

"But we are strong, each in our purpose, and we are all more strong together."

— Bram Stocker



Regardless of whether you do research alone or with co-authors, there comes a time to discuss it with your peers. In this issue of The HSE Look, we are happy to present three different takes on a long-running format of professional discussion of research - a seminar series, so as to both bring additional attention to events themselves, as well as enable organizers to share their experience with other colleagues. As one of the seminar series is held at HSE St. Petersburg, it was only fitting to develop further the topic of cross-campus connections via an interview with Professor Barajas, who recently became a Head of the Department of Finance at HSE St. Petersburg in addition to being a leading research fellow at the international laboratory at HSE Perm.

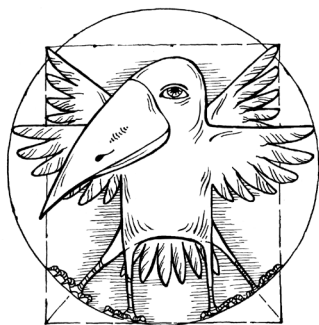
Other issues that we wanted to focus on include a call for applications to the Teaching Excellence workshop and the personal account of Lili di Puppò on how to both keep one's inward focus and discover the world around through practising yoga.

**Director of Internationalization**  
**Yulia Grinkevich**

## Research Seminars at HSE

HSE offers a variety of opportunities to do joint research and discuss the results with colleagues, such as conferences, laboratory projects, stand-alone lectures and workshops, or informal collaborations. One of the less formal yet very purposeful and continual forms is the seminar series, with some of them running for many years and bringing researchers in similar fields together, both inside the university and from abroad.

In this issue of The HSE Look, we would like to focus on three of the many seminar series which are held at HSE, so as to let our readers learn more about the events they can attend, as well find helpful information about their colleagues' experience in organizing seminars (and perhaps even start or join one at their school or department). The three interviews will cover seminars in Sociology (HSE Moscow), Philosophy (HSE Moscow), and History (HSE St. Petersburg).



# Boundaries of History

Alexander Semyonov,

Professor, Head of the Department of History at HSE St. Petersburg

## What is the objective of the seminar series in History?

Once the Faculty of History (now the Department of History and the Center for Historical Research) was established at the HSE campus in St. Petersburg in 2012, the first thing we thought about was a research seminar, which would bring together historians with different backgrounds: political and intellectual history, environmental and technological history, social and cultural history. In addition to creating a discussion platform for different research schools, traditions and approaches, we also wanted to promote the new faculty among the academic community. We were planning to focus on the systematic reflections and advancement of global, comparative, and transnational history. Hence, we settled on Boundaries of History as the title of the seminar.

The complex metaphor in the title refers to limits and scales in comparative and global history, as well as the goal of studying historically formed diversity and, in particular, the diversity and complex arrangement of difference in historic empires. The metaphor also emphasizes the everlasting methodological problem of boundaries between history and other social sciences and humanities. Moreover, we often discuss the division between history and historical memory in all of its manifestations, in particular, fostering a dialogue between professional and public history.

## How often do you hold meetings? How are they organized?

Generally, we have about 20 single-presenter sessions per year accompanied by several major events such as multiday workshops and conferences touching on the key topics of the seminar. Larger events allow more time for the interaction and communication between different parties, while also significantly contributing both to scholarly exchange and reputation.

The seminar series includes sessions with pre-circulated research papers, both in English and Russian, as well as public lectures and roundtables. The most frequent setup for single sessions is rather traditional, i.e. a talk followed by questions and a discussion, which has proven to be the most reasonable format for both speakers and audiences. Nowadays, Boundaries of History seminar enjoys a good

international reputation, and the majority of our guest speakers come from abroad, hence the events are bilingual: in Russian and English.

## Is there any over-arching topic or disciplinary focus for the seminar? How do you choose topics for specific events?

I would suggest that it is not the frequency of the sessions but rather their topical, methodological, and theoretical cohesion and consistency that can make a series out of single events.

From the very onset of the seminar, we had a clear vision about the major topics we want to explore:

- opportunities for historical research across and beyond the boundaries of national history, the analytical value of approaches to global history with respect to different fields and historical periods;
- historical research on empires, colonialism, and nationalism in comparative and global perspectives;
- the porous boundaries between the study of history and adjacent fields of social sciences and opportunities for cross-disciplinary research;
- the arbitrary nature of the boundary between past and present in contemporary historical studies, and the relevance of historical knowledge for public and expert debates in contemporary societies;
- the boundary between professional, public and popular history.

We always try to stay true to this agenda, inviting or responding to the requests of prominent or distinguished scholars in these respective fields. Relevant and prominent publications and joint projects also provide a good reason and occasion for specific events. The seminar has proved to be a living organism and it evolved together with the currents of contemporary historiography. For example, a number of papers presented at the seminar addressed what we called 'contested global history'. And this was enough to prompt a subseries within the seminar in regards to how national or regional traditions paved the way for a peculiar take by historians on the concept of the 'global' in history.

### What are your plans for 2018 and beyond?

'Global history' is a thing which intrigues us the most at the moment. Until recently, historiographies tended to develop within the auspices of nation-states, i.e. they focused primarily on political history of a state or a narrative for national identities, while transnational connections and entanglements were mostly ignored.

The global perspective, with its structures, processes and tendencies remained largely unclaimed, which negatively affected the scope and range of comparative studies. After David Armitage's (Harvard University) talk at Boundaries of History last year, we launched a subseries 'Contested Global History', which we are eager to continue and expand in order to systematically compare different readings and conceptions of 'global history', as well as articulate the variations and divergences in teaching this type of history within different historiographical traditions.

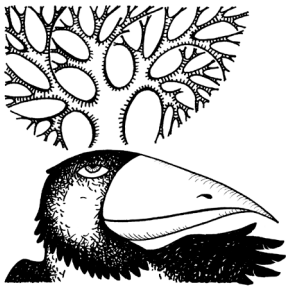
Our other ambition is to carry on bringing historians and anthropologists closer together and look closer into the relations and interactions of professional and public history and the function of collective memory in societies undergoing modernization processes. For the time being, we are planning around 12 sessions up until July, the most prominent names

among our guests include Arjun Appadurai, Dominic Lieven, Alan Barenberg, Andreas Eckert, Sebastian Conrad and others.

### What have been the outcomes of the seminar series?

There are multiple and various benefits that come from this seminar series. Just to name a few, it is a significant reputational gain for both the Department of History and the Centre for Historical Research, as well as our St. Petersburg campus in general. The seminar has helped tremendously in advancing existing research and identifying new promising areas. We were also able to find new international partners, and this led to potentially long-lasting collaboration in research and education. For instance, our partnerships with the Universities of Munich, Eastern Finland, Michigan and Oslo, respectively, originated thanks to the seminar. And it also enabled the creation of the joint Summer School 'Imperial History in a Global Age, 1870-1920' with the Free University Berlin.

It also helped our students to see in concrete terms the fruits of historical research and helped some of them choose an academic career. And last but not the least, the seminar has kept the dialogue going between faculty members despite their crushing teaching loads and various obligations.



## Philosophy Colloquium

**Ulrika Carlsson,**  
Assistant Professor at the School of Humanities

### Why did you decide to start a regular colloquium?

Like many of our international colleagues, **Silver Bronzo** and I went to graduate school in the US, and in each of our departments, a weekly colloquium followed by a reception served as the centre for community life. An important part of being an academic was reading and discussing colleagues' work, as well as listening to presentations of works in progress on a whole variety of philosophical topics by visitors from other educational institutions.

At HSE's School of Philosophy, our Russian colleagues ran all kinds of seminars and research groups, but these were all conducted in Russian and devoted to a particular subfield of philosophy. With only basic Russian, we were not able

to participate in these events, and as a result, we had little opportunity to meet our new colleagues and engage with them intellectually. Therefore, we decided to start a regular colloquium in January 2017, where anyone in the department was invited to give a presentation of their work in English. Now in its third semester, the colloquium meets once a week.

In September 2017, we incorporated an international speaker series into the colloquium at the initiative of our new colleague **Aaron Wendland**. We invited people from abroad to give talks, and the response was quite enthusiastic. Although we do not pay for their trips - the colloquium doesn't have any money - many of the invitees were excited about the prospect of visiting Russia and were thus happy to use their own research funds to do so.

### What are the key objectives of these events?

The speaker series aims to engage Russian academia with the international academic community, enrich the growing English-speaking philosophy group in Moscow, and provide visitors with a chance to receive some constructive criticism and helpful feedback on their work. In doing these things, the international speaker series exposes our Russian colleagues to western ways of arguing and presenting philosophical works, and it should be particularly beneficial to Russian students who want to go abroad for a PhD or post-doc, as well as for faculty members preparing to attend conferences abroad.

### How are the meetings organized?

#### How often do you hold them?

Every event begins with a 45-minute talk by the speaker, followed by a discussion with the audience for another 45 minutes. Afterwards, we have a small reception, and then some of us usually go out to dinner together. This spring we have a meeting scheduled every week except during student breaks and the annual philosophy conference. The speakers are a mix of students and faculty, along with foreign visitors, as well as some people from other institutions in Moscow. We meet on Fridays in the late afternoon, a time that seemed to conflict somewhat less with everyone's teaching schedule. It makes for a nice conclusion of the work week. It also

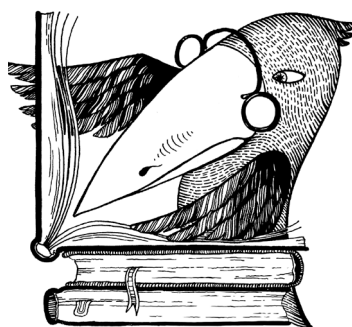
works well for foreign visitors, who can fly in on Thursday, speak on Friday, take the weekend to see Moscow, and then fly back in time to teach the next week.

### How do you choose the topics for the specific events?

When setting our schedule, we e-mail all the professors and PhD students in the department to ask who is interested in giving a talk. Anyone who wants to gets a spot, and they can present on any philosophical topic they wish. At the same time, we ask all international faculty in the department to name a few scholars they'd like us to invite to the international speaker series. So far at least, we haven't organized the schedule according to philosophical themes, and the colloquium as a whole has no one particular focus.

### What are your plans for 2018 and beyond?

We think students can benefit a lot from the colloquium, and our hope is that their attendance will continue increasing. A graduate of the PhD programme has suggested that we should try to arrange it so that graduate students can get credits for attending the colloquium. This might be a good idea. We also hope that the colloquium comes to be regarded by everyone as a permanent feature of department life, and that there won't be classes scheduled at the same time as the colloquium, so that more professors can attend.



## International Research Seminars Series in Sociology

**Christian Fröhlich,**

Assistant Professor at the School of Sociology

### What prompted the launch of the seminar series?

The seminar series in Sociology was launched as early as in the fall semester of 2012 on the initiative of the first foreign assistant professors at the Department of Sociology - Christopher Swader, Sergej Bessudnov, Benjamin Lind and Ruben Flores. Since then, it has been continuously supported by HSE's administration, in particular by Professor Vadim Radaev. It was devised to make advantage of international networks with new colleagues and attract foreign experts as guest lecturers to the Faculty of Social Sciences. This will, therefore, boost the international profile and appeal of HSE's Department of Sociology. This has obviously contributed to the high position of sociology and social science in international rankings in terms of HSE's visibility and prominence.



### **Is there any over-arching topic or disciplinary focus for the seminar?**

The organizers do not set an overarching theme for each year. The only, however weak, guiding principle for the selection of presenters is the prospect of interest not only on the part of sociologists but also from other social science disciplines, such as political science or public administration. As a result, the seminar series involves a huge variety of interesting topics in social research, which have fulfilled another intent, namely to bring HSE faculty into lively contact with the latest developments and innovations in sociology at the global level.

### **How do you choose the topics for the specific events within the series?**

The lectures in the series are usually organized by international faculty at the Department of Sociology, but the organizing groups were started last year for other departments at the Faculty of Social Science in order to make sure these events have a faculty-wide scope. Every member of the organizing team can suggest guest lecturers and then it is decided collectively whom to invite. Most often, the guests are already personally connected to one of the organizers, but those ties may be quite weak, such as an acquaintance from a conference. What counts is whether the research is interesting for social researchers at HSE in general.

But not all guests of the series are directly invited from abroad to participate in our series. Each year, we also invite so-called 'windfall speakers'. These are colleagues who stay in Moscow for other purposes and are just invited over to present and discuss their research at HSE. In the past, these were colleagues from HSE's campus in St. Petersburg, and from the Centre d'Études Franco-Russe in Moscow, where many wonderful scholars from France visit for research stays and teaching.

### **How are the meetings organized? Are they individual presentations or panel debates?**

The evening lectures usually take place during the fall semester, but there may be some events during May and June, or in January and February. There is no standard rhythm, but guest lectures are most often organized once a month. In the early years, these events were more frequent due to the higher number of foreign colleagues working in the department.

The guest lecture itself is organized as an evening event, usually held on Tuesday nights at 6.15pm. The guest lecturer has about 45-60 min talking time, after which a Q&A session follows for around 45min. The debates continue in more

comfortable conditions after that in a nearby Georgian restaurant. The lectures also draw students into the classroom even after teaching hours. Participation is voluntary, of course, and we like to invite the students from the faculty's English-taught Master's programmes.

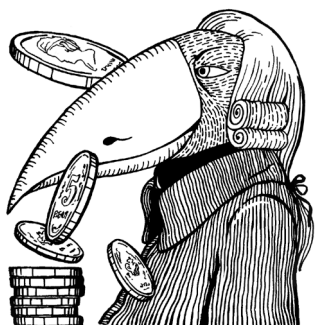
### **What are the usual outcomes of the seminar series?**

Over the years, the seminar series has brought many international scholars to the HSE and thus widened the global networks of the general faculty. These meetings have also provided a multitude of opportunities for research collaboration. Previous guest lecturers have been developing common research ideas with their peers at HSE, or are, in fact, actual or prospective co-authors with HSE faculty members. For example, Ruben Flores did an interview on Norbert Elias with his British guest Stephen Mennell and published it in a journal, and Christian Fröhlich co-authored a paper with Kerstin Jacobsson from University of Gothenburg on protest and dissent in urban liminal spaces.

Inviting guests also poses an opportunity to develop teaching partnerships. Tawat Mahama has been developing a format for teaching the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) method with Sofia Pagliarin from the Swiss Research Institute. Another form of cooperation is developing student exchanges or broader partnership agreements, such as double Master's degree programmes. For example, in 2016 we began our partnership with Tilburg University, including a guest lecture. And in most cases, invited guests not only present their research in the seminar series but also hold a workshop on a particular topic for Master's students, which is a great benefit for the educational environment at HSE. We have held workshops on the sociology of culture and a comparative analysis of secularization. So, our guests mostly end up having quite a full schedule in the one week they are in Moscow, with presenting, teaching, discussing project ideas or institutional cooperation, etc.

### **What are your plans for 2018 and beyond?**

The 2017 seminar series brought a broad variety of topics to the faculty, such as the formation of the urban passenger as a social figure, the moral dimension in social movements, the effects of mega-events such as the Olympic Games on urban development, and the pluralization of law in modern societies. The upcoming seminar series in 2018 will include such topics as modernization and globalization in India or Muslim identities. This year, we also plan to broaden the disciplinary width beyond sociology in order to evolve into a faculty-wide international seminar series in social science.



## A Laboratory, a Department and a Master's Programme: How are Finances, Intangibles and Sport Connected?

It is not unusual for faculty staff to combine several roles, such as a researcher and a teacher, but sometimes they bring even more to the table. *The HSE Look* is glad to present an interview with Professor **Angel Barajas**, who initially joined HSE's campus in Perm as a Leading Research Fellow of the International Laboratory of Intangible-Driven Economy. Also, he is the Head of the Department of Finance at HSE St. Petersburg, as well as the supervisor of a Master's programme there.

**What are your major research interests?  
Does your work in Russia add an extra dimension to this research?**

I generally work on topics related to finance, but to give an example of more specific studies, my PhD thesis was devoted to analyzing the financial side of football clubs. As our Laboratory works on the issue of intangibles, I am also interested in intellectual capital and in the sports industry in particular, as it is a sector highly intensive in intangibles. Of course, the geographical factor also plays a part in my research – from the very beginning it was very interesting for me to understand the specifics of Russian economy. I persuaded my colleagues that we should focus on Russian companies and their behaviour in regards to intangibles. Moreover, we plan to make it a comparative study with their European counterparts.

**What are intangibles and why are they important to study in economics and finance?**

The main feature of intangibles is that they are present but you cannot touch them. In the digital era, there are many things that we cannot touch but we still use them, or we experience them. In a company, for instance, we can find many intangibles – skills of employees, the experience of the board of directors, organizational structure, the relations the company maintains with its clients and other stakeholders, etc. From a financial point of view, it is interesting to understand how intangibles create value for shareholders. Regarding the sports industry, the main intangible assets are the skills of individual competitors and their coaches, how

teams are built, how games are organized to provide more entertainment, etc.

**You've worked at HSE Perm for several years at the International Laboratory of Intangible-Driven Economy. What kind of research does the Lab do?**

Our Laboratory won a grant from the Russian Science Foundation to study the role of intangibles in Russian companies. The idea was to understand how to make Russian firms more competitive in the 'knowledge economy'. In addition to theoretical and methodological findings published in peer-reviewed journals, we also created a vast empirical database of Russian companies analyzing over 50 primary indicators of their intangibles, using European companies as a benchmark. As a practical application, we also created an information system called MIRC (Monitor of Intangibles in Russian Companies), which can effectively monitor companies based on open data. The MIRC analytical system allows us to screen studies, monitor indicators of competitiveness and investment attractiveness. We can also measure effectiveness in terms of how intellectual resources are used, as well as assess the effects of public policies.

We are currently developing two major lines of research. The first focuses on intangibles in Russian companies in relation to their global competitiveness. The second line is devoted to new digital skills applied at Russian companies and the issue of moving from analogue to digital technologies and bridging the skills gap.

**You became the head of the Department of Finance at HSE St. Petersburg in 2017. What are the plans for the department's development?**

One of our goals is to help department staff improve their personal research in line with the general strategy of the School of Economics and Management, which, in turn, is geared towards obtaining international accreditation as a mark of quality, thereby allowing us to better attract talents globally. Naturally, this means that we place a lot of emphasis on presenting research at top conferences

and publishing papers in internationally acclaimed peer-reviewed journals, and in order to support to our faculty in their efforts, we hold research seminars approximately every two weeks. At the moment, the major goal of these seminars is for the members of the department to present their research, so that they can receive feedback from peers and improve their work, as well as perhaps foster some collaboration. In addition to faculty members, we also invite students from PhD and Master's programmes so that they can take part in research and discussions.

**You have plans to launch a new Master's Programme in Management and Analytics in Business this September. Whom do you see as its prospective students?**

We want to attract students who have studied business or economics at HSE, but we are also interested in learners who have a more of a mathematical background, perhaps,

in physics or engineering, who want to learn more about business and corporate management.

We are eager to take the advantage of the fact that Russian students in general have a good background in quantitative methods (e.g. mathematics, econometrics and statistics). Furthermore, when this background is augmented by knowledge and skills related to data-driven management, such graduates are more attractive for companies. In addition, we are going to invite faculty from other departments, as well as visiting scholars, to teach under this programme and supervise student theses.

We want to attract students globally as well; in fact, we already have set the target of having a good number of international students. But this is not the only way our students can get international experience, as we are participants in the international network Quantitative Techniques for Economics and Management (QTEM), which provides opportunities for student exchanges between its members.



## Discovering HSE and Russia

In addition to interviews with international faculty, The HSE Look is launching a new feature – a column about their life in Russia, what they discover in different cities, and interesting venues at HSE and beyond. If you have an interesting experience to share, please contact us at [ifaculty.support@hse.ru](mailto:ifaculty.support@hse.ru). In this issue, we present a column by **Lili di Puppo**.

### Yoga in Moscow

I've been living in Moscow for about 5 years, and by far my favourite place (apart from Orthodox monasteries) is the Yoga 108 studio, which is located in the Kitai Gorod neighbourhood, very close to Myasnitskaya Street. I had practised yoga for one year in Berlin before coming to Moscow, which means that almost all of my yoga practice has taken place in Russia. It has been so far a unique experience of learning yoga while learning Russian at the same time! First, I had to look often at the yoga Russian teachers and tried to be placed next to them to see the positions. Now, I have acquired a substantive vocabulary about the human anatomy in Russian. But since in yoga we work with so many bodily organs and muscles, some that I didn't previously know existed, there is always something new to learn. Breathing is very important in yoga and to this day I cannot yet always follow the very detailed instructions about breathing techniques.

Some of my HSE colleagues have joined me for yoga classes over the years and some continue to actively practice yoga.

Quite often people are a bit apprehensive before attending their first class. Most of the time, they are afraid that others will look at them and notice their lack of flexibility, strength, etc. But this could not be further from the truth! Especially in Moscow, as it seems to me, people take yoga very seriously. They go to a yoga class to do yoga, which means devoting their full attention to their practice. When you are completely relaxed in a yoga position and have left all your other thoughts outside of the room, you will definitely not look at other people and judge them. The only time when we may happen to look at others is when we are laughing together, after the teachers explain how a position that looks impossible to do is actually very easy. Nevertheless, be prepared to do any positions that may look impossible the first time after some practice!

Yoga is about relaxation, stepping out of one's circle of redundant thoughts about the past or future. This makes it just perfect for academics. Also, it helps you to balance the many hours spent at your computer. It makes you aware of your body, which is, again, a very good thing for academics!



The vibrant yoga scene in Moscow would be a very good choice for an ethnographic study. As I understand, yoga has deep roots in Russia and was practised during the Soviet Union. My teachers regularly go to India and come back with perfumes, oils, food, etc. My studio organizes all kind of retreats, including a trip to see Siberian nature. Classes and retreats are affordable, and the price of a yoga class in Moscow is not as expensive as in other big cities in Europe, as far as I can tell. Another difference with yoga studios in other European cities is that a 'beginner's class' in Moscow resembles more an 'advanced class'. The word 'beginner' seems to apply to any class that is not for yoga instructors! Be prepared for an intense yoga practice that lasts close to two hours. However, this doesn't mean that the teachers are not very careful about possible injuries; they will help you to understand how to do a position in the right way. And with

the help of regular practice, an intense yoga class can easily become a normal class. Nevertheless, if you want something for real beginners, try 'beginner's light'.

I cannot imagine Moscow without regularly practising yoga. I always leave yoga classes in a happy mood, ready to join the flow of people entering the busy Moscow metro, and content to have finished a long day with a relaxing moment. I leave my redundant thoughts behind and feel fresh for the following couple of days. Yoga is perfect for life in a big city and it is perfect for academics. When will you start?

*Lili di Puppo is an Assistant Professor at the School of Sociology. In addition to doing research on issues of religion in politics and anti-corruption policies and their implementation, Lili also teaches courses on qualitative research methods in sociology, as well as supervises students' thesis papers.*



## Teaching Excellence Call for Applications

The HSE Look is excited to inform you that the HSE Teaching Excellence Initiative Call is open until March 23, 2018. This programme gives an opportunity for HSE degree programmes to organize workshops for teachers with colleagues from universities abroad who have extensive experience in providing instruction. Such visits can receive institutional funding through applications made by academic programmes.

### Goal of the workshops:

to share best teaching practices in particular disciplines, e.g. the issues of teaching philosophy to non-philosophy majors, project-based learning in economics, etc.

### Target audience:

faculty members who teach at HSE degree programmes, doctoral students.

### Who can submit an application?

Academic supervisors of HSE degree programmes or faculty members who teach degree programmes. Direct self-nominations from invited scholars are not eligible (i.e., applications should be submitted by HSE faculty).

### Useful tips for planning your application:

- workshops should be scheduled for 2018 (between April and December);
- the contribution of the invited speaker to the teaching at a specific degree programme, and any follow-up changes

that the organizers foresee should be explicitly stated in the application.

- the application should include a short description of the contents of the workshops and lectures, as well as their target audience.
- the coordinator of the visit who will attend to all organizational matters should be listed in the application.
- terms and conditions for funding are available on the website and should help you plan the costs associated with a visit.

Detailed information on the conditions and required documents, as well as the application form, is available at <https://visitingscholar.hse.ru/en/>.

Any inquiries concerning the organization and procedures for the HSE Teaching Excellence Initiative may be addressed to Yana Fisher or Ekaterina Sukhanova at [visitingscholar@hse.ru](mailto:visitingscholar@hse.ru). Questions concerning academic issues related to the HSE Teaching Excellence Initiative may be addressed to Vice-Rector Igor Chirikov at [ichirikov@hse.ru](mailto:ichirikov@hse.ru).