium on Breakthroughs in Life Sciences hosted by Charité Universitätsmedizin. All the speakers were leaders in their respective fields, so this was a very valuable opportunity to learn and engage.

November 9th, 2021, marked the 32nd anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. On this very same day, the highlight of the Falling Walls Science Summit, the Science Breakthroughs of the Year award, took place. A wide range of high-impact research topics, from social science to climate change, were presented. There was a touching moment when the audience gave long-standing applause to Özlem Türeci, the co-founder of BioNTech, the developer of the first mRNA-based vaccine approved for use against COVID-19, or more well-known as the Pfizer vaccine. Science and humanity have come so far to combat real-life problems such as the pandemic and we should all be thankful to these scientists for their contributions to the world. As for me, I want to become one as well!

All the Falling Walls events had finally come to an end. It was sad that we had to say goodbye to the good friends that we made in Berlin. However, as the official hashtag says, #ScienceReunitesUs! We were all grateful to be united in the scientific community. Becoming one of the Falling Walls Lab winners was such a huge milestone in my life and I genuinely hope it will bring me to another leap in my career and experience. As the winners of FWL 2021, we promised to keep being connected, bring home all these wonderful experiences, achieve our dreams, and meet up again in the future Falling Walls event, hopefully winning the Science Breakthrough of the Year award!



Photo: Amalia Sitti Khayyira



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