

"Great things are done by a series of small things brought together"

— Vincent Van Gogh

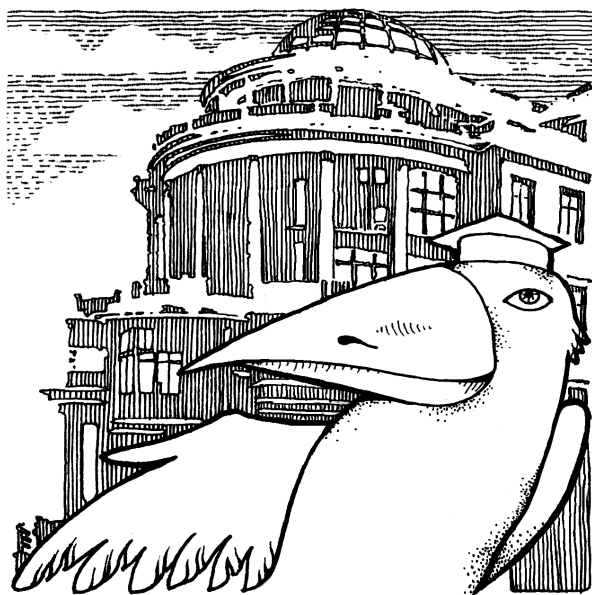


ommunity, and an actively engaged one at that, is a vital part of university life. From the large-scale events which are part of the institution's brand to the grass-root initiatives, everything thrives on genuine and shared interest, and in this issue of The HSE Look we would like to share several stories which might inspire to join the existing projects or start new ones. As a follow-up to the April Conference of 2018, with preparations for the next year already underway, we present the interview with Prof. Fuad Aleskerov about the conference and its role in informing the public debate and furthering research, as well as share impressions from international faculty about this year's papers and what they value most about the April Conference. To provide the contrast with such a large-scale project and showcase the variety of initiatives at HSE, we are glad to present a much smaller but not less vibrant community of the German-language research conference Welt und Wissenschaft through an interview with Yulia Pasko. Traditionally, we also share the announcements of upcoming visits by invited scholars who come to HSE to share their teaching experience with colleagues and give lectures to students. Last but not least, we present two personal accounts of how to fully immerse into the life of the city beyond the university by Arnab Roy Chowdhury and Brian McLoone, whether your stay at HSE is short or long.

**Director of Internationalisation**  
**Yulia Grinkevich**

## April Conference: Bridging Research and Policy

HSE is striving to be not only a world-class research university, but also to actively engage with social and policy issues. While there are many initiatives and projects in each of these aspects of HSE life, April Conference is one of the most notable events which brings them all together. With over 2500 participants from different regions of Russia and different countries attending plenary and academic sessions, it is a major forum for discussing various issues of social and economic development



## April Conference: A Multidisciplinary Forum for Research Discussion and Public Debate

The HSE Look is delighted to present its readers with the interview with **Fuad T. Aleskerov**, HSE Tenured Professor, Head of the Department of Mathematics at the Faculty of Economic Sciences, and a long-time member of the April Conference programme committee, about the evolution of the Conference and its major highlights of this year.

### It's been the XIX April Conference this year – how has it changed since the first years?

To give a little retrospective, when I became a part of the April Conference programme committee, a few years after I joined HSE back in 2003, the conference brought together around 250 participants. This year we had over 1800. The scale changed greatly, and while in the past Andrey Yakovlev and I still could read through all the submitted papers, these days it is simply impossible. Still, I do my best to indulge my scientific curiosity and get familiar with some of the papers outside the conference sessions which I supervise.

The conference maintains a balance of research and policy analysis, on the one hand, and of theoretical topics and to specific issues concerning development of Russia, its economy, education and political system, on the other hand, thus creating a space in which everybody can find something to suit their research interests. And indeed, the scope of topics discussed at the April Conference is astounding and has naturally expanded over the years.

I am exceedingly happy and proud to note that through all these years the quality of research presented at the April conference has always been very strong. It corresponds fully to my idea and experience of what a good scientific conference should be – it brings together people who do cutting-edge research. I would like to emphasise that the honorary speakers have delivered outstanding talks, and presented findings and approaches which are bound to define future research in their respective fields.

### Was there any paper that impressed you most of all? One that everybody should get familiar with?

Listening to an honorary speaker presentation is always a treat. Several years ago we had **Eric Maskin**, then **Kenneth Arrow**, which were very special occasions for HSE. This year, for example, **Claude d'Aspremont-Lynden** presented an outstanding talk on Dixit-Stiglitz model, which is very fundamental and generates a whole new array of ideas for further exploration. However, this talk was a very math-based economic theory of 21st century and would make little sense to the general audience.

To give another example, **Maurice Salles**, another speaker whom I had the pleasure to invite, did a very thorough historical analysis of how the concept of independence of irrelevant alternatives originated. He evoked the works of J.F. Nash, K. Arrow, and many other great names in the economic theory, and this puts one of the most influential concepts of the 20th century into context. There was a talk by **Heinz-Dieter Kurz** on Marx, which I was not able to attend unfortunately, and while it is not my area of expertise, I would be very interested to learn more in terms of adding to the general intellectual background. It's one of the perils of the conference growing - for me, between chairing two sessions and being a moderator at 4 honorary speaker talks, there is too much going on at once to attend everything that interests me.

**This year new thematic sessions were added to the conference. Could you please tell more about them?**

The session 'The Arctic: Challenges of the 21st Century' was added on my suggestion because it is a huge policy issue. Due to the growing interest in using the resources of the Arctic (hopefully responsibly and sustainably), there is a pressing need to learn more about this area and to study its resources and the natural, technological and political limitations regarding their use.

By the way, I got interested in the topic by chance: two years ago I was invited by a colleague whom I respect very much to participate in a workshop on the Arctic issues, and I could not refuse. While I was listening to the colleagues, I did a draft mathematical model based on the presentations about the issues concerning the Arctic. After further refining and developing this model, I was able to present it at three prominent conferences focusing on the Arctic, including the Arctic Congress, and I got involved in several research and policy analysis projects on the Arctic since.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the Arctic and the complexity of the issues involved in its further use. To provide but a few examples, first, given the oil extraction ambitions, the Arctic is a looming environmental catastrophe, unless a well-maintained system of alarm and early prevention will be installed. The fragility of the ecosystem there would make the cost of spillage cleaning astronomical. I do hope that our research will help to advocate for investment in such a system. Second, there are several contested zones between the Arctic countries and understanding the resources and interest at stakes is vital for successful negotiations regarding the activity in the region.

Initially I thought that next year we will hold a separate conference focused only on the Arctic, but after this April Conference I am convinced that we will benefit more from staying a part of it for some time, as it allows to bring a wider array of researchers to the discussion of the topic and untangle the complex web of economic, political, environmental and other issues involved.

**As HSE itself, April Conference began with a focus on a rather narrow set of research areas, while recently it likewise turned into the "Higher School of Everything". How does the conference keep its cohesiveness despite the diversity of topics?**

There are two sides of the conference to consider – the scientific discussion and the civic debate. As for the research, new sessions, including the ones on the Arctic and design theory, are closely tied to the development of the economy in contemporary society. For example, there are many

interesting studies on the economics and art internationally, which are only starting to emerge in Russian universities. As a programme committee, we are open to the new ideas, and when there is a community of people who are doing research on a specific topic and which is related to the general premise of the conference, we are happy to welcome them. It demonstrates very clearly that HSE is a fertile ground for new ideas as a university, and it does not hold on to a narrow focus.

If we speak about the April Conference as a forum for civic discussion, all these topics have an impact on the development of our society and on how we think about it. For instance, plenary talks, which have always been an integral part of the conference, are more heavily geared towards policy analysis, such as the proposals for higher education development, and at the same time, they are grounded in very good research. It's been a pleasure for me to listen to both the presentations and the discussion which followed.

As a side-note, I have never put much stock into any civic initiatives or movements which were not founded on a deep understanding of the issue they try to address. One of the missions of the April Conference is to provide the knowledge that can support the public debate.

**What is the April Conference to HSE at large? Part of the brand, a 'flagship conference'?..**

Calling it a flagship conference seems very official to me... personally, it is a large part of my life at the university, and not only because I devote a lot of time to its preparation, but because I am looking forward to the exchange of ideas which happens every year. I think also that holding such a conference contributes to the development of the research community – when all of us are able to listen first-hand prominent researchers, we get new ideas and new aspirations in terms of the quality and impact of the work we do. I encourage my students to attend the sessions, and I think it would benefit HSE's best students if during the three days of the conference all classes were suspended and the students could grow both as researchers and global citizens by attending the April Conference.



## Impressions from the 19th April Conference

After the conference is over it's time to reflect on what this year has brought to plan for the participation in the next year's event, and The HSE Look talked to several internationally recruited HSE faculty members about what they value most about participating in the April Conference and what topics and discussions they found most interesting this year.

### **Christian Welzel, Academic Supervisor of the Laboratory for Comparative Social Research:**

First of all, the academic and scientific quality of the conference is really high, and second, it brings together people from all the corners of the world, and it is a great networking opportunity. I would also highly recommend it to young researcher, as I see how our PhD students have grown their network over the years of attending the April Conference, which is important for their future career as researchers. Last but not least, it is quite interdisciplinary – you have people from sociology, political science, economics, psychology, urban studies – it's a great way to learn more from other fields.

The conference is a great chance to see many things in contrast and how they differ between countries, between regions, between cultures, and it's very relevant to our Lab's work. In the past we mostly did cross-country comparisons, now the trend is more towards zooming in and doing comparison between different regions inside one country. We want to see if we find the same mechanisms and dependencies as we find across countries. There was one paper, for instance, which looked upon regional differences in Russia in terms of levels of democracy, and was also mapping it to per capita income level, number of peaceful protests, and other variables.

### **Christian Fröhlich, Assistant Professor at the School of Sociology, Academic Supervisor of the MA programme 'Comparative Social Research':**

The April Conference has two great assets: first, you get the opportunity to welcome your international colleagues in Moscow, catch up and discuss your current research as well as future collaborations. But, second, the broad topical width of the conference's sessions provides the wonderful opportunity to get updated on the most current research undertaken by your colleagues in Russia and abroad.

I was very positively surprised by very interesting presentations on urban development. Also, there have been presentations of fascinating and important research on the

relation between regional political institutions and popular mobilisation in Russia.

### **Anastasiya Antsygina, Assistant Professor at the Department of Theoretical Economics:**

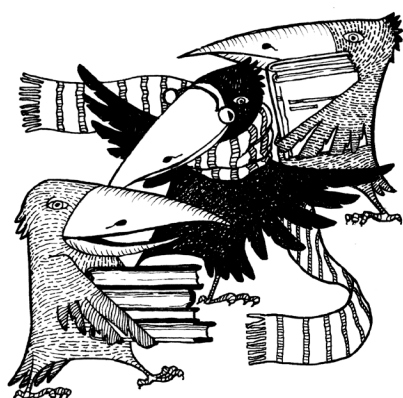
The conference brings scholars from different fields of Economics and Social Science together. It gives a great opportunity to discuss ongoing research and exchange new ideas. Also, the conference helped me to learn what the colleagues from other departments and centers are working on. This experience provides the ground for future academic collaborations and joint projects.

### **Tim Jaekel, Assistant Professor at the School of Public Administration**

The April conference to me is an excellent opportunity to get valuable feedback from both my colleagues at HSE and international peers. I presented a recent paper about pay dissatisfaction among Russian civil servants and received extremely useful feedback and critical remarks from the audience and from Professor Tobin Im from Seoul National University in particular who served as a co-chair of the session.

In our session we had three excellent presented papers that all circled around a common theme, namely "what drives people to work as civil servants" and – once they made this choice - whether or not they consider themselves to be "happy people". Associate Professor Alexander Kalgin presented his latest research result on the link about religiosity and serving in the public sector. Associate Professor Tamara Nezhina and Professor Alexey Barabashev investigated the work satisfaction of Public Human Resource Managers in Russia. Beyond the originality and findings of individual papers it was great so see that HSE's School of Public Administration contributes to the current behavioral turn in public management research, since historically public administration in Russia has been analysing rules, and processes, so I am glad to find it taking a turn towards studying the people who work as civil servants.





## Welt und Wissenschaft: Growing Strong with a Dedicated Community

If you are interested in attending a conference at HSE, there is always something going on. In fact, one of the University's conferences aimed at young researchers is quite special, as it held neither in Russian nor in English, but in German. Less than half a month apart from HSE's April Conference, the international conference Welt und Wissenschaft ('World and Science') was held for the 4th time. The HSE Look talked to one of the organizers, **Yulia Pasko**, Associate Professor of the Department of German Language, about how they involve students and faculty in the development of this tight-knit academic community.

### Where did the idea of holding a conference in German at HSE come from?

You could say that it originated as a spin-off of an annual festival of German language ('Wir lernen Deutsch'), which our department has held since 2005. This is a place for all students to present something, usually a song, a small play, etc., to celebrate their love of German language and culture. One year we had several students who wanted to present in German the results of research they did in term papers and theses. We thought it would be a good idea to hold the festival and research events separately if there turned out to be sufficient number of student presenters. So, 2014, we announced that the following year we will hold the student conference Welt und Wissenschaft. This would have been impossible without our colleagues at HSE who were kind to lend their time and efforts to chairing the conference sessions. Initially, they were **Oleg Voskoboynikov**, **Carsten Sprenger**, and **Tobias Stüdemann**, our partner from Freie Universität Berlin.

### What subjects are being currently considered at the conference?

We have quite a diverse range of subjects to offer students. And this has evolved organically. In our first year, we had three very broadly defined sessions: Law, Economics and Humanities. Political Science branched off in 2016, along with Literature, Culture and Translation. With every passing year, more specialized sessions emerge.

We can now offer a wide range of sessions in different fields, including:

- Literature, Culture and Translation - chaired by **Iris Bäcker**, Associate Professor at the School of Philology;

- Politics and Public Administration – chaired by **Tim Jaekel**, Assistant Professor at the School of Public Administration;
- Sociology – chaired by **Christian Fröhlich**, Assistant Professor at the School of Sociology,
- History ('Past and Present') – chaired by **Martin Beisswenger**, Assistant Professor at the School of History;
- Economics – chaired by **Dirk Meissner**, Professor at the Institute for Statistical Studies and Economics of Knowledge;
- Philosophy and Logic – chaired by **Pjotr Rezvykh**, Associate Professor at the School of Philosophy;
- Law Theory and Practice – chaired by **Alexander Dreut** from Russian-German Chamber of Commerce.

### Are all of your participants HSE students?

Far from it! We get students from other universities in Moscow, such as MGIMO, MGU, RGGU, Moscow State Pedagogical University, Moscow State Law University, and, what was most surprising for us, from Sechenov Medical University. We've also had students come from as far as Vladivostok, as well as German students – a PhD free-mover from Dresden and an exchange student from Göttingen, who is currently doing a semester abroad at HSE St. Petersburg.

It's a great asset to our participants that we have students of all levels – undergrads, graduate and PhD students, thereby allowing younger researchers to learn not only from established professionals such as our session chairs, but also from other young but more experienced researchers such as PhD students. Some of the participants have been attending

for three years already. Naturally, exposure to world-class research is invaluable as well, as it allows them to consider a potential academic career in more depth, as well as produce more solid work as students.

### What else was special about the conference this year?

Since our conference has many different sessions, it was difficult to come up with an idea for some integral opening or plenary that would be relevant to them all. So, we decided to hold a fair for students. Our event brings together many talented students. Furthermore, we wanted to show them opportunities made possible through their knowledge of German, both for further education, internships and career development. We've had representatives from DAAD, Freie Universität Berlin, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Russian-German Chamber of Commerce, Bosch, and many others. We've also had many students join this part of the programme, so it has served its purpose – to show that knowing German language and

culture, as well as understanding the contemporary society and economy of German-speaking countries, can be a path to a successful and interesting professional life.

### Is the conference followed up by any publications?

We published the third book of conference papers this year, and we are hoping to continue with this. Of course, not all paper proposals make it to the conference, and, at the same time, not all the presentations are turned into conference papers. It requires a whole new level of work and motivation – some students are more focused on delivering presentations, while others are looking to expand their list of published works. All in all, about one-third of participants end up selected for the book. In 2017, we were able to bring the publication to a new level with the help of **Tim Jaekel**, who has been a member of the organizing committee since 2016, both in terms of editing the final papers, as well as getting an ISSN. Our conference also has its own logo, and we are very happy that it helps to visually present a sense of community that we are trying to create through this very dynamic and vibrant academic event.



## 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 **Arnab Roy Chowdhury** and **Brian McLoone**.

## Experiencing Moscow

**By: Arnab Roy Chowdhury**, Research Fellow at Public Policy Department, Faculty of Social Sciences. Arnab holds PhD from National University of Singapore. Prior to HSE, he was an Assistant Professor in the Public Policy and Management Group at the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta (IIMC). His research and teaching interests include environmental policy, development studies, migration policy and postcolonial studies.

I have been in Moscow since September 2017. In the early days, it was like a rollercoaster. The fall semester, which is shorter, was pretty busy and hectic, as I had to settle down, as well as teach and participate in various academic programmes and events. The students I started teaching came

across as very intelligent and brilliant, while my colleagues, seniors, and administrators were very kind, and they helped me to settle in. The language seemed to be a barrier only in the first few months. As I started learning new words and expressions, life became easier, and the genial behaviour and help that I have received in Moscow, sometimes from complete strangers, has given me warm and fuzzy feeling about the city and my university, HSE.

During the first semester, I had the opportunity to go to the countryside and see beautiful Golden Ring cities like Rostov-Velikiy and Yaroslavl, which is next to the Volga River and has amazingly beautiful churches. The winter is known to be deadly in Moscow, but I enjoyed it thoroughly, thanks to the International Faculty Support team! Its warmth kept me going in the cold winter. They organized a number of wonderful city tours, including a visit to Gorky Park and a

Moskva river cruise. I remember standing on the deck of the boat looking at Moscow museum, and watching Peter the Great's monument pass by, and talking endlessly with colleagues under a starry night as cold wind gushed and shuddered down my spine. I guess that exposure to the Moscow cold gave me a kind of resilience, which helped me pass through the winter most easily. I come from the tropics, and I am not used to wearing warm clothes all that time. I came when the weather started becoming chilly. There was rain, and it was a pretty cold. Snow came late to Moscow in 2017, sometime in November. I remember my first experience of snowfall in Moscow – it was surreal. I was sitting at my study table in the evening reading under a soft yellow chrome light. I looked out the window and saw soft white rainfall, then realised it is snow! I stood at the window for hours and watched how everything became covered by a blanket of fluffy snow ...

Moscow is so vibrant in winter – friends hugging each other, people talking on the street, some smoking electronic cigarettes to ward off the cold. I enjoyed walking around the city centre and Kremlin in December, as everything was decorated with lights, carols were being sung, bells were chiming in preparation of approaching Christmas. The Kremlin and Red Square look very colorful, and host many events and carnivals in different seasons.

Another thing I enjoy about life in Moscow is its metro stations. Inside, the metro looks like a palace. It has a vintage charm, and the people walking in fur coats genially smiling and talking make it look like a scene from a Hollywood film. Moscow is a mix of tradition and modernity – you can see the most stunning skyscrapers beside baroque and classical architectural marvels, many with colonnaded porticos. I had heard about the grandness and magnificence of Soviet-era buildings, but I was dumbstruck at how beautiful they are when I saw them the first time – how big they are, and how much power they radiate.

Exploring Moscow is never complete if you aren't interested in tasting the different cuisines offered. In the winter, I got to taste some wonderful Russian delicacies – herring 'under a coat' salad, black caviar, borsch, and pelmeni. Moreover, grechka (buckwheat) is one of my favorite healthy foods. Zapekanka, Russian cheesecake, is melt-your-mouth delicious. Blini with jam or milkmaid (condensed milk) has also become my staple. I also enjoyed kvass, medovukha, beer with vobla, and White Russian cocktails, with the Russian, Kazakh, Uzbek, Indian, and Bangladeshi friends I've made at the HSE Guesthouse. I have had tea at Chaikhana café and eaten at an Azerbaijani café. In the market near Dubrovsky, I bought locally made clothes and a coat. I also bought fresh vegetables and fish at the Tyoply Stan market like the locals. I found ingredients to cook hearty Indian biryani - but most enjoyable of all has been sharing these meals with friends.

## Making the Best of Being a New Arrival in Moscow

**By: Brian McLoone**, Assistant Professor, School of Philosophy, Faculty of Humanities. Brian completed his PhD in philosophy of biology at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 2016. Brian is interested in philosophical issues that emerge in evolutionary theory, such as what sorts of facts natural selection can explain, and what role artificial intelligence might play in the field of evolutionary biology.

The way I interact with the city I am visiting is often very different from the way I interact with the city where I live.

When I visit a city, it is difficult for me not to fumble around quite a bit. I can easily get lost. I go to bad restaurants. I get ripped off on cab fare. I get lost again. But such fumbling certainly doesn't stop me from attempting to take advantage of the city to the fullest. Like any good tourist, I will spend most of my day walking its streets, visiting its parks, and exploring its museums and houses of worship.

When I am living in a city, in contrast, very little fumbling occurs. Before moving to Moscow this past September, I lived in Madison, Wisconsin, and before that, I lived in Boston. Rarely, and only early on, did I get lost in those cities, eat at their bad restaurants, or get ripped off on cab fare. That's the benefit of being a local.

However, the cost of being a local is that one feels very little urgency to engage in the 'tourist activities' of one's city. Exacerbating this problem is the fact that in your hometown it is easy to become consumed with work during the week, leaving you with little energy on the weekend to visit, say, a museum. The consequences of this dynamic can be unfortunate. I left Boston without ever walking its famed 'Freedom Trail,' for instance, and I never visited any of the Frank Lloyd Wright homes for which Wisconsin is well known.

Living in a foreign city can often pose an interesting challenge. The city is new and probably so is the language, so no doubt you'll find yourself fumbling around. But it's also the city in which you live, so you'll feel less urgency, as well as energy, to take advantage of what it has to offer. In other words, there's a risk that you'll experience the worst parts of being tourist, but none of its rewards.

Indeed, the risk might be particularly pronounced for non-Russian academics moving to Moscow. When you arrive in September, it might be a month or two before you actually feel 'settled.' You'll need to find (and perhaps furnish) an apartment, sign up for the internet and mobile coverage, figure out where your best grocery store is, and so on. However, by then it will start to get cold, and the various



'tourist' activities you had initially planned will start to seem markedly less appealing.

When I was asked to write a column for this issue of The HSE Look, I thought it worthwhile to comment on the above dynamic. It took me a few months to become aware of it myself, though no doubt it was obvious to others from

the start. Moscow is easily the most interesting city in which I have lived. The benefits of this city far outweigh its frustrations. But this is true only if you actively engage with what the city has to offer ...and pretend, at least every once in a while, to be a tourist.



## Visiting Scholars: Upcoming Visits

HSE provides institutions funding for two programmes which allow Schools and Departments to invite international colleagues to teach courses to students and collaborate on research (Visiting Scholars) and to organise workshops for teachers in order to introduce new methods and approaches to work within and outside classroom (Teaching Excellence).

The HSE Look presents brief information about the upcoming visits – please, refer to the host departments for more details.

### Visiting Scholar programme

**Daniel Ibanez**, Research Associate at Harvard GSD, USA

**Host department:** Laboratory for Experimental Urban Design

**Dates:** June 04-11, 2018

**Christine Whitehead**, Emeritus Professor at London School of Economics, UK

**Host department:** Vysokovsky Graduate School of Urbanism

**Dates:** September 2018

**Nello Barile**, Assistant Professor at International University of Language and Media, Italy

**Host department:** School of Media

**Dates:** September 2018

### Teaching Excellence programme

**Anton Dzhamay**, Professor at College of Natural and Health Sciences, University of Northern Colorado, USA

**Host department:** Faculty of Mathematics

**Dates:** May 14-31, 2018

**Miriam Finkelstein**, Assistant Professor at University of Innsbruck, Austria

**Host department:** Faculty of Humanities

**Dates:** September 24-30, 2018

**James Thomas**, Head of the teacher training unit in the Faculty of Arts (Freelance ELT author and teacher trainer. Until July 2016 - Masaryk University)

**Host department:** Faculty of Economics, Management, and Business Informatics (HSE campus Perm)

**Dates:** September 23-29, 2018

**Andrew Janco**, Assistant Professor at Haverford College, USA

**Host department:** Faculty of Humanities

**Dates:** October 01-10, 2018